



Trafi

Finnish Transport Safety Agency

**ETSC PIN EVENT:
Tackling drink driving: what can European
countries learn from one another?**

Alcohol interlocks in Finland

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*Responsible traffic.
A joint effort.*

1. Finland: facts and number of DUI* cases

2. National approval of alcohol interlocks

3. Rehabilitation programme for DUI offenders

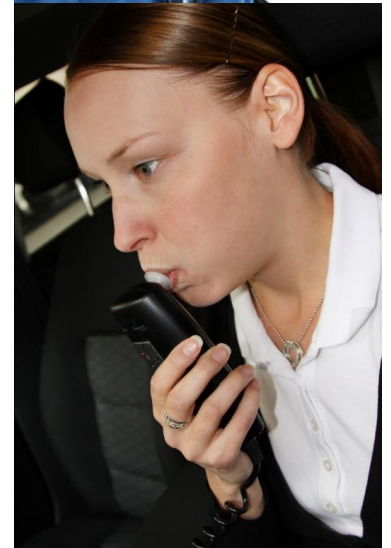
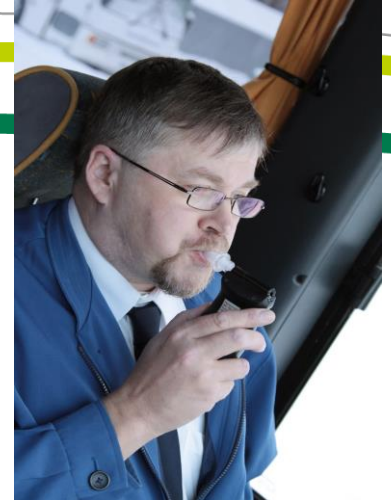
- a. The facts
- b. The costs
- c. The steps
- d. The evaluation study

4. Doctors prescribing alcohol interlocks

Alcohol interlock as a preventive measure for drivers having a drinking problem

5. Alcohol interlocks in commercial transport

* **D**riving **U**nder the **I**nfluence (of alcohol)



Finland: facts

Area 338 432 m2 (10 % lakes)

5,4 million inhabitants

3,6 million driving licences

5,0 million vehicles

BAC-limit: **0,5** %

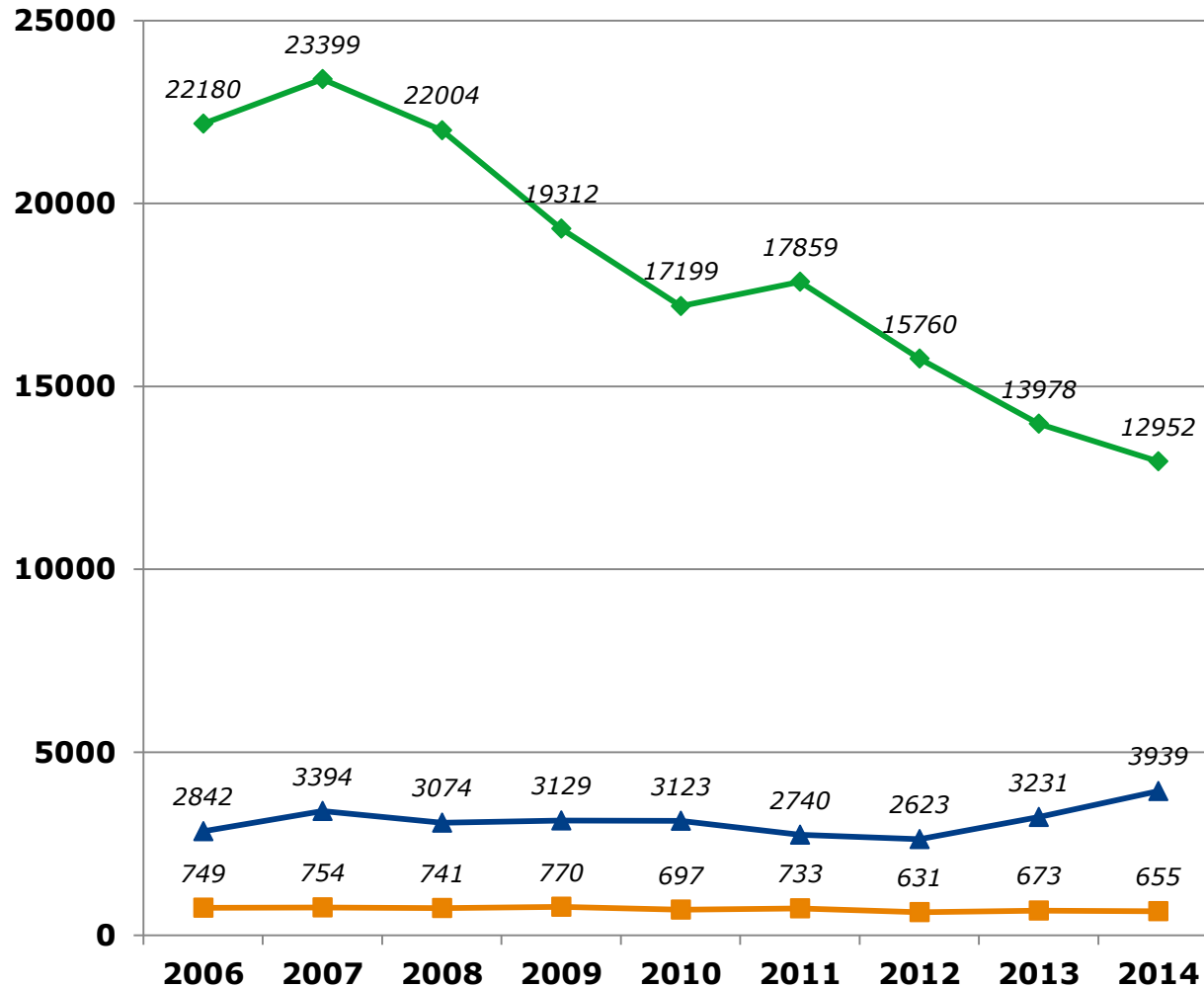
Road traffic accidents:

