



MEDIA STATEMENT

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EuroTAP Audit Report Highlights Europe's Best and Worst Tunnels

Brussels, On 22 January, the European Tunnel Assessment Programme (EuroTAP) published its final Audit Report highlighting Europe's best and worst tunnels out of 152 tested over a three year period in 18 countries. The EuroTAP Audit Report, a 150-page work of reference, compiled on CD Rom provides the latest information on the state of tunnels in Europe together with interactive training materials, videos and a unique data base detailing everything to know about the operators and tunnels inspected.

At the presentation of the Audit Report, Europe's safest tunnels tested between 2005 and 2007 received for the first time ever the "European Tunnel Award". The award winning tunnels included the Ottsdorf Tunnel, Austria, the Markusberg Tunnel, Luxembourg, the M-12 Tunnel, Spain, and the Brinje Tunnel, Croatia.

Testing, assessing, informing and improving are the four key elements of the EuroTAP formula for effecting changes to make road tunnels across Europe safer and better. Bad publicity and harsh criticism as a result of poor tunnel assessment ratings have triggered remedial actions on numerous occasions. After the San Juan Tunnel, Spain was rated the worst tunnel in Europe, the government invested four million euro of on improvements to make this one tube tunnel state of the art. In 2005 the San Juan Tunnel was rated "Good". Similarly, the Kappelberg Tunnel near Stuttgart received refurbishments worth 12 million euro as a result of the failings identified by EuroTAP and a "very good" rating in 2006. Moreover the programme with its mass media information campaigns has raised awareness among road users with very positive results. In January 2007, 150 people escaped alive and uninjured from a 48 – car pile up in Austria's Ehrentalerberg Tunnel. Another disaster of Mont Blanc dimensions was avoided because road users knew what to do.

Despite the improvements achieved, the fact remains that many tunnels are not yet up to scratch.

"Even if the Member States are currently busy refurbishing their tunnels, according to the results of our European Tunnel Assessment Programme (EuroTAP) every fifth tunnel in Europe still fails to meet European minimum safety standards" said Robert Sauter, EuroTAP Chairman from the German motoring club ADAC, which led the EuroTAP project in cooperation with 11 other European automobile clubs. The most common faults and potential safety threats identified concerned the escape and rescue routes – 32% of all tunnels failed in this category of assessment; fire protection (a 28% failure rate was registered) and the quality of traffic management and surveillance (a 28% failure rate was registered).

The Audit Report reveals however, that there is a continuing need for improvements to be made in road tunnel safety. Caroline Ofoegbu of the FIA European Bureau noted "Automobile clubs have long argued that optimal road infrastructure plays a crucial role in minimizing road deaths and serious injuries. Despite road tunnels reducing congestion, improving traffic flow and often offering safer transit, accidents in confined spaces can be of catastrophic proportions."

"Decision makers must continue to take action to avoid any repeat of horrific tunnel accidents. ", said Werner Kraus, Chairman of the FIA Eurocouncil. *"Much has been done already in many countries and by the European Commission also. But in some countries the processes are very slow. More needs to be done and more money needs to be invested. The aim is to have tunnels which meet at least the minimum standards within the next five years all over Europe."*

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Besides awarding specific tunnels, the EuroTAP Audit Report also singles out countries such as Italy and Norway. In these two countries, there is a particularly urgent need for action, not just due to the many tunnels, but also due to relatively low safety levels in tunnels.

"We have produced the Directives and Recommendations on how to build and operate safe road tunnels. Now it is up to the operators to refurbish their tunnels accordingly. But over all we should never forget the road users, who are playing a key role in tunnel safety. They need to be educated to behave correctly whenever they drive through tunnels," said Reinhard Rack, member of the European Parliament. Rack was the author of the European Parliaments Report on minimum safety standards in road tunnels said in 2004.

The EuroTAP event, *held at the Representation of the Free State of Bavaria, Brussels* on 22 January 2008, brought together ministers, members of the European Parliament, European Commission, national ministries, automobile clubs and road tunnel operators as well as national and international experts.

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Notes for Editors

1. Club testing began in the disaster year of 1999 (The year of the Mont Blanc and Tauern Tunnel accidents). Since 2005, tests have been conducted under the brand name EuroTAP (European Tunnel Assessment Programme). The programme is operated by 12 national motoring organizations, all members of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) from 11 countries including Croatia (HAK) Switzerland (TCS) and Norway (NAF) from outside the EU. Participating EU clubs include ADAC (Germany) The AA (United Kingdom) ACI (Italy), AMZS (Slovenia), ANWB (Netherlands), OEAMTC, Austria, RACC (Spain) RACE (Spain), Touring (Belgium). Together with the FIA in Brussels, these automobile clubs represent some 34 million road users in Europe.

2. The 4.5 million euro "EuroTAP 2005-2007" programme was project-led by ADAC and received EC funding. The EuroTAP principle of testing, assessing, informing and improving has been repeatedly successful, and not just when it comes to improving individual tunnels. Following disappointing ratings, governments have also responded with targeted nationwide investments.

3. In total, EuroTAP has inspected 152 tunnels in 18 countries over the last 3 years. This represents approximately 315 km of tunnel tubes. In 2007, 51 tunnels were tested in 13 countries. One in five of all tunnels tested have failed the EuroTAP inspection that takes on board the minimum standards set by the European Directive on minimum safety standards for tunnels on the Trans European Road Network (2004//54/EC).

4. The EuroTAP methodology comprises more that 200 criteria classed in eight categories. They examine the preventative, mitigating and remedial features of a tunnel as well as its risk and safety potentials. Additionally, a so-called knock-out criteria leads to any tunnel with a single serious defect automatically having its score downgraded.

5. Aside from inspecting 152 tunnels, EuroTAP has contributed markedly to improved driver awareness of how to behave correctly in tunnels thanks to mass media campaigns and targeted information for drivers – The driver training DVD and interactive computer game are also incorporated into the interactive EuroTAP Audit Report DVD.

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