



PRESS STATEMENT

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Police Officers give high priority to harmonisation of EU Driving Licences – as crucial as biometric data in passports

EuroCOP President Heinz KIEFER calls for swift progress on EU Directive on Driving Licences

Following today's discussion of the draft EU directive on driving licences in the European Parliament Mr KIEFER has emphasised the importance of this directive in terms of public security.

Currently about 100 different models of driving licences are in circulation in the EU. While more recent models regularly contain up to date security features, some models date back to the 1950s and are fairly easy to falsify. However the sheer number of existing models already turns traffic control into a lottery. Even the different classes are not entirely compatible. Consequently, police officers might already have a hard time in finding out on the spot whether a driver is allowed to drive a specific car or not.

For police officers greater harmonisation in this area would thus not only make work a lot easier and be beneficial to transport safety in general at the same time. The bigger problem however is the repercussions for the fight against organised crime and terrorism:

In some EU Member Countries driving licences with an image of the holder are accepted as proof of identity instead of an ID card, i.e. for checking in for a domestic EU flight. This being hard to believe already, particularly after the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, not much is being done to improve the situation.

The vast number of driving licence models and the lack of safety measures to protect against false documents is an invitation to criminals and terrorists to make use of this opportunity. In connection with the widespread acceptance of driving licences as proof of identity in every day life this is unacceptable, says Mr KIEFER. 'From a police practical perspective it is as important to improve the situation with regard to driving licences in the EU as to introduce biometric data in passports.'

The European Confederation of Police, EuroCOP is the umbrella organisation of 26 national Police Unions and Staff Organisations from 18 European States. It represents the interest of over 600.000 police officers in Europe. www.eurocop-police.org.