

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE EFTA STATES

Ref. 23-2493

30 November 2023

SUBCOMMITTEE II ON THE FREE MOVEMENT OF SERVICES AND CAPITAL

EEA EFTA Comment

on the Revised Driving Licence Directive

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *The Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA Agreement) extends the Single Market to the EEA EFTA States (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).*
- *The EEA EFTA States welcome the European Commission's proposal for a revised driving licence directive, as included in the Road Safety Package.¹ The EEA EFTA States support the Commission's overall ambition to promote road safety, free movement and environmental measures, and to adapt to the digital development of the road transport sector.*
- *The EEA EFTA States support the suggestion to increase the weight limits for alternatively fuelled vehicles in category B for drivers with more than two years of driving experience, in order to promote environmental considerations.*
- *The EEA EFTA States encourage the development of digital driving licences. Cross-border use of driving licences may result in benefits for both drivers and authorities, and further strengthen and promote free movement within the EEA.*
- *The EEA EFTA States express concern regarding the inclusion of category C driving licences in the proposed accompanied driving scheme, allowing the issuance of driving licences to 17-year-olds. The EEA EFTA States highlight that the added road safety risk of heavier vehicles should be taken into consideration, and encourage the use of designated educational programmes for category C instead.*
- *The EEA EFTA States express concern regarding the removal of staging requirements for category C and D driving licences. The EEA EFTA States support the continuation*

¹ [Proposal for a revised directive on driving licences \(COM\(2023\) 127\)](#)

of a step-by-step model to ensure road safety, whereby obtaining a category C or D driving licence is a prerequisite for obtaining a category CE or DE driving licence.

- *Additionally, the EEA EFTA States express concerns about the European Parliament's proposed category B+ for inexperienced drivers, decreasing the maximum vehicle weight to 1 800 kg. The new category has the potential to negatively impact the transition to alternatively fuelled vehicles, as these types of vehicles are normally heavier than the proposed maximum weight.*
- *The EEA EFTA States highlight their support for Section 14 of Annex III to the proposed revision, which introduces alcohol interlocks as an alternative to denying the renewal of driving licences for individuals with alcohol use disorders.*

2. GENERAL REMARKS ON THE PROPOSAL

1. The EEA EFTA States welcome the Commission's proposal for a revised driving licence directive, as included in the Road Safety Package. The Driving Licence Directive is important for driver qualifications, and consequently for road safety across the whole of Europe. The EEA EFTA States support the Commission's overall ambition to promote road safety, free movement and environmental measures, and to adapt to the digital development of the road transport sector.
2. The EEA EFTA States acknowledge and support the fundamental role of free movement within the EEA. Facilitating the development of digital driving licences and cross-border use of driving licences may simplify the everyday lives of drivers and further strengthen and promote free movement within the EEA. The EEA EFTA States have had positive experiences from introducing digital driving licences at national level (Norway in 2019, Iceland in 2020 and Liechtenstein in 2022).
3. The EEA EFTA States support the proposed Article 9 and the increased weight limits for alternatively fuelled vehicles in category B for drivers with more than two years of driving experience. Electric vehicles are often heavier than combustion engine vehicles due to the weight of the battery. The EEA EFTA States therefore support increasing the weight limits to promote greater use of alternatively fuelled vehicles in light of environmental considerations. In Norway, the weight limits have already been increased for alternatively fuelled vehicles for the transport of goods to further encourage the use of such vehicles. Norway is currently experiencing demand to increase the private and professional use of heavier electrical vehicles for passenger transport as well, for example in the case of taxis with up to eight passenger seats.
4. The EEA EFTA States support the Commission's ambition to facilitate driving training at a young age, and acknowledge the importance of this to promote road safety. They also welcome and recognise the need for measures that ensure the safety of young drivers.
5. The EEA EFTA States support Section 14 of Annex III, which introduces alcohol interlocks as an alternative to denying the renewal of driving licences for individuals with alcohol use disorders. The EEA EFTA States believe that this solution can

safeguard road safety while simultaneously serving as a more effective rehabilitation tool.

6. These comments are given without prejudice to further comments from the EEA EFTA States and the assessment of the final act, which will be carried out by the EEA EFTA States once the acts have been adopted by the EU.

3. REMARKS ON SPECIFIC PROVISIONS IN THE PROPOSAL

7. The EEA EFTA States support the ambition to facilitate driving training at a young age, and acknowledge the importance of this to promote road safety. Therefore, the EEA EFTA States support, in principle, the proposed accompanied driving scheme, which introduces driving licences for 17-year-olds on the condition that they drive accompanied by a person of a specified minimum age and with a certain level of driving experience. However, considering the added road safety risk of heavier vehicles, **the EEA EFTA States suggest excluding category C driving licences from the accompanied driving scheme under Article 14.** The EEA EFTA States encourage additional safety measures for category C vehicles that exceed those in place for category B passenger cars. Norway has had a positive experience with designated educational programmes for young drivers aspiring to obtain a category C licence for professional purposes. The EEA EFTA States suggest promoting a stronger link between educational programmes and the attainment of category C driving licences for young drivers, in order to ensure road safety.
8. In Article 9 of the proposed directive, the Commission suggests removing the current requirement to hold a category C or D (truck or bus) driving licence before it is possible to obtain a licence under category CE or DE (truck or bus with trailer). **The EEA EFTA States advise against the removal of staging requirements for category C and D driving licences under Article 9.** Instead, they support the continuation of a step-by-step model to ensure a continued high level of road safety, whereby obtaining a category C or D driving licence is a prerequisite for obtaining a category CE or DE driving licence. The EEA EFTA States highlight that a continued step-by-step model will have positive implications for learning and acquired experience in handling heavy vehicles.
9. Furthermore, the EEA EFTA States note with concern that the European Parliament has tabled in the draft report a proposal to introduce a category B+ driving licence for inexperienced drivers, decreasing the maximum vehicle weight to 1 800 kg for drivers in their first two years after obtaining their driving licence. While the EEA EFTA States recognise the need for measures to ensure the safety of young drivers, **the EEA EFTA States do not consider the introduction of a category B+ driving licence an appropriate measure to increase road safety.** The new category has the potential to negatively impact the transition to alternatively fuelled vehicles, as these types of vehicles are normally heavier than the proposed maximum weight, and would consequently become unavailable to inexperienced drivers. In Member States with a high use of alternatively fuelled vehicles this may lead to a transfer to older, more polluting and less safe cars.