



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

TRANS/WP.1/2000/26
25 July 2000

ENGLISH
Original: ENGLISH and
FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Road Traffic Safety
(Thirty-fifth session, 3 – 6 October 2000,
agenda item 2 (e))

**AMENDMENTS TO AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
1968 CONVENTIONS ON ROAD TRAFFIC AND ON ROAD SIGNