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Towards the modernisation of driver training and a European Commission proposal for the revision of the EU Driver Training Directive

IRU position on the modernisation of driver training and the revision of the EU Driver Training Directive

I. IRU POSITION

1. Introduce short-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes

General training (initial and periodic CPC training)

- Promoting the use of high-quality simulator modules and equipment to safely complement and enhance targeted professional driver training.
- Promoting and recognising the use of high-quality e-learning training material and equipment to provide targeted, interactive and flexible training.
- Inviting the Commission to thoroughly assess the effectiveness of the Driver Training Directive, including its initial and periodic training, and considering Member State best practices in terms of innovative training methods, knowledge and skills assessment, the length and combination of driving licence and CPC training, particularly for young candidate drivers. The Commission should also make proposals for the revision and modernisation of the Driver Training Directive, adapting it to current and future needs, including removing overlaps between driving licence and initial CPC training.

Periodic CPC training

- Promoting further the recognition of certified in-house driver training within the periodic CPC, with modules and trainers, including duly certified in-house trainers, officially recognised by national authorities, by making wider use of national and EU funds.

Languages

- Encouraging Member States to support, including financially, the possibility of conducting training and examinations in EU and non-EU languages.

Light commercial vehicle (LCV) driver training

- Opposing the extension of the current CPC regime to LCV drivers engaged in cross-border EU freight operations with vehicles weighing between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes. This would avoid worsening the driver shortage and facilitate their entry into the profession in the longer term.
- Encouraging Member States to introduce standardised mandatory training of up to seven hours without exams for drivers of LCVs (2.5–3.5 tonnes) conducting cross-border EU road freight.

- Encouraging LCV driver training to focus on sector-specific topics relevant to them, such as using the tachograph and understanding driving, rest time and posting rules.
- Considering the opportunity of introducing a mandatory periodic training of seven hours every five years for drivers of LCVs (2.5–3.5 tonnes) conducting cross-border EU road freight.

CPC digitalisation

- Extending the mobile driving licence digitalisation provisions to the CPC, making it fully digital.
- Digitalising administrative procedures for the control, obtainment and renewal of the EU CPC.

2. Long-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive

General training (initial and periodic CPC training)

- Creating a dedicated EU vocational training fund to support the training, retraining and upskilling of professional drivers in EU Member States.
- Modernising and adapting professional CPC curricula to consider new professional needs, such as automated driving systems, emergency braking assistance, and electronic stability control.
- Consider the possibility of allowing EU Member States to use the two options provided for in Annex 1, Section 2, paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of [Directive \(EU\) 2022/2561](#), combining initial training and tests and conducting tests only during initial training.
- Measuring e-learning training in points rather than hours to focus on skills and knowledge.
- Promoting professional driver training and/or testing on vehicles reflecting modern technologies and current EU transport operations.

Periodic CPC training

- Allowing Member States to reduce the length of periodic CPC training modules to more flexible and adaptable micro-training bits of up to two hours (instead of the current seven hours) to align with specific needs and introduce more targeted and attractive training.

Recognise the experience of professional EU drivers

- Enabling EU Member States to introduce a dedicated seven-hour periodic CPC training (instead of currently 35) for experienced and safe professional drivers who have carried out at least four cycles of five-year periodic training, with the validity of their CPC extended for five more years, following the completion of this 7-hour CPC training.
- Making proof of clean infringement and safety records, validated by national authorities, as a precondition for experienced professional drivers to benefit from this facilitation.
- Introducing a dedicated, initial seven-hour return-to-driving CPC course, with an enhanced practical driving element, for experienced drivers who have temporarily left the profession and whose CPC has expired (they must take the remaining 28 hours within one calendar year following the completion of the seven-hour initial course).

Recognise the experience of third-country professional drivers

- Developing a harmonised EU framework to fully or partially recognise third-country professional drivers' qualifications for obtaining an EU CPC.

- Removing, under strict and verifiable conditions, the requirement to carry out the initial EU CPC training and/or testing in an EU Member State.

Languages

- Enabling truck, bus and coach candidate drivers to take exams outside of their Member State of residence in a Member State where they master the language.

Professional minimum driving age in passenger transport

- Aligning the professional minimum driving age at 18 across the EU.
- Enabling Member States to mutually recognise the minimum driving age for bus and coach drivers under 21 across their territories.
- Removing the 50km distance limit for professional passenger transport drivers under 21 who have successfully obtained their CPC.

II. ANALYSIS

With over 500,000 professional truck, bus and coach driver positions unfilled in the EU, the shortage of drivers is expected to exceed 1 million by 2026 if no concrete action is taken. The extent of the professional driver shortage has become a threat to the EU's mobility, economy and supply chains. With a rapidly ageing workforce, the lack of young drivers has been identified as a key challenge facing the EU goods and passenger road transport industry.

