

Improving attractiveness and facilitating access to the driver's profession with an ambitious revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive

IRU position

IRU position on the revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive.

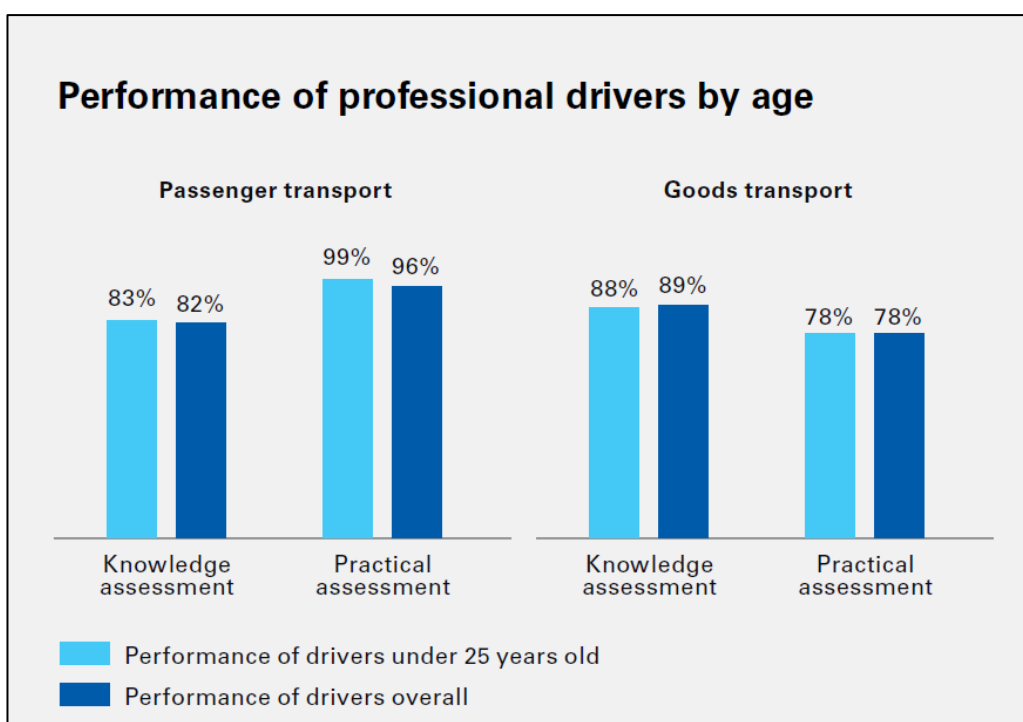
I. ANALYSIS

1. Background

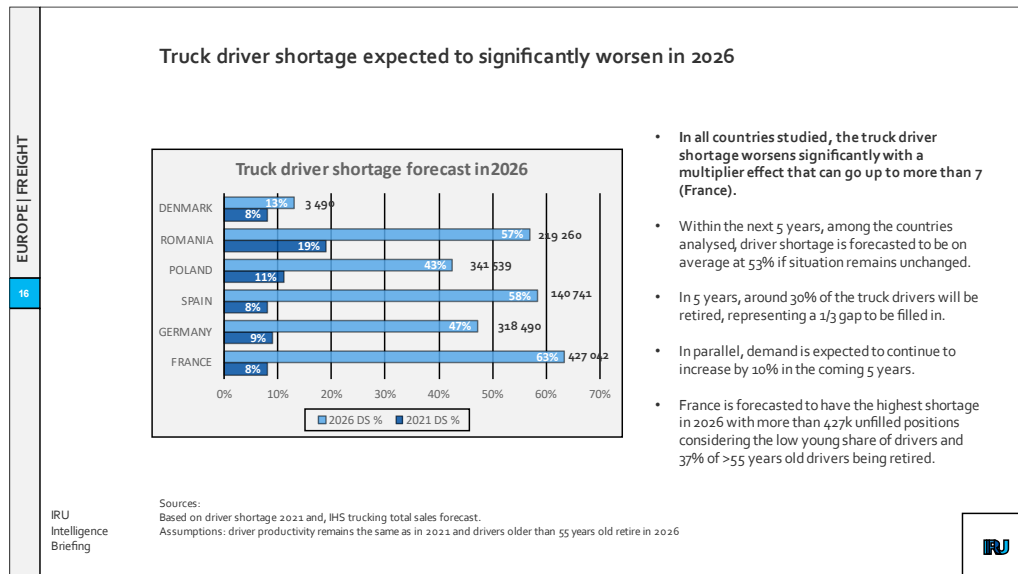
Over recent decades, commercial road transport – both passenger and goods – has established itself as the backbone of modern mobility and supply chains, serving European citizens safely and efficiently, while moving our societies and economies towards a sustainable and prosperous future.

