

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ROAD

AND MOTOR TRANSPORT

Geneva, 23 August 1949

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE LICENSING OF MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General requested in his note of 28 April 1949, all Governments invited to the Conference to submit inter alia information with regard to their existing and prospective requirements for the licensing of motor vehicle drivers, as he was of the opinion that such information would assist the Conference in drafting the final provisions of a new Convention dealing with the mutual recognition of the validity of national drivers licenses in the territories of all Contracting States.

This document summarizes a first series of replies received by the United Nations from 14 Governments. Further replies will be issued as addenda.

In order to present the data, varying considerably in comprehensiveness and systems of classification, in the form of tables, it was necessary to adopt a simplified classification of the various requirements for the licensing of motor vehicle drivers and to interpret to a certain extent the replies received from the Governments. Since it is the purpose of the study undertaken to find out whether there exists a common pattern of requirements in the various countries the tables only list the more important and comparable of these requirements. Special conditions or special categories of vehicles mentioned occasionally in the replies were therefore omitted, for example, a requirement to submit a record of offences with the application for the license, which was mentioned by two countries. In other cases very long lists of health requirements had to be briefly summarized.

The tables permit, nevertheless, a quick comparison of the principal conditions under which drivers' licenses are granted in the countries which have sent in replies.

ANALYSIS OF REPLIES

Comparison of the information supplied by the Governments concerning their national requirements for the issue of drivers' licenses shows great variations in every respect.

Thus for example, many countries have a careful classification of licenses according to the type of vehicle for which they are valid and also require a very elaborate examination of applicants for drivers' licenses, while the Government of one country reported that one of the sub-divisions of that country does not even require any drivers license.

1. MINIMUM AGE

In most countries the minimum age for the issue of a license varies with the class of vehicles for which the license is valid.

The classification of vehicles varies considerably. Some countries require a license for motor cycles. In others the lowest category of vehicles requiring a license are non-commercial passenger vehicles (e.g. up to eight seats) and light trucks. For this class the minimum age varies from 14 to 18 years. A number of countries issue under certain conditions so-called "restricted licenses" or "junior permits" to persons younger than the normal age limit.

The next class usually comprises heavy trucks. From the few replies mentioning this class it seems that the corresponding license is usually granted at the age of 19 to 20 years.

The highest class usually includes heavy passenger buses, for which some countries have set an age limit of 21 to 22 years.

Other countries have additional classes depending upon the total weight of the vehicle (or combination of vehicles), the number of trailers and their system of brakes, etc.

2. HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

The legislation of the various countries with respect to this requirement is even more varied than that concerning minimum age.

While some countries do not have any requirements at all, others demand careful examination by medical examiners, certifying that the applicant meets certain minimum health standards.

A large group of countries has adopted an intermediate system requiring the applicant to declare his physical and mental disabilities, some of which disqualify the candidate absolutely from holding a drivers license. The most common are lunacy, epilepsy, sudden attacks of fainting, etc. By far the most common health requirements are certain minimum standards for eyesight and hearing, in most cases tested by an official examiner. The methods of testing and the minimum standards again differ considerably from country to country.

A number of countries give the addiction to alcohol and drugs as a reason for denying a license.

In several countries, although fewer than in the case of minimum age, the health requirements vary with the class of vehicles, for which the license is valid.

3. EXAMINATION

The same divergency of national requirements as noted in the previous paragraphs also prevails with respect to the examination of the driver as to his knowledge of the rules of the road and his abilities to drive.

While a few countries do not require one or the other of these examinations or forego examination altogether, others have various types of examination according to the type of vehicle for which the license is valid.

The majority of those countries which sent in replies has adopted however, the two following examinations:

- (a) oral or written examination in the knowledge of the rules of the road,
- (b) practical driving test.

The details which some countries give concerning these examinations demonstrate a wide divergency in their conception and application. It seems to be a standard practice, however, that the applicant has to take the practical driving test in the type of vehicle for which the license is to be valid.

Certain countries require that a certain time of apprenticeship elapse between the time of application for a learner's permit and the granting of the license. It is in some cases especially required for the drivers of passenger buses that the applicant prove that he has driven a heavy truck over a certain period of time without having caused any complaints.

Furthermore, in a few cases the examinations include knowledge of the mechanics of the vehicle, particularly for professional drivers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the preceding paragraphs the majority of the countries which sent replies seem to adhere to the following general pattern of requirements for drivers:

(a) Categories of vehicles

Licenses are issued for different types of vehicles.

The most common categories are:

- A. Motor cycles
- B. Light passenger cars and light trucks
- C. Heavy trucks
- D. Passenger buses

(b) Minimum age

The minimum age for drivers varies for the different categories of vehicles. The age of 18 years seems to be the most common minimum for Class B: light passenger cars and light trucks.

(c) Health requirements

The eyesight and the hearing of the applicant for a license have to meet certain minimum standards.

The applicant has to declare his physical and mental disabilities, some of which, such as epilepsy, disqualify him from holding a license.

Professional drivers of trucks and passenger vehicles have to meet more rigorous health standards certified by medical examinations.

(d) Examination

The applicant for a license has to pass an examination on his knowledge of the rules of the road and a practical driving test in the type of vehicle for which his license is to be valid.