The EU Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) is a mandatory qualification for all professional bus, coach and truck drivers. Designed to ensure professional drivers' knowledge and skills, it aims to improve road safety and transport efficiency. The EU CPC must be adapted to consider new professional needs, namely on driving aids, alternative fuel powertrains, automation and new mobility and business patterns. Furthermore, driver training must consider drivers and operators' needs to make both the training and the profession more valuable and attractive, thus making the profession more appealing.

While the recent revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive considered some driver needs (e.g. digital driving licence, EU framework for the recognition of third-country driving licences, adjustments for the weight of alternative fuel vehicles), many provisions for professional drivers remain unaddressed. The revision of the EU Driver Training Directive is an opportunity to address and improve the attractiveness of the profession while enhancing EU road safety and mitigating the driver shortage.

Some adaptations to the EU CPC Directive will not require changes to the legislation itself. They can be addressed through other legislative and non-legislative measures, such as implementing/delegated acts and/or European Commission guidance notes (e.g. on the use of languages in CPC training and/or exams). However, some changes will require the modernisation and targeted revision of the current legislation on driver training.

1. Modernise skills and training content (initial and periodic CPC)

IRU supports a progressive adaptation and modernisation of the EU Driver Training Directive to better reflect the specific and dynamic nature of the bus, coach and truck driver profession. This will allow professional drivers to prepare for current and future challenges (e.g. digitalisation, automation, alternative powertrains, specific subsectors, new services, new business mobility and patterns, specific local needs, lane assist, emergency braking assistance, electronic stability control, predictive cruise control, Smart Tachograph Generation 2, general safety regulation, etc).

To ensure the relevance of professional driver training, carefully selected and innovative additional training materials must be added to the curricula. On the other hand, training materials that have now become obsolete due to their replacement or the introduction

of new technologies should be removed (e.g. reading a roadmap) to prioritise innovative and relevant content promoting road safety and effective road transport operations.

Professional driver training curricula and competence objectives should be further specified to support their implementation in Member States and ensure harmonised professional driver training across the EU (e.g. road safety objectives).

IRU calls for

Introducing short-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes to:

- Invite the Commission to thoroughly assess the effectiveness of the Driver Training Directive, including its initial and periodic training, and considering Member State best practices in terms of innovative training methods, knowledge and skills assessment, the length and combination of driving licence and CPC training, particularly for young candidate drivers. The Commission should also make proposals for the revision and modernisation of the Driver Training Directive, adapting it to current and future needs, including removing overlaps between driving licence and initial CPC training.

Introducing longer-term measures to modernise the EU CPC regime and revise the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Modernise and adapt professional CPC curricula to consider new professional needs, such as automated driving systems, emergency braking assistance, and electronic stability control.
- Establish a dedicated EU vocational training fund to support the training, retraining and upskilling of professional drivers in EU Member States.
- Consider the possibility of allowing Member States to use the two options provided for in Annex 1, Section 2, paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of [Directive \(EU\) 2022/2561](#), combining initial training and tests and conducting tests only during initial training.

2. Modernise training modalities and vehicles (initial and periodic CPC)

Focus on learning outcomes and ensure learners gain the needed competences. Promote flexibility, align training with innovation and job market needs, support lifelong learning, and improve quality by clarifying outcomes, practical assessments, modular learning and social partner involvement.

To ensure added value and the safety of professional driver training, the use of simulators should be further promoted across the EU. This will complement driver training by safely gaining practical experience, such as driving in dangerous situations (e.g. harsh weather conditions, crossing civil engineering structures, and in proximity of vulnerable road users in urban settings).

Promote the use of high-quality e-learning for professional drivers to carry out targeted training in flexible and attractive ways. To ensure quality, e-learning modules should be officially validated and recognised by national competent authorities.

For e-learning to provide high-quality and attractive professional training, emphasis should be placed on providing high-quality and interactive material complementing other forms of training. Each driver should be given the ability to proceed and learn at their own pace. Therefore, the completion of e-learning modules should not be measured in terms of hours spent online but rather based on the knowledge acquired. For this, e-learning module completion should be measured in terms of points rather than hours. Upon successful completion, professional drivers should be granted points/credits counting towards their periodic CPC training. To ensure national systems remain comparable, one point would be the equivalent of one training hour. Employer and

worker representative organisations should be involved to evaluate and recognise training.

To gain familiarity with vehicles used in daily commercial operations across EU roads, professional drivers should carry out training and/or examination with vehicles adequately reflecting the sector's real-world dynamics and the varied operations. The closed-body box requirement should be removed to better reflect modern and various forms of transport (e.g. grain, milk) and vehicle types.