Recent and current crises have further increased the role of commercial road transport in the economy and society, making it an essential, indeed core part of society's functioning, with an unmatched door-to-door flexibility and adaptability potential. Road transport is capable of complementing – and in some cases replacing – broken mobility or supply services of other transport modes during crisis situations.

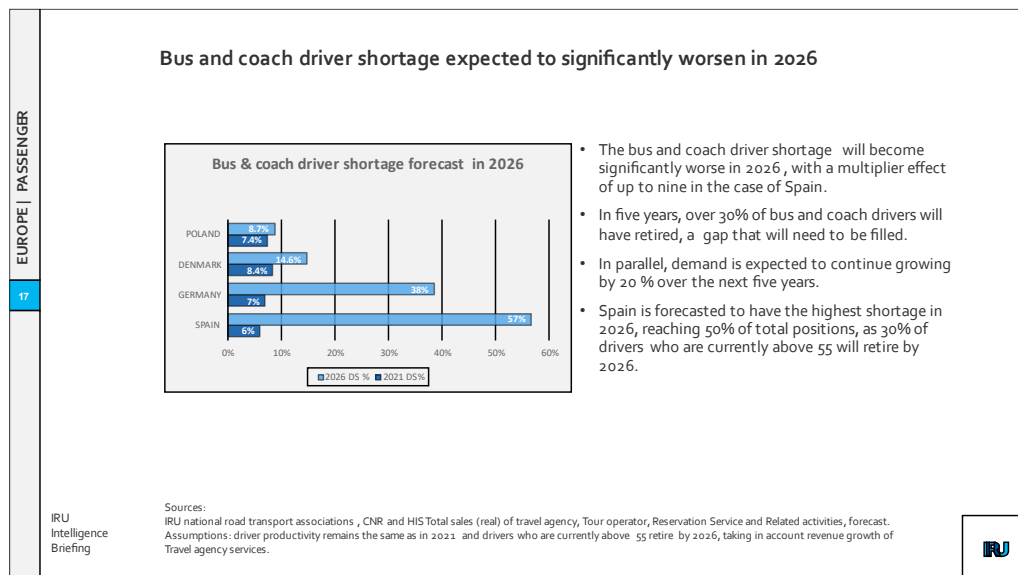
Some 4 million professional drivers are active in road transport and logistics today, making it a key employer in the EU. Professional drivers undergo solid training and regular retraining, making professional drivers, including young drivers, the safest drivers in Europe.



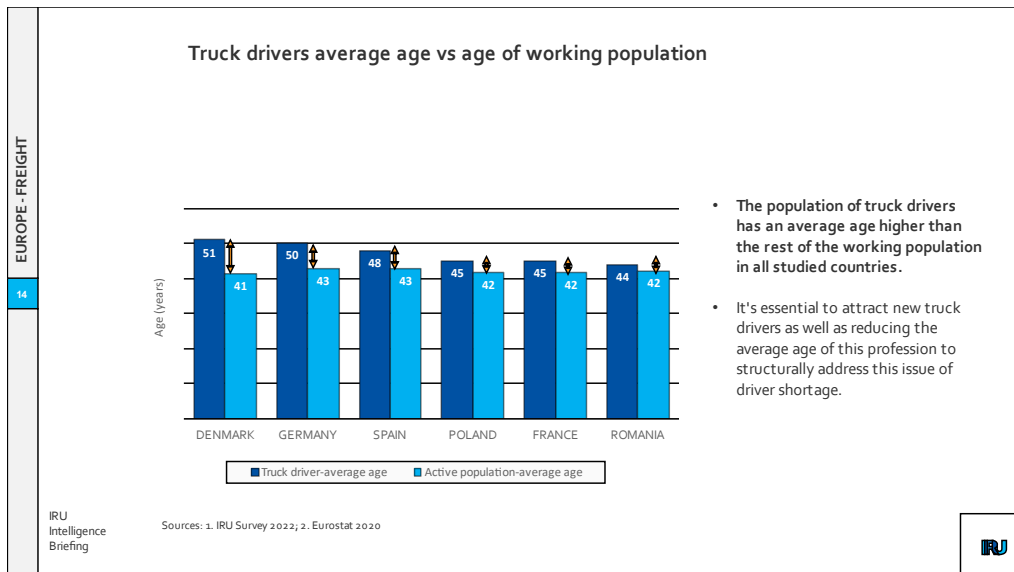
Yet, over recent decades, an acute driver shortage has become a permanent concern in European road transport and logistics, plaguing road transport companies and, above all, the European economy and mobility. Europe is currently missing over 0.5 million professional drivers, while barriers to enter the profession have never been so high.



