

His Excellency Michael Stibbe  
Ambassador  
Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU  
Permanent Representation of Netherlands to the  
EU  
Avenue de Cortenbergh 4-10  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium



**By email**

BR1059201/RMA

Brussels, 27 mars 2023

**re: call for an ambitious revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive to tackle driver shortages**

Dear Ambassador,

Today, Europe is missing 0.5 million truck and bus drivers. Given that the driver profession has an ageing population with a very low influx of young people, we are expecting the number of missing professional drivers to increase dramatically in the coming years, with an alarming forecast of about 2 million missing drivers by 2026. This will create a critical situation for mobility in Europe – and the economy in general.

*By this letter, we call for your support to use the revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive as an opportunity to considerably increase the flow of new professional drivers into the EU talent pool.*

**Give EU youth the chance to embrace the driver profession**

Youth unemployment, which reaches up to 35% in some Member States, is a social issue in the EU. Yet, only about 7% of professional drivers are below 25 years of age.

One reason for the low number of young drivers is the legal barrier created by the EU Driving Licence Directive.

*Young truck drivers*

IRU welcomes the possibility of 17-year-old apprentice drivers *accompanying professional drivers* as a way to capture potential talents finishing school. However, the Commission's proposal can be improved by unequivocally setting the age of fully trained professional truck drivers at 18 for both national and international driving.

*Young bus and coach drivers*

In the bus and coach sector, 50km should no longer be the barrier for young drivers. 18-year-old drivers who are capable of safely driving 49km cannot suddenly become a danger on the road if they drive 51km. Removing the 50km limit would provide the opportunity to serve more lines or stop discontinuing lines due to the lack of drivers, particularly in large rural areas.

An equally simple correction of the Driving Licence Directive is to allow drivers below 21 to cross borders if both countries accept drivers of that age on their own territory. There is no reason to set a border barrier for young drivers when both countries concerned consider drivers of that age to be safe enough to drive nationally.

Ultimately, we call for the alignment of the minimum driving age for fully trained bus and coach drivers with that applicable to truck drivers, which is 18 years old.

### **Attract third-country drivers to supplement the EU pool**

Considering the dramatic shortage of drivers, even the most optimistic approach will not solve the issue without an infusion of third-country professional drivers.

The revision of the EU Driving Licence Directive provides a unique opportunity to create a genuine EU framework for the recognition of third-country drivers' professional driving licences, which the European Commission has proposed, and of certificates for professional training (CPCs), which should be added.

### **Allow the greening of light vehicle fleets without losing drivers**

While the road transport sector is committed to decarbonising and is increasingly purchasing zero-emission vehicles, the increase in vehicle mass due to the weight of the battery is affecting the availability of drivers.

Drivers of small passenger transport vehicles, such as minivans, taxis, and freight vans, with a basic B licence are no longer able to drive these vehicles because they often exceed the authorised mass for this licence category, including when using alternatively powered engines. This compels transport operators to look for new drivers in the scarce pool of C and D licenced drivers.

IRU therefore calls for raising the authorised mass for B licence from the current 3.5t to a higher limit in the case of zero-emission vehicles, which will allow the holders of B drivers to continue driving these vehicles transporting goods and passengers.

We count on your support for an ambitious revision of the Driving Licence Directive to tackle driver shortages.

IRU's full position can be found [here](#).

Yours sincerely,



Raluca Marian  
Director, EU Advocacy & General Delegate