



NEWS RELEASE

Brussels and Tylösand

Sweden top of the class – but not on driver behaviour

4 September 2007 – Comparison of Sweden's road safety performance with that of other European countries reveals that Sweden scores exceedingly well in terms of overall safety but neglects the role of the driver in road safety. Sweden has not made any progress on the key areas of drink driving and speeding whereas other top performing countries have, according to the first Road Safety PIN Report by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC).

Distinguished representatives of Sweden's major organisations working in road safety gathered today in Tylösand for a panel debate on Sweden's road safety situation in the European context. This debate was organised by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)⁽¹⁾, the Swedish Road Administration (SRA)⁽²⁾ and the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI)⁽³⁾ in the framework of the Road Safety PIN Programme⁽⁴⁾. The experts' discussion was based on the findings of the first Road Safety PIN Report⁽⁵⁾ as well as recent research undertaken by SRA and VTI.

In 2006, Sweden comes third after Malta and the Netherlands in terms of road deaths per million population⁽⁶⁾. The country has also progressed well over recent years with a 24% reduction in road deaths since 2001 (the baseline for the EU target). Sweden does however not hold a top position any of the ETSC rankings on road user behaviour:

- The country has made no progress on drink driving over the last years when numbers of drivers killed in traffic crashes with a positive BAC have remained high. They have actually risen in relation to other driver deaths so this development has slowed down overall reduction in driver deaths⁽⁷⁾. A similar situation can be found in six other countries, whereas progress on drink driving has contributed to improving road safety in eight European countries including top performers such as the Netherlands⁽⁸⁾.
- Mean driving speed in Sweden has not changed significantly over the last ten years. Major reductions in driving speeds are however reported from a number of countries including France and Belgium with medium road safety, but also Switzerland and the UK that have a high level of road safety. In these countries, reductions of 3% to 11% in mean speed have been recorded, depending on the road type.
- Seat belt use in Sweden in the front seat of cars and vans is high at 92% (2005) but not as high as in France, Germany and Malta where rates exceed 95%⁽⁹⁾.

"Any ambitious road safety effort must encompass action in three areas – the roads, the vehicles and the drivers. While the drivers cannot be solely held responsible they cannot be let off the hook entirely. They too must deliver their contribution to a safer road transport system. Europe has much to learn from Sweden on how to improve road safety. It is time that the country also takes the lead on improving driver behaviour," said Jörg Beckmann, ETSC Executive Director.

"Making comparisons between countries is a powerful way to learn and stimulate progress," said Ingemar Skogö, Director General of Swedish Road Administration. *"While we are pleased with the progress in many areas of traffic safety, we are deeply worried about our situation regarding drink driving. We are also slightly embarrassed to be one of the leading countries in the world in traffic safety, but at the same time so poor in speed management. We are now applying many of the methods that have been successful in other countries."*

"All research shows that human behaviour is important for road safety," says Urban Karlström, Director General for VTI, The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute. *"Sweden needs to focus even more on human behaviour and continue our work to improve road safety."*

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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 37 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. See <http://www.etsc.be>.

