

Regional and Local Action as a Motor for Road Safety Improvements in the Czech Republic

19 March 2009, Prague - The number of road deaths in the Czech Republic decreased by 20% in 2001- 2008, less than EU average. This falls short of both the national and EU road safety targets. The country's road safety performance and the areas for possible improvements through the involvement of regional and local authorities were discussed today at the Road Safety PIN Talk in Prague held within the context of the Czech EU Presidency. The regional and local authorities should from now on play a more important role in delivering key road safety policies.

The National Road Safety Strategy which was set in 2004 is aiming to "have no more than 650 deaths on Czech roads in 2010". Yet this target is very likely not to be reached with 992 road deaths registered in 2008. Following a 15% rise in road deaths in 2007, the Czech Republic saw a 12% drop in road deaths in 2008. Between 2001 and 2008 it has only made little progress in reducing deaths on its roads, with a 20% decrease, compared to a 29% EU country average⁽¹⁾.

"One of the reasons of this disappointing performance is the lack of traffic law enforceability and enforcement. I urge the government to deliver a higher level of enforcement in the Czech Republic. It should also support the process of adopting an EU Directive on Cross-Border Enforcement," said Antonio Avenoso, ETSC Executive Director.

If in the long term, a slight reduction in road deaths could be tracked, its rate is far beyond the rate of decrease the country was witnessing in 1970 -1980's, and this even when the increase in motorized travels is taken into account. The Czech Republic saw the worst development in PTW safety in the past decade, with a 5% annual increase in deaths. The safety of Czech motorways falls short in comparison with the European counterparts, despite the massive infrastructure investments in the past years. The number of deaths per billion motor vehicle kilometers is almost double that of German motorways. The car fleet is aged and even the new cars have a relatively low level of safety. The increase of safety in several cities is however a promising opposite side of the story.

Strong involvement of regional and local authorities in road safety is of vital importance especially as they are delegated to deliver certain road safety measures such as manage road infrastructure. It also brings the road safety issue closer to the citizens and contributes to their higher risk awareness. This is particularly important in the Czech Republic, where the public concern with road safety remains particularly low.

"As of this year, the Ministry of Transport will start working on the National Road Safety Strategy for the period 2010-2020 in parallel with the preparation of the 4th European Road Safety Action plan. It will also pass more responsibilities and activities to our local authorities," said Zuzana Ambrozova, head of Road Safety Department of the Ministry of Transport (BESIP)⁽²⁾.

In the Czech Republic, almost 80% of road crashes leading to some 60% road deaths occur on roads under the competency of regional and local authorities. *"Through the monitoring of the real number of road crash victims at the regional and local level a better road safety management could be assured. This will allow the linking of Police and Health data and will identify dangerous road sections. The National Road Safety Observatory now has the methodology for the monitoring and evaluation of crash outcomes at regional and municipal level,"* said Jindrich Fric, Director of road safety and traffic engineering division at the Transport Research Centre (CDV).

The Road Safety PIN⁽³⁾ Talk in Prague was jointly organised by ETSC⁽⁴⁾, the Ministry of Transport and the Czech Transport Research Centre (CDV)⁽⁵⁾ and forming part of the official programme of the Czech EU Presidency. The PIN Talk benefits from the patronage of the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

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Notes to Editors:

⁽¹⁾ Percentage changes in road deaths between 2001 and 2008. Source: DG TREN, Quick Indicator, http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road_safety/observatory/doc/trends_figures.pdf

⁽²⁾ BESIP is the abbreviation standing for the Road Safety Department of the Czech *Ministry of Transport*. Its mission is to promote the safety of road traffic by influencing people's attitudes and traffic behaviour. www.ibesip.cz

⁽³⁾ The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in June 2006 to compare country road safety performances. It currently includes 30 countries. The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) receives financial support from Swedish Road Administration and Toyota Motor Europe. www.etsc.eu/PIN

⁽⁴⁾ 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 41 national and international organizations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.eu

⁽⁵⁾ Transport Research Centre (Centrum dopravního výzkumu - CDV), is the public transport research institute under the Czech Ministry of Transport. Established in 1992, CDV has been providing the research and development needed to improve the safety, efficiency, and operation of the Czech transport system and to facilitate the cooperative achievement of land use, environmental and transport goals. www.cdv.cz
CDV also collects data and gathers knowledge for the website of the Czech Road Safety Observatory (www.czrso.cz) which provides information to road safety experts and the wider public. The Czech Road Safety Observatory builds upon the experience of the European Road Safety Observatory (www.erso.eu).