

NEWS RELEASE

Elderly to Make up a Third of Road Deaths by 2050

26 May 2008, Brussels – While today every fifth person killed on EU roads is aged 65 or over, by 2050 one death out of three will be an elderly person, if their safety level does not improve. This striking conclusion was presented today at the launch of the ETSC's Road Safety PIN Flash 9 on Reducing older people's deaths on roads in Europe⁽¹⁾.

Over **eight thousand people** aged 65 years old and over are killed in the EU27 annually. Per population, the risk of death in a road accident for an elderly road user is on average 16% higher than for a younger road user. However, the individual differences between countries are huge, with the risk of being killed per population seven times higher for senior citizens in **Lithuania** than for their **Maltese** counterparts. **Malta**, the **UK** and **Sweden** are the safest places for elderly people using the roads, while **Lithuania**, **Cyprus** and **Poland** are the most dangerous ones⁽²⁾.

Only in **Latvia**, **Malta**, **Estonia**, **Spain**, **Lithuania** and **Slovenia** do older people have a lower risk of dying on the roads than the rest of the population⁽³⁾. Paradoxically, the risk is disproportionately high in some countries with generally good road safety records, such as **the Netherlands**, **Switzerland** and **Israel**. Here the risk for an elderly person to be killed in road traffic is twice as high as for younger road users.

In terms of progress in making their countries safer for the elderly over the past decade, **Portugal**, **Israel** and **France** scored the best year-to-year reduction in elderly deaths on the road per population⁽⁴⁾, with respectively 8%, 7% and 6% average annual reduction⁽⁵⁾. **Cyprus**, **Denmark**, **Slovenia**, **Greece**, **Switzerland**, **Norway**, **Slovakia**, **Finland**, the **Netherlands**, **Spain** and the **UK** follow with reductions above the EU average of 3.7%. Slowest progress has been recorded in **Latvia** and **Bulgaria** where it has been less than 2%. In **Romania** numbers of elderly deaths per population actually rose over the last six years.

Older people account for some 17% of the European population now, and if current demographic trends continue by 2050 they will make up 30%. If road safety is not improved for this group, one road death out of three is likely to be an elderly person in 2050.

"The very old, the very young and the disabled are most at risk on European roads", said Dr Dinesh Sethi from WHO's Regional Office for Europe. "In particular as the elderly are less agile and resilient, the likelihood of being killed as a pedestrian is more than twice that for younger adults. As a consequence, concern for their vulnerability is increasing and there is an urgent call for a re-think of transport policies to address the specific needs of our growing aging population."

"The authorities must increasingly provide public transport alternatives and general infrastructure improvements to serve the mobility needs of the senior citizens," said Liisa Hakamies-Blomqvist, co-chair of the OECD expert group on Ageing and Transport. "Car manufacturers have to start developing vehicles with a focus on older drivers' limitations and requirements. Without these and other improvements each one of us will find him or herself at growing risk of being killed on the road as we grow old."

You can download the complete PIN Flash 9 study at www.etsc.be/PIN-publications

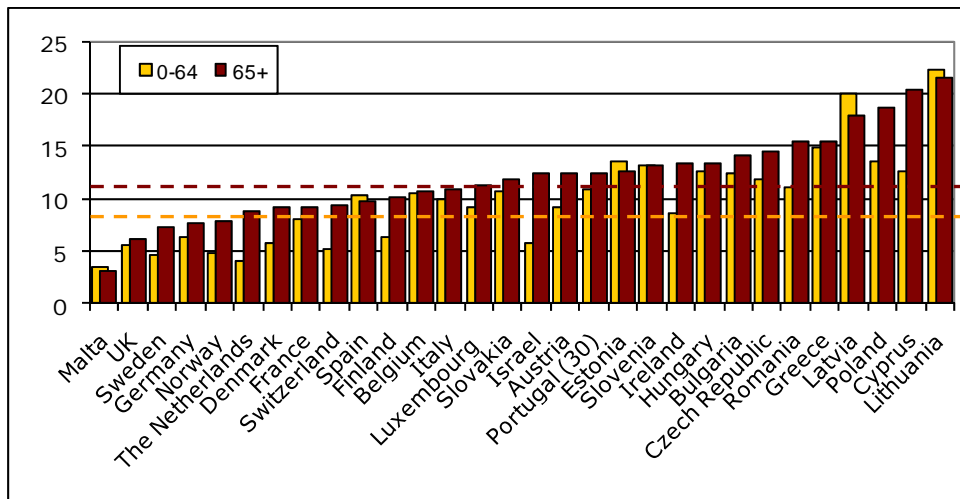
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Notes for Editors:

