

## Press release

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### **More children's lives could be saved in the EU - European Child Safety Alliance launches today a 24-country report**

**Strasbourg, Wednesday, 6 May, 2009** - Despite injury reductions and safety improvements achieved by many Member States over the last 20 to 30 years, injury remains a leading cause of death for children and adolescents in every Member State in Europe.(1)

Each year about 10,000 children die needlessly in the European Union due to unintentional injuries. That is equivalent to losing an entire school classroom of children, more than 25 students, every day of the year. Yet it has been estimated by researchers that if all strategies known to be effective were uniformly implemented approximately 90% of these injuries could be prevented. (2)

Released today are "Child Safety Report Cards" for 24 countries and the Europe Summary Report Card which score countries on their level of adoption, implementation and enforcement of over 100 proven, effective child injury prevention strategies – good practices known to save children's lives. The good practice policies relate to road traffic accidents, drowning, falls, poisoning, burns, choking and supports, such as leadership, data infrastructure and professional capacity, necessary to combat child injury. (3)

The report cards show that there is great variability between the best performing and poorer performing countries with injury death rates up to 4 times higher in the countries with poorer performance. Of the 24 countries that participated in these report card assessments, the highest over all unintentional child injury death rates are found in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and the lowest are found in the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Ireland and Sweden. (4)

There is also great variability on uptake of the proven good practices noted in the report cards, between countries. Best child safety performance scores were achieved in Iceland, the Netherlands and Sweden, while the countries doing least well were Greece and Portugal. (5)

**Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou** acknowledged the great burden that child injury places on children in the EU. "Injury deaths are leading examples of inequalities in childhood deaths in Europe, with greater inequalities existing for children than any other age group, demonstrating their vulnerability to socioeconomic factors. (6) The European Union and European countries must ensure all children's right to safety. This could be achieved by developing and resourcing implementation of national child safety action plans. The results of these report card assessments are aimed at ultimately raising the level of all children's health."

**Arlene McCarthy, MEP (PSE, UK) Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee** advocates support for EU policy measures that address child safety priorities and are based on evidenced good practices. "We continue to work at a European level to raise standards, most recently adopting tougher toy safety standards to protect our children. However, a strong call for child safety action must go out to both governments and industry. As child injury still remains the number one killer of children aged 5-19 in each Member State our commitment to action should be serious, sizable and soon. National governments need to make the investments in children and families with the safety measures that have been proven to reduce child deaths. Industry also needs to be responsible and show leadership to ensure products and services offered are safe for children."

**Consumers Commissioner Meglena Kuneva** echoed the remarks of Arlene McCarthy and commented further, "Work undertaken to provide products and services to children and families requires the collaboration and support of many to ensure the highest possible standards of safety can be achieved. The most effective response will be multi-sectoral, involving all sectors with a role to play in child safety, not only consumer protection and health, but other key stakeholders such as transport, education, justice and industry."

*The European Child Safety Alliance is a Programme of EuroSafe and is hosted and supported by the Consumer Safety Institute in the Netherlands*

Broad stakeholder collaboration would support the adoption, implementation and enforcement of well-evidenced strategies noted in the report cards. One example where action is needed is keeping children rearward facing in child passenger restraints longer. It is common in some countries to turn children forward facing in car seats as early as 8 months despite evidence showing that children under the age of 2 years are 75% less likely to die or sustain serious injury when they are in a rear-facing seat. (7)

**Joanne Vincenten (8), Director of the European Child Safety Alliance** says, “Countries are improving, but can do more, especially when we have evidence of what works to save children’s lives. For 14 countries these 2009 report cards represent their 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment and all countries improved with their new scores between 3 to 46% higher than in 2007. The greatest improvements were reported in Austria and the Czech Republic.” (9)

These early results from the countries participating in report card assessments, which are part of the Child Safety Action Plan initiative, suggest that the process of developing and implementing child safety action plans does lead to increased attention and commitment to the child injury issue and steps towards uptake of proven good practices.

