Press release

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Children living in European countries experience some of the highest and lowest rates of child injury in the world.

More than 42,000 children die from injury in Europe each year; that is at least 115 children each day, making injury the number one cause of death for children aged 5 to 19 years in Europe (1).

Three landmark resources are being launched today by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF to bring forward key facts on the impact of injuries on children and call for immediate action. At the global level WHO and UNICEF are launching the World report on child injury prevention and a child friendly version call Have Fun, Be Safe. The WHO European Office is also launching a European focus child injury report.

The European Child Safety Alliance of EuroSafe, a network of more than 30 Member States working collaboratively on child injury prevention, is pleased to have contributed to the development of these reports and congratulates WHO and UNICEF for the momentous work undertaken to prepare these important documents.

Joanne Vincenten, Director of The European Child Safety Alliance, EuroSafe, says “Our Alliance fully supports the recommendations of the World and European Reports, as Europe is a region that has countries with some of the worlds’ highest and lowest child injury rates. Within the European region there is a seven-fold difference between countries with the highest and lowest injury death rates, and up to a nine-fold difference in injury rates within countries between lower and higher social classes. With European countries like the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK having the lowest child injury rates in the world, Europe has the opportunity to share lessons learnt throughout the region.

The recommendations from reports released today reflect the goals the European Child Safety Alliance is striving to achieve through joint work to advocate for the adoption, implementation and evaluation of proven good practices in child injury prevention in the European setting.

It is estimated that more than 24,000 children’s lives could be saved if commitments would be undertake to do what has been proven to work (1). Yet Child Safety Report Cards release by the European Child Safety Alliance in 2007 revealed that many of proven good practices are not being used by the majority of Member States (e.g., use of bicycle helmets, reduced speed limits, barrier fencing on swimming pools, standards for playground equipment, child resistant containers, or lower tap water temperatures) (2).

To address this, the European Child Safety Alliance is working cooperatively with WHO and UNICEF with the support of the European Commission to develop nationally approved child safety action plans in Member States to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive approach to tackle this critical child health issue, (3) This work includes addressing gaps in leadership, capacity and infrastructure such as data systems, to support child injury prevention efforts and working towards uptake of proven good practices.

The European Child Safety Alliance and its country partners will use these World and European reports to strengthen our current call for action to address this leading cause of death for children through commitment to national child safety action plans and to bringing forward children’s rights to live, learn and play in safe environments.

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


2. Child Safety report cards were prepared and launched November 20, 2007 as part of the Child Safety Action Plan initiative of the European Child Safety Alliance of EuroSafe. These report cards were prepared in cooperation with WHO, UNICEF with support of the European Commission and are available at www.childsafetyeurope.org

3. Child Safety Action Plans is an initiative lead by the European Child Safety Alliance, EuroSafe to assist 27 Member States to develop a comprehensive and coordinated approach to reduce child injury in countries through the use of proven good practices. More information is available at www.childsafetyeurope.org