

Mr. Ondrej Horazny, EFA delegate member from Czech Republic, shows to our European colleagues how is going the driving school business after the lockdown and new projects.

How is the reopening of driving schools working after the lockdown in the Czech Republic?

Driving schools were closed in the Czech Republic from 15 March 2020 until the end of April 2020. We have seen a great interest in their services since their reopening. This is obviously a delayed demand combined with the spring season, which is always the strongest time of the year. This big jump in demand is now coming to the normal level. It will however still last for an extended period of time, because it is not easy to find new employees – driving school teachers.

Are waiting times for exams very long? Can you foresee the backlog of exams can be disposed of?

Yes, exam periods have been extended. A big problem is that the capacity of testing has not reached the pre-Covid levels yet. Testing started only two to four weeks later than the operation of driving schools. Only a few test institutes increased their capacity and cut waiting periods for the tests. Some authorities even reduced the number of applicants to be tested and provided only one examiner per day.

I would generally expect that the test authorities will be trying to solve the problem of non-compliance with legal periods. This can be done by providing extra afternoon times, weekend dates or by providing examiners from other authorities. The test period is set by law to 15 days since request. It has become a practise to fail to meet this period, which is absolutely unacceptable in the long term.

Is there a risk due to the lockdown of closing driving schools in the Czech Republic?

We have no accurate information whether some driving schools remained closed after the lockdown. According to some insider information, teachers aged 60 and more stopped doing this job for fears of their health. But I don't think this will be too many.

How do you think EFA can help your driving school association perform well nationally?

It would be great to share experience with work with young drivers aged 18-24 and connect more national projects between countries who are members in EFA.

We would welcome the chance to set up a Universal Hazard Reception Test that could be used in testing across EFA (EU) member states. This test should be created in a way that localisation for the respective country by providing local traffic signs is sufficient.

Also, a joint platform for driving tests should be made and common issues defined wherever possible. This high-quality testing could be done in several countries. The theoretical test should be harmonised to a reasonable degree.

Which projects is the Czech Driving Schools Association currently working on?

The Czech Driving Schools Association seeks to co-shape the creation of laws that govern the work of driving schools. The parliament is currently discussing an amendment that, among other things, reduces the number of correction tests to better motivate driving schools clients to simply do more for the test.

The Czech Driving Schools Association also seeks to take new approaches to new drivers within the existing legislation without the need for amendments. This is why we have enrolled in projects funded by insurance companies.

START DRIVING – the first pilot project of the second phase of drivers' education in the Czech Republic, following the Austrian model, has been under way in 2020. The project is opened for 1 000 young drivers. An evaluation ride with the driving school teacher, a seminar with a traffic psychologist, a lecture of the traffic police, a theoretical lecture about a safe ride and a training for safe driving on a special test ring are part of this scheme.

Hazard Perception – this pilot project introduces hazard perception in final exams. We are currently asking for project funding, so that we can prepare test questions for the final exams.