



European Commission

Newsletter N° 10 | December 2012

Road Safety Newsletter



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A single driving licence for the whole EU

January 2013 will see the introduction of a European driving licence as part of the entry into force of the third EU Driving Licence Directive. The new credit-card style format will replace some 100 paper and plastic models currently in use by more than 300 million drivers across the EU.



The new licence includes a photograph of the holder and Member States can include a microchip giving access to information about the card holder. The licence has also been made almost impossible to falsify.

Fragmented licencing is an obstacle to road safety as it encourages licence tourism. Potentially reckless drivers, such as those banned due to traffic offences, may try to get a new licence in other countries. The introduction of a licence recognised in all Member States will also support mobility of responsible drivers and help to strengthen holders' European identity.

The licence is backed up by a European electronic data exchange system, which will facilitate the management of driving licences by administrations, especially for persons changing residence from one Member State to another. It will also contribute to better detection of driving licence fraud.

For car drivers and motorcyclists, the new document must be renewed every 10 to 15 years depending on the Member State. Licences for bus and lorry drivers will be valid for five years and a medical check-up will be necessary for renewal.



Gradual access to motorcycles for young Europeans



While the European driving licence represents a considerable step towards harmonisation, according to Casto Lopez of the European Commission Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, 'The changes for motorcycles are probably the most important.'

This is understandable given the safety issues related to motorcycles and mopeds. As Secretary General of the Federation of European Motorcyclists' Associations (FEMA), Aline Delhaye tells us,

“ Motorcycle safety is complex as there are different types of vehicle, rider and use and different levels of safety awareness which often vary between countries. ”

Ms Delhaye adds, *'The focus has only been put on motorcycling safety recently. Before, few people paid attention to motorcyclists, and research, infrastructure and standards didn't take account of them. Over the last decade, safety on the road has improved for most road users but to a much lesser extent for motorcyclists. Today, because of congestion and mobility problems, the numbers of powered two wheelers on the road have increased tremendously, hence the need to have a dedicated approach to motorcycling safety.'*

The prominent place accorded to motorcycling in the new Driving Licence Directive is part of the EU response to this. A notable element is the introduction of new vehicle categories, including the creation of a separate category for mopeds. Moped licence applicants will from now on be required to pass a theory test and Member States may also introduce skill and behaviour tests and medical examinations.

The new rules establish uniform minimum ages for acquiring licences for different types of motorcycle.

'The Directive will implement the principle of gradual access to different categories of motorcycle,' says Casto Lopez. 'This will encourage riders to acquire experience on smaller motorcycles before they can ride bigger ones, which is justifiable on the grounds of safety, as fatalities among motorcyclists are disproportionately high compared to other road users and many of them may be due to inexperience.'

Long-term solutions for tackling road traffic offences



The European Commission supports a variety of licence-related projects which encourage safer driving. One example is BESTPOINT, which was concluded in September 2012. Its aim was to establish a set of practices to enable demerit point systems (DPS) to make a more effective and long-term contribution to road safety.

Under DPS, licencing authorities issue points to drivers who are convicted of traffic offences. If a driver's points total exceeds a set limit, they may be disqualified or have their licence revoked.

Various kinds of DPS have been used in Europe to act as a deterrent and punish repeat offenders. While their impact on accident numbers may often be significant, it is also thought to be short-lived.

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Against this background, BESTPOINT collected data on existing DPS so as to get an overview of their main aspects, backed up by expert opinions. This led to an evaluation of the systems and accompanying legal frameworks, all of which enabled the project to identify the essential features of an effective DPS.



On this basis, the BESTPOINT handbook was compiled. This is the culmination of the project. It provides an overview of the recommended practices and should help to prepare the way for a standard EU DPS.

The results were presented to policy makers and representatives of public authorities and road safety groups at a final conference. They will be promoted further through national dissemination plans of the project partners and the European Transport Safety Council.

Second European Motorcyclists' Forum takes place in Cologne

Following the success of the first Forum, which took place in Brussels in 2010, the second European Motorcyclists' Forum was held in Cologne on 3 October 2012. The event was jointly organised by the European Commission and FEMA and brought together motorcyclists, experts in the field and policy makers.

In the context of the public launch at the Forum of the RIDERSCAN project, the main focus was safety. As figures for accidents and deaths amongst riders are not improving in line with those for other road users, delegates discussed ways to improve this.

