

Blind spot mirrors

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. Objective of the proposal

The proposal aims to improve the safety of road users by amending the construction requirements of certain components and introducing new technologies in order to increase the field of indirect vision for drivers of motor vehicles of categories M (vehicles for the carriage of passengers) and N (vehicles for the carriage of goods) and reducing the blind spots which occur in the immediate area around the vehicles.

2. Legal basis

The measures are proposed on the basis of Article 95 of the EC Treaty. The measures form part of the European type-approval system and compliance will become mandatory for new approvals to be issued by the national authorities after a defined transition period.

The text is relevant for the EEA Agreement.

3. Background

A number of accidents are caused by vehicle drivers who are not aware that other road users are very close or beside their own vehicle. These accidents are often related to a change of direction at crossings, junctions or roundabouts when drivers fail to detect other road users in the blind spots which exist in the area immediately around their vehicles. When larger vehicles such as trucks or buses are involved, these accidents frequently lead to serious injuries or even fatalities of vulnerable road users like pedestrians, cyclists or drivers of smaller two-wheel motor vehicles.

4. Involvement of Interested Parties

The Commission has discussed with Member States, industry and other interested parties the possibilities to reduce the risk by requiring the installation of rear-view mirrors or alternative systems with specific arrangements to reduce the blind spots around vehicles.

Following general agreement in its Motor Vehicle Working Group the Commission services established an expert ad-hoc group to improve the legal framework with regard to rear-view mirrors. In three meetings in May, July and September 2001 the group prepared a document, which proposes significant improvements to the existing situation taking into account the technical development since the last amendment of Directive 71/127/EEC on rear view mirrors. A majority of the experts are supportive of the proposal.

5. Basis and Content of the Proposal

Although the structure of the original Directive 71/127/EEC has been maintained as much as possible the content of this directive has been altered significantly. Therefore it is proposed to repeal Directive 71/127/EEC and its amendments and replace it by the new directive. This is in line with the "Interinstitutional Agreement on Common Guidelines for the Quality of drafting Community Legislation" which requires obsolete acts and provisions to be repealed.

The following main modifications to Directive 71/127/EEC are foreseen:

- The directive becomes mandatory for all categories of vehicle instead of being voluntary within the type-approval system for light and heavy duty commercial vehicles. This measure seeks to harmonise the requirements within the Community and to avoid divergent national solutions;
- Additional mirrors shall be mounted to certain vehicles (front mirrors on trucks, exterior rear view mirrors on the passenger's side of passenger cars, aspherical mirrors on vehicles of categories M₁ and N₁) in order to increase the field of indirect vision;
- Certain characteristics of mirrors (e.g. curvature of the surface now 1 200 mm instead of 1 800 mm for main rear view mirrors) are modified according to technical progress in order to increase the field of indirect vision;
- Certain mirrors can be replaced by other systems for indirect vision such as camera/monitor systems.
- The provisions regarding type-approval procedures and conformity of production procedures originally covered by Directive 71/127/EEC are now taken over in Directive 70/156/EEC as last amended and therefore not anymore included in this Directive.

6. Conclusions

This proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council will introduce mandatory harmonised requirements for the type-approval of mirrors and systems for indirect vision for motor vehicles of categories M (vehicles for the carriage of passengers) and N (vehicles for the carriage of goods) within the EU.

Source – EUROPA European Union