



Elena Kountoura
Member of the European Parliament
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 - Bruxelles
Belgium

By email

BR1059504/RMA

Brussels, 20 juin 2023

Re: Collective passenger transport needs new blood to survive. We call for your help through the revision of the Driving Licence Directive

Dear Ms Kountoura,

The International Road Transport Union (IRU), the International Association of Public Transport (UITP), and the European Passenger Transport Operators (EPTO) would like to bring to your attention a serious concern and to seek your support in its resolution. *There is currently a severe shortage of bus and coach drivers across many Member States. With the prediction of a wave of driver retirements in the next few years, coupled with too few new entrants to the profession, this has the potential to impair the operational functioning and continuity of collective passenger transport, specifically regular and occasional transport by bus and coach.*

One of the solutions is in your hands, by a simple amendment of EU law. We call for your help to seize the opportunity and make the change the sector urgently needs - a sector at the heart of Europe's green transformation by providing EU citizens with a sustainable, safe, environmentally beneficial and socially equitable alternative to their individual motorised transport means.

One of the solutions is in your hands

The public transport sector is subject to the binding requirements of the Driving Licence Directive and the provisions of the "professional training directive - Directive (EU) 2022/2561", both amended by the EU Commission's proposal. The latter sets the standard minimum age for bus/coach drivers to 21 years if they hold a full Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) and drive on regular lines of less than 50 km. In addition, Member States have the possibility to decrease the age for domestic service operation (subject to the same 50km limit) to 18 years for drivers with full professional training.

This 50 km limitation represents a barrier for providing good public transport services in lower density areas, for example for regional and suburban lines. This is an arbitrary restriction as it is not the length of the route or service which is relevant to driver fatigue and safety, but the total driving hours in a day of work. Developing public transport links between rural areas and city centres represents a challenge and should not be made more difficult by such an arbitrary imposition.

Evidence from Member States which decreased the minimum age to 18 years old, such as the Netherlands and Sweden, does not show any propensity for such drivers to have an increased accident risk. Furthermore, in the UK, bus and coach driving from age 18 has been permitted for over 40 years without any evidence of an increased safety risk.

We therefore call for the removal of the 50 km limitation in the professional training directive. This means introducing a standard minimum age of 21 years in all cases for drivers with full professional

training. We call for the option for EU Member States to decrease the minimum age of fully trained drivers to 18 irrespective of the route length (again without the 50km restriction).

The magnitude of the issue

According to the latest IRU driver shortage survey, the share of unfilled bus and coach driver positions increased by 45% in 2023 versus 2021, reaching 10% of positions being unfilled in 2023. These shortages, across many EU Member States, threaten the very functioning of European mobility, with a great number of examples of discontinued public transport routes due to the lack of drivers.

Today, we have a rapidly aging drivers' population, with an average age around 50. The percentage share of young drivers under 25 is at a historical low (3%). It is predicted that the bus and coach driving profession is facing a critical situation, whereby in the coming 10 to 15 years, the number of vacancies is expected to be multiplied by a factor of up to 4 in some countries as a result of older drivers retiring and a shortage of new recruits. The impact will almost certainly be a reduction in the provision of essential (public) transport services, thereby reducing access to employment, education, health, retail and leisure facilities, across Europe.

To conclude, we count on your support for public passenger transport in the EU, as a green and affordable facility available to EU citizens. We call for your support to simplify the current rules and establish a minimum age of 21 for all fully trained drivers, providing EU Member States with the possibility to decrease the drivers' age to 18 years, without distance limitation, as set out above. We kindly ask you to consider the proposed amendment enclosed.

Signatures



Raluca Marian
Director EU Advocacy and
General Delegate of IRU to
the EU



John Birtwistle
President of EPTO



Thomas Avanzata
Spokesperson of the EU
Committee
International Association of
Public Transport, UITP

[IRU](#) is the voice of more than 900,000 road transport companies in the EU, including truck, bus, coach and taxi companies, which operate about 35 million vehicles. IRU is the official social partner recognised by the European Commission to engage in negotiations with trade unions on behalf of road transport employers in the EU. In total, the road transport sector employs over 5 million people.

[EPTO](#), the association of European Passenger Transport Operators, represents major private sector public transport operators in Europe who have the majority of their business awarded by open tendering and contracts. EPTO is committed to the development of the transport market through liberalisation of bus, rail and other similar transport modes.

[UITP](#) (Union Internationale des Transports Publics) is the International Association of Public Transport and a passionate champion of sustainable urban mobility. Established in 1885, with more than 135 years of history, it is the only worldwide network to bring together all public transport stakeholders and all sustainable transport modes. Across the globe and every day, people rely on public transport to bring them to school, to work, to sports clubs and cafés. In using public transport millions travel more sustainably, safer and actively while bringing economic benefit to their community. UITP supports the entire sector to ultimately guarantee that public transport and its workers continue to bring cities to life. UITP has over 1,900 members, in more than 100 countries, with 13 offices across the globe.

Proposal for a
DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
on driving licences, amending Directive (EU) 2022/2561 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Directive 2006/126/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Commission Regulation (EU) No 383/2012

Amendment

Proposal to amend Article 5 paragraph 3 of Directive (EU) 2022/2561¹
Article 5 – paragraph 3

<i>Text of the Article</i>	<i>IRU, UITP and EPTO proposed amendment</i>
<p>3. Drivers of a vehicle intended for the carriage of passengers may drive:</p> <p>(a) from the age of 21:</p> <p>(i) a vehicle in driving licence categories D and D + E to carry passengers on regular services where the route does not exceed 50 kilometres and a vehicle in driving licence categories D1 and D1 + E, provided that they hold a CPC as referred to in Article 6(2).</p> <p>Any Member State may authorise drivers of vehicles in one of those categories to drive such vehicles within its territory from the age of 18, provided that they hold a CPC as referred to in Article 6(1);</p>	<p>3. Drivers of a vehicle intended for the carriage of passengers may drive:</p> <p>(a) from the age of 21:</p> <p>(i) a vehicle in driving licence categories D and D + E to carry passengers on regular services where the route does not exceed 50 kilometres and a vehicle in driving licence categories D1 and D1 + E, provided that they hold a CPC as referred to in Article 6(2).</p> <p>Any Member State may authorise drivers of vehicles in one of those categories to drive such vehicles within its territory from the age of 18, provided that they hold a CPC as referred to in Article 6(1);</p>

Justification

The purpose of this amendment is to remove the 50-kilometer distance limitation. The current minimum age limitations for professional bus and coach drivers established by EU law are a strong barrier for young Europeans to be employed in the sector after leaving school, leading to a record low level of employment of young people in the profession and a much higher average age of bus and coach drivers.

¹ Directive (EU) 2022/2561 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the initial qualification and periodic training of drivers of certain road vehicles for the carriage of goods or passengers (codification)