

Brussels, 27 March 2006

Member States Agree on the European Driving Licence

Today the Council of Ministers reached a political agreement on a European Commission proposal from 2003 regarding a European driving licence (COM(2003)621 – [IP/03/1435](#)). Common European rules will facilitate the free movement of EU drivers, prevent fraud when driving licences are used as identification documents and improve road safety, particularly where motorcycles are concerned. A single model in credit card format will replace the more than 110 different models currently in circulation.

Vice-President Barrot welcomed the agreement saying “*The European driving licence is of vital importance for road safety and for the fight against fraud. It will make travel around Europe easier and without bureaucratic difficulties. All drivers will have clear, modern licences that will be accepted in all Member States – I am pleased the Council succeeded in reaching this agreement*”.

The new driving licence will ensure improved road safety through better definitions of the scope of application of the different driving licence categories. It will make clear exactly who is entitled to drive what. It provides for the introduction of a licence for mopeds and establishes the principle of progressive access to bigger and more powerful motorcycles. Direct access to the latter category will only be possible at the age of 24 after a theoretical and practical test. People who want to ride the most powerful motorcycles before that age will need to gain two years experience on lighter types. The new rules also set minimum standards for driving examiners.

The new legislation represents an important step towards combating fraud involving driving licences and the phenomenon of “driving licence tourism”¹. Member States will strengthen their cooperation in order to prevent temporarily banned drivers from obtaining a new driving licence in another Member State. An EU wide-network for data-exchange of driving licenses needs also to be established for this purpose.

A single new driving licence model in credit card format with reinforced security features will be introduced, whereas the 110 different models still in circulation will be gradually phased out. After the entry into force of the directive, Member States will have 26 years at their disposal to replace the existing driving licences. Specific provisions have been agreed upon to ensure that every existing entitlement to drive a specific vehicle will continue to benefit from mutual recognition.

¹ This term describes the following phenomenon: citizens, who had to hand in their driving license to the authorities of their home state after a serious offence, obtain a new driving license in another Member State, which has then to be recognised also in their home state.

The new directive will leave Member States free to introduce a microchip or not on the new model. Whatever option they chose Member States must respect EU data protection rules.

In future, the validity of driving licenses will be limited. The new rules foresee a 10 year validity period for licenses, which Member States may raise to 15 years. Member States are free to organise medical examinations at the time of administrative renewal.

Following the political agreement of today, the formal adoption of the Directive by the European Parliament will be effective later this year in a second reading. Thus the Directive will enter into force by the end of 2006 and therefore be applicable at the latest at the end of 2012.

[MEMO/06/143](#)