~ **20** % of deaths and

~ **10** % of injuries related to DUI



Finland: number of DUI cases (caught by the police)



Act on the approval of an alcohol interlock for traffic use

- The selling, handover and use in traffic (of an alcohol interlock) is prohibited, if the Transport Safety Agency has not approved the interlock model.
- The agency shall publish a list of the approved alcohol interlocks on its website.
- Transport Safety Agency needs to approve the alcohol interlock, if it fulfils
 - 1) the European standard EN 50436-1* or EN 50436-2, and
 - 2) the technical requirements given in the Vehicle Act and the regulations under the Act.

** In the DUI offender programme only these interlocks may be used.*

Rehabilitation program with alcohol interlocks

– the facts

- A trial July 2005 – June 2008 → Permanent since July 2008
- **Voluntary** for DUI offenders (the offender may apply for the alcohol-interlock-controlled driving licence, instead of being banned from driving)
- Approximately 500 new participants each year
 - The participation **rate is rather low** (still), as the driving bans for a DUI offence are fairly short in Finland → For many drivers a short driving ban is more appealing choice than investing in an alcohol interlock device.
 - **The plan** is to get the courts to order the interlock program to all DUI offenders. However, it would still require a consent from the offender (as e.g. they all do not own a vehicle, and they may not afford the program).
- Program **duration 1–3 years** (court decides)
- Brochure in English:
http://www.poliisi.fi/instancedata/prime_product_julkaisu/intermin/embeds/poliisiwwwstructure/27627_alkolukkoesite_suomi_muokattu2_EN.pdf?2577f39c4d2ad288

Rehabilitation program with alcohol interlocks

– the steps

- DUI offender is caught by the police
 - The police informs the offender about the interlock possibility

The offender

- gets the alcohol interlock installed and the vehicle inspected
- visits a doctor or an another health care professional
- submits the driving licence application to the police
- receives a driving licence with national code 111 (interlock)
- takes the interlock to log-data read-out every 60 days
- after the mandatory period, may get the interlock removed from the vehicle, or instead, may leave the device in the vehicle (with voluntary use settings applied, e.g. no running re-tests, no data read-out)

Rehabilitation program with alcohol interlocks

– the costs

The participant pays all the costs (in average less than 5 € per day)

- Alcohol interlock + installation: 1250–1450 €
- Data read-out: 20–60 €
- Calibration (usually once a year): 30–60 €
- Removal of the interlock: 100–170 €

- One visit to a doctor or another health care professional: in public sector ~ 30 €, in private sector up to 160 €
- Inspection of the vehicle after the installation of the interlock: ~ 40–60 €
- New driving licence from the police: 52 €