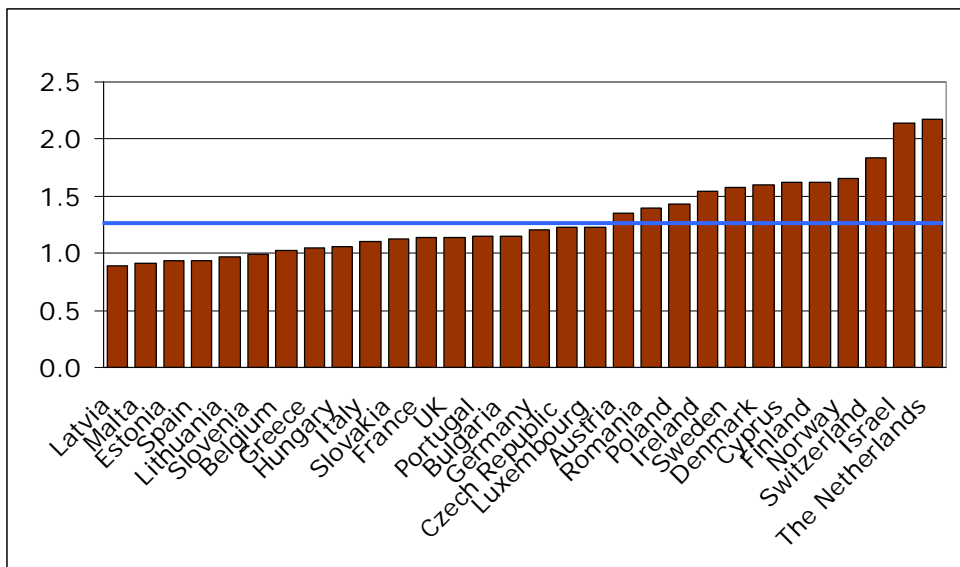
(1) The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based independent non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of the number and severity of transport crashes in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote research-based measures with a high safety potential. It brings together 39 national and international organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe. www.etsc.be.

ETSC's Road Safety Performance Index (PIN) Programme was launched in 2006 to compare country performances in road safety. It currently includes 30 countries - the EU 27 as well as Switzerland, Norway and Israel. Cross-country comparisons are published four times a year in the series of Road Safety PIN Flashes. www.etsc.be/PIN

(2) *Elderly road mortality rate with the road mortality rate of the rest of the population (0-64) for comparison. Average values for years 2004, 2005 and 2006.*

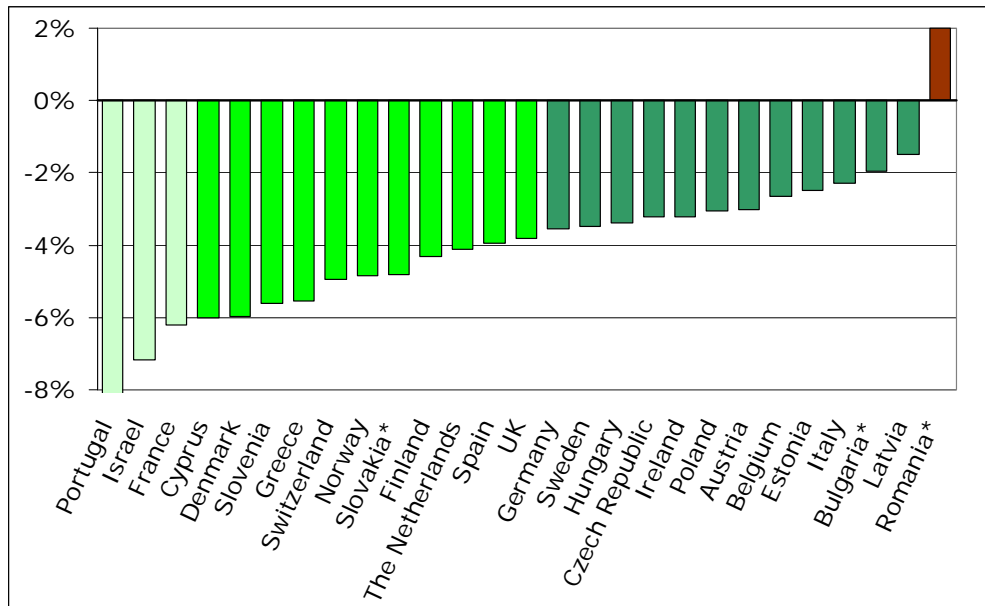


(3) *Ratio road mortality of elderly / road mortality of the rest of the population. Average values for years 2004, 2005 and 2006*



(4) expressed as number of deaths among elderly people per 100,000 elderly population

(5) Average yearly percentage change in road mortality of elderly people over the period 1997-2006



* SK (2003-2006) and BG (2001-2006), RO (2000-2006).

LU and MT are excluded because the annual numbers of deaths in those countries are below 20 and thus subject to substantial random fluctuation. The estimation is not available for LT due to a too short timeline (number of elderly deaths is available only for the period from 2004 to 2005)