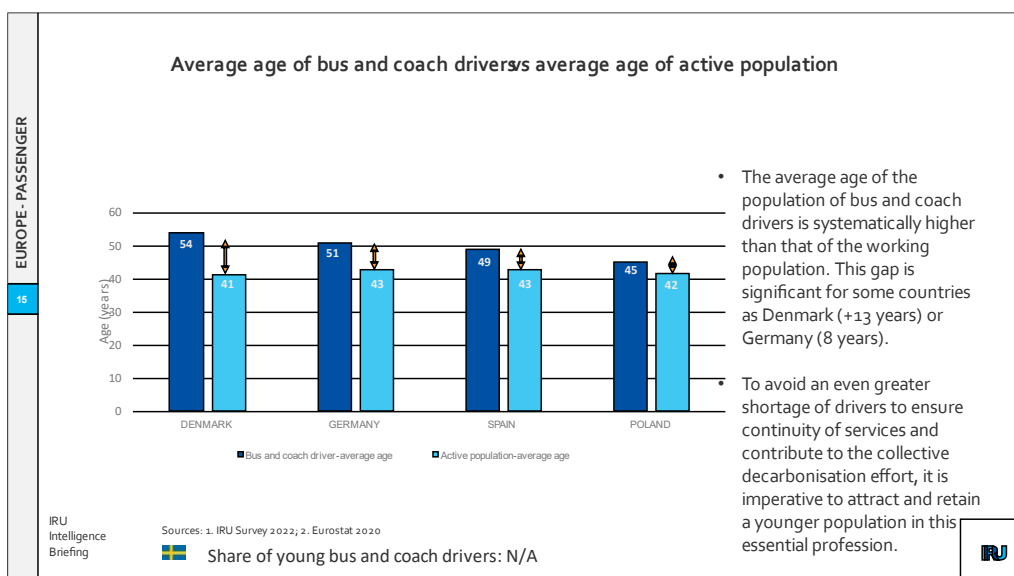
If nothing is done, European mobility and supply chains are heading towards a major crisis. Mobility and essential supply shortages could potentially affect large segments of the European population.



The profession is also rapidly aging, in some cases by 1 year every 2-3 years. It is rarely on young people's radar, when considering future career choices, whilst those who are interested in joining the profession experience significant barriers, both financial and legal. In particular, the minimum driving age has become a real obstacle, preventing young people from joining the profession. There is an important gap between the moment young people finish school and when they can enter the profession, which in some countries and sub-sectors can reach 5-7 years.



If young people are unable to start driving when they finish school and start their professional life, they will, in most cases, seek opportunities in other sectors.



This is against the backdrop of a very high level of youth unemployment in Europe.

The reasons for the shortage are numerous and complex. They need to be addressed in a genuine partnership with as many public and private stakeholders as possible, including other sectors facing similar issues.

Following an intense intra-industry debate, the IRU adopted a [vision, strategy and action plan](#) to collectively address these challenges in an organised way, with short- and long-term measures and actions, in a genuine partnership with its public and private partners.

2. The opportunity of the upcoming revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive

A cornerstone of the industry strategy is the opportunity provided by the upcoming revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive, scheduled to begin in early 2023.

By endorsing the below industry's proposals during its revision, it is expected that the current share of young drivers (below 25 years) in the profession (6% for freight and 5%

for passenger transport) would increase to 10% by 2030, placing the road transport industry on a solid, long-term rejuvenation path, with a number of positive side effects, such as the share of women drivers increasing also to 10% by 2030 in the EU.

