

# Driving licences

2023/0053(COD) - 01/03/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to revise the EU rules on driving licences.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: road safety in the EU has improved quite significantly over the last 20 years. The number of road fatalities has gone down by 61.5% from around 51 400 in 2001 to around 19 800 in 2021. However, the improvement in road safety has not been as strong as needed.

The rules on driving licences are essential elements of the common transport policy, contribute to improving road safety, and facilitate the free movement of persons taking up residence in a Member State other than the one issuing the licence. However, the current framework should be **updated** to be fit for the new era, sustainable, inclusive, smart and resilient. It is important to simplify and digitise administrative procedures, in order to remove the remaining barriers, such as administrative burdens, to the free movement of the drivers taking up residence in a Member State other than the one issuing the licence.

A harmonised Union standard driving licence framework should encompass both physical and mobile driving licences, and provide for their mutual recognition, where they were duly issued in accordance with this Directive.

This proposal constitutes the **third revision** of the rules on driving licences first introduced in 1980 by Directive 80/1263/EEC, followed by the second driving licence Directive 91/439/EEC and the third driving licence Directive 2006/126/EC.

It forms part of a package that concerns the revision of two other related directives:

- Directive (EU) 2015/413 facilitating [cross-border exchange of information](#) on road-safety-related traffic offences; and
- a proposal for a Directive on the Union-wide effect of certain [driving disqualifications](#).

CONTENT: the Commission proposal aims to improve road safety and facilitate the free movement of people in the European Union while also contributing to sustainable road transport and to its digital transformation by:

- improving driving skills, knowledge and experience, and reduce and punish dangerous behaviour;
- ensuring adequate physical and mental fitness of drivers across the EU;
- removing inadequate or unnecessary barriers affecting applicants and holders of driving licences.

The revised rules give special attention to the road safety needs of all groups of society, notably **vulnerable road users** like pedestrians, cyclists, users of powered two-wheeled vehicles, users of personal mobility devices and persons with disabilities or reduced mobility and orientation.

The proposal does not apply to power-driven vehicles running on wheels or tracks, having at least two axles, the principal function of which lies in their tractive power, which are specially designed to pull, push, carry or operate certain tools, machines or trailers used in connection with agricultural or forestry operations, and the use of which for carrying persons or goods by road or drawing, on the road, vehicles used for the carriage of persons or goods is only a secondary function.

The main measures of the proposal include:

- a **probation period** of at least two years for novice drivers after passing the test, and a zero-tolerance rule on drink-driving;
- allowing young people to take their test and commence **accompanied driving** of cars and lorries from the **age of 17**, to gain driving experience;
- adapting driver **training and testing** to better prepare drivers for the presence of vulnerable users on the road. This will help improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, as well as users of e-scooters and e-bikes as the EU transitions to more sustainable urban mobility;
- a more targeted assessment of **medical fitness**, taking into account advances in medical treatment for diseases such as diabetes. Drivers will also be encouraged to update their driving skills and knowledge to keep up with technological developments;
- simplifying the recognition of driving licences between Member States, the Commission proposes the introduction of a **digital driving licence**, accessible through a mobile phone or other digital device, which would be recognised throughout the EU. It will be much easier to replace, renew or exchange a driving licence since all procedures will be online. In the same vein, it will also be easier for citizens from non-EU countries with comparable road safety standards, to exchange their driving licence for an EU one;
- updated **testing rules** will take into account the transition to zero-emission vehicles. They will, for example, assess the knowledge and skills linked to advanced driving assistance systems and other automated technologies. Novice drivers will also be taught how their driving style has an impact on their emissions – the timing of gear changes, for example. It is proposed that the permitted mass of a ‘B’ category vehicle will be adjusted for alternatively fuelled vehicles, since battery-carrying zero-emission vehicles can be heavier.

### ***Budgetary implications***

The implications for the Union budget are mainly for the establishment of an information platform for authorities to exchange information on physical and mental fitness to drive and the development of an (online) training programme for general practitioner between EUR 0.7 to 1.1 million.