

Driving sustainability: EEA priorities for the future revision of the Directive on Driving Licenses

Introduction

The European Express Association (EEA) welcomes the announced revision of the current Directive 2006/126/EC on Driving Licenses. In this perspective, the EEA would like to highlight its key priorities below.

Key priorities

A. Sustainability

In order to address the environmental objectives of the revision, the EEA supports an EU-harmonised increase in maximum vehicle weights for B-licenses for alternatively fuelled vehicles. Currently, the Directive allows for Member States to implement a derogation that enables holders of a category B license to drive alternatively fuelled vehicles up to 4.25t, due to the excess mass of the propulsion system. However, it is not mandatory for Member States to implement this derogation.

Through the revision, it is vital that this derogation is made mandatory across the EU27. The current framework has led to significant fragmentation of the market and created unnecessary administrative burden for industry as it seeks to roll out its alternatively fuelled fleet of vehicles. The existing framework is also inconsistent with the EU's climate goals, sending a contradictory message on the importance of transport sustainability at a critical time. Making this provision mandatory EU-wide would also speed up market uptake of alternatively fuelled vehicles and provide much-needed certainty to transport operators who are ready to use these vehicles across the region today.

Lastly, providing additional flexibility for users of the B-license, while maintaining safety as the highest priority, will help to address increasing driver shortage issues. Transport operators are struggling with a lack of qualified drivers who possess the appropriate license to drive heavy duty vehicles. Making the derogation mandatory will ensure that such drivers are utilised when and where they are needed most.

B. Digitalisation

The EEA welcomes the fact that the recognition of digital driving licenses across the EU is listed as one of the specific objectives of the possible revision. An EU framework for digital driving licenses that harmonises and streamlines the process of applying/renewing licences would benefit all operators, most of whom are operating in more than one EU Member State. Digitalisation, not only of driving licenses but also of other relevant freight documents, would further benefit control agencies.

C. Early training

A harmonised EU approach would allow driver training from the age of 17 years, accompanied by an experienced driving trainer. This would allow the instream of young drivers to start earlier and ensure that 18-year-olds are ready to obtain the professional driving license as soon as they reach this age across the EU. Starting earlier decreases the risk of accidents, if one learns to drive with an experienced driver, and would help young drivers by providing enhanced access to the profession.

Next steps

The EEA stands ready to provide further input and expertise as the revision moves forward through the legislative process.

About the European Express Association

The European Express Association (EEA) represents the interests of the express industry in Europe. The express industry provides door-to-door transport and delivery of next-day or time-definite shipments, throughout Europe and the world. According to a 2020 Oxford Economics [study](#) on the impact of the express industry on the EU economy, the European express industry directly supported 330,000 jobs and an estimated 1.1 million indirect jobs in the EU in 2018, while generating €24 billion in tax revenues for EU Member States' governments that same year.