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### Notes to Journalists

1. World, European and Child Friendly reports released in December 2008 confirm the great health impact of injury on children. [www.childsafetyeurope.org](http://www.childsafetyeurope.org)
2. **Child Safety Report Card 2009: Summary for 24 countries** and individual country level report cards will be available on May 6, 2009 at [www.childsafetyeurope.org](http://www.childsafetyeurope.org)
3. The Child Safety Report Cards are part of the Child Safety Action Plan initiative led by the European Child Safety Alliance of EuroSafe in partnership with the European Commission, the Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL), UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) and partner organisations in 26 countries.

The main purpose of the review was the opportunity it provides to assess where a country is at in terms of adoption, implementation and enforcement of policy that supports child safety as a baseline for national action planning. The review identified gaps in current policy that could then be addressed by participating countries as part of action planning. While countries were interested to see how they scored in relation to one another, the international comparison was not the aim of the review.

Countries included in the review: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Wales.

#### 4. How countries measured up on child unintentional injury deaths

	<b>Unintentional injury death rate</b>	<b>Number of deaths</b>
<b>Netherlands</b>	5.83	266
<b>United Kingdom</b>	5.93	1048
<b>Ireland</b>	6.52	104
<b>Sweden</b>	7.04	300
<b>Germany</b>	7.86	1480
<b>France</b>	8.16	1425
<b>Israel</b>	8.30	254
<b>Hungary</b>	8.43	241
<b>Italy</b>	8.63	1027
<b>Finland</b>	9.08	140
<b>Austria</b>	9.42	224
<b>Slovenia</b>	9.61	48
<b>Spain</b>	9.71	841
<b>Czech Republic</b>	10.44	275
<b>Greece</b>	12.44	287
<b>Belgium</b>	12.62	364
<b>Portugal</b>	13.70	299
<b>Estonia</b>	21.30	89
<b>Lithuania</b>	21.90	270
<b>Latvia</b>	22.43	146

Source: WHO Mortality Database; 3 year average death rates per 100,000 population for children 0-19 years of age for 2003-2005 or most recent 3 years of data available and number of deaths reported for 2005 or most recent year available; Cyprus and Iceland excluded due to small populations; data for constituent countries of the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) not available so they are presented together as United Kingdom

**5. Country child safety score ranking**  
(good performance is 37-48.5 stars; fair performance is 25-36.5 stars)

	<b>Overall score</b>
<b>Iceland</b>	48.5
<b>Netherlands</b>	45.5
<b>Sweden</b>	42.5
<b>Czech Republic</b>	42
<b>Austria</b>	40.5
<b>Slovenia</b>	40.5
<b>France</b>	40
<b>England</b>	39.5
<b>Germany</b>	39
<b>Finland</b>	38.5
<b>Hungary</b>	36.5
<b>Scotland</b>	35.5
<b>Estonia</b>	35
<b>Latvia</b>	34
<b>Lithuania</b>	32.5
<b>Cyprus</b>	31.5
<b>Israel</b>	31.5
<b>Ireland</b>	31
<b>Belgium</b>	30
<b>Italy</b>	30
<b>Wales</b>	29.5
<b>Spain</b>	29
<b>Portugal</b>	27.5
<b>Greece</b>	27

6. More information is available on child injuries and inequalities by viewing the European Report on Child Injuries released by WHO December 2008.

7. Good practice measures such as use of child passenger restraints and staying rearward facing longer are included in the “Child Safety Good Practice Guide” published by the European Child Safety Alliance in 2006. It is available at [www.childsafetyeurope.org](http://www.childsafetyeurope.org)

8. Joanne Vincenten and her colleague Morag MacKay, Project Manager at the European Child Safety Alliance are both highly regarded professionals in their field. Ms Vincenten established the European Child Safety Alliance in 2000 and has made major progress in addressing the issue at the European level. She is an expert advisor on child safety to the European Commission (working party on injury), UNICEF and WHO. Ms MacKay is lead author for the work on the Report Cards and Country Profiles.

9. The following countries completed the report card assessments in both 2007 and 2009: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Scotland, Spain and Sweden. In 2007 these 14 countries represented a ratio of good: fair: poor performance of 3:8:3 and in 2009 this had changed to 7:7:0, demonstrating a marked improvement.