In addition, bearing in mind the expected time needed for the implementation of the revised Driving Licence Directive, as well as the huge current gap of more than 0.5 million professional drivers in Europe, IRU also proposes to create an EU framework for the recognition and exchange of third-country drivers' professional driving licences, when employed by road transport companies established in the EU.

II. IRU POSITION

1. IRU proposals for the revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive

- Clarify the provision that 18-year-old professional truck drivers with full training can drive freight transport vehicles in both national and international traffic.
- Remove distance limitations and align the minimum driving age limit for bus and coaches drivers with those applicable to truck drivers (18 years).
- Adopt an EU list of third countries whose official driver CPCs are recognised as meeting the EU professional driver training standards.
- Create a genuine D1 driving licence allowing drivers to drive passenger transport vehicles of 21/22+1 seats (currently 16+1).
- Allow 17-year-olds to start professional driver training, which would allow them to take the exam and begin driving as soon as they turn 18.
- Allow 17-year-old trained young professional road transport drivers to accompany competent and experienced professional drivers.
- Advocate for the possibility to use a B driving licence to drive light commercial vehicles that have passed the 3.5 tonne threshold and passenger transport vehicles of up to "8+1" seats, due to the installation of additional road safety or low or zero-emission powertrains.
- Recognise the existing driving experience of B licence holders already engaged in professional transport with vehicles below 3.5 tonnes and up to "8+1" seats in their path and training to obtain professional C and/or D licences.
- Advocate for the digitalisation of driving licences.
- Advocate for the interoperability of digital platforms.
- Allow the possibility for road transport companies to access available public/official databases covering information on temporary or definitive loss/withdrawal of professional driving licences, allowing them to verify the validity of their drivers' licences.
- In addition, the European Commission is invited to:
 - Issue a guidance note to EU Member States authorities containing recommendations on how to best implement the new provisions related to ICT tools, including recommendations on how to combine ICT-based methods with the need for practical training, which is paramount to the driver profession. The guidance note should contain recommendations on the use of appropriate simulators.
 - Issue a formal letter to EU Member States clarifying that the EU Driver Training Directive does not prohibit the holding of initial and periodic training and of taking exams/tests in any EU language, particularly in English.

- Develop a dedicated Q&A online database for public consultation by any interested stakeholder (preferably as part of an EU-wide road transport vocational training platform/single window). It should contain competent and legally compliant answers to frequently asked questions.

2. IRU proposals for an EU framework to recognise and exchange third-country professional driving licences

- An evaluation (competence test) of their knowledge and skills, according to the conditions laid down in the EU Driver Training Directive should be carried out. This should particularly cover specific requirements to ascertain the legitimacy of the holder's driving licence and skills, such as the use of the latest technology, including digital/smart tachographs, driving on the left (if relevant), with a specific focus on road safety. In-company, practical evaluations can be part of this evaluation. It is also suggested that a standardised evaluation framework be worked out at the EU level.
- Such an evaluation framework should make a distinction between third countries which have implemented driver training standards comparable to the EU and those who have not, whilst at the same time duly considering any agreements between the EU and third countries, obliging the latter to apply the EU's driving licence and driver training rules. In parallel, such framework could take into account drivers coming from third countries that are actively applying the ECMT Quality Charter.
- Member States should offer appropriate technical support, including language assistance, to third-country drivers to facilitate the test-taking process.
- An induction and competence training of up to 35 hours (minimum 24 hours and maximum 35 hours) to fill in any potential gaps in the knowledge and skills of third-country drivers. This should cover, in particular, new technology and road safety and, if relevant, driving on the left, with an exam to be passed, according to the conditions laid down in the EU Driver Training Directive.
- Member States should have the right to require a more comprehensive induction and competence test to ensure that C and D licence holders have the level required for their tasks, including in terms of specific geography, weather conditions, etc.
- A probationary period could be established, i.e., of 1 year, to monitor these drivers' safety performances, before a final recognition/exchange of their C or D driving licences. In case of serious or repeated infringements or accidents, the recognition of their driving licence could be revoked and subject to passing a mandatory training and/or exam.
- It should be avoided that any condition induces discrimination between third-country drivers wishing to work for EU established road transport companies and third-country drivers working for third-country road transport companies having access to the EU market.

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