



28 November 2023

Open letter to EU Ministers of Transport

Re: Concerns over dangers of allowing teenagers to drive heavy goods vehicles

Dear Minister,

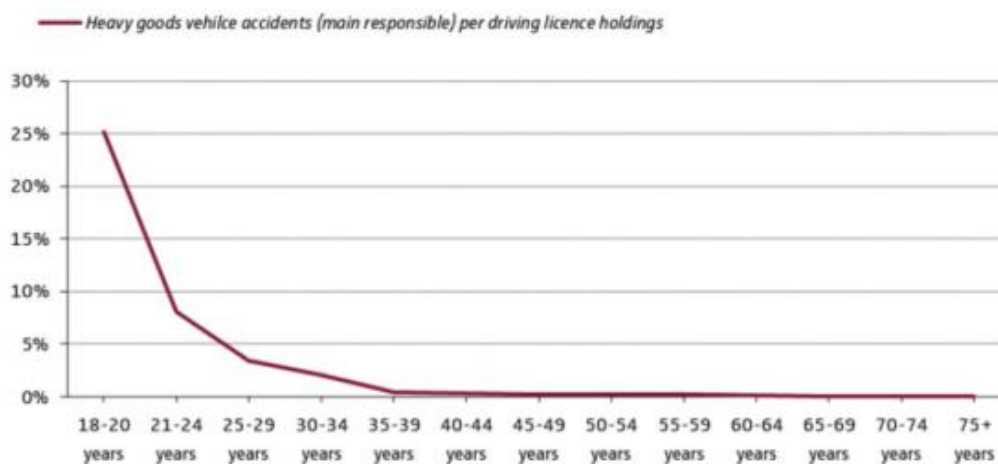
On 1 March 2023, the European Commission published its proposal to revise the EU rules on driving licences, as part of a [‘road safety package’](#) of legislation.

Ahead of the adoption of the position of [EU Member State transport ministers](#) on 4 December, our organisations wish to highlight our concerns over the proposal to lower the minimum age for driving a lorry or bus.

The Commission proposes to allow 17-year-olds to begin accompanied training to drive a lorry. The current recommended minimum age for this category of vehicle in the EU is 21, though five countries allow 18-year-olds to drive HGVs under certain conditions today. We are concerned the proposal to lower the general recommended age could encourage even more countries to allow youngsters to begin solo HGV driving from the age of 18.

Putting a teenager behind the wheel of a 40-tonne lorry risks serious consequences for road safety according to data from countries that already allow it.

Research by the German Insurance Association (GDV) shows that HGV drivers aged 18-20 caused a much higher number of collisions resulting in personal injury, in relation to the number of licences registered for that age group, when compared to all other HGV age groups. That proportion decreases considerably up to 24 years and remains stable in older age groups.



Accidents of heavy goods vehicle drivers as main responsible for accidents causing personal injury (2017 to 2019), per driving licence holdings per age (average 2017 to 2019); (all C categories).²⁴

Similarly, data from Statistics Finland (2014 to 2020), show that the involvement in collisions of truck and bus drivers aged 18-19 in proportion to the number of driving licences for that age group, is



considerably higher with respect to other age groups and it decreases with increasing age of the driver. In Poland, data provided by the Motor Transport Institute (ITS) show the same trend.

Young people undergo significant biological and social changes between the ages of 15 and 25. Brain development is ongoing throughout this period and is not completed until well into the 20s. Consequently, when young people are learning to drive, their cognitive abilities are still not completely developed. This affects their perception of, and attitudes towards, risk. Cognitive development during puberty can lead to greater emotional instability and more assertive behaviour. Thus, as road users, young people tend to display risky behaviours and have a diminished appreciation of the hazards that they face. Biological research shows that, at the age of 18, areas of the human brain which are responsible for the integration of information and impulse control are still developing.

Our message is: do not lower the minimum age for any type of driving license but pay special attention to the heaviest vehicles, where crashes can be catastrophic.

For more information and links to the sources mentioned above, please see the full briefing: <https://etsc.eu/briefing-reducing-the-minimum-age-for-driving-an-hgv-bus-or-coach-in-the-eu-would-increase-safety-risks/>

The proposed changes form part of a legislative package that had the stated goal of improving road safety (it is known as the 'road safety package'). But if the EU goes ahead with plans to allow teenagers to drive lorries the legislation will likely have the opposite effect. We strongly urge you to take the above facts into consideration in your decision-making.

Yours faithfully,

Ekin Öztürk, European Transport Workers Federation
Ellen Townsend, European Transport Safety Council ETSC
Filippo Randi, European Federation of Road Traffic Victims
Ceri Woolsgrove, European Cyclists Federation