

NEWS RELEASE

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At least 300,000 people are seriously injured on EU roads every year *Governments and EU called to adopt serious injuries reduction targets*

12 November 2009, Brussels – Today, thanks to more protective vehicles and roads, better emergency response and medical progress, many road deaths are prevented, but survivors remain and many are seriously injured. European and national decision makers should not neglect this less-publicised part of the real picture by referring only to road deaths, urges ETSC⁽¹⁾ in its 15th Road Safety PIN⁽²⁾ Flash published today. The report⁽³⁾ is being launched in conjunction with the World Day of Remembrance of Road Traffic Victims taking place every 3rd Sunday of November, falling this year on the 15th of November.

In addition to the 39,000 people killed in road collisions in the European Union, about 1,700,000 people are recorded as injured in police reports each year, among them 300,000 seriously. For every road death in the EU, at least 44 road injuries are recorded, of which eight are serious.

Yet, although serious injuries tend to be better reported than slight, not all serious injuries are recorded by the police. In Sweden, for every road death, there are 23 road collision survivors treated in hospital, against just 8 serious injuries recorded by the police⁽⁴⁾. EU comparisons are hampered because both the levels of injury reporting and national definitions of a serious injury vary greatly among countries⁽⁵⁾. The magnitude of underreporting undermines proper allocation of resources to preventive measures. Improving the quality of data about seriously injured survivors of road collisions is key to designing more effective safety policies.

Sweden is taking the lead in linking police and hospital data and wishes its number of seriously injured recorded by the hospitals to be used for international comparison. As current EU Presidency holder, Sweden is in a prime position to encourage other Member States to benefit from its experience.

"ETSC believes the new EU Road Safety Action Programme should include challenging targets for the reduction in serious injuries alongside a target for continued reduction in deaths," said ETSC Executive Director Antonio Avenoso. *"Each country should aim to reduce serious injuries, according to its own national definition, at the same pace as deaths. In parallel, the EU should work towards the adoption of a common definition of serious injuries."*

In 14 EU countries using a similar definition of what a serious injury is, deaths and serious injuries have decreased at broadly the same pace since 2001⁽⁶⁾. However, the situation differs considerably from country to country. While in Romania, Norway, Hungary and Spain changes in road deaths and serious injuries followed almost a similar pace, in Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Sweden reductions in road deaths exceeded by far the reductions in recorded serious injuries, whereas in Slovenia, Latvia, Ireland and Greece injuries decreased faster than deaths.⁽⁷⁾

You can download the PIN Flash Report at www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php. For more information please contact PIN Programme Manager Graziella Jost, graziella.jost@etsc.eu, mob. +32 (0)4 98 51 65 62 or ETSC Communications Officer Evgueni Pogorelov, evgueni.pogorelov@etsc.eu, tel. +32 (0)2 230.41.06.

Notes to Editors:

(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. The ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 42 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu

(2) The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in June 2006 to compare country road safety performances. It currently includes the 27 countries of the EU, as well as Israel, Norway and Switzerland. www.etsc.eu/PIN.

(3) The PIN Flash Report and Background Tables are available at www.etsc.eu/PIN-publications.php.

(4) Recent analysis indicates a similar order of magnitude of difference for Great Britain

(5) The disparities are due to differences in legislation, insurance policy, police resources, quality of data collection and processing and the mix of kinds of collisions.

(6) Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, France, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK use a similar definition of serious injury: an injury is graded as serious if a victim of a road collision has to spend at least one night in hospital as in-patient.

(7) In some countries, like France, this could be explained by a greater impact of achieved speed reduction on death rather than on injuries. In others, like the Netherlands, this is the result of national traffic patterns: 45% of all seriously injured Dutch road users are cyclists.