

Drink Driving Monitor

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ETSC's Newsletter on Drink Driving Policy Developments in the EU

Editorial

This 10th Drink Driving Monitor brings news from across the EU of steps to further improve drink driving legislation and enforcement. Discussions are being held about changing or lowering the BAC limit in Ireland, Belgium and Finland. Improvements to existing enforcement practices in the Czech Republic and France are underway such as carrying out a breath test every time a driver is checked, and ensuring that every police vehicle has a breathalyser to do this. Results from recent drink driving campaigns linked to enforcement are also presented from Austria and Spain. The latest plans for the summer campaign on drink driving enforcement by TISPOL are also presented. ETSC's alcolock legislation barometer is included.

EU News

Eurobarometer Poll on Attitudes to Drink Driving

A new Eurobarometer was published polling EU citizens opinions on alcohol and drink driving. Key findings include most EU citizens cannot give a correct answer regarding the legal blood alcohol limit for driving in their country. Only a little over a quarter of respondents (27%) were able to give a correct answer when asked what the legal blood alcohol limit for driving is in their country. More than one third gave an incorrect answer. There is a wide variation in awareness levels across the Member States. The Czech Republic, with a Zero limit, tops the list with

75% of respondents able to answer correctly. Another question was on perceptions of risk. The majority of Europeans consider driving under the influence of alcohol to be risky but 14% would drive after more than two drinks in two hours. Such an amount would result in a blood alcohol concentration above the legal limit in most EU countries. More than half (62%) consider that one should not drive after two drinks in two hours. A considerable proportion (15%) thinks that not drinking at all if you intend to drive is the safest option. http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/docs/ebs_331_en.pdf

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Road Safety Benefit of Lowering the BAC limits for Novice and HGV drivers in Belgium

In early 2010 a new report on reducing the legal BAC limit of novice drivers and drivers of HGVs was published by the Belgian Road Safety Institute (IBSR/BIVV). It aimed to look at the justifications for reducing the BAC limit of these two groups from 0.5 to 0.2 mg/ml. It looked at what is the impact of alcohol on drivers under 0.5 and undertook a literature review covering the topic of drink driving and its impact on novice and HGV drivers. In Belgium, although young drivers only make up 18.7% of the population, drivers between 18-29 years of age represented 39.8% of killed or injured drivers in 2007. Studies show that the risk of a collision increases even after one or two glasses of alcohol for all but does so more strongly with novice drivers. According to studies undertaken by the IBSR/BIVV, although drivers between 18 and 25 are half as likely to be driving under the influence, the share of those tested positive in alcohol related crashes resulting in death and serious injury is higher than amongst other older age groups. Based on this analysis the IBSR concludes that if certain supplementary conditions are respected, including increased traffic law enforcement and a good communication of the reasons for specifically targeting novice drivers a decrease of the legal BAC limit for novice drivers, could reduce the numbers killed on the roads. A reduction was also supported for HGV drivers, although the share of drink driving accidents is not higher amongst this group the benefit of introducing a lower limit in terms of reduced risk outweigh the costs. Although the share of drink driving accidents is low among HGV driver, a reduction of the BAC limit was also supported for this group. This is mainly because of the high baseline risk due to high mileage and increased accident severity. As a consequence the benefits of introducing a lower limit can be expected to outweigh the costs in terms of enforcement capacity. http://bivvweb.ipower.be/Observ/FR/0,2_promille_FR_lowres.pdf

Investment in Breathalysers in France

In France new measures to improve road safety, including investing in equipment by the Police to undertake alcohol checks, were announced by the French Prime Minister who was chairing the Inter-ministerial Committee on Road Safety on the 18th of February.

In 2008, approximately 26% of drivers' lives could have been saved if they had not been over the legal BAC. Progress to reduce drink driving remains weak in France without much change in levels since 2002.

In order to increase drink driving tests national Police cars and the cars of the National Gendarmerie will be equipped with 5000 breathalysers by 2012 from the 3200 present today (http://www.securite-routiere.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/DP_CISR_2010_VDEFDEF-25-03-10_cle0dbd15.pdf)

Moreover, licensed cafés and restaurants will introduce breathalysers to allow drivers to self test for presence of alcohol before driving. This extends a recommendation already adopted by the Inter-ministerial Committee on Road Safety in 2008 to install self testers in places licensed to sell alcohol, but only after 2 am.

Germany Drink Driving Enforcement Hampered by Judge's Consent to Blood Tests

The German Federal Court of Justice's President Klaus Tolksdorf has requested that Police should be able to ask a doctor to directly take a blood sample without the consent of a judge from a suspected drink driver. This would enable a doctor to directly take a blood test more quickly and contribute to reliable evidence in the investigation. At present Police report that in reality they often do not manage to reach a judge in time to gain his agreement and their evidence is often brought into question in court if it is presented without the formal judge's agreement.