IRU calls for

Introducing short-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes to:

- Promote the use of high-quality simulator modules and equipment to safely complement and enhance targeted professional driver training.
- Recognise and promote the use of high-quality e-learning training material and equipment for targeted, interactive and flexible training.

Introducing longer-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Measure e-learning training in points rather than hours to focus on skills and knowledge.
- Ensure e-learning module completion and quality through adapted national procedures.
- Promote professional driver training and/or testing on vehicles reflecting modern technologies and current EU transport operations.

3. Promote targeted and attractive periodic training (periodic CPC)

To enhance the attractiveness and relevance of periodic CPC training, professional drivers must be equipped with new and relevant skills, fostering safety, professional growth and adaptation to new technology, business and service developments.

By promoting the recognition of in-house training within the periodic CPC, professional drivers will be able to gain the targeted and practical training needed for their profession. To ensure high-quality training, modules and trainers should be officially recognised by national competent authorities, as is already the case in certain Member States. The inclusion of nationally certified in-house training should be recognised as part of mandatory periodic CPC, thereby incentivising both drivers and operators to carry out relevant training that best aligns with commercial transport requirements.

To facilitate the introduction of targeted, practical and innovative periodic training modules, module lengths should be adapted accordingly. Certain targeted professional driver training modules may require less than the legal timeframe (currently set at seven hours per module). Furthermore, this will help to better schedule training modules and support professional drivers' work-life balance. To introduce and carry out more attractive and targeted periodic CPC modules, the minimum module length set in EU law should be adapted from seven hours to adaptable training bits of a minimum two hours (without affecting the current requirement to undergo a total of 35 hours of periodic training every five years).

IRU calls for

Introducing short-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes to:

- Promote further the recognition of certified in-house driver training within the periodic CPC, with modules and trainers, including duly certified in-

house trainers officially recognised by national competent authorities, by making broader use of available national and EU funds.

Introducing longer-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Allow Member States to reduce the length of periodic CPC training modules to more flexible and adaptable micro-training bits of up to two hours, instead of the current seven hours, to align with specific needs and introduce more targeted and attractive training.

4. Recognise the experience of professional EU drivers (periodic CPC)

Currently, the repetitive and theoretical nature of CPC training constitutes a deterrent for experienced professional drivers to both undergo the periodic CPC training and stay in the profession. Professional driver training should consider professional drivers' experience and already acquired skills.

To motivate experienced professional drivers who have reached the age of retirement to stay in the profession, Member States should be allowed to facilitate the procedures regarding the obligation to undergo periodic training. This should be done under strict conditions and provided they have successfully completed their periodic training in the previous years and have a proven safety record.

In addition, to support professional drivers returning to the profession – those who have been inactive for some time and whose CPC validity has expired – should be able to complete a return-to-driving CPC course, provided they previously completed the full qualification process during their last period of active work. This return-to-driving CPC course should consist of an initial period of seven hours of training. Drivers should then be able to resume professional driving once the training provider has recorded the completion of these seven hours. In addition, these drivers must also complete the remaining 28 hours of training within a year after finishing the seven-hour course to stay qualified and be able to operate HDVs commercially.

IRU calls for

Introducing longer-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Enable EU Member States to introduce a dedicated seven-hour periodic CPC training (instead of currently 35) for experienced and safe professional drivers who have carried out at least four cycles of five-year periodic training, with the validity of their CPC extended for five more years, following the completion of this seven-hour CPC training.
- Make proof of clean infringement and safety records, validated by national authorities, a precondition for experienced professional drivers to benefit from this facilitation.
- Introduce a dedicated initial seven-hour return-to-driving CPC course, with an enhanced practical driving element, for experienced drivers who have temporarily left the profession and whose CPC has expired (they must take the remaining 28 hours within one calendar year following the completion of the seven-hour initial course).

5. Recognise the qualifications of third-country professional drivers (initial CPC)

With fewer than 5% of professional drivers under 25, the shortage facing the sector will not be filled by just making use of the local talent pool. To remove current barriers preventing third-country professional drivers from being employed by EU operators, an EU framework should be introduced to partially or fully identify and recognise third-country certificates in line with EU training and road safety standards.

For IRU, the revision of the EU Driving Licence failed to introduce a similar assessment mechanism for the recognition of third-country drivers' CPC, which is the second mandatory element for any professional driver to work for an EU-based road transport company. To cover any potential gaps in the knowledge and skills of third-country drivers, additional competence training should be introduced (i.e. between 24 and 35 hours). These should cover specific EU rules, new technologies and road safety and, if relevant, driving on the left, with an exam to be passed, according to the conditions set in the EU Driver Training Directive.

