



Certificate of professional competence certifying the driver's initial qualification or periodic training (Directive 2003/59/EC)

Introduction

Starting from 10 September 2009, each truck driver who is employed by a company established in an EU Member State or who is a national of a Member State will need a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) in order to be allowed to pursue a driving activity. This certificate has nothing to do with the CPC for Operators which is needed for operating a transport company.

Scope

The CPC covers more issues than the test for a professional driving licence. Some examples:

- knowledge of the modern safety features and technical characteristics of the vehicle
- rational driving, including optimised fuel consumption;
- loading with due regard for safety and legislation in force;
- knowledge of the social and safety legislation related to road transport (driving time, working time, digital tachograph, etc...);
- ability to fill in official documentation such as CMR;
- being conscious of the risks to the security (criminality and trafficking) and safety (influence of alcohol, medicine or high speed on road safety) related to road transport and ability to respond to emergency situations;
- knowledge of the economic rationale behind road transport and its relations with other transport modes.

Aims

The CPC scheme will in general enhance the professional competence of the drivers, with positive implications in the following fields:

- increased road safety;
- reduced emissions and fuel consumption;
- enhanced profile of the industry;

- harmonised training of drivers that will facilitate worker mobility on the common market.

The Directive also lowers the minimum age for driving a truck to 18 years. This measure should partially ease the problem of shortage of drivers in Europe.

Contents

There will be two sorts of CPCs:

- the **CPC certifying initial qualification**: issued to drivers that apply for the first time for a CPC. In order to get it, drivers will have to successfully pass an official practical and theoretical test organised under the supervision of the Member State of their residence. Each Member State can also decide to render mandatory a previous training. In such a case, the training must last at least 280 hours (under special conditions, this period can be reduced to 140 hours). Drivers holding a C1, C1+E, C or C+E driving licence, issued no later than 10 September 2009, will be exempted from the requirement to obtain a CPC certifying initial qualification.
- The **CPC certifying periodic training**: issued to drivers that already hold a CPC certifying initial qualification or are exempted from the requirement to obtain it, after completion of a periodic training on road safety and rationalised fuel consumption. The first of the periodic trainings must be completed within 5 years (in some cases, Member States were allowed to shorten this period to 3 years or extend it to 7) after the CPC certifying initial qualification has been issued (or 5 years after 10 September 2009 for the drivers exempted from the obligation to certify initial qualification). A periodic training must then be completed every 5 years.

As an exception to the general rule, young drivers can work for a maximum period of 3 years without holding a CPC, under the condition that they are involved in a national vocational training lasting at least 6 months.

Issues

Costs and benefits

The CPC will bring substantial benefits to road haulage operators that will be related most notably to reduced damage rates and optimised fuel consumption.

However, either the drivers or their employers will have to cover the costs of CPC training and testing. Some estimates done by the British Driving Standards Agency (DSA) show that the full training for a CPC certifying initial qualification might cost as much as 3000 GBP (around 4000 euros). The mandatory 35 hours

periodic training will also correspond to an expense of several hundreds of euros. Finally – once again according to the study of the DSA, the fee for sitting a CPC test will amount to around 200 GBP (266 euros).

Luckily, the directive leaves a large margin of appreciation to the Member States in whether to impose mandatory training to candidates for a CPC certifying initial qualifications. Most Member States are likely not to do it. The British and Irish governments have indeed calculated that the introduction of the CPC scheme would bring an overall social loss if drivers were required to pass the 280 hours long training, while it would bring profits otherwise.

The directive also makes it possible to take the mandatory periodic training in several periods of at least 7 hours each, thus spreading the total cost over time.

Finally, the possibility to pursue a remunerated activity under a national vocational training while preparing for the CPC will help young drivers to cope with the costs of the test itself.

Training

Currently, many road transport companies, including several ECG Members, organise training for their drivers on issues covered by the CPC like fuel efficiency, safety and loading. When the new legislation starts to be applied in 2009, this training will have to be aligned on the official syllabus presented in the Directive. This will give ECG the opportunity to coordinate the efforts of its members and create a common training programme preparing to the CPC certifying initial qualification. Such a programme could not only include issues relevant to general haulage necessary to pass the test, but also those related to car transport in particular (load distribution, use of the hydraulics, lashing, etc...).

For periodic training, not much can be coordinated by ECG: according to the directive, training must be given at an authorised centre in the country of residence of the driver. Nothing prevents, however, particular ECG members from applying to become an authorised training centre.

If you have further questions concerning the Drivers CPC, please don't hesitate to contact Jan Szulczyk at jan.szulczyk@eurocartrans.org or under the telephone number +32 2 706 8280.