Driving licence, new Community model (amend. Directive 91/439/EEC)

1995/0109(SYN) - 31/10/1995

The Committee welcomed the suggestion in a proposal by the Commission that the paper-format driving licence in the EU should be accompanied by a 'credit card' model by 1 July 1996.This takes account of the demands of Finland and Sweden and the UK's wish to incorporate the holder's photograph into driving licences by means of an efficient and non-forgeable protection method. Experience gained from the use of "smart cards" or microchip cards will pave the way for the efficient production and management of documents and the information they contain. This licence in credit card format will contain details on both sides concerning the holder of the licence, some of which will be compulsory and other optional. The card will also include a space for a microchip which, in the near future, will contain certain details to which the traffic police will have access as well as the holder. The new model licence will be valid for a maximum of 10 years. The Committee discussed Mr. Gipo FARASSINO's (ELD, I) report on the Commission proposal for a Council Directive amending Directive 91/439/EEC on driving licences). Rapporteur FARASSINO was of the opinion that the use of smart cards or microchip will be extremely useful in simplifying bureaucratic procedures for issuing and dealing with driving licences and reducing the risk of forgery. The new model driving licence will also be easier to read and to check for anyone inside the EU. The rapporteur: "Once all Member States agree to the introduction of the microchip into the licence, significant progress will me made in introducing a EU penalty points licence system as a further means of improving road safety. Finally, the new format will make things easier for drivers given that they are easier to handle and may even in future be converted to multifunctional cards (for toll payments, fuel, etc.)". To take due account of the 1992 single market objective, Directive 91/439/EEC on driving licences was adopted on 28 July 1991. This directive, which will only enter into force on 1 July 1996, laid down, in particular, the principal of mutual recognition of national driving licences, without any obligation to exchange them, subject to harmonization of: essential requirements for their issue, including maximal age conditions; conditions of validity, categories of vehicles and the knowledge, skills and behaviour required for driving, on the basis of which driving tests should be conducted in the Member States. Annex I of the directive contains a description of the EU model driving licence on pink paper, including certain compulsory features and data. This includes a compulsory photograph of the holder. In the UK, however, driving licences may be issued without that until 2005. Although this model will be issued as from 1 July 1996, all driving licences currently in sue will remain valid until their date of expiry, unless the Member States decide otherwise. Sweden and Finland, which issue plastifized driving licences in identity card format, will not have to return to the paper format of the other EU states.