

Press release

EMBARGO UNTIL 11.00 noon (10.00 am GMT) Tuesday, 20 November 2007

Press conference 11.00-12.00 Noon, 20 November, European Parliament, Brussels
60, Rue Wiertz, Paul Henri Spaak Building (PHS), Press Conference Room, A050

Photo opportunity: *During press conference Nick Fahey, Deputy head of the health strategy unit of Health and Consumer Protection Directorate-General will receive the European 18-country Report Card Summary and MEPs will be presented with Child Safety Report Cards on their countries. An 11 year-old girl will lead a safety quiz.*

The press conference is hosted by Arlene McCarthy, Chair of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee.

Today is International Day of the Child commemorating the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in New York in 1989.

Countries scored on protecting children from accidents

Brussels, Tuesday, 20 November 2007 – More than 6,700 child and adolescent deaths could be avoided each year if every Member State achieved the level of the safest country in the European Union, according to a major review to be launched today by the European Child Safety Alliance, EuroSafe. (1)

A summary report of the review will be made available for policy makers at the meeting while individual “Child Safety Report Cards” will be released for each of 18 countries participating in the review. (2)

The report cards provide figures on how many deaths could be prevented if each country achieved the same levels as in Sweden, the EU country with the lowest child and adolescent death rate in the year examined. Countries with higher child deaths rates have more to gain. For example, Greece has a child death rate that is four times higher than Sweden. The report card for Greece shows that the lives of an estimated 509 children could be saved each year. (3)

The 18 countries have been scored for the first time on their efforts to reduce fatal accidents among children based on evidenced safety policies. The countries that scored best are the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, and Sweden. The countries doing least well are Greece and Portugal. (4)

No European country is taking all the necessary steps to minimise child accidents but nor is the performance of any of the countries in the review deemed “unacceptable”.

The dozens of policies assessed in the performance grading have all been shown to prevent child deaths if adopted, implemented and enforced. They relate to road traffic accidents, drowning, falls, poisoning, burns and choking.

Effective measures include measures, such as child seats in cars, fencing for private swimming pools and adaptation of vehicle design to reduce risk of pedestrian injury.

Joanne Vincenten, Director of the European Child Safety Alliance (5) is disappointed that the scores are not higher. “Our research has found that too few of the measures that are proven to be effective are in place and being properly enforced,” she says.

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

Arlene McCarthy, MEP (PSE, UK), who is hosting the meeting says that the lack of action to protect children is due to failings on the part of both government and industry failings to put children first and honour pledges to the rights of the child convention. "National governments need to make the investments in children and families with the safety measures that have been proven to reduce child deaths," she says. "Industry needs to be responsible and show leadership to ensure products and services offered are safe and not put profits before safety."

Ms Vincenten agrees: "It took years to reach agreement on the adoption of child resistant cigarette lighters for example and we are still waiting for the car industry to adopt safer designs." Estimates suggest changes in the design of the front of cars could help prevent up to 2,100 deaths and 18,000 serious pedestrian and cyclist casualties of all ages annually in the EU. (6)

The performance assessment also scores countries on their leadership, infrastructure and capacity in child safety. For example, countries where government has given a clear mandate to one national department to be responsible for coordinating child safety activities across sectors are more likely to be effective in reducing child injury.

Health Commissioner Markos Kyrianiou has identified child and adolescent safety as a priority for the European Union in the recently adopted Communication and Council Recommendation on injuries (7). "The European Commission welcomes this report as a valuable contribution to reducing the number one cause of child and adolescent deaths in every country of the European Union. We are happy to announce that we shall be supporting a second phase from January 2008 to extend the project to 12 more countries." (8)

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Notes to journalists

1. Child Safety Report Card – Summary for 18 countries, 2007 and other documents will be available at a press conference and from 12.00 noon on the website of the European Child Safety Alliance (ECSA) at www.childsafetyeurope.org

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 Innocenti Centre, World Health Organization (WHO) and partner organisations in 18 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.

2. The 18 countries include 15 EU Member States, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Norway. The project treats Scotland and Northern Ireland as individual "countries" because England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales each have different government structures that would have to endorse a Child Safety Action Plan.

3. All figures in the Child Safety Reports relate to the 0-19 year age group. Child Safety Report Cards and Country Profiles are for all the countries listed in the chart below. The chart indicates how many lives could be saved if each of government took action that resulted in reducing deaths to the level achieved in Sweden.

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Avoidable child and adolescent injury deaths in 2001* (reference country Sweden)

	Total number injury deaths	Number avoidable injury deaths if same rate as Sweden	% of injury deaths avoidable if country had Sweden's rate	Unintentional death rate per 100,000 population (0-19 years)
Austria	339	204	60%	12.41
Belgium	626	467	75%	25.63
Czech Republic	325	153	47%	12.32
Denmark	138	40	29%	9.26
Estonia	115	90	78%	26.12
France	2122	1015	48%	18.23
Germany	1866	587	31%	11.85
Greece	683	509	75%	28.29
Hungary	279	106	40%	10.14
Italy	2030	1213	60%	17.95
Netherlands	289	0	0%	6.56
Northern Ireland	53	16	30%	14.3
Norway	122	35	29%	8.06
Poland	1640	855	52%	15.76
Portugal	731	560	77%	22.16
Scotland	150	62	41%	10.95
Spain	1012	388	33%	14.19
Sweden	158	(reference group)	(reference group)	5.77

Source: WHO Mortality Database; 2001 or most recent year of data available at time of data download

4. How countries scored on child safety performance out of a total of 60.

Austria	27
Belgium	29.5
Czech Republic	31
Denmark	39.5
Estonia	27
France	37
Germany	35.5
Greece	21
Hungary	32
Italy	27
Netherlands	40
Northern Ireland	40
Norway	35.5
Poland	32
Portugal	20
Scotland	31.5
Spain	22.5
Sweden	40

5. 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 2001 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.

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6. European Transport Safety Council. Priorities for EU Motor Vehicle Safety Design, Brussels, 2001. “Good practice” measures such as this one are included in the “Child Safety Good Practice Guide” published by European Child Safety Alliance in 2006. It is available at www.chilfsafetysafetyeurope.org

7. The major directions for injury related actions under the Public Health Programme are determined in the Commission Communication on “Actions for a Safer Europe” and the Council Recommendation on the prevention of injuries and the promotion of safety. The communication was adopted by the Commission in June 2006 and the resolution June 2007. See http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/environment/IPP/ipp_en.htm

8. Countries joining second phase (2007-2009) include EU countries plus Turkey. They are Bulgaria, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Turkey. England and Wales will be observers and Croatia and Macedonia will be invited to observe.

Activities in three of the new countries - Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey – will be coordinated by UNICEF, who will use the model to serve as an approach to child and adolescent injury prevention in the UNICEF Central Independent States (CIS).



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