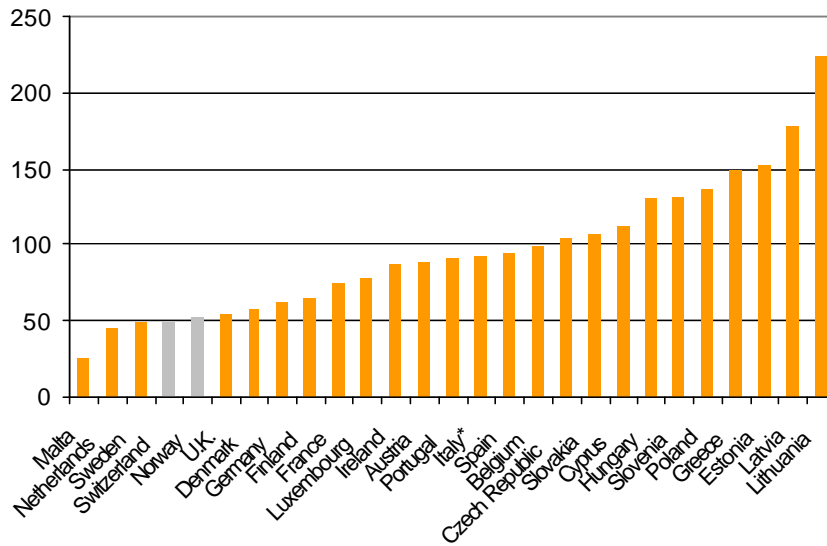
(2) The Swedish Road Administration is the national authority assigned the overall responsibility for the entire road transport system. Its task is to co-operate with others to develop an efficient road transport system in the direction stipulated by the Swedish Government and Parliament.

(3) The Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute, VTI is an independent, internationally established research institute which is engaged in the transport sector. Its work covers all modes, and its core competence is in the fields of safety, economy, environment, traffic and transport analysis, public transport, behaviour and the man-vehicle-transport system interaction, and in road design, operation and maintenance. VTI is a world leader in several areas, for instance in simulator technology.

(4) The Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in June 2006 to compare road safety performances of 27 European countries. See <http://www.etsc.be/PIN.php>.

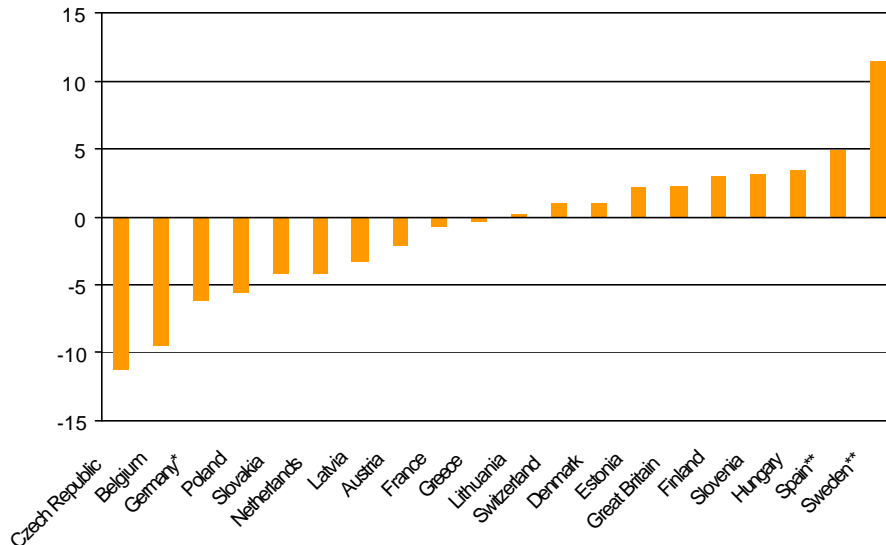
(5) European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) 2007: *Raising Compliance with Road Safety Law*. 1st Road Safety PIN Report. See http://www.etsc.be/documents/PIN_Report.pdf.

(6) Road deaths per million population in 2006. Source: CARE and national data



(7) In Sweden, the number of killed drivers with a positive BAC has decreased 12% more slowly over 2002-2005 than the number of killed drivers with negative BAC. Data source: SRA, VTI

(8) Yearly percentage change in deaths related to drink driving relative to change in other deaths over 3-8 years ending 2005. Source: National data



* Yearly percentage change in drivers involved in fatal drink driving crashes relative to change in drivers involved in other crashes (Germany).

** Yearly percentage change in driver deaths from drink driving crashes relative to change in driver deaths from other crashes (Spain, Sweden)

(9) Road Safety Performance Indicators: Country comparison. Deliverable D3.7a of the EU FP6 project SafetyNet