ANNEX
REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSING OF MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS

COUNTRY	MINIMUM AGE	HEALTH REQUIREMENTS	EXAMINATION
AUSTRALIA			
<u>6 states of the Commonwealth</u>	16 to 18 years, depending upon the State and the type of vehicle. 21 years for public passenger vehicles.	The applicant for a license must declare bodily defects likely to affect his efficiency in operating and controlling a motor vehicle. Certain defects disqualify absolutely. All States require test of eyesight (although with different methods). One State requires test of colour blindness.	Five States require oral, one State requires written examination on traffic laws. All States except one require driving test.
AUSTRIA	16 years for motor cycles up to 127 cubic centimeters. 18 years for other vehicles.	Applicant must undergo examination by medical official and comply with regulations health standard. Addiction to alcohol and drugs disqualify.	Examination in traffic regulations and technical installation of vehicle. Driving test.
BULGARIA	18 years for vehicles up to 3 tons. 20 years for vehicles up to 5 tons or 33 passenger seats. 21 for all vehicles.	Physical examination (type not specified in reply).	General examination (type not specified in reply).

/DENMARK

ANNEX (continued)

COUNTRY		HEALTH REQUIREMENTS	EXAMINATION
DENMARK	21 years for small public passenger vehicles. 22 years for passenger buses. 18 years for other vehicles.	Applicant for license must provide a doctor's certificate and be of sober habits. Test of eyesight and hearing.	Examination on traffic regulations and on knowledge of the way to check the controls of the vehicle. Driving test.
GREECE	18 years for motor cycles. 19 years for other vehicles.	Applicants for both a professional and an amateur permit have to give proof of their competence.	
INDIA	20 years for transport vehicles. 18 years for other vehicles.	Applicant for license must declare physical and mental disabilities. The following diseases and disabilities disqualify from holding a license: Epilepsy, lunacy, sudden attacks of giddiness and fainting, addiction to alcohol, etc., night- blindness and inability to distinguish the pigmentary colours red and green. Test of eyesight and hearing.	Prospective: Literacy test for drivers of public service vehicles. Driving test.

/ITALY

ANNEX (continued)

COUNTRY	MINIMUM AGE	HEALTH REQUIREMENTS	EXAMINATION
ITALY	-	<p>The applicant for a license has to submit a medical report certifying that he meets certain minimum standards.</p> <p>Addiction to alcohol and drugs disqualify.</p> <p>Test of eyesight.</p> <p>Test of hearing.</p>	<p>Examination on the mechanics of the vehicle for drivers of trucks and buses.</p> <p>Driving test.</p>
NEW ZEALAND	15 years.	<p>The applicant for a license to drive a bus, trackless tram, taxicab or passenger-service vehicle has to submit a certificate from a registered medical practitioner.</p> <p>Test of eyesight.</p> <p>Test of hearing.</p>	<p>Oral examination on knowledge of the traffic laws.</p> <p>Driving test.</p>
PHILIPPINES	-	<p>Applicant for license must submit medical certificate from licensed physician.</p> <p>For professional drivers identical medical certificate is necessary for every third renewal of drivers' license.</p>	<p>Written examination on the National Road Law.</p> <p>Professional drivers have to pass, in addition, a written test on the mechanics and control of the motor vehicle.</p> <p>Driving test.</p>

/PORTUGAL

ANNEX (continued)

COUNTRY	MINIMUM AGE	HEALTH REQUIREMENTS	EXAMINATION
PORTUGAL	-	-	Examination on traffic signals, rules of the road and mechanics of the motor vehicle.
SWITZERLAND	18 years 22 years for heavy passenger buses.	Medical examination for professional drivers of passenger vehicles, certifying that they meet certain minimum standards. Addiction to alcohol disqualifies. Test of eyesight. Test of hearing.	Oral examination on the rules of the road and functioning of steering and brakes. Special conditions and examination for professional drivers of passenger vehicles and heavy trucks. Driving test.
UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA 4 provinces	17 to 19 years depending upon province.	Applicant for license must declare physical and mental disabilities, some of which disqualify absolutely (depending upon the province).	All 4 provinces require literacy test examination on the Rules of the Road. All 4 provinces require driving test.
<u>Proposed Uniform Motor Vehicle & Road Traffic Regulation Ordinance.</u>	16 years for motor cycles without and with side car. 18 years for other vehicles except public service vehicles. 21 years for public service vehicles.	Applicant for license must declare physical and mental disabilities. Epilepsy, sudden attacks of fainting, serious mental disorders, addiction to alcohol and drugs, etc., disqualify. Test of eyesight.	Literacy test. Examination on Rules of the Road, traffic signs and signals. Driving test.

/UNITED KINGDOM

ANNEX (continued)

COUNTRY	MINIMUM AGE	HEALTH REQUIREMENTS	EXAMINATION
UNITED KINGDOM	16 years for motor cycles.	Applicant for license must declare diseases and disabilities.	Oral examination in knowledge of the Highway Code.
	21 years for drivers of "locomotives", motor tractors and heavy motor cars.	Epilepsy, sudden attacks of fainting serious mental disorders, addiction to alcohol and drugs, etc., disqualify.	Driving test.
	17 years for other vehicles.	Test of eyesight.	
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	14 to 18 years depending upon state.	All but 7 states require test of eyesight.	All but 7 states require examination on rules.
48 states and District of Columbia. Some states have no provisions on certain requirements.	14 to 17 for restricted license, depending upon state.	Four states do not require examination of any kind.	All but 6 states require a driving test.
One state does not require a driver's license.			
Proposed Uniform Vehicle Code.	16 years	Test of eyesight.	Examination on road rules.
(Revision of 1947-48 by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances).	14 and 15 for restricted licenses.		Driving test.