

EMBARGOED UNTIL 12.00 noon (GMT plus 1) Tuesday 24 April



Press Release
Global Road Safety Week April 23 to 27, 2007

Governments presented with opportunities to reduce child car seat prices

Brussels 24 April 2007 – Health groups are calling for rapid reductions for taxes of child passenger restraints for children during Global Road Safety Week. (1)

“Taxes on child car seats cost up to 15% more than they should because governments are not setting VAT at the minimum level as recommended by the European Commission,” says Joanne Vincenten of the European Child Safety Alliance (ECSA).

“We think Global Road Safety Week is an excellent opportunity to remind leaders that supporting what works in child injury prevention could substantially improve child safety on the roads within the European Union.”

When installed and used correctly, the use of child safety seats and safety belts is one of the proven good practices for road safety. Rear-facing car seats reduce injuries up to 90-95% and forward facing car seats up to 60%. Children travelling in cars without restraint are about seven times more likely to be severely injured or killed in motor vehicle crashes than children who are restrained. Eighty-three per cent of belted and restrained children remain uninjured in accidents. Research also shows that every EURO spent on a child safety seat saves 32 Euros on health care costs. (2)

The Portuguese member of the Alliance, The Portuguese Association for Child Safety Promotion (APSI) is urging their government this week to review the VAT on child passenger restraint systems and to reduce the tax to 5% as recommended by the European Union directive. Other National members are being urged to do the same. (3)

According to a 19-country review researched by APSI, only one EU country - the UK - has passed on the benefit of reduced VAT to consumers. (4) Parents of many other European Union countries are paying up to 15% more than they should be for these important contributors to child safety.

“In Portugal, for example, parents are paying 21 % VAT on an essential safety product like child car seats while the tax on soft drinks is only 5%” says Helena Menezes Technical Director of APSI. “Once politicians and citizens realise that VAT can be as low as 5 % as recommended in an EC directive, I think policy will change to support family safety. This will also help to reduce the use of 2nd hand and old design seats that increase misuse.”

Lower prices could increase demand for child car restraint equipment and improve safety on the roads. Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death and severe injuries among children aged 0–14 years. This includes pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicle passengers. An estimated 200,000 families per year suffer from the death or lifelong disability of at least one family member due to a road traffic injury in the European Union (EU). (5)

“Parents make it their responsibility to know the most suitable restraint system and how to fit it correctly to the car – but there is also a moral duty on governments to make this essential equipment available at the lowest possible price,” says Génon Jensen, Executive Director of the Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL).

Joanne Vincenten, Director of the European Child Safety Alliance, EuroSafe adds, “National governments supporting strategies to reduce VAT on child passenger restraints is one of many good practices that can be adopted, implemented and enforced, others include: reduced alcohol and speed limits, traffic calming, safer car fronts for pedestrians and cyclists, and bike helmets to name a few. This requires politicians to make policy decisions placing safety as a priority over financial incentives for industry.” (2)

Notes to journalists

1. European Commission Brussels event related to Global Road Safety Week at http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety/road_safety_day/index_en.htm
2. Other proven good practices to support the reduction of road traffic injuries and deaths to children are detailed in the Child Road Traffic Injuries Fact Sheet attached or available at www.childsafetyeurope.org with further recommendations to achieve safer roads in Europe.
3. The European Union Six Directive 77/388/CEE enhances the affordability of “safety restraints” by including them in the category “essential product” on which VAT can be charged at only 5%. Safety restraints comprise seatbelts, booster and child seats, all of which are a highly effective way of reducing serious and fatal injuries to children.
4. See 19-country “Taxes on Child Restraint Systems throughout Europe” chart attached, researched by APSI
5. Some EU Member States are performing much better than other with regard to children’s safety on the roads, according to official reports. A child born in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia is almost 3 more like to die from a road traffic injury than in Sweden, the country with the best safety performance.

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The European Child Safety Alliance (ECSA) is a programme of EuroSafe and is hosted and supported by the Consumer Safety Institute in the Netherlands. Our aim is to make life safer for children. The Alliance operates with 26 European country members using evidenced-based research on proven cost effective ways to prevent injuries where available and good practice information to determine its priority issues and strategies.

The Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL) is an international non-governmental organisation that aims to improve health through public policy that promotes a cleaner and safer environment. Our work draws on the findings of the environmental health science revolution, which is revealing the impact of environmental degradation on health in an ever-widening range of diseases and conditions. We represent a diverse network of more than 50 citizens’, patients’, women’s, health professionals’ and environmental organisations across Europe with a strong track record in bringing environmental health science and policy to an increasing number of platforms. Our vision is that of a healthy planet for healthy people.

Taxes on Child Restraint Systems throughout Europe

Country	Reduced VAT on CRS?	What is VAT rate on CRS?	Regular consumer product VAT rate?	Costs deductible from income tax?	Comments
Austria	No	20%	20%	No	
Belgium	No	21%	21%	No	
Cyprus	No	15%	15%	No	
Czech Republic	No	19%	19%	No	
Estonia	No	18%	18%	No	
Finland	No	22%	22%	No	
France	No	18,6%	18,6%	No	
Germany	No	19%	19%	No	
Greece	No	19%	19%	On some islands	Some islands have general reduced tax rates
Ireland	No/soon	21%	21%	No	Approved reduction on CRS VAT to 13.5% as of May 2007
Netherlands	No	19%	19%	No	
Norway	No	25%	25%	No	
Poland	No	22%	22%	No	VAT for child products 7 – 12%, food 7%
Portugal	No	21%	21%	No	VAT for Restaurants 12% and soft drinks 5%
Slovenia	No	20%	20%	No	
Spain	No	16%	16%	No	
Sweden	No	25%	25%	No	Reduced VAT of 12% or 6% on food, certain art, entertainment and tourism
Switzerland	No	7,6%	7,6%	No	Reduced VAT of 2,4% on food, medicines; 3,6% at hotels, restaurants
United Kingdom	Yes	5%	17,5%	No	

www.apsi.org.pt

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