Road transport: training of professional drivers for the carriage of goods or passengers

2001/0033(COD) - 12/07/2012 - Follow-up document

In accordance with Directive 2003/59/EC on the initial qualification and periodic training of drivers of certain road vehicles for the carriage of goods or passengers, the Commission presents a report making an initial evaluation of the implementation of the Directive, in particular with regard to the equivalence of the various initial qualification systems provided for in Article 3 and their efficiency.

This report is based on answers provided by Member States and by Norway to a questionnaire distributed to the national authorities in February 2011.

To recall, the Directive establishes the mandatory initial qualification and periodic training for professional drivers who are nationals of Member States or who are working for an undertaking based in the EU. They aim to ensure that professional drivers have the necessary qualifications to drive vehicles. The initial qualification and periodic training are attested by a certificate issued to drivers, called the Certificate of Professional Competence

Most of the Member States gave complete answers to the questions addressed. However, some did not possess all the necessary data to provide all the information.

Main findings: according to the findings of the evaluation, there are several differences among Member States in the application of Directive 2003/59/EC:

(1) the Directive allows Member States to choose whether the **initial qualification** takes the form of a course and test or just involves tests. The periodic training can also vary in structure, since it must be taken as a single course in some Member States while in others the 35 hours can be spread over different years;

(2) **training programmes and teaching methods** are not standardised: the content of the courses differs between Member States as does the way in which training is provided, e.g. in some Member States the use of computer-based modules is allowed alongside traditional teaching. Furthermore, the requirements for trainers and the premises where courses are given differ from one Member State to another;

(3) the number of drivers per class, the fleet of vehicles, and the availability of a top-of-the range simulator depend on the testing centre. Nevertheless, the equivalence of the qualification systems and the efficiency in ensuring the required qualification is guaranteed by the national training systems, which have to meet the requirements in Annex 1 regarding the minimum subjects to be taught and the structure of tests. The monitoring of the training centres by the national authorities also makes an important contribution to ensuring that the training is aligned with the objectives of the Directive.

Main aspects to be improved and recommendations: building upon the findings concerning the application of the Directive, a few specific issues may need to be improved.

- *Exemptions*: the Directive excludes several categories of drivers from its scope The implementation of the exemption under Article 2 (g) has led, for some categories of drivers (e.g. crane drivers, mechanics driving vehicles that transport broken-down agricultural machinery, etc.), to divergent interpretations: the drivers concerned apply to be exempted but the public administrations still want to include them within the scope of the Directive.

The fact that several Member States apply different exemptions may cause problems for intra-EU cross-border traffic. Although the Commission has so far no knowledge of any such cases, it is in general advisable for professional drivers and undertakings to be aware of the differences between Member States concerning the application of Article 2 of the Directive. It may therefore be necessary for the Commission to issue some **guidelines**, over the medium term, in order to clarify the scope of the exemptions under Article 2.

- ***Periodic training***: Member States have chosen different criteria to establish their national timetables for the periodic training of drivers holding acquired rights. These can be based for instance on the date on which the driving licence was issued, on the driver's birthday, on the driving licence expiry date, on the age of the driver, or on the driving licence number.

The report states that the **exchange of national timetables** should help overcome any difficulty that enforcement authorities may face when checking drivers from abroad. This can be done within the Committee established under the Directive.

Given that the Directive does not cover this issue, it is essential to maintain close cooperation between Member States, in particular within the Professional Drivers Training Committee.

Against this background, a **list of existing national contact points** has been established by the Commission in order to facilitate cooperation between Member States.

Lastly, the report considers that it would appear useful in future to closely involve **social partners** and consult them on a regular basis.