



The Development of Recommendations on Quality Standards in Professional Driver Training in Europe in the Framework of Directive 2003/59/EC

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Prepared by:

Joanna Burchert, Claudia Ball, Nils Petermann, Prof. Dr. Georg Spöttl

With contributions from:

ProfRDV project consortium

For further information on the project please consult:

www.project-profdrv.eu

For further information on the paper please contact:

Joanna Burchert: burchert@uni-bremen.de

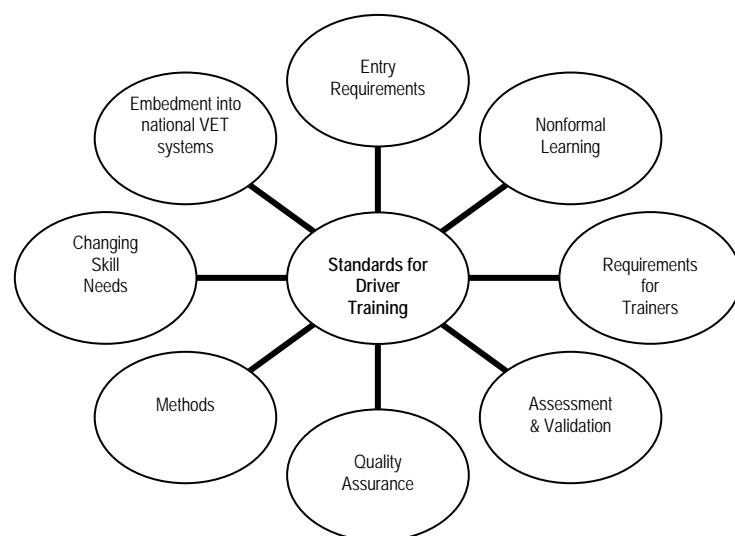
Summary:

The text presents the development process of recommendations for the training of professional drivers in Europe. These standards are referring to the directive 2003/59/EC and the EQF with its output orientation. In summary, the following aspects of training are regarded as crucial:

- Embedding directive 2003/59/EC into national VET systems
- Entry requirements
- Training design and choice of methods within initial and periodic training
- Requirements on trainers
- Assessment & validation in initial and periodic training
- Recognition of non-/informal training
- Adapting content and training approaches to changing skill needs
- Quality assurance in initial and periodic training

(1) Introduction

In the ProfDRV project, the introduction of Directive 2003/59/EC was analyzed by a consortium of training providers and VET researchers. One central issue of these deliberations was driver training: the differences in its realisation in Europe, the question what defines and restrains an ideal training environment, and references to actual developments like the introduction of the EQF and NQFs. One result of our discussions is this paper, in which standards¹ for the training of professional drivers were presented. We understand those training standards as recommendations for practitioners and policy makers.



Picture 1: Areas of Standards for Professional Driver Training

¹ As standard we define, with the CEDEFOP, a series of elements whose content is defined by the concerned actors. Educational standards refer to statements about learning objectives, contents of curricula, entry requirements as well as resources required to meet the learning objectives.

The development process

In November 2011, the ProfDRV project consortium defined which issues are crucial for the quality of professional driver training. The resulted areas are shown in picture 1. A set of standards was defined for each aspect. After this, the standards were translated from English into the other project languages German, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian and Dutch, and discussed with around 40 stakeholders from four different areas:

- Employers and their representatives: leaders of training institutes, representatives of the chamber of commerce (or similar),
- Employees and their representatives: trainers, drivers, representatives of trade unions,
- Political stakeholders: representatives of the federal and of local ministries (of transport), sector skills councils,
- other VET experts: researchers, consultants of freight operators.

In individual face-to-face or telephone-interviews, the stakeholders were asked the following questions:

- Which standards were already realized? Why were certain standards not realized?
- Where is quality improvement in driver training most necessary?
- What is most relevant? What is missing? What is too much?
- How could the standards be implemented?

In case that the paper on our standards has not been read by the interview partner, it was asked directly what is important under each aspect.

