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COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION

of the

**Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December
2006 on driving licences**

{SWD(2022) 17 final}

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Directive 2006/126/EC on driving licences¹ (also known as ‘the *third* driving licence directive’), was adopted in 2006 and EU countries had to apply all its provisions from 19 January 2013. The directive and its predecessors² aim to align rules on driving licences in the EU to improve road safety, to facilitate the free movement of citizens and to fight driving licence fraud. The evaluation assesses to what extent the directive has achieved these general objectives. It aims to establish evidence-based conclusions on the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value of the directive **between 2006 and 2018**.

Effectiveness

Road safety

Overall, the directive was found to have improved road safety, despite some limitations in the available data. Certain new provisions of the directive such as the minimum standards for driving examiners, the medical examinations for professional drivers and the tests for drivers of mopeds and motorcycles are thought to have particularly contributed to this improvement.

Harmonisation of the driving licence rules

The directive has further harmonised the driving licence rules across the EU. Nevertheless, differences remain in the administrative validity periods, including when these expired, the requirements for medical checks and their frequency, the practices and requirements for training and testing, the requirements for **driving examiners**, the mutual recognition of driving licence **disqualifications** and the recognition of driving licences issued by **non-EU countries**.

Skills and knowledge

While the directive establishes standards on skills and knowledge for drivers, the related requirements vary considerably by country. There is limited and inconclusive evidence on whether the directive helped improve driving skills.

The directive sets out minimum standards on quality assurance and regular training measures for driving examiners. The related provisions are considered sufficient by most countries to

¹ Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2006 on driving licences (Recast), OJ L 403, 30.12.2006, p. 18.

² First Council Directive 80/1263/EEC of 4 December 1980 on the introduction of a Community driving licence, OJ L 375, 31.12.1980, p. 1 (the *first* driving licence directive) and Council Directive 91/439/EEC of 29 July 1991 on driving licences, OJ L 237, 24.8.1991, p. 1 (the *second* driving licence directive).

guarantee the quality of training and road safety, although some aspects could be improved (e.g. the communication skills of driving examiners).

Absence of EU rules on mutual recognition of driving disqualifications

The lack of EU rules on the recognition of driving bans issued in another EU country makes it harder to prevent abuse by drivers banned in one country who are still able to drive in another country. This issue has also been the subject of several cases at the Court of Justice of the EU.

Driving licence network / Réseau permis de conduire (RESPER)

RESPER is an effective tool to share relevant information between national authorities but it suffers from quality issues (query errors and incomplete information) and it is not exploited to its full potential, e.g. sharing information on drivers, penalty points, national codes, or a driver's place of normal residence.

Free movement

The Union model driving licence, the mutual recognition of licences issued in EU countries and the harmonised minimum age limits for the driving licence categories have likely helped facilitate the free movement of citizens inside the EU. By contrast, some provisions that are difficult to apply in practice, such as the one on the place of normal residence, may create obstacles to the free movement. Moreover, the lack of a standard approach to the recognition of driving licences issued by non-EU countries can lead to higher administrative burden, driving licence shopping and barriers for non-EU citizens, including professional drivers.

Reducing fraud and driving licence tourism

There is only scarce information on the effect of the directive on driving licence fraud and driving licence tourism. However, roughly half the stakeholders consulted think that the directive – in particular the provisions on RESPER, the Union model driving licence and anti-fraud measures – has helped reduce both practices.

Efficiency

It is unclear whether the directive has led to excessive costs or administrative burdens for citizens, authorities and firms. The rules on the Union model driving licence and on RESPER do not appear to have led to higher costs for citizens; they have likely helped reduce red tape.

However, standardised validity periods, the requirement to renew driving licences and regular medical checks for professional drivers are likely to have increased both the administrative burden and the costs for citizens. Some stakeholders also claim that the system of progressive access to category A licences has led to higher costs and burdens for applicants.

There are significant differences among EU countries in the costs of obtaining a driving licence, mainly due to differing national requirements and efficiency levels in national administrations. The training costs charged in each country also differ to some extent.

There is scope for simplification and for a reduction of the administrative burden in the areas of online licence renewal and medical checks for professional drivers, progressive access to category A licences, weight limits for category B licences, establishment of a driver's place of normal residence.

Digital solutions and the digitisation of driving licences have not been sufficiently explored, and RESPER could be used more to reduce the administrative burden.

Relevance

The directive's current rules on driving skills and knowledge do not sufficiently reflect new technological solutions, such as semi-automated and automated driving, vehicles with automatic transmission, advanced driver-assistance systems, and alternative fuels vehicles.

Some stakeholders have raised concerns that there are no EU-wide rules to regulate the safe use of micro-mobility solutions such as electric scooters, bikes and mopeds. Others, however, doubt the necessity of an EU initiative on micro-mobility.

As regards young drivers, the minimum age limits established by the directive are deemed broadly adequate. However, in particular for moped licences, those limits vary between countries. Motorcyclists' associations consider that the requirements of the progressive access system make it too difficult for young people to get a category A licence.

While industry representatives think that lower minimum age limits for professional drivers could help address the problem of driver shortage in Europe, trade unions believe that the minimum age is low enough and that efforts should instead focus on making transport a more attractive sector in which to work.

As regards older drivers, rules vary between countries (e.g. increased medical checks, shorter validity periods on renewal). There is no conclusive evidence that fitness screening based on age provides significant safety benefits. More attention should instead be paid to drivers with high health risks.

Coherence

The evaluation found no major inconsistencies among the directive's own provisions. However, minor inconsistencies in the equivalence rules were raised, as was the insufficient level of detail of the standards on alcohol, drugs and medicinal products (Annex III).

No major inconsistencies between the directive and international conventions with similar objectives (the Geneva and Vienna Conventions on Road Traffic) could be established.

The directive is consistent with EU road safety policy objectives (e.g. Vision Zero³ and the Valletta Declaration⁴). It complements the cross-border enforcement directive⁵, but possible synergies in enforcement through a mutual recognition of driving disqualifications are not exploited. As regards other EU legislation, the directive could be better aligned with the EU type approval legislation for vehicles.

EU added value

Without the directive, EU countries would likely have cooperated through bilateral agreements and through other means, which would however likely have resulted in more complex licensing systems and a higher administrative burden. In this respect, the main benefit of the directive is the increased standardisation of driving licence rules across the EU.

³ EU Road Safety Policy Framework 2021-2030 – Next steps towards “Vision Zero”; SWD(2019) 283 final of 19.6.2019; <https://transport.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/SWD2190283.pdf>

⁴ Valletta Declaration on Road Safety of 29 March 2017, endorsed by the Council on 8 June 2017: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9994-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

⁵ Directive (EU) 2015/413 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2015 facilitating cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences, OJ L 68, 13.3.2015, p. 9.