WHAT IS CHANGING

Dear Reader,

Driving licenses issued over the next few days in Germany, namely from 19 January, will no longer be unlimited but will be valid only for a period of 15 years – in other words, they come with an expiry date. Owners of old driving licenses will then have to renew them, and in some cases the licensing authority might even refuse to do so. For example, for those who are too old or too ill, or those who have collected too many points on their license.

But can you imagine what the situation will be like in 20 years' time? Although it may still seem a long way off, in 2033 all previously issued licenses will have to be renewed. Driving a car will, for the time being, be out of the question, as endless queues form at licensing offices as drivers rush to get their new documents.

The reasons given for this expiry date: personal details such as names and photographs should be kept up to date, and there has long since been a need to standardise the 110 different license formats in the EU. Medical examinations such as those customary in our neighbouring countries or questionnaire tests are not (yet) included in the renewal process in Germany. But I wonder whether a certain amount of testing might not be a good idea. It would be one way of addressing the problems of driving under the influence of drugs, or confused drivers who go the wrong way down a motorway or who cannot cope with complex situations. We will no longer have the chance, however, to pull out our ancient driving licenses at a party and have a laugh at the youthful faces from a distant past. What a pity.

What other changes will 2013 bring in the sector of traffic and mobility? In the summer, a kind of government-run fuel

price comparison site will become available on the internet. Filling stations will be required to notify the authorities of their current fuel prices. Drivers will then be able to access the data in real time, for example on a smartphone or a computer.

And the cities of Mainz, Mönchengladbach, Remscheid and Wiesbaden as well as the metropolitan area of Ludwigsburg will introduce low emission zones. The two Rhine-Main cities will even impose the maximum Level 3 right from the start on 1 February, permitting access to the zones only to vehicles displaying a green sticker.

Let us hope that all other changes in our private and business lives that are as yet unforeseeable will be happy ones, or at least manageable. I wish you all the best for 2013.

Kind regards,

DIPL.-ING. MICHAEL REICHENBACH,
Vice-Editor in Chief
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