Austria Footballers Join Drink Driving Campaign

Following stricter sanctions introduced in September of last year, in November the Austrian Transport Ministry and the Austrian Road Safety Council launched a new campaign focusing on prevention and awareness building around the issue of drink driving. The aim is to show people the possible consequences of drinking and driving on other peoples' lives. The title of the campaign is: „Drink Driving: could you live with that?“. In March this year, Vienna's Football Club Rapid has joined the campaign. Its captain Steffen Hofmuller and his colleagues said: "Those who drink drive put themselves offside. Therefore: red card for drink drivers." The Austrian

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Transport Minister Bures stressed the importance of engaging role models such as football players to communicate with young people and change their opinions.

Czech Republic New Drink Driving Checks

The traffic police systematically tests all stopped drivers for alcohol in the Czech Republic since January 1st. The reason for this move was motivated by an unprecedented rise in deaths from crashes caused under the influence of alcohol. While there were only 36 cases recorded in 2007, the number rose to 80 in 2008 and even to 123 in 2009.

Any driver refusing a breath test faces up to 2 year driving ban and a monetary fine of up to about 2,000 EUR. The measure has seemed to work, as the proportion of alcohol related crashes dropped from 1:16 to 1:20 in the first couple of months of 2010.

In a country where a zero legal limit has applied since 1953, two third of culprits in alcohol related crashes are found with the BAC over 1 g/l, which is similar to other EU countries. Drink driving is nowadays punished very severely: 3-7 penalty points out of 12 are attributed to any driver found with alcohol in blood and the driver faces further sanctions such as monetary fines up to 1000 EUR and imprisonment for up to 2 years.

The Zero Alcohol Policy has been a success in the Czech Republic, given its top position in the average alcohol consumption per population and specific drinking culture. Suggestions to slacken the current legal 0 BAC limit has been regularly brought by policy-makers in recent years, most recently only a few months ago. This time it was on the basis of an inaccuracy of breath test measurements. However, the Traffic Police has remained firm in enforcing the current zero limit. At very low levels of BAC, under 0.2 g/l, the police officers are however likely to consider possible inaccuracies in measurements and decide not to fine or prosecute the driver. This situation is the same in other countries enforcing the zero BAC limit.

Discussions in Irish Parliament on Lowering the BAC Limits

The Road Traffic Bill 2009 is now for consideration before the Irish Parliament. The Bill has passed sec-

ond stage and it is expected it will be passed into law before the summer recess. The Bill provides for a reduced blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for drivers. It also introduces mandatory testing of all drivers involved in collisions. This builds on Ireland's mandatory alcohol testing introduced in July 2006 which led to a 22% drop in road deaths in the first 12 months. Public support in Ireland for the proposed reductions in the drink driving limit is high: 7 out of 10, polled by the Road Safety Authority in Ireland, support the Irish Government's move to lower the legal limit for driving from 0.8 mg/ml to 0.5 mg/ml. A similar number (73%) also backs the move to legislate for a reduction in the limit to 0.2 mg/ml for learner and professional drivers. The new Bill will reduce the legal BAC limit from 0.8 to 0.2 for learner, novice and professional drivers and to 0.5 for all other drivers.

Spanish Drink Driving Enforcement Efforts Up

In Spain the Interior Ministry (DGT) launched a national enforcement campaign between 7 and 20 December 2009. The Traffic Civil Guards carried out 393,084 breath tests and identified 4,634 drivers who were over the legal BAC limit (making up 1.17% of those checked). The tests were carried out both at night, at noon so that controls would discourage alcohol intake during the typical Christmas dinner. In addition to the checks carried out by agents of the Traffic Civil Guards from DGT, some municipalities with more than 25,000 people joined the campaign, conducting inspections and other awareness and prevention measures in their respective municipalities.

Aside from the enforcement campaigns, the number of annual tests conducted by the Traffic Civil Guards is increasing whereas the percentage of positives rates above those allowed is decreased (1.17% in 2009 compared to 1.87% in 2000). For 2010, a similar campaign is planned to run between 13 and 19 December.

UK's Independent Expert Report on new Drink and Drug Driving Proposals Delayed

Sir Peter North's report on changes to the legal framework around drink- and drug- driving is delayed. At the end of March he gave the current Secretary of State

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his initial advice and provisional conclusions. However, as a general election has been announced, he will now deliver his report to the next Secretary of State for Transport after the election scheduled for the 6th of May. For drink driving, the report was to advise on the case for changes to the prescribed alcohol limit for driving (either reducing the current limit, or adding a new, lower limit, with an associated revised penalty regime).

Alcolock Legislation in Finland

The Ministry of Transport and Communications in Finland has a bill underway to introduce obligatory alcolocks to vehicles used for school transport. There has been a slight delay with the law, which is now supposed to be going to the Parliament finally this April. The technical requirements might come into force a bit later but still this year. The Law proposes that alcohol interlocks be mandatory for vehicles used in school and day care transportation (chartered transport ordered by municipalities and cities). It has been estimated that alcohol interlocks would need to be installed to 7,000 – 10,000 buses and taxis. The law will be in force when the school semester begins in August 2011 and is calculated to cost about 10 million euros during years 2010 and 2011.