The interviewed stakeholders approved very much our standard draft. In general, they stated that the standards are interesting, holistic and should be realized. The degree of standard realization differed between different countries (see national scenarios), but in some cases also in the views of the experts. Additional remarks and the course of discussion were sketched in section 2. Section 3 includes a methodological reflection and suggestions for the use of the standards.

(2) The standards in the light of stakeholders' comments

Standard 1:

Embedding directive 2003/59/EC into national VET systems

Guideline for standard:

The implementation of directive 2003/59/EC is interconnected with and embedded into the national vocational education and training systems of the participating countries.

This standard was discussed by many stakeholders, but not concerning its contents, but with the focus on its realization: It was regarded as very important, but threatened by a multitude of problems, especially political responsibilities. The degree of realization is part of the national scenarios. There were also some critical remarks concerning formulations which we took into account.

Standard 2:

Entry requirements

Guideline for standard:

Professional driving is perceived as an occupation that requires certain life abilities and affinities before entering into initial training for professional drivers and therefore before entering into the profession as such. It is therefore considered as an occupation that cannot be performed by anybody.

Entry requirements for initial training were also an important topic for the interviewed stakeholders. Only one interview partner stated: "drivers don't need any special entry requirements: all they need will be provided by the training" (tr.tr.in.It2). The following expectations towards drivers were mentioned:

- future drivers should have technical understanding, understanding of complex logistics and traffic geography, and „literacy in traffic“ (f.tr.in.Au1),
- they should keep cool in critical situations and act responsibly (f.tr.in.Au1),
- drivers need flexibility in time (f.tr.in.Au1) and high motivation (ch.o.c.It3),
- they need the ability to read and write, should be familiar with ICT tools and have at least a medium level of general culture (cons.It1),

These characteristics were already a part of the standards (as some other interview partners recognized), so no adaptations had to be made.

Standard 3:

Training design and choice of methods within initial qualification and periodic training

Guideline for standard:

The choice of training design and methods within professional driver training refer to all kinds of learning outcomes related to the training, the specific needs of the target group and the needs of heterogeneous groups. They incorporate a high level of practical relevance and reflect the state of the art of training possibilities for professional drivers.

The following ideas were emphasized by the interview partners concerning training design and choice of methods:

- More practical learning and learning with(in) concrete objects should take place, esp. in load securing and (eco) driving (f.tr.in.Au1, fed.min.Au2, tr.tr.in.It2)
- The training methods must be improved, training material should create motivation by including games and simulation (tr.in.Fr1)
- The use of simulators should be encouraged as long as simulators allow interactions between more real drivers: by this way my mistakes will have an influence on the other drivers performance (ch.o.c.It3);
- usage of new technologies should be trained (ch.o.c.Ger3)
- The standard could also include something about appropriate sizes for learning groups and building on feedback from learners who have already undertaken the course. The standard needs to differentiate between Initial and Periodic Training (se.s.coGB3).

The ProfDRV standards on methods also emphasize practical learning and learning with new media, especially with simulators (which is up to now not allowed in some of the partner countries).

In the internal discussion on the stakeholder feedback, the partners agreed that the standard elements defined for training methods should not be further specified. However, it was proposed to further define the term "appropriate" in terms of appropriateness for the group size, aspired learning outcomes, entry level of drivers, abilities of trainers, etc.. Furthermore it has been agreed that no maximum number of participants in a learning group should be defined because also this is rather a question of appropriateness of methods applied, skills and abilities of trainers, etc..

Standard 4:

Requirements on trainers

Guideline for standard:

Training for professional drivers is implemented by well qualified and accredited trainers that possess the necessary professional abilities in terms of expert knowledge (skills and competences within the subject they teach) and the necessary pedagogical knowledge, skills and competences in order to implement high quality training for professional drivers.

