Beat: Politics

European Parliament wants to ending impunity for non-resident drivers

Disqualification should be valid in EU

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USPA NEWS - To make Europe's roads safer Transport, the European Parliament want driving disqualification decisions to apply in all EU member states and for more offenses to trigger cross-border investigation. On Wednesday, the Transport and Tourism Committee adopted draft new EU rules to end the impunity of non-resident drivers and improve road safety. Under the current rules, if a driver commits an offense in a country other than the one which issued their license and loses it, the sanction will most of the time only be valid in the country where the offense was committed and entails no restrictions in the rest of the EU.

Under the proposed new rules, decisions on the suspension, restriction or withdrawal of a non-resident's driving license will have to be passed on to the EU country which issued the driving license, to ensure the disqualification decision is applied across all EU countries. MEPs propose the expansion of the list of severe traffic offenses that would trigger the exchange of information on driving disqualification. In addition to the proposal by the Commission to include excessive speeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs and traffic offenses causing death or serious bodily injury, MEPs add driving without a valid license offense. Transport MEPs suggest instituting strict deadlines for EU countries to inform each other and the person concerned about driving disqualification decisions.

"I hope EU-wide driving disqualifications will reduce the number of road accidents throughout the EU by enabling the punishment of reckless driving abroad, and decrease significantly the number of fatalities caused by excessive speeding, drink-driving, and driving under the influence of drugs. As we work towards Vision Zero, we must also raise awareness that driving is about keeping everyone safe on the road," Belgian rapporteur Petar Vitanov said.

Transport MEPs also revised draft EU rules on the cross-border exchange of information on traffic offenses to streamline assistance between member states. The committee backed expanding the list of traffic offenses that would trigger cross-border investigation to include dangerous parking, dangerous overtaking, crossing a solid line and hit and run amongst other offenses.

Given around 40% of cross-border offenses go unpunished, MEPs support more robust assistance procedures between EU countries by involving national contact points more in cross-border investigations, providing them access to different national registers and setting up an IT portal for information exchange.

"The ambitious goals of Vision Zero cannot be achieved without the ability to enforce penalties for road traffic offenses committed by foreign drivers. Member states must have the tools to exchange information and effectively identify road traffic offenders. Driving abroad should not mean impunity of punishment, including for third-country drivers," Poland EP rapporteur Kosma Z?otowski added.

The draft rules on driving disqualifications were approved by 37 votes to five, while the proposal on the cross-border exchange of information was passed with 37 votes in favor and five abstentions. MEPs also agreed to start talks with member states on the final shape of both texts (35 votes to six on driving disqualification, 34 votes to one and four abstentions on cross-border exchange of information), once plenary has given its green light during the December 2023 plenary session.

Both proposals are part of the Road safety package presented by the Commission in March 2023 to improve safety for all road users, facilitate cross-border enforcement of traffic rules and modernize driving license rules. The ultimate goal is to move as close as possible to zero fatalities in EU road transport by 2050.

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