The Finnish government's ITS Strategy also commits to carry out an investigation of the implementation and effects of alcohol interlocks used in transport services paid by public funds, in scheduled/line transport services and in professional/commercial transport of goods. The investigation is due to be completed during 2011 and the obligation to use alcohol interlocks would be in force at the latest in 2014. Finally, the ITS Strategy stresses the need for international co-operation to have alcohol interlock as standard equipment in all new vehicles at the latest by 2020. The responsibility of realising these aims will fall on transport operators, companies, municipalities, Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Transport Safety Agency.

0.2 BAC limit for drunk driving and boating in Finland?

Also in Finland there has been some discussion around lowering the limit for drunk driving from the current 0.5 mg/ml to 0.2 mg/ml. According to Mikko Paatero, National Police Commissioner, the safety of road and boating can be improved effectively by lowering the limits. A drunk driver is involved in one

out of four lethal road traffic collisions in Finland. He stated that "the number of vehicle drivers tested with a portable breath tester in Finland is the largest in the world compared with all persons who have a driving licence – almost two million drivers a year. However, this will not translate into a sufficient preventive impact and suggests that the intervening limit should be lowered. A new way of intervening with cases in which the amount of alcohol exceeds 0.2 mg/ml but is less than 0.5 mg/ml, for instance, could be to interrupt the suspect's journey immediately and to fine him/her on location,". The police have opened a discussion thread in its Facebook profile on lowering the limit for drunk driving and boating and can be found in Facebook under the name "Finnish Police".

TISPOL Summer Drink Driving Campaign

Police officers across Europe will again run their annual summer one week long campaign in the second half of June to mount a crackdown on drivers impaired by alcohol or drugs. The European Traffic Police Network (TISPOL) ran a similar campaign in 2008 in the summer. This saw nearly 700,000 drivers breath-tested in 21 European countries during the seven-day operation. A total of 11,448 drink-driving offences and 985 drug-driving offences were detected. More info: www.tispol.org

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Safe and Sober campaign

The "Safe & Sober" campaign, supported by the Volvo Group and run by ETSC, has continued this year with the 10th policy debate organised in Copenhagen on 22th of January. A number of new Danish political initiatives to prevent drink driving were presented by the Danish Minister of Justice, Brian Mikkelsen, who outlined the Government's plans to tighten drink driving legislation and provide more space for the use of alcohol interlocks in programmes for drink driving offenders. Denmark has already a strict drink driving law. Anything above the legal alcohol level could mean imprisonment. Killed and injured in accidents with alcohol were reduced by 70 % in 20 years, but still represents about 25% of all deaths in road accidents. Police uses the evidence breath test analyser

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for each driver checked. High frequency of checks, high level of sanctions and inherent costs of alcohol rehabilitation programmes have a very high deterrent effect on Danish drivers. Yet, room for improvement exists, for example by educating people and raising awareness, amongst other measures. Details on the recent legislative change plans were outlined in the last issue of Drink Driving Monitor.

Another debate was organised in the framework of the project in Lisbon, Portugal, on the 3rd of May 2010.

PRAISE Thematic Report on Fitness to Drive

As part of ETSC's project on work related road safety PRAISE (Preventing Road Accidents and Injuries for the Safety of Employees), ETSC published a new Thematic Report on Fitness to Drive in the work-related context. The first part looks at Workplace Health Promotion. It is thanks to general well being and healthy lifestyles that

significant threats to safety risks such as fatigue, addictions to alcohol or drugs (illegal and/or medicines) and stress can be avoided. The report also focuses on three specific areas that pose specific challenges: fatigue, alcohol, and drugs. This report covers existing legislation, examples of initiatives and good practice case studies, and recommendations to the EU, to EU Member States, and to employers. The report was discussed at ETSC's PRAISE Brunch seminar on May 6th for information see www.etsc/praise

ETSC PIN Flash on Drink Driving

ETSC published its new PIN Flash ranking the EU Member States on collisions involving alcohol in early May. This updated the last ranking done on drink driving in 2006. The Flash also included updates on speeding and seat belt wearing and include a focus on traffic law enforcement.

Alcolock Legislation Barometer April 2010

ETSC's alcolock legislation barometer gives an update on the "weather" for new legislation on introducing the use of alcolocks either within the commercial or rehabilitation context.

	Pilot project ongoing	Legislation in preparation	Legislation in discussion in Parliament	Legislation adopted	Legislation in implementation	Rehabilitation	Commercial Transport	Voluntary use of alcolocks in commercial transport
Austria								x
Finland		x for use in school transport vehicles			x	x		x
Sweden	x	x for use in rehabilitation programmes						x
Netherlands	x	x for use in rehabilitation programmes	x					
France	x	x for use in rehabilitation programmes	x				x for school buses	
UK		Included in Road Safety Compliance Consultation						
Belgium	x	x		x		x		x
Slovenia	x						x	
Denmark		x for use in rehabilitation programmes						



European Transport Safety Council

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