



Rue de Spastraat 8 – 1000 Brussels
Tel.: +32 (0)2 238 06 40
Fax: +32 (0)2 238 04 41
e-mail: ceettar@ceettar.eu
website: www.ceettar.eu

EC Register: 15086733813-03

Confédération Européenne des Entrepreneurs de Travaux Techniques Agricoles et Ruraux

European Organisation of Agricultural and Rural Contractors

Zentralverband der europäischen Lohnunternehmer

(COM\Transports\Réglementation routière en Europe-EN)

Traffic regulations in Europe

1. European Union

Traffic Regulations in Europe do not rule the use of the road by vehicles. It covers all aspects of transport and are binding for the Member States as a true supranational legislation. Given the importance of road transport in the economy and people's lives, including security issues and competition, legislative texts are quite a plenty. But they cover both professional and private travel transportation.

The legislation of the European Union does not create legislation for road traffic itself. The EU legislation repertoire in force does contain a branch 07 Transport policy, 07.20 Land transport, but this legislation combines all types of land transportation, whether rail or road, and addresses the issues under the terms of transport services.

EU law still covers some aspects of road safety. A few examples:

- Position (EU) No. 8 / 2011 of the Council for the adoption of a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council facilitating cross-border exchange of information about crimes in road safety adopted by the Council on March 17, 2011
- The European Parliament resolution on the European Programme for Action for Road Safety: Reduce by half the number of road fatalities in the EU by 2010: A shared responsibility (2004/2162 (INI)).

2. Member States

Most countries define a national law on road traffic and related topics, as well as penalties. For mobility, many countries agreed that their legislation is in fact fairly consistent with certain principles known to many drivers.

2.1 Countries with legal codification of traffic law

These codes are generally in line with the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic of 1968. The laws relating to road traffic are subject to a specific code, including the following countries:

- France: Highway Code
- Italy: Codice della strada
- Luxembourg: In Luxembourg, legislation called the Highway Code and is considered "code law" or collection of traffic law.
- Portugal: Código de estrada

On top of the law, road signs are also harmonized with the Vienna Convention on Road Signs and the European Agreement on the Geneva Road Signs.

2.2 Other countries

In Belgium, the legislation does not take the form of a code and is defined by the Royal Decree laying down general rules on road traffic police and the use of public roads. [M.B. 09.12.1975].

Traffic regulation in Germany is defined by several laws, including Straßenverkehr-Ordnung and Straßenverkehrsgesetz and it is known as StVO. German legislation on road traffic (Straßenverkehrsgesetz) contains the basic rules on road traffic in Germany, with the rules on driving (Fev), the regulation on vehicle registration (FZV), traffic regulations (StVO) and Regulation of traffic licenses (StVZO).

2.3 Country without legal codification of traffic

Note that the UK is a country where the law is not codified. In the UK, there is a Road Traffic Act and Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions. In addition, the Highway Code is a code that contains the one hand, legislative references, and other advices.

3. Other elements

A Road Traffic Code may contain rules on:

- the qualities or skills that a user must have as regards his use of public roads (drivers license, minimum age, medical examination);
- the characteristics that a vehicle must have (approval of vehicles, technical regular coverage of liability insurance of the driver, ...);
- how a user can use the public road (driving on the right or left, speed limits, parking brake and the presence of reflective strips on the pedals, ...);
- how users interact with each other (eg priority rules);
- how the authorities can impose local rules on certain portions of public roads (signage, police, ...).

These laws must in particular comply with the commitments of the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic.

The traffic is not static, since perception vary with the authorities and the population of what is important or vital in the regulation (see for example the evolution of the perception of excess speed in Europe in recent years).

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