

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0741/05
by Antonio De Poli (PPE-DE)
to the Council

Subject: Disabled persons' right to mobility and the 'mini driving licence'

Minicars, which the Italian highway code defines as 'light four-stroke vehicles' constitute an alternative, and sometimes the only alternative, for persons who do not hold a driving licence. These vehicles are often the only way of ensuring mobility and autonomy for the elderly and disabled, who without them would be confined to their homes, unable to do their own shopping or to interact normally with their community and - as happens quite alarmingly frequently - to get to work. In the last two years, more measures have been passed to improve road safety standards via a commendable strategy of information, prevention and prohibition. Other measures (e.g. driving licence points) include the introduction of a mandatory provisional driving licence for mopeds. The new version of article 116(1a) of the Italian highway code stipulates that 'persons wishing to drive a moped must be in possession of a driving licence (category A or B) or the certificate of driving aptitude issued by the relevant office of the Department of Transport following a special course of instruction with a final examination'. This provision applies to all persons, be they under full age or of full age, who do not hold a driving licence. Indeed, paragraph 1b of the aforesaid article 116 specifies that 'as from 1 July 2005, the obligation to obtain the certificate of aptitude for driving a moped shall be extended to all persons of full age who do not already hold a driving licence'. This 'certificate of aptitude' can only be obtained after having followed special courses at driving schools. The issuing of the certificate is contingent on the passing of a final examination conducted by an examining official of the Ministry of Transport, and provisional licence applicants have to sit a multiple choice theory test consisting of ten questions.

Is the Council aware that the regulation referred to above is bound to complicate the lives of many disabled and elderly persons? In particular, it may well be that persons with mild intellectual disabilities who are perfectly able to drive a motor scooter or a minicar will be unable to answer the multiple choice questions correctly. Does the Council intend to amend the Transport Directive to take into account scenarios such as the provision of special arrangements for learning support for courses run at driving schools and the possibility of replacing the theory test with a practical test to ascertain candidates' true understanding of traffic rules and road safety?