

Transport operator: mutual recognition of diplomas, free establishment

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The Committee unanimously adopted the report by Maria BERGER (PES, A) on admission to the occupations of road haulage operator and road passenger transport operator. Market access to the transport of goods and passengers in the EU has now been almost completely liberalised and unrestricted cabotage will come into effect on 1 July 1998. Greater harmonisation of the rules is thus needed in order to prevent distortions of competition. Among the main differences between Member States are the minimum financial requirements per vehicle (ranging from 3000 to 20 000 ECU) and the length of training courses needed to obtain the special driving licence (65 hours in the UK, 300 hours in the Netherlands). The Committee improved the Commission's text on a number of points. The requirements regarding the reliability of drivers are tightened up. Previously serious criminal offences constituted grounds for banning an individual from the profession; from now on convictions for minor offences, including infringements of the Community common transit procedure and of the rules on the transport of live animals, can have the same outcome. There are more detailed rules on the driving test (written and oral, as well as the precise knowledge required) and drivers must be re-tested every five years. When sitting the test, they must show thorough knowledge of the common transit procedure and the TIR Convention procedure. The Committee has thus put into effect one of the main recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry into Community Transit.