

Driving sustainability: EEA Position Paper on the revision of the Directive (EU) 2023/0053 on Driving Licenses

Introduction

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

Key priorities

A. Sustainability

In order to address the environmental objectives of the revision, the EEA strongly supports the introduction of an EU-harmonised increase in maximum vehicle weights for B-licenses for alternatively fuelled vehicles up to 4.25t under article 9 paragraph 2 point H.

The existing Directive currently 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, under the current directive, it is not mandatory for Member States to implement this derogation. This has resulted in significant fragmentation of the market and created unnecessary administrative burden for industry as it seeks to roll out its alternatively fuelled fleet of vehicles, hampering the deployment of EVs for companies and thereby limiting environmental benefits such as less GHG emissions and noise and improved air quality. Hence, the existing framework is inconsistent with the EU's climate goals, sending a contradictory message on the importance of transport sustainability at a critical time.

As a result, the EEA welcomes the introduction and support for the mandatory, facilitative, provision enabling alternatively fuelled vehicles up to 4.25t to be driven on a B category licence. In addition to ensuring harmonization across the EU, the introduction of the mandatory provision would speed up market uptake of alternatively fuelled vehicles and provide much-needed certainty to transport operators who are ready to use these vehicles within the EU already 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 also welcomes the introduction of the Mobile Driving Licences under article 5 of the proposed revision. An EU framework for digital driving licenses that harmonises and streamlines application and renewal of licences benefits all operators, most of whom are operating in more than one EU Member State.

C. Early training

Finally, the introduction of a harmonised accompanied driving scheme under article 14 of the proposed revision by the European Commission is supported by the EEA. A harmonised EU approach allowing driver training from the age of 17 years, accompanied by an experienced driving trainer, allows 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. Through enabling earlier training with an experienced driver, schemes such as the accompanied driving could support the decrease the risk of accidents, and would help young drivers by providing enhanced access to the profession. In this respect, the accompanied driving scheme could play a role in reducing the drivers shortage currently experienced by the industry.

Next steps

The EEA calls on the co-legislators to avoid delays that may hamper the progress in the legislative procedures. It is imperative that as much progress on the file is made prior to the upcoming European elections. The EEA continues to remain ready and committed to provide constructive input and expertise throughout 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.