

Driving licences: issue, validity, renewal (repeal. Directive 91/439/EEC). Recast

2003/0252(COD) - 21/10/2003 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to revise European legislation on driving licences to reduce possibilities of fraud, ensure a true freedom of movement to EU drivers and reinforce road safety. **PROPOSED ACT** : Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council. **CONTENT** : Directive 91/439/EEC on driving licences is governed by two main principles: enhancing the free movement of Community citizens and contributing to an improvement in road safety. These principles continue to be the main guidelines for the future legislation on driver licensing. This proposal is a recasting of Directive 91/439/EEC, in line with the Interinstitutional Agreement on the recasting technique for legal acts. This means that it incorporates in a single text both the substantive amendments it makes to Directive 91/439/EEC and the unchanged provisions thereof. This proposal will replace and repeal Directive 91/439/EEC. This should help to make Community legislation more accessible and transparent. The new draft Directive thus proposes: - to generalise the plastic card type model of European licence. This model allows for higher protection against fraud. Current paper driving licences will not be exchanged but will stop being issued from the date of application of the new legislation; - to allow Member States who so wish are allowed to equip the new driving licences with a microchip including the information printed on the card to reinforce further anti-fraud protection. The use of this microchip will be strictly limited to driving licence issues so as to ensure that a licence can still be withdrawn after a serious offence; - to introduce the notion of a limited administrative validity of driving licences. All new driving licences issued from the date of application of the proposed Directive will have to be regularly renewed. Drivers will keep their acquired rights but the regular renewal of the document will limit the extensive possibilities of fraud that exist today by making it possible to update the anti-fraud protection of all licences as well as the holder's photograph. This will also ensure free movement of drivers: all driving licences will have the same validity periods and they will all be valid in any Member State without condition for this same administrative period. This will prevent Member States from applying restrictive measures to holders of non-national driving licences by subjecting them to national rules on validity periods and medical checks. All new licences of category A (motorcycles) and B (cars) would be valid for 10 years, 5 years if holders are over 65 years of age. All new licences of category C (trucks) and D (buses) will be valid for 5 years, one year if holders are over 65 years of age; - to put an end to "driving licence tourism" by ensuring a coherent and pan-European application in case of driving licence withdrawal. Today, too many citizens establish themselves in another Member State to apply for a new driving licence when the Member State of their normal residence has withdrawn their driving licence because of a serious traffic offence. The Commission thus proposes to reinforce the concept of 'one holder-one licence', which will prevent a Member State from issuing a licence to a person who already holds another driving licence, also when such licence has been withdrawn; - to reinforce, in the interest of road safety, progressive access to: the most powerful motorcycles by varying the minimum age between 16 and 24 years, depending upon the technical characteristics of the motorcycle and the experience of the driver; - the most powerful trucks and buses, ensuring that all drivers of trucks and buses, including those that so far were not covered by legislation on the training of professional drivers, be subject to progressive access; - to introduce a new licence category for mopeds which should improve road safety for the most vulnerable youngsters on our roads. A very popular means of transport, mopeds should no longer be left outside the scope of this legislation; - to harmonise the periodicity of medical checks for professional drivers; - to introduce minimum requirements for the initial qualification and training of driving examiners which had been so far left out of the scope of any harmonisation. This should contribute to increasing similarities between driving tests throughout the EU.