



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

According to the EuroTAP inspectors, the European Tunnel Assessment Programme (EuroTAP) carried out this year produced a sensational result, all of the 13 tubes tested in Croatia, Spain, Switzerland and Germany, received positive ratings. Nine tunnels received a *Very Good* rating, three were rated *Good* and even the worst candidate this year received an *Acceptable* rating.

The overall result would have been even better were it not for the Schlossberg tunnel in Heidelberg, Germany, and the Piqueras tunnel near Soria, Spain. Both tunnels were downgraded from *Very Good* to *Good* due to a *Very Poor* rating in one of the categories. The German tunnel yielded deficiencies in the “tunnel system” category because its lanes are only 2.85m wide and its emergency walkways only 50cm. On the other hand, the Spanish tunnel was downgraded because of its failings in the “ventilation”. This bi-directional tunnel of almost 2.5km is equipped with a conventional longitudinal ventilation system only. The risk of the natural longitudinal draught in the event of a fire was not taken into account and is not properly controlled, meaning that the whole tunnel can fill up with smoke.

The Vue-des-Alpes tunnel near La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland received an *Acceptable* rating. Nevertheless, this tunnel generated a somewhat lengthy list of deficiencies. The bi-directional tunnel with the highest daily traffic volume among the tunnels tested is ill-lit; there is no in-tunnel public address system and no vertical clearance control in the portals. Video surveillance cameras, emergency call points, fire extinguishers and hydrants are placed at 300m intervals. When an incident occurs, the cameras do not automatically display the image on the monitors, escape routes are insufficiently marked and the emergency exits are spaced too far apart. And last, but not least in importance, the existing emergency shelters do not have second exits, which is not in line with the EU tunnel safety directive.

Two tunnels were re-tested this year, the Vielha tunnel near the eponymous town in Spain and the Tuhobić tunnel near Rijeka in Croatia. Both had clearly failed their first tests, scoring *Very Poor* ratings. This time they achieved *Very Good* ratings in recognition of their operators’ sustained efforts to improve their tunnels’ safety and bring them in line with an up-to-date tunnel philosophy.

In spite of the positive ratings, there are still some deficiencies encountered in several of the tunnels tested. The most frequent one, found in 38% of the tunnels tested, is the insufficient operating life of fire brigade breathing equipment. Also, in one third of the tunnels there are no public announcement speakers over which to keep motorists in the tunnel updated on critical events. In an equal number of tunnels, the dark tube walls create a lugubrious atmosphere. In almost a quarter of the tunnels tested, there are no barriers to close off the tunnel and/or tunnel closure information boards at the portals, rescuers are unable to use radio throughout the tunnel and/or the fire brigade takes too long to arrive.

With three *Very Good* and one *Good* tunnel, Germany sets an example this year. The Warnow tunnel, located in North-Eastern Germany, is one of the top scorers. This tunnel, opened in 2003, connects the two banks of the river Warnow in Rostock and is the first privately operated tunnel in Germany. As the EuroTAP testers found only strong points, this tunnel can serve as an example to others.





For more information about EuroTAP's tunnel results 2009 visit [www.eurotap.eu](http://www.eurotap.eu)

## 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).

2. The programme is operated by 19 national motoring organizations, all members of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) from 18 countries including Croatia (HAK), Switzerland (TCS) and Norway (NAF) from outside the EU. Participating EU clubs include the AA (United Kingdom), ACI (Italy), ACL (Luxembourg), ACP (Portugal), ADAC (Germany), AL (Finland), AMZS (Slovenia), ANWB (Netherlands), FDM (Denmark), AC (France), FIB (Iceland), M (Sweden), NAF (Norway), OAMTC (Austria), RACC (Spain), RACE (Spain) and Touring (Belgium). Together with the FIA in Brussels, these automobile clubs represent some 34 million road users in Europe.

3. The EuroTAP methodology comprises more than 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.

4. Aside from systematic testing of Europe's most important road tunnels EuroTAP has produced user friendly information and educational campaigns. The aim is to boost awareness of tunnel safety among those in authority, to achieve transparent tunnel standards and to thus improve these standards along with motorists' behaviour in tunnels.

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