

NEWS RELEASE

Brussels, embargoed until 25 October 2006

Seat belt reminders increasingly standard in Europe – but not in all countries

The second ranking published today under the Road Safety Performance Index (PIN)⁽¹⁾ of the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)⁽²⁾, shows that more than half of the new passenger cars sold in Europe are equipped with advanced seat belt reminder systems for the driver seat. The proportion of cars sold in 2005 in 25 European countries that are equipped with seat belt reminders for the driver seat is estimated to be 56%.

In Sweden, nearly 70% of new passenger cars are equipped with seat belt reminders for the driver seat. In Luxembourg, this is 64% and in Germany 63%. In the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Lithuania, Italy and Greece, this is however less than half of the new passenger cars⁽³⁾.

A new study carried out in six European cities shows that advanced seat belt reminders can increase seat belt use among drivers in urban areas up to rates of 93% to 100%. The highest impact of seat belt reminders was noted in Brussels: in cars equipped with seat belt reminders, 93% of drivers used their belt. In cars without seat belt reminders, only 70% of drivers buckled up. An earlier study revealed that in Sweden, wearing rates are 99% with seat belt reminders against 82% without such a system⁽⁴⁾.

The seat belt reduces the risk of dying in a car crash by up to 60%⁽⁵⁾. Moreover, important safety features such as airbags work as designed only if occupants are restrained by their seat belts. Still, wearing rates vary greatly among countries. They are especially low on the rear seats and in urban areas.

At a press event held today in Brussels, Anders Lie from the Swedish Road Administration, said: "*The seat belt is the car's single most important passive safety feature. A great many people's lives could be saved if all car occupants used their seat belt. To make sure this is happening, we cannot only rely on education and enforcement, but use also to a maximum advanced vehicle technologies available today.*"

To date, the implementation of this new technology has been driven mainly by Euro NCAP where new car models receive additional points under the adult occupant score. This has meant that more and more new models are now equipped with this technology. "*Euro NCAP provides a great incentive for manufacturers to install seat belt reminders on the best-sold models in Europe. But to reach also the upper and lower priced segments of the market, we need EU legislation mandating seat belt reminders in all new cars,*" Jörg Beckmann, ETSC Executive Director stated.

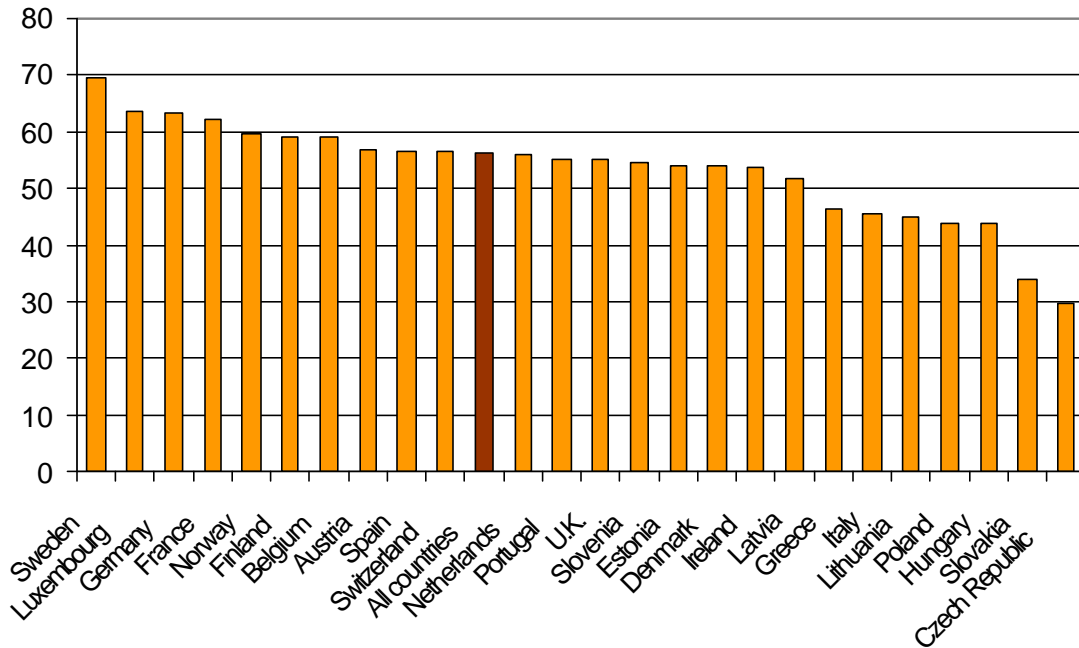
More detailed information can be found in the Road Safety PIN Flash 3 on www.etsc.be/PIN. For more information contact: PIN Programme Director franziska.achterberg@etsc.be or PIN Programme Officer graziella.jost@etsc.be

Notes to Editors:

⁽¹⁾ The Road Safety Performance Index was set up in June 2006 to compare Member States' performance in all areas of road safety. It receives financial support from Swedish Road Administration and Toyota Motor Europe. See www.etsc.be/PIN.

⁽²⁾ The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of transport crashes and casualties in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. It brings together 35 international and national organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

⁽³⁾ Proportion of seat belt reminders for the driver seat in cars sold in 2005 (in %). Sources: CSM Worldwide's Global Light Vehicle Sales Forecast, Euro CAP, Swedish Road Administration, IEE



⁽⁴⁾ Kullgren, A., Krafft, M., Lie, A., Tingvall, C. 2006: The use of seat belts in cars with smart seat belt reminders – Results of an observational study. In: Traffic Injury Prevention 7/2006, pp.: 125-129

⁽⁵⁾ World Health Organization (WHO) 2004: World report on road traffic injury prevention. Geneva, Switzerland