The interviewed partners suggested the following requirements on trainers:

- Stricter, unique standards for trainers, also for initial training are necessary (f.tr.in.Au1, loc.min.Au4),
- Trainer qualification, but also experience in subject are necessary: trainers should be involved in/very familiar with the transport area – ideally they should be ex-truck drivers – in order to be able to explain things to this particular learning group appropriately (f.tr.in.Au1, tr.tr.in.It2, ch.o.c.It3, se.s.co.GB3, cons.It1). But: qualifications can also be realized with work division (trainers for theory, instructors (driving), engineers, expert of medical area) (tr.tr.in.It2)
- There should be an age restriction (at least 24 years) (f.tr.in.Au1)
- Trainers should have ethical sensibility (f.tr.in.Au1)
- Trainers should be able to deal with the particular training participants, esp. young people (tr.tr.in.It2)

It was argued by the interview partners as well as in the ProfDRV consortium that too high requirements on driving trainers might go together with a lack of trainers (e.g. ch.o.c.Au5). But also in the ProfDRV standards it was stated that trainers need both experience within the truck driving sector and pedagogical qualification. "Ethical sensibility" has been interpreted by the ProfDRV consortium as awareness and appropriate handling of conflicting interests within professional driving such as legal regulations on the one hand and employers or personal interests on the other. "Ethical sensibility" to address such conflicts in an appropriate manner should be added as a trainer ability. Furthermore also "sensitivity" for groups and individuals, their learning processes and needs was added.

The ProfDRV consortium discussed intensively the question of age restriction and agreed that an age limit would not be supportive because age gives no real indication about the trainers' abilities. The standard therefore kept as it is.

Also with regard to trainers the difficulties with driving instructors offering all periodic training modules has been discussed. However, this appears to be a German problem and could be addressed in the German scenario. In this context it has also been argued that the market would regulate difficulties with

bad training providers, but it has been pointed out that at least in Germany there is currently a trend towards cheap training offers at the expense of quality and that big parts of the market are not interested in quality but in cheap offers only.

Standard 5:

Assessment & validation in initial qualification and periodic training

Guideline for standard:

Assessment & validation in initial qualification and periodic training are oriented on learning outcomes, and allow the assessment of learning outcomes achieved within initial training / qualification or elsewhere.

The following issues were discussed concerning assessment & validation in driver training:

- In further education, no test is necessary, the training is sufficient: good companies recognize results of good training, and some drivers have problems with the test situation (f.tr.in.Au1) vs.
- Tests in continuing training should be implemented (loc.min.Au4)
- executives of the responsible body (in accordance with driving schools) enable cheatings as accreditations without test – other control mechanisms are necessary (cons.It1)
- drivers think they have to learn things they don't need to know when they drive – just for multiple choice tests (tr.tr.in.It2); multiple choice tests don't assure that drivers are competent (tr.u.Es6)
- Attention: test mode influences methods ("test simulations") (tr.tr.in.It2)
- separate between initial and periodic Training (se.s.coGB3)

In the ProfDRV consortium the partners confirmed that there should be no recommendations for assessment in periodic training: It has been pointed out that the request for tests seems to be rather an appeal to motivate drivers/ participants to follow and participate actively in the training but this is less a question of tests but rather a question of pedagogical quality in order to raise the participants' awareness and interest. However, if there are assessments they should also be "appropriate" and measure the different kind of learning outcomes and not only knowledge as usually is the case in multiple-choice tests.

It has also been proposed that enforcement of course implementation should be stressed in the standards, but this has been dropped again because the EQF only asks for the learning results but not for the way how they have been acquired. Therefore enforcement of course attendance cannot be part of EQF-related standards as proposed within ProfDRV. However, the partners emphasized the existence of cheatings and difficulties that result from trainings that only consist of signatures but without or only very limited actual training implementation. The question of assessment and/or enforcement has furthermore been pointed out as crucial with regard to recognition of periodic training certificates in other European countries.

Standard 6:

Recognition of non-/informal learning

Guideline for standard:

In- and non-formal learning are accepted and recognised as form of learning within initial and continuous/ periodic training for professional drivers. They lead to the same certificates/ proofs as those acquired within formal learning environments.

