



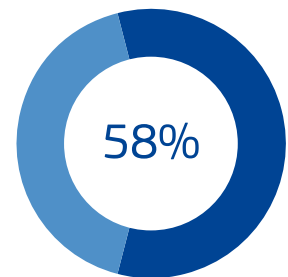
## ANALYTICAL HIGHLIGHT

### PROSPECTS FOR

# Drivers and mobile plant operators

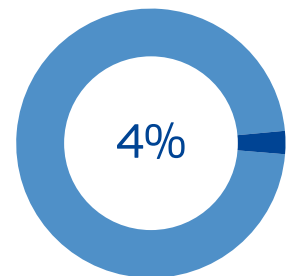
- The number of drivers and mobile plant operators employed across the EU-28 has grown over the last decade, but is forecast to decline in the coming years.
- There are still fairly widespread recruitment difficulties, especially for heavy truck and bus drivers, due to the nature of the hours worked and pay levels.
- Drivers and mobile plant operators are increasingly required to have customer service and interpersonal skills, as well as the technical skills required to operate their vehicles and machines.
- The distribution and transport sector is at the forefront of green developments. Vehicles, fuels and distribution processes are becoming more efficient and sustainable. On the one hand this could increase skill levels as these operators need to monitor their tasks more effectively, but technological developments such as remote control and driverless vehicles will reduce certain skills.

▼ Figure 1a – Drivers and mobile plant operators share of plant and machine operators, and assemblers occupational group, 2013, EU-28



Source: Cedefop forecasts (2014)

▼ Figure 1b – Drivers and mobile plant operators share of total employment, 2013, EU-28



Source: Cedefop forecasts (2014)

### WHAT DO THEY DO?

Drivers and mobile plant operators<sup>1</sup> are skilled manual workers who drive and operate motor vehicles, trains, industrial and agricultural machinery or steer and execute deck duties on ships. Jobs vary according to the type of transport and machinery:

- Car, taxi, van, motorcycle, heavy truck, tram and bus drivers transport

passengers, materials or goods, as well as tending their vehicles.

- Locomotive engine drivers and related workers drive passenger and/or freight trains, or assist in doing so (for example, by controlling the railway traffic by operating signals).
- Mobile plant operators drive and operate motorised machinery, such as cranes and lifting trucks, in order to clear land, dig

and spread earth or other materials, and move heavy objects.

- Ships' deck crews and related workers perform deck duties on board ships or other water-borne crafts. Typically, this includes steering ships according to instructions, operating ships' equipment (such as rope and wires), performing deck and hull cleaning and other related activities<sup>2</sup>.

## Employment outlook

There were around 9.4 million drivers and mobile plant operators employed across the EU-28 in 2013. This equated to around 4% of the total EU-28 workforce, as well as more than half of the wider occupational group of machine operators and assemblers<sup>3</sup> (see Figures 1a and 1b).

The size of the occupational group grew in the decade to 2013. Drivers and mobile plant operators were the only occupation within the wider group of plant and machine operator and assembler occupations to increase in size over this period.

However, from 2011 to 2012, there were significant falls in employment levels of heavy truck and bus drivers and of mobile plant operators. Heavy truck and bus drivers experienced the fourth largest decline in employment over this period across the EU-28 and the third largest hirings decline. Mobile plant operators were among the top-20 occupations for both employment and hirings decline across the EU-28<sup>4</sup>.

At national level, heavy truck and bus drivers were among the top-10 declining occupations in France, Ireland, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom. Mobile plant operators were among the top-10 declining occupations in Austria, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain.

Recent employment growth during 2011 and 2012 has tended to be in eastern European countries: Poland and Slovakia (car, van and motorcycle drivers); Czech Republic (mobile plant operators); and Slovenia (heavy truck and bus drivers).

