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

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The committee adopted the report by Matthieu GROSCH (EPP-ED, B) tabling a number of amendments under the codecision procedure (1st reading) with the aim of clarifying and streamlining certain aspects of the Commission proposal. Some of the key amendments specified that professional drivers should be required to actually pass a final examination as well as merely completing their training. Such examinations should be conducted by an independent organisation. The committee also stipulated that if a person undergoing training already had a driving licence he should be allowed to work as a trainee driver for a period stipulated by the Member State in question, thus enabling firms to bring potential drivers into employment at an earlier stage. It was important to ensure that drivers were not obliged to cover the same ground in the basic vocational training as in the instruction imparted for the purpose of obtaining a driving licence. Moreover, basic vocational training should not be required of anyone who had worked as a professional driver for 3 years during the 5 years before the entry into force of the directive, and who returned to the profession no more than one year after its entry into force. The committee also said that the length of "continuous" training should be 35 hours every five years and that such training should take place during working hours. The training programmes should be arranged so that each course lasted at least 7 hours. Lastly, a number of amendments sought to reorganise the annex to the proposal so as to provide clear indications of specific objectives to be attained and set out the content of each part of the training accordingly. The committee also wanted to differentiate the training according to the licences to be awarded, e.g. licences for the carriage of passengers or licences for the carriage of goods.