The interviewed partners stated that non- and in-formal learning is not integrated (f.tr.in.Au1, fed.min.Au2, ch.o.c.Au5, cons.It1, tr.tr.in.It2), but that it would be useful to recognize it officially, because many competent drivers took unconventional career paths (f.tr.in.Au1, fed.min.Au2, ch.o.c.Au5, tr.u.Ger2, exp.Es2). Moreover, any part of training done outside initial/periodic qualification (i.e. provided by employers etc.), - especially if coinciding with some parts of the CPC training - should be recognized and considered as "already done", and drivers should not be required to replicate it (cons.It4). But it was also pointed out that there is a contradiction between the recognition of informal learning and periodic training because here the course attendance is mandatory so any option to "replace formal learning attendance" is actually not appropriate (se.s.co.GB3). Also in the discussion of the ProfDRV consortium this was an important issue. Although it is clear that there is a contradiction with the actual directive and the situation as outlined with regard to "assessment" above, the standard will be kept as it has been outlined originally, because the EQF only relates to learning outcomes and not to the way how they have been achieved.

Standard 7:

Adapting content and training approaches to changing skills needs

Guideline for standard:

Vocational education and training for professional drivers are responsive to changing skill needs and can be adapted without losing relevance, transparency and comparability of the driver CPC in Europe.

The interviewed stakeholders pointed out that

- adapting to change is one of most important aspects (tr.in.Es8), that
- training institutes are in close contact to companies and react on changing needs (f.tr.in.Au1), but that
- the curriculum is defined by law, the transfer is not build-in , the reduction of training duration is not permit (tr.in.Fr1).

All of those ideas were already formulated in the ProfDRV standards.

Standard 8:

Quality assurance in periodic and initial training

Guideline for standard:

Quality assurance systems and measures are put in place for the implementation of professional driver training in the framework of directive 2003/59/EC. Quality assurance is primarily based on pedagogical considerations in order to ensure a high quality within professional driver training.

The stakeholders discussed the following issues:

- Good practice of quality assurance in a training institute includes internal evaluation all three months, external evaluation all two years, and external training of trainers (f.tr.in.Au1); evaluation is important (cons.It1).
- Quality improvement in driver training should be implemented especially in the area of "dangerous goods" (tr.tr.It2).
- Specific authorized bodies should be created by Ministries to certificate the training and should be able to regularly provide and demonstrate their high level of qualification and services (i.e. by updating trainers knowledge) (cons.It4).

The ProfDRV consortium agreed that those issues were also already part of the ProfDRV standards and/or part of national regulations.

(3) Reflections on the method used

The quantity of information to be read by the different target groups (30 pages of standards) has been pointed out as difficult during the consultations. On the one hand, therefore, it was good to have prepared also a set of questions for the persons who have not read the standards. On the other hand it was discussed in the ProfDRV consortium to prepare target group specific extracts of the standards, but it has also been agreed that the standards as such should not be separated because they are too closely interrelated with each other in order to be looked at separately. As a result of the discussion it has been agreed to develop target group specific introductions instead of different versions of the standards. Target groups to be addressed should be (1) policy makers, (2) major stakeholders incl. VET providers, competent bodies, transport companies highlighting major elements for each of these groups individually but within one introduction and (3) drivers. Different stakeholders may have specialized interests in the standard paper:

- Competent bodies and policy representatives probably are paying most attention to the issues “entry requirements”, “changing skill needs” and “embedment into national VET systems”,
- VET providers and trainers might be especially interested in the aspects “requirements for trainers”, “assessment & validation”, “methods” and “changing skill needs”,
- For drivers, the aspect “non-/ informal learning” seems to be most important.

Another problem in the conduction and analysis of the interviews was that some stakeholders have no research experience: they are experts in the field of professional driving and thus have good connections to other relevant stakeholders, but they seem to have problems with consequently asking and editing the research results. Therefore we recommend for future projects to use the stakeholders as “door openers” and experts for the contents, but not in research functions.