In spite of significant employment decline up to 2013, there were reported recruitment difficulties, especially for heavy truck and bus drivers in 15 out of the EU-28 countries<sup>5</sup>. Shift time, unsociable working hours and low salary are the most frequently-cited reasons for recruitment problems. There is also a gender imbalance in the workforce, with far fewer female applicants for some of these jobs. This has been partly linked to characteristics such as long hours and dangerous working conditions.

Almost two thirds (65%) of drivers and mobile plant operators work in the distribution and transport sector. No other sector accounts for more than 10% of the workforce. Employment of drivers and mobile plant operators in distribution and transport rose from 2003 to 2008, but then did not grow to 2013. The number of driver and mobile plant operative jobs in the second largest sector, manufacturing, fell in both of these periods.

Drivers and mobile plant operators typically hold medium level qualifications (see Table 1). The share of workers at medium level grew by 7% in the decade to 2013, while the share of workers with low level qualifications fell by 8%.

▼ **Table 1 – Share of Drivers and mobile plant operators by qualification level compared to all occupations, 2013, EU-28**

|                                    | Low   | Medium | High  |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| Drivers and mobile plant operators | 32.3% | 61.5%  | 6.2%  |
| All occupations                    | 21.2% | 48.1%  | 30.7% |

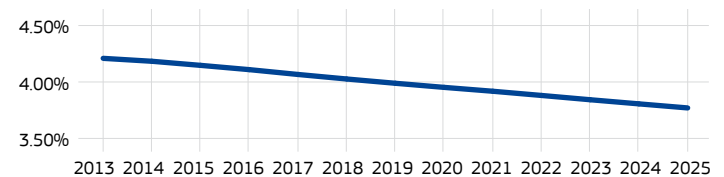
Source: Cedefop forecasts (2014)

## A look into the future

While the number of drivers and mobile plant operators grew in the ten years to 2013, employment levels are forecast to fall by 7.4% in the period to 2025. Their relative share of total EU-28 employment is also predicted to decline (see Figure 2).

Job losses are predicted across virtually all sectors and sub sectors, except for business and other services. Workers with low level qualifications will continue to increasingly be replaced by those with medium- and high level qualifications.

▼ **Figure 2 – Future share of Drivers and mobile plant operators, EU-28**



Source: Cedefop forecasts (2014)

From 2013 to 2025, only six out of the EU-28 countries are expected to experience an overall increase in driver and mobile plant operative employment (Denmark; Finland; Greece; Ireland; Romania; Sweden). In many cases, these increases will be small. While overall employment levels are expected to fall in most countries, all countries are predicted to have job opportunities due to the need to replace people who leave their jobs due to retirement and for other reasons

Across the EU-28, drivers and mobile plant operators are expected to comprise 3.2% of all job openings. As Figure 3 shows, in Sweden, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Greece at least 1 out of every 20 job openings will be for drivers and mobile plant operators.

