

1- Is the reopening of driving schools in Estonia going well? Did you accumulate many exam tests during the lockdown? When do you think you can return to normal?

We were able to start with the theory and driving lessons a bit sooner than we thought, on the 6th of May. But driving schools were prepared for it. During the lockdown there were only a few driving schools which tried to keep the driving lessons going, putting in danger their own health as well as the student's health. They were also risking with going against the law and getting a fine. Luckily, there were only a few cases of this sort. The driving schools had the option of requesting a wage subsidy from the government due to the emergency situation. Re-opening the driving schools after lockdown has gone without larger difficulties. Surely, there are still limits on how many people are allowed to be in a classroom at the same time (50%). Also, classrooms have to be provided with bottles with disinfectant for people to use.

About the exams. Approximately 36000 driving exams and 35000 theory exam are taken yearly in Estonia. Because of the emergency situation over 4000 driving exams and almost as much theory exams were put off. This has caused longer waiting lines for taking the exams, despite the fact that examination centre is putting in hard work and examiners will not be having any time off this summer. Since in the spring everybody were forced to stay home for almost two months. I hope that that the situation regarding the examinations will normalize for the beginning of 2021.

2- Estonia is one of the most technological European countries in the field of driving license examinations. You record driving exams. Can you briefly describe how the system works?

We have recorded driving exams in Estonia since 2007. The same year we started using separate examination cars for B-category. It is possible to look at the driving exam online, the recordings are also kept, in order to solve possible disputes. In my personal opinion, if the driving instructor is allowed to ride along in the examination car during the exam then there would not be any disputes. The Road Administration examination department executive agrees with this statement.

For the rest of driving exam categories the driving school's own cars have been used since 2017. Those cars also have portable recording equipment, which the examiner installs to the cars himself before the exam.

From this year it is again possible for the B-category student to request taking the driving exam with the driving school's car. In that case the driving instructor will ride along in the front passenger seat and examiner will ride in the back seat. Additional pedals have to be equipped with electronic signals to fixate if and when the instructor intervenes with the exam. Although this method has not been used for a long time, the results of driving exams have already improved.

3- How periodic training of driving instructors works in Estonia. Until recently you were the country with the most hours. Has the system changed? If yes, how

From February 2020 there have been positive changes made regarding the periodical training for driving instructors. Before the change was made, driving instructors had to go through 207 hours of periodical training in every 5 years. Since this February only 40 hours of additional training needs to be done in 5 year time. Most university-level educational institutions did not want to provide 207 hour long trainings. The teachers had problems with extending their license and many teachers gave up on this job. Now we have more freedom in picking out the topics of periodical trainings in order to make them more beneficial for our teachers. All of this has been very positive, but there is still a long way to go to make the driving instructor profession more attractive in Estonia.

What other kinds of fields should be developed apart from the existing driving school instructor additional trainings?

The traffic environment changes quickly, technology develops very quickly, however, people's mindset does not change as quickly. For the past 2 years I have invited different lecturers to talk at our organization seminars about new alternative fuels and about the vehicles which use those fuels, about new energy sources used in transport. The instructors who have been around for quite a long time, often have the mindset that they do not need to know about these new possibilities. This is sad. I find that a teacher needs to have a broad outlook and knowledge in his field of work. He needs to be a specialist and keep up with the technology developments. This also fills in the main purpose, which is road safety. The teacher has to be able to teach his students that the tools made to assist the driver have been made to lighten the driver's possible mistakes, not to change the law of nature.