

Single EU driving licence from 2013
By Carmel Attard
Forum Malta fl-Ewropa

In December the European Parliament is set to approve from the second reading a proposed directive by the European Commission that would introduce a single driving licence in all the Member States of the European Union.

The Transport Committee of the European Parliament has already approved the draft proposal which would be replacing more than 110 different models of driving licences that are currently used in the EU of 25. The new licence would be in the format of a credit-card. Malta has already adopted such a format for its driving licences.

The new law aims to limit the validity of the driving licence to a maximum of 15 years. The idea behind the introduction of a single driving licence is to help reduce fraud and improve road safety. A good number of people in Europe use their driving licence as a form of identification instead of a passport or identity card. However, with the different formats of current driving licences, the present system is open to fraudulent use. The new licence may also include a microchip with information on the driver. Since the licences will be renewed periodically, the new system will allow Member States to update the data on the driver and insert new security features on the card, if necessary.

For instance, in some EU Member States, driving licences are issued for life. This practice will be stopped by the new single EU driving licence. Besides, a driver who is banned in his or her Member State, will also be banned in the rest of the EU.

The new law introduces also stricter rules in the granting of driving licences to motorcyclists who have powerful bikes. The European Commission is arguing that motorcycles are 16 times more often involved in road accidents than car drivers. The new directive imposes an additional test for a driver who wishes to move from a lower powered bike to a more powerful one.

Once the European Parliament approves in plenary session the proposed directive, the new law would enter into force and Member States would start issuing the new driving licence by 2013. However, Member States would have 26 years to ensure that all driving licences are replaced by the single card.

More information can be obtained from Forum Malta fl-Ewropa, telephone 2590 9192 or email foruminfo@gov.mt