**Skills challenges**

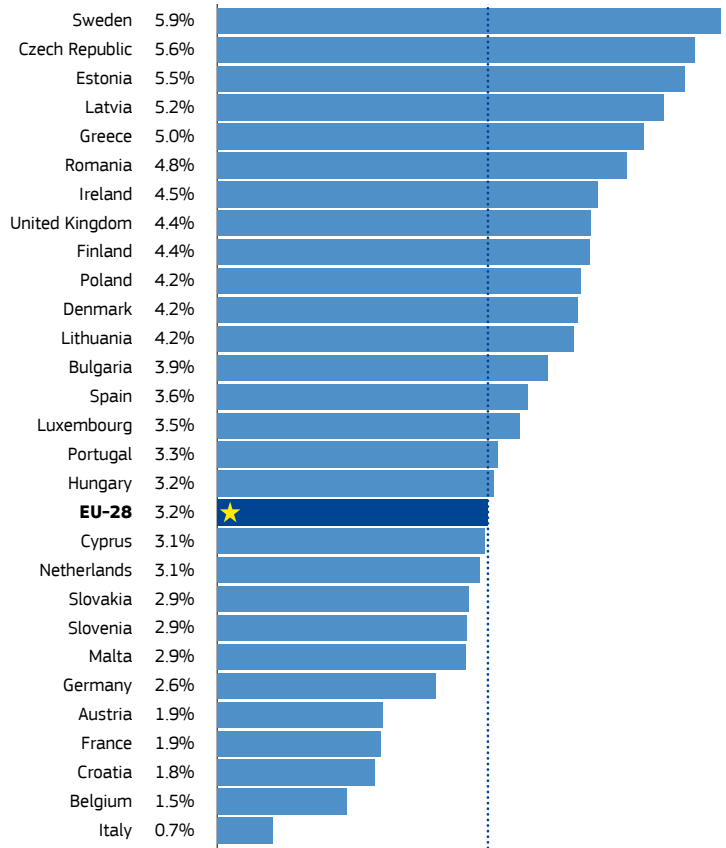
Drivers and mobile plant operators work with a range of machines. An understanding of these machines, including their operation, repair and maintenance, is a core requirement. In addition, many of these occupations work with passengers, so customer and personal service skills (assessing and meeting customer needs) and public safety and security skills (knowledge and application of health and safety procedures) are also required<sup>6 7 8</sup>.

Communication skills are important – orally and in writing – in communicating with users and co-workers, as well as reading administrative and technical documents. Numeracy skills are required for cash handling, machine operation, time management and processing information and data<sup>9</sup>.

The drive for greater sustainable development is impacting on the role of drivers and mobile plant operators in terms of the types of vehicles/machines they use, and how efficiently they use them<sup>10</sup>. For example, commercial vehicle drivers are required to monitor their driving skills and drive more efficiently. Environmental considerations also influence the pattern of employment. The demand for bus and train drivers could increase as a consequence of moves to promote and encourage public transport use in order to lower emissions<sup>11</sup>.

Drivers and mobile plant operators often need to keep their skills up-to-date to reflect changing technology<sup>12 13</sup>, especially as vehicles become more technologically advanced, computerisation becomes more integrated into supply and distribution chains. The impact of technology on these jobs is unpredictable. For example, the growth in online shopping in some countries has increased demand for van drivers. However, in the future the planned development and use of drones and driverless vehicles could reduce the overall need for drivers in some situations<sup>14 15</sup>. ■

▼ **Figure 3 – Share of Drivers and mobile plant operators in total job openings by country, 2013-2025, EU-28**



Source: Cedefop forecasts (2014)

- 1 Defined as ISCO-08 Group 83 Drivers and mobile plant operators
- 2 International Labour Organization (2012), International standard classification of occupations structure, group definitions and correspondence tables: ISCO-08 Volume 1
- 3 ISCO Major Occupational Group 8 – Plant and machine operators, and assemblers
- 4 European Commission (2014), European vacancy and recruitment report
- 5 European Commission (2014), Mapping and analysing bottleneck vacancies in EU labour markets: Final overview report
- 6 UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2012), Transportation and storage: Sector skills assessment 2012
- 7 O\*Net (2014)
- 8 Skills for Logistics (2013), Logistics report
- 9 National Careers Service (2014), Construction plant operator
- 10 International Labour Organisation (2012), Working towards sustainable development
- 11 Cedefop (2009), Future skill needs for the green economy
- 12 Bernd Dworschak, Helmut Zaiser, Antonino Ardilio Fraunhofer Institute, for Industrial Engineering, Stuttgart, Germany, in using technology foresights for identifying future skills needs (2014), SKOLKOVO and International Labour Organization Global Workshop Proceedings (2014), Anticipation of skill needs and technology foresight: points of alignment and potentials
- 13 PWC (2012), Transportation & Logistics 2030: Volume 5 – Winning the talent race
- 14 The Economist (2013), Look, no hands
- 15 David Rotman (2013), How technology is destroying jobs



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