National safety approaches were presented in the form of the Swedish "Joint Strategy" and the Dutch "Action Plan" for improving road safety for motorcyclists and moped riders.

According to Aline Delhay, 'These are examples to be promoted because motorcyclists were fully involved in their development and the outcomes are expected to be very positive. Getting the motorcyclists on board is already a major step forward and listening to their needs will definitely make things happen as shown by the examples from Sweden and the Netherlands.'

Research highlights

The Forum highlighted the importance of research by showcasing both the RIDERSCAN (www.riderscan.eu) and the SIM2CO+ projects (<http://www.pole-moveo.org/pdf-projets-das/Sim2co-A.pdf>). SIM2CO+ designs simulated training modules to improve learner motorcyclists' hazard perception. Their content is based on a review of existing literature and a study of novice and learner riders.

Research is essential in improving road safety. Casto Lopez emphasised the EU's commitment in this area, saying:

“ The EU has provided grants to many road safety projects. Concerning motorcycles, it provided 50% of the financing for projects such as RIDERSCAN, which makes a comprehensive assessment of motorcycle safety. ”

The Forum also benefited from third country input. Liz de Rome from Neuroscience Research Australia presented findings of her latest study on motorcycle protective gear along with an overview of research in Australia as regards training, infrastructure and behaviour.

Training, licencing and infrastructure

Discussion is a vital part of any Forum and, says Casto Lopez, 'The main topics were the role of training and licencing and improvements to infrastructure.' Two panel discussions took place, the first of which looked at the relationship between training and licencing systems and how to improve them.

As Mr Lopez adds, 'Concerning licencing, the Forum acknowledged the importance of the gradual access to be implemented by the new Driving Licence Directive. It also underlined the importance of risk perception and awareness in motorcycle training and training in real traffic situations, as this is not generally applied today.'



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Representatives from Norway and Sweden also underlined the need for driving licence and training schemes to take precise accident knowledge as their starting point. In Norway, for instance, in-depth accident investigation has led to a revision of the training curriculum to better fit riders' needs. This revision process then led to a review of the licencing access scheme.





The second session focused on improving infrastructure and possible reviews of construction standards. Other topics included design and maintenance of roads and barriers for motorcyclists.

The discussion took account of challenges to improving infrastructure, particularly the fact that,

“ responsibility for infrastructure is diverse and cooperation and communication amongst stakeholders is essential. Safety rules and standards are not always implemented. We have to work to ensure that they are, explains Mr Lopez. ”

As part of the infrastructure session FEMA presented its motorcyclist protection system website (<http://www.mc-roadsidebarriers.eu/>). For Aline Delhaye, the site is one answer to the above-mentioned problem. *‘It will help road authorities to better understand the problems of motorcyclists involved in collisions with roadside barriers. The website provides a lot of useful information on existing test protocols, good examples in various European countries, and detailed guidelines for road authorities on the recent EU Technical*

Specification 1317 part 8, but particularly important is the database where manufacturers can place details of motorcyclist protection products. Local authorities can then go online to look for the products they need.’

Ms Delhaye felt that the launch of the public activities of the RIDERSCAN project at the European Motorcyclists Forum was a milestone. She explains that, *‘one of the objectives of the project is to create a motorcycle safety network throughout Europe, and get the best information about motorcycle safety. The Forum was the best opportunity to launch the RIDERSCAN motorcyclists pan-European Survey (<http://www.fema-online.eu/riderscan-survey/>) and to offer the opportunity for people to provide input (at <http://www.fema-online.eu/riderscan/contribute>). Both FEMA and the European Commission see these inputs as very important.’*

Reflecting on the day, Aline Delhaye concluded that, *‘The Forum is useful as it allows national stakeholders to learn what’s happening in other countries. Road authorities and motorcyclists want the same thing. The means of reaching our aim and the analysis might differ but the best way to get there is to talk to each other.’*



The next Forum will take place in 2013. Date and place will be announced soon on www.europeanmotorcyclistsforum.eu.

Find out more...
If these subjects have revved up your interest, then check out the new road safety website at: ec.europa.eu/roadsafety
European Youth Forum for Road Safety (EYFRS) also has a Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/EYFRS
EYFRS has its own website at: ec.europa.eu/eyfrs
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Published by: Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport | European Commission – BE-1049 Brussels
http://ec.europa.eu/transport/index_en.htm

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