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

2001/0033(COD) - 15/07/2003 - Final act

PURPOSE : to improve road safety by introducing an initial qualification and period training of professional drivers in the EU. LEGISLATIVE ACT : Directive 2003/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the initial qualification and periodic training of drivers of certain road vehicles for the carriage of goods or passengers, amending Council Regulation 3820/85/EEC and Council Directive 91 /439/EEC and repealing Council Directive 76/914/EEC. CONTENT : the Council adopted this Directive on the initial qualification and periodic training of drivers of certain road vehicles for the carriage of goods or passengers. The amendments agreed by the Council and the European Parliament introduce the monitoring of the level of qualification achieved in the overall assessment of the Directive and also the instruction of drivers in the prevention of crime as this is becoming a serious pan-European problem. The text is aimed at establishing a Community framework on a compulsory training for both young people interested in becoming professional drivers and drivers who are already working. This legal text encompasses the existing vocational training under Regulation 3820/85/EEC and provides answers to the specific problems of recruitment, quality and competition. EU professional drivers will now be required to have followed professional training. The Directive on the initial qualification and periodic training of drivers of certain road vehicles for the carriage of goods or passengers entered into force on 10 September 2003. This important milestone in the harmonisation of social aspects in road transport policy should lead to enhanced safety on European roads. Almost no EU drivers have followed professional competence training so far. Only very few drivers were obliged by EU legislation to follow any training and in most of the Member States only 5 to 10% of professional drivers underwent such training, which was based upon requirements specified in a Directive that dates back to 1976. The vast majority of professional drivers therefore work solely on the basis of their driving licence. The demands on professional drivers today obviously call for solid basic and periodic training. Whereas the legislation on driver licensing concentrates on basic driving skills, this Directive has a much broader perspective and aims at: - improving road safety in general, as well as safety during stops; - reducing environmental damage, with a special focus on reduction of fuel consumption; - giving knowledge of how to act in an emergency situation ; - ensuring ability to load a vehicle, with due regard for safety rules and proper vehicle use; - ensuring ability to guarantee passenger comfort and safety ; - giving knowledge of the social environment and the rules governing it; - preventing trafficking in illegal immigrants and criminality; - ensuring ability to prevent physical risks; - ensuring ability to assess emergency situations. These skills and knowledge will be kept up to date throughperiodic training. This will allow drivers to keep up with ever changing regulations and benefit from the state of the art in training throughout their whole career. For both young people interested in becoming professional drivers and drivers who are already working, the introduction of harmonised compulsory training for all will underline that the opening up of the transport market and growth in competition go hand in hand with the harmonisation of social matters and conditions of employment. At the same time, the introduction of compulsory training should help recruit new professional drivers by changing the image of the profession. Member States can choose to introduce initial qualification in two ways: - theory and practical exams with a total length of 6 hours; - fixed length of training (280 hours) concluded by a knowledge test. Besides these two options, Member States may also introduce vocational training courses with a length of minimum 6 months to a maximum of 3 years. Such a training scheme allows future drivers to alternate theory and practical training with training on the job in a company. Finally, Member States can introduce accelerated initial qualification for candidate drivers who are older or who are choosing to drive vehicles of smaller weights and dimensions (140 hours). In addition to the initial qualification, the proposal for a Directive establishes the principle of periodic training. It is essential for professional drivers to be able to refresh their knowledge and learn what is new. At the same time, it is necessary to re-evaluate their practical knowledge, in particular as regards the driving of vehicles, e.g. to help rationalise fuel consumption and stress the importance of road

safety and the part which professional drivers play in this. A person who has completed the initial qualification for the carriage of goods should not have to repeat the common parts of that qualification if the person later wishes to comply with the Directive's requirements for the carriage of passengers or vice versa. In order to ensure mutual recognition of the initial qualification and of the periodic training, Member States have the choice to put a Community code on the driving licence or to issue a driver qualification card. The Directive lays down criteria for the approval of training bodies. The Member States will have to approve and control them ENTRY INTO FORCE : 10/09/2003. IMPLEMENTATION : 10/09/2006.