



NEWS RELEASE

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Reducing alcohol harm on Europe's roads through better enforcement

The European Commission publishes its Strategy on Alcohol Harm Reduction⁽¹⁾ today, and the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)⁽²⁾ calls for concrete legislative action to raise police enforcement efforts ensuring that drivers are travelling soberly and safely across the EU.

Drink driving is the second greatest cause of road deaths in the EU. Although the EU has set a target to reduce road deaths from 50,000 by 50% by 2010, more than 41 000 people still died on Europe's roads in 2005. In the EU 2-3% of journeys are associated with an illegal level of alcohol in the driver's blood, and 30-40% of road deaths result from drink driving crashes⁽³⁾. Other road users are not exempt and cyclists and pedestrians are also victims of drink driver behaviour.

To tackle drink driving, the new Strategy proposes the dissemination at national level of good practices already implemented in some Member States such as setting lower or zero BAC limits for young and professional drivers, unrestricted (random) breath testing for all drivers, the enforcement of drink-driving countermeasures and application of dissuasive sanctions against all who are found to be driving over the BAC limit, and in particular for repeated drink drivers. The Commission also proposes to improve coordination between drink driving and road safety action in Europe. ETSC's Executive Director Jörg Beckmann states: "*The strategy paves the ground for a better integration of road safety into the EU's public health policy. But the Commission now needs to follow up with legislation concerning the enforcement of national drink-driving regulations.*"

European Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot has indicated that a public consultation on a Directive to enhance co-operation on the cross border enforcement of traffic offences (including drink driving) is around the corner. ETSC stresses the need for this Directive to include high standards in drink driving enforcement according to the best practice set out in the EC Recommendation on enforcement⁽⁴⁾. This includes random screening tests and evidential breath tests in conjunction with publicity campaigns. ETSC's recent publication⁽⁵⁾ shows that in Finland, France, Sweden and the Netherlands this combination has helped to reduce road traffic deaths significantly.

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy rightly identifies tackling drink driving as a priority, but concrete action to increase police enforcement should take immediate precedence for action.

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Notes to Editors:

(1) An EU strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm. http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/alcohol/documents/alcohol_com_625_en.pdf.

(2) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC), founded in 1993 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 35 national and international organisations. www.etsc.be

(3) ESCAPE, 2003: Enhanced safety coming from appropriate police enforcement. ETSC, 2003: Cost-effective transport safety measures.

(4) Commission Recommendation on enforcement in the field of road safety (2004)
http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numdoc=32004H0345

(5) ETSC, 2006: Traffic Law Enforcement Across the EU. An Overview. [http://www.etsc.be/documents/Traffic Law Enforcement in the EU An Overview May 2006 ETSC.pdf](http://www.etsc.be/documents/Traffic%20Law%20Enforcement%20in%20the%20EU%20An%20Overview%20May%202006%20ETSC.pdf)