IRU calls for

Introducing longer-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Develop a harmonised EU framework to fully or partially recognise third-country professional drivers' qualifications for obtaining an EU CPC.
- Remove, under strict and verifiable conditions, the requirement to carry out the initial EU CPC training and/or testing in an EU Member State.

6. Language facilities (initial and periodic CPC)

EU citizens should be able to carry out the CPC theoretical and/or practical exams in their EU language – even if the residence Member State does not offer that possibility. IRU considers that the facility introduced for B licence drivers to take their exam outside of their Member State of residence in a Member State where they master the language should be extended to also include professional drivers in obtaining their CPC. This provision will help ensure that their skills are accurately tested, rather than focusing on their knowledge of the language.

Currently, certain Member States allow drivers to carry out CPC training and examinations in non-EU languages or with the help of an interpreter. To make the driving profession more accessible, this language facility should be extended across Member States.

IRU calls for

Introducing short-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes to:

- Encourage Member States to support, including financially, and further promote the possibility to carry out CPC training and exams in different EU and non-EU languages.

Introducing long-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Enable truck, bus and coach candidate drivers to take their CPC exam outside of their EU Member State of residence in an EU Member State where they master the language.

7. CPC digitalisation (initial and periodic CPC)

The EU-wide digital and mobile driving licence – accessible through a mobile phone or other digital device and recognised across the EU – should be extended to also include EU CPCs. A mobile driver CPC should simplify the administrative process for the control, replacement, renewal or exchange of driving licences. It will make it possible to perform the procedures online and help achieve paperless control and administrative processes.

To ensure the validity and compliance of professional drivers' CPC, access to drivers' CPC should be guaranteed to employers and enforcement authorities.

IRU calls for

Introducing short-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes to:

- Extend the mobile driving licence digitalisation provisions to the CPC, making it fully digital.
- Digitalise administrative procedures for the control, obtainment and renewal of the EU CPC.

8. LCV driver training

It is important to ensure that LCV drivers engaged in cross-border EU freight operations with vehicles weighing between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes are familiar with the relevant EU rules, including those entering into force on 1 July 2026. However, they should not face the same rules as those applicable to professional heavy-duty drivers, as it would further exacerbate professional driver shortages.

To ensure safety and awareness of legal obligations, a standardised LCV training course should be carried out. It should enable those LCV drivers to become familiar with current and future sector-specific provisions, such as using tachographs as well as driving, rest time, cabotage and posting rules, while ensuring road safety and compliance.

To avoid worsening the driver shortage, it is important to maintain the distinction between LCV and heavy-duty vehicle training, while recognising the value of this training to facilitate their transition from LCVs to HGVs. This training should therefore only be introduced for road freight drivers engaged in cross-border EU freight operations with vehicles weighing between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes.

IRU calls for

Introducing short-term and long-term measures via EC implementing/delegated acts and/or guidance notes to:

- Oppose the extension of the currently applicable mandatory EU CPC regime to drivers engaged in cross-border EU freight operations with vehicles weighing between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes to avoid exacerbating the driver shortage, and facilitate, in the longer term, the entry of these drivers into the profession.
- Encourage Member States to introduce a standardised mandatory training of up to seven hours, without exams, for drivers engaged in cross-border EU freight operations with vehicles weighing between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes.
- Focus LCV driver training on sector-specific topics relevant to them, such as using tachographs and following driving, rest time and posting rules.
- Consider the opportunity of introducing a mandatory periodic training of seven hours every five years for drivers engaged in cross-border EU freight operations with vehicles weighing between 2.5 and 3.5 tonnes.

9. Professional driving minimum age in the bus and coach sector

The professional bus and coach sector is facing an alarming shortage of drivers: over 105,000 positions are currently unfilled across Europe. As fewer than 3% of drivers are under 25 years old, the EU's shortage of drivers is expected to surpass 275,000 unfilled positions by 2028. This threatens the stability of European collective passenger transport and mobility, whilst numerous public transport routes and school services could be expected to be discontinued.

To address the growing driver shortage and improve the sector's attractiveness, the minimum age requirements for professional bus drivers should be adapted and aligned with those for truck drivers. Furthermore, professional bus and coach drivers currently allowed to drive within their Member State at 18 years old should also be allowed to carry out operations in neighbouring Member States with similar age provisions.

Lastly, the current arbitrary distance limit for the transport of passengers on routes over 50 km should be removed for professional bus and coach drivers under 21 years old who have successfully obtained their CPC.

IRU calls for

Introducing long-term measures to support and modernise the EU CPC regime, including by revising the EU Driver Training Directive to:

- Align the professional minimum driving age at 18 across the EU.
- Allow Member States to mutually recognise the minimum driving age for bus and coach drivers under 21 on their territories.
- Remove the 50km distance limit for professional passenger transport drivers under 21 who have their CPC.

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