The evaluation study published in February 2013

- Trafi Publications 6/2013 (in English): “Effectiveness and impact of alcohol interlock-controlled driving rights”
- http://www.trafi.fi/palvelut/julkaisut/2013_julkaisut/effectiveness_and_impact_of_alcohol_interlock-controlled_driving_rights

The study included

- A survey (**questionnaire**) to all the drivers in the interlock program since July 2008 (N=1569; response rate 45 %)
- An analysis of the drink-driving **offences** before, during and after the interlock period
- An analysis of the interlock **log data**
- **Interviews** with the relevant authorities within the process

Population

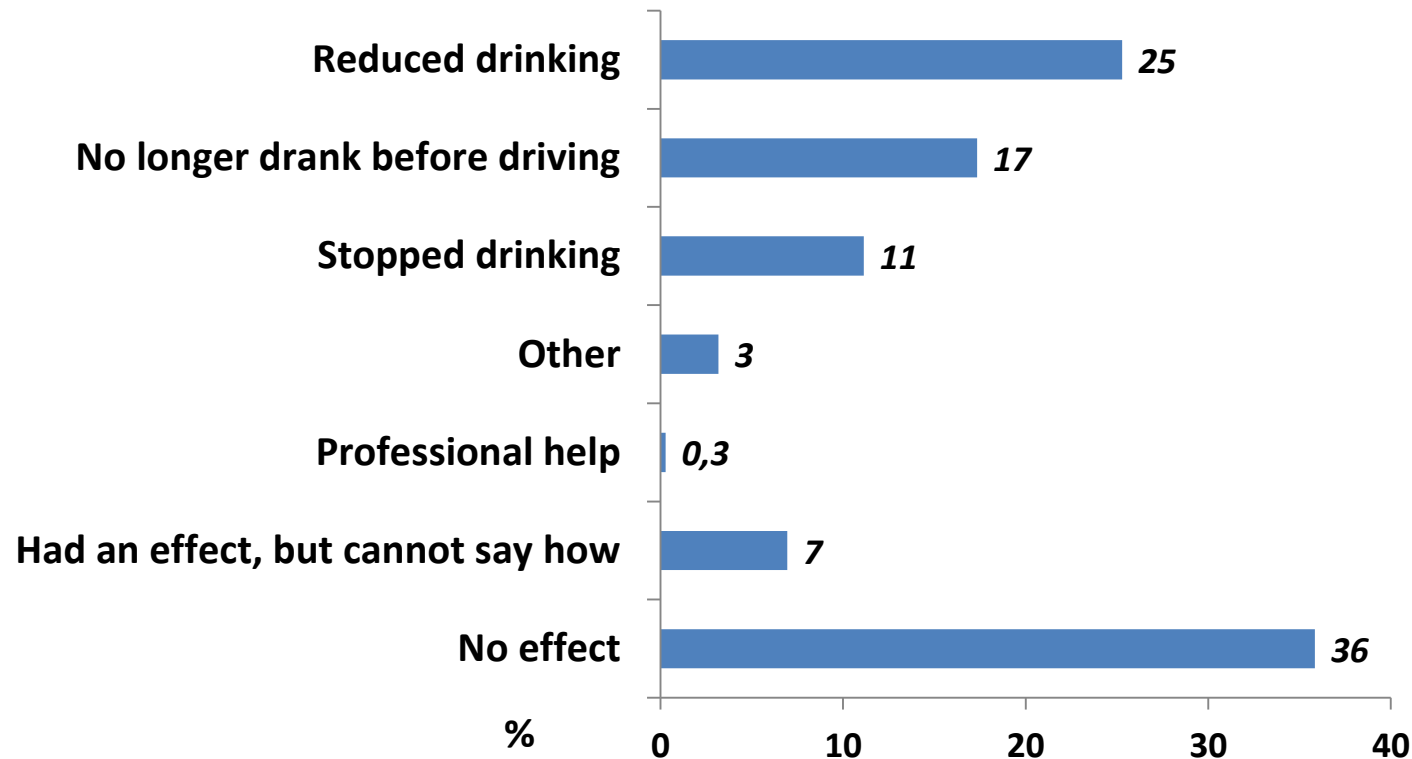
- The **average age** of the participants in the alcohol interlock program was **51 years**. The youngest was 20 years old, the oldest 82.
- 84 % of the drivers were male.
- 1.4 % of the participants had died before the end of the interlock program. In 37.5 % of the cases the cause of death was related to alcohol.
 - In general population the mortality rate is around 1 %. Alcohol related causes of death account for about 6 % for men and 2 % for women.

After the mandatory period

- At least **one third** of the drivers leave **voluntarily** the alcohol interlock device fitted in their vehicle after the mandatory period of 1–3 years!

The evaluation study: effect on alcohol use

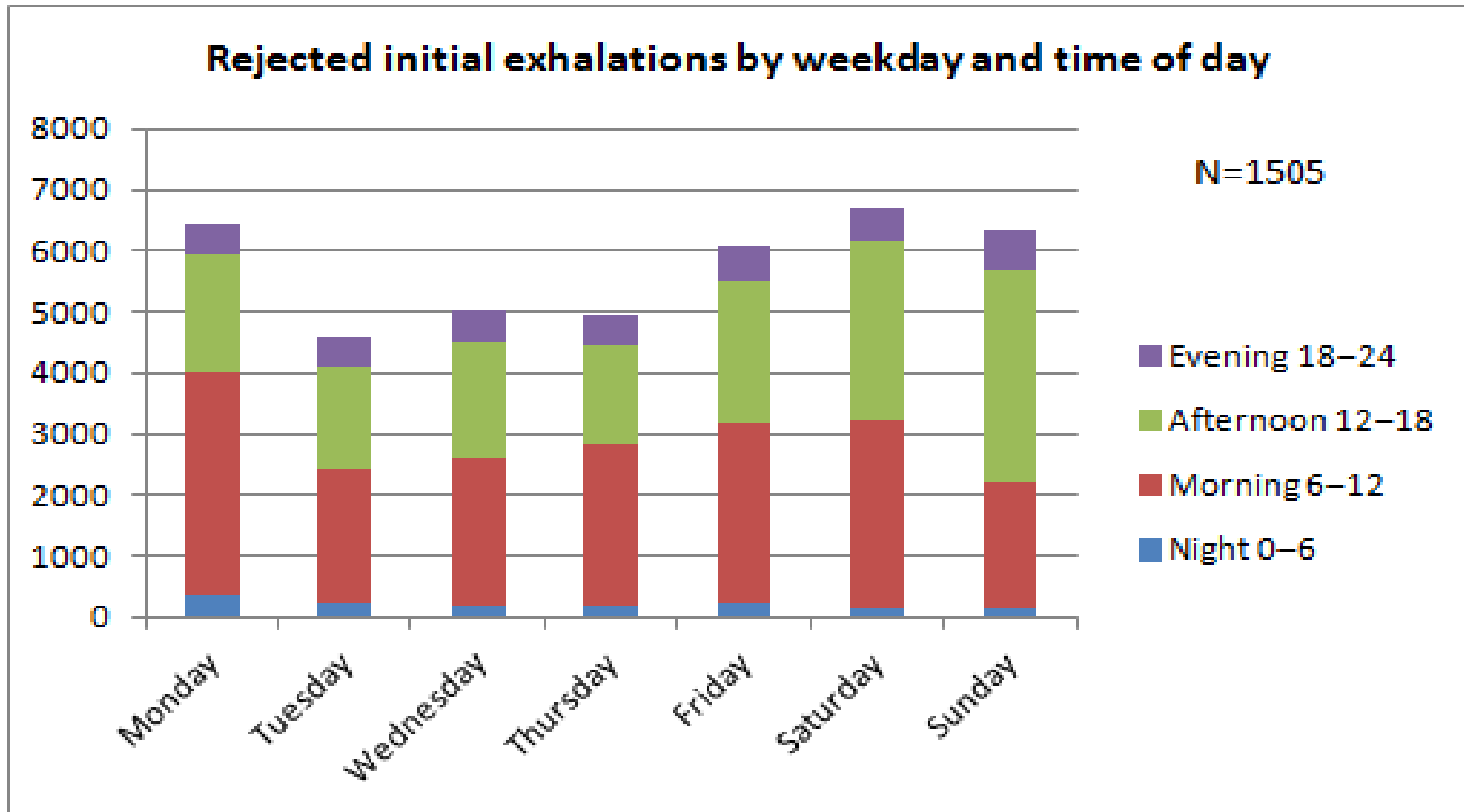
How did/does the alcohol interlock affect the use of alcohol for you?



The evaluation study: prevented DUI cases

- The alcohol interlock log data for about 4 years was analysed out of 1505 interlocks used by the DUI offenders.
- Alcohol interlocks used by the offenders had prevented at least 12 000 instances of driving while under the influence of alcohol (≥ 0.5 ‰; the legal limit) in Finland.
- Overall the alcohol interlocks had prevented over 40 000 times a driver who had “had a few” (≥ 0.2 ‰; the limit set to the interlocks) to start the vehicle for driving.

The evaluation study: rejected breath samples



Best things about using an alcohol interlock

- Keeping one's driving licence was felt to be the largest benefit (95 % of all the respondents).
- More than half (58 %) of the drivers also appreciated the certainty that they would not accidentally set out intoxicated.
- One-third of the drivers kept their jobs thanks to the interlock.
- The emphasis on traffic safety was also valued (28 %).
- Free-form answers listed getting sober as a benefit, as well as the fact that the interlock “teaches one to think” and reminds of “the dangers of the drink”.
- Some drivers viewed the interlock as a friend and travel companion: “I drive a Renault and I've named the alcohol interlock Pierre. Pierre tells me when it's safe to drive. Above all, the interlock is a health instrument and a friend.”

Worst things about using an interlock

- **Waiting time** for the device to **warm up** (59 % of all the respondents) and
- rather **high expenses** (57 %) were seen as the worst aspects of using an alcohol interlock.
- Almost half (54 %) of the respondents considered **re-tests** while driving to be unpleasant, and many felt them to be a safety hazard*. The interval of randomly required re-tests was felt to be too frequent**.
- Exhaling in public was felt to be **awkward** by 43 % of the respondents. Many also described the attitude of outsiders as suspicious or negative.

* in re-test the driver has time period of 6 min to give a breath sample

** first re-sample required in 5–10 min, after that every 30–45 min

The evaluation study: Recidivism

- **More than half** of the drivers had been convicted of DUI **several times before** applying for the alcohol interlock driving licence.
- **3.3 %** of the drivers were caught for DUI **during** their period of alcohol interlock controlled driving licence (most likely with another vehicle, not fitted with an interlock).
- **After** the end of the alcohol interlock supervision period, **2.5 %** of the drivers were caught for a DUI offence.
- The recidivism rate of alcohol interlock users seems to be significantly smaller than that of all DUI offenders, as **generally the recidivism rate** in Finland is **at least 30 %**.

Doctors prescribing alcohol interlocks:

Alcohol interlock as a preventive measure for drivers having a drinking problem

- The problematic use of alcohol may come up
 - at medical examination for a driving licence or for a licence renewal,
 - at medical examination for another reason (annual check etc.), or
 - when the driver is referred to the doctor by the police.
- The doctors are **obliged** to inform the police if the person does not meet the health requirements for a driving licence.
- In terms of alcohol use the doctors have two options;
 - Order a **follow-up period** of 3–12 months, after which a re-assessment whether the person is still having a drinking problem or not, or
 - Inform the police that the person meets the health requirements only with an **alcohol interlock** (code 113 for the driving licence).

Alcohol interlocks in commercial transport

School and day care transport

Background

- The share of professional drivers of all DUI cases: around 8–9 %.
- In 2006 the Ministry of Transport gave a recommendation to use alcohol interlocks in all professional school and day care transports.
- In 2008 alcohol interlocks had been taken in use for these transports in 17 municipalities only (total number of municipalities more than 400).

Since August 2011 the Act:

“If the transportation is organised by a municipality, municipal federation, school or institute as charter transport and support from a municipality or state is obtained, a vehicle equipped with an alcohol interlock must be used for:

1. the transportation of pupils participating in preschool, primary school or voluntary additional basic education teaching;
2. the transportation of pupils participating in upper secondary education; and
3. day-care transportation”.

Alcohol interlocks in commercial transport

Other vehicles

There are **no new acts** regarding the use of alcohol interlocks in other commercial vehicles, but nevertheless, nowadays interlocks are rather common in commercial vehicles via **requirements in public tenders**:

- E.g. Helsinki Region Transport in 2012: "Alcohol interlock is a mandatory equipment in all new busses. The transport company gets extra points, if an alcohol interlock is retro-fitted also in busses that are already in use."
- E.g. Road Maintenance contracts since 2012: "All the vehicles that require a valid professional competence (CPC) from the driver, need to be equipped with an alcohol interlock."

The use of alcohol interlocks ensures the **quality and safety** of the transports and promotes the overall **safety culture** of transportation companies

One accident caused by a drink driver may cost several times more to a transportation company than investing in interlocks!

Thank you!

Questions?

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