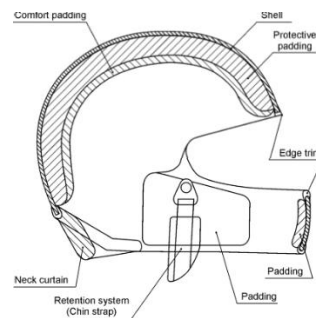


How does UNECE's work help improve road safety for motorcyclists?

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DIAGRAM OF PROTECTIVE HELMET



United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) first pioneered road safety activities in the United Nations system with a working group on the prevention of road accidents in 1950. Then, in 1988, WP.1, an intergovernmental working group, was established. Today, WP.1 remains the only permanent body in the United Nations system that focuses on improving road safety. Its primary function is to serve as a guardian of the United Nations road safety legal instruments. The 1968 Conventions on Road Traffic and on Roads Signs and Signals, and other UNECE legal instruments address the main factors of road accidents.

SC.1 – or the Working Party on Road Transport – manages a number of road transport agreements, including the European Agreement on Main International Traffic Arteries (AGR). The AGR Agreement also specifies a number of international obligations for its Contracting Parties in relation to the provision of safer road infrastructure for vulnerable road users. Many countries around the world have become Contracting Parties to UN road safety and road transport conventions and benefit from their implementation.

The 1968 Convention on Road Traffic

This Convention is the key legal instrument which forms the basis for the majority of traffic rules around the world. These rules have existed for a long time and they need to be respected and enforced to enhance road safety.

A "motorcycle" is defined in Article 1(n) as "any two-wheeled vehicle, with or without a side-car, which is equipped with a propelling engine. Contracting Parties may also treat as motorcycles in their domestic legislation three-wheeled vehicles whose unladen mass does not exceed 400 kg. The term "motorcycle" does not include mopeds, although Contracting Parties may, provided they make a declaration to this effect in conformity with Article 54, paragraph 2, treat mopeds as motorcycles...".

Motorcycles are also considered as motor vehicles under the Convention (Article 1(p)). Unless the Convention provides otherwise, the same rules that apply to motor vehicles are applicable to motorcycles. These include respecting the rules of the road (Articles 5 to 34), registration numbers (Article 36) and observing technical conditions in Annex 5 concerning motor vehicles such as braking, and vehicle lighting and light-signalling devices.

In a similar way, motorcyclists have an onus to take care of vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians, children, elderly persons and the disabled (Article 7). Pedestrian crossings must be approached at low speed to give way to pedestrians and if necessary, to stop. This also applies to pedestrians boarding or descending from public transport vehicles.

In limited scenarios, where expressly provided in the Convention, a Contracting Party may choose not to apply certain rules or requirements in the Convention to motorcyclists and motorcycles. These exceptions include overtaking and movement of traffic in lanes (Article 11). Finally, Contracting Parties may refuse to admit to their territories in international traffic motorcycles with trailers and motorcycles whose drivers and passengers are not equipped with protective helmets (Annex 1).

The 1971 European Agreement Supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Traffic

This agreement was introduced to unify the rules governing road traffic in Europe. Provisions are similar to those in the 1968 Convention, but set higher standards by additional and more precise requirements. For example, motorcyclists and moped drivers must hold the handlebars with both hands except when giving a prescribed signal in conformity with the 1968 Convention (Article 27).

The same Article also provides that drivers and passengers of motorcycles and mopeds must wear approved protective helmets except where exempted in domestic legislation. The Agreement also contains special rules applicable to signposted residential areas including drivers proceeding at very low speed as specified by national legislation and in any event, not exceeding 20 km per hour (Article 27bis).

The Consolidated Resolution on Road Traffic (RE.1)

RE.1 addresses, in greater detail, key road traffic issues and recommends (non-binding) best practices. For example, general rules such as speed, driving under the influence of alcohol and other substances, daytime use of lights and driving in specific places such as tunnels and at level crossings. It also covers various methods of influencing the behaviour of all road users, and ways to improve road safety for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, persons with reduced mobility, and children. Motorcyclists will find Chapters 6 and 11 especially relevant. Chapter 6 contains special rules relating to two-wheeled vehicles, and Chapter 11 addresses the matter of infrastructure and safety of two-wheeled vehicles.

To be effective in reducing motorcycle and moped crashes and related deaths and injuries, comprehensive motorcycle and moped safety programmes should be established and supported. The most successful practices include the use of a phased licensing system based on riding experience, pre-licence training of a minimum standard, the wearing of a protective helmet which meets the standards defined in Regulation No. 22 annexed to the 1958 Agreement concerning the Adoption of Uniform Technical Prescriptions for Wheeled Vehicles, Equipment and Parts which can be Fitted and/or Used on Wheeled Vehicles and the Conditions for the Reciprocal Recognition of Approvals Granted on the Basis of these Prescriptions and other protective gear, and safety campaigns targeted at motorcyclists and moped drivers.

It is also important to pay attention to infrastructures and facilities to protect users of two-wheeled motorized vehicles, or minimize the consequences of accidents. Examples are the quality of pavements, road markings, roadside features, and some road structures (narrowing or raising of the carriageway). The "hard" infrastructure should be accompanied by "soft" infrastructure such as policies concerning road design and signs, maintenance and repair programs, and more comprehensive national strategies to improve infrastructure for motorcyclists and moped drivers.

The 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement Supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals

The 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals and the 1971 European Agreement Supplementing the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals are also important legal instruments that aim at increasing road safety for all road users through the international harmonization of road signs and signals. There are some road signs relating to motorcyclists, moped drivers and their safety. Examples below are from the Convention (1. motorcycles and 2. mopeds), Poland, Italy and Viet Nam (in order of appearance).



The Consolidated Resolution on Road Signs and Signals (RE.2)

It is similar to RE.1 in that it recommends best practices for road signs and signals either not covered at all or not covered in detail. The same road signs and signals that would be informative for drivers of motor vehicles apply equally to motorcyclists and moped drivers using the carriageway.