

Methodological Guidelines and Diagnostic Methods for Assessment of Drivers' Psychological Eligibility in the Czech Republic

When defining the baseline assumptions for a valid diagnosis, traffic psychology reflects the developments in the traffic environment, as well as those in research and diagnostic tools. As the demands on drivers increase, however, the process starts with the testing and review of factors that are considered relevant in terms of psychological eligibility. First and foremost, the paper addresses the question of which psychological qualities, functions, and processes are involved in driving and which of them pose a risk and which may play a protective role. The legal basis for the assessment of psychological eligibility for driving in the Czech Republic is outlined at the beginning.

A. Legal Background

Laws

Act No. 361/2000 Coll, on road traffic, as amended (133/2011 Coll.)
Act No. 247/2000 Coll, on obtaining and improving professional competence for the driving of motor vehicles
Decree No. 31/2001 Coll, as amended (27/2012 Coll.)

A traffic psychological assessment is obligatory for

1. Holders of driver's licences C, C+E, C1+E, D,D+E, D1, D1+E and drivers of lorries over 7500 kg of maximum authorised weight (Section 87 of Act No. 361/2000 Coll.)
Note: vehicles for 8-16 persons = D1, more than 16 persons = D
It is important to specify the weight of 7500 kg:
C1 = 3500-7500 kg, but C1+E may exceed 7500 kg
C = over 3500 kg, but drivers of small lorries (i.e. 3500-7500 kg), such as Avia,
are not subjected to such assessment

All holders of the types of driver's licences specified above are required to undergo an assessment in terms of traffic psychology before they began to engage in activities involving the driving of specific motor vehicles for a consideration, irrespective of their age. An additional examination of this type is required not later than on their 50th birthday and subsequently every five years. (This does not apply to drivers working for the Fire Rescue Service, the Army of the Czech Republic, and the Police of the Czech Republic. These organisations follow their own internal regulations).

2. Drivers who apply for the renewal of their licences after they had them suspended as a result of too many penalty points (Section 123 of Act No. 133/2011 Coll.)
3. Driving school instructors (Section 21 of Act No. 247/2000 Coll.)

B. Traffic Psychology Assessment

A person authorised to perform a traffic psychological assessment is a psychologist (a natural person) who was granted the respective accreditation by the ministry on the basis of his/her application and who

- a. has completed accredited master's studies in psychology,
- b. has completed postgraduate studies in traffic psychology provided as part of an accredited academic programme or a life-long learning programme provided by an institution of higher education,
- c. has worked in the field of traffic psychology for at least three years
- d. has the necessary resources available for the due performance of traffic psychological assessment. (Section 87 of Act No. 133/2011 Coll.)

The resources necessary for the due performance of traffic psychological assessment include

- a. a room in which to carry out the assessment using a psychological diagnostic technique,
- b. a room in which to carry out the assessment using other techniques,
- c. a waiting room, reception, or a similar suitable facility,
- d. a psychological diagnostic technique and standardised testing systems making it possible to

1. assess the personality traits of the individual being assessed,
2. measure the level and quality of attention, coordination, and speed and accuracy of sensorimotor reactivity to simple and complex visual and acoustic stimuli under time pressure, using various devices.

The rooms have to be separated from each other by structural elements. (Section 18 of Act No. 27/2012 Coll.)

A traffic psychological assessment is executed in writing and is reflected in the physical and mental health competency report.

C. Drivers' Personality

The uniqueness of each personality makes it difficult to establish a standard method of assessing drivers' personalities and their eligibility to drive. All that can be done is to determine the qualities that are generally beneficial or risky for the personality of a driver.

Using the existing typologies and research (Ulleberg & Rundmo, 2003; West & Hall, 1997; Machin & Sankey, 2008) concerning drivers' risk-taking characteristics, we have identified the following driver personality variables as those posing a risk:

I. Personality trait characteristics:

- o dominance, the need to assert oneself, egocentrism,
- o emotional stability × instability (neuroticism),
- o hypersensitivity, anxiety,
- o level of confidence, self-concept,
- o extraversion × introversion,
- o self-control, self-discipline, respect for traffic regulations,
- o conscientiousness,
- o tolerance of frustration and stress resistance, psychological resilience, and fatigue.

II. Other aspects of personality with an impact on driving:

- o type A behaviour,
- o seeking of situational excitement and adventure, sensation-seeking,
- o antisocial attitudes × prosocial attitudes, altruism,
- o LOC – internal locus of control with reduced anticipation,
- o attribution.

III. Aggressive tendencies:

- o aggressiveness,
- o aggression,
- o anger,
- o hostility.

Special attention should be paid to the above characteristics in the psychological testing and selection of drivers.

Conclusion

The personality of a problem-free driver features a well-balanced structure, emotional stability, adaptability, self-control, reasonable self-confidence, resilience to stress, conscientiousness, and reliability. Social qualities, such as altruism expressed by the effort to think of others and predict their behaviour, should not be disregarded either. On the contrary, drivers who cause traffic accidents more often tend to be more peculiar, egocentric, dynamic, aggressive, and emotional, and have reduced self-regulation, a disharmoniously structured personality, and impaired self-esteem, but show reasonable psychological performance. Unfailing individuals are efficient, adaptable, responsible, and emotionally stable, and can control themselves and cope with difficulties and stress.

Literature:

- Ulleberg, P. & Rundmo, T. (2003). Personality, attitudes and risk perception as predictors of risky driving behaviour among young drivers. *Safety Science*, 41 (5), 427-443.
West, R. & Hall, J. (1997). The role of personality and attitudes in traffic accident risk. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46 (3), 253-264.
Machin, M. A. & Sankey, K. S. (2008). Relationships between young drivers' personality characteristics, risk perceptions, and driving behaviour. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 40 (2), 541-547.

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