



18 October 2023

Dear MEP,

Subject: Support for Enhanced Driver Training for Professional Van Drivers and Revision of the EU Driving Licence

We are writing with regard to the European Commission's proposal to amend the EU Driving Licence Directive (2006/126). A key objective of this proposal is to bolster road safety and to contribute to meeting the EU's target to reduce road deaths and serious injuries by 50% by 2030.

Our organisations believe that it is crucial to introduce additional mandatory driver training for professional van drivers.

Vans play a significant role in road crashes within the EU, and the use of vans is on the rise. In 2018, a shocking 11% of all road deaths (2630 people) were the result of crashes involving Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs). The highest number of road deaths following collisions involving LGVs is recorded among pedestrians (21%), cyclists (7%) and motorcyclists (11%) making up 39% of total such deaths.

A report from the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) indicates that LGV usage is increasing due to higher demand. This includes more LGVs operating during office hours in central urban areas, increased nighttime deliveries, and the surge in online shopping, leading to more deliveries to workplaces and households. One in three collisions involving LGVs take place in urban areas.

Unfortunately, the pressure to meet market demands, fierce competition in the transport industry, and a relative lack of regulation have contributed to poor working conditions for LGV drivers, posing significant safety risks.

One key issue is that LGVs weighing less than 3.5t are subject to less stringent regulations regarding driver and working hours compared to Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). HGV regulations necessitate operators to be licensed and drivers to obtain Certificates of Professional Competence (CPCs), which must be periodically updated. However, LGV fleets can operate under lower standards, and only LGVs exceeding 2.5t and operating across EU borders will be subject to EU rules for driving and resting times by 2026. The vast majority of van traffic, which operates within national borders, will not be affected by this change, unfortunately.

To enhance road safety, all professional LGV drivers should receive training on safe loading and unloading, cargo securing, reversing, fatigue prevention, journey planning, and adherence to traffic rules, including seatbelt usage and avoiding distractions. Research cited in the recent ETSC report on LGV safety has shown higher rates of seatbelt non-compliance and mobile phone distractions among drivers using vehicles for work.

We strongly urge that the current requirements for bus and truck drivers, including the need for professional driver training (Certificates of Professional Competence - CPCs), should be extended to create a new category for van drivers ; including van drivers who may be misclassified as self-employed

or owner driver. This could be accomplished as part of the European Parliament rapporteur's proposal to establish a B+ category with the creation of a separate requirement for CPC-type training for N1 vehicles used for professional purposes.

On a final note regarding road safety, we wish to make it clear that we do not support the European Commission's proposal to increase the permissible mass of a 'B' category vehicle from 3.5 to 4.25 tonnes. There is substantial evidence (VIAS institute, Belgium) indicating that larger and more powerful vehicles are having an increasingly adverse impact on road safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists.

We firmly believe that more can and should be done to improve the safety standards of LGV fleets to align them with the broader freight and passenger transport sector. This would also professionalize the sector as a whole and ultimately establish a cohesive set of measures for all types of professional transport, including installment of tachographs to combat fatigue. We would wholeheartedly welcome the introduction of a new category in the Driving Licence Directive that mandates additional professional training for this group of drivers.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We trust that you will consider our recommendations seriously as part of your deliberations on the proposed amendments to the EU Driving Licence Directive.

Yours sincerely,

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*This letter is sent on behalf of all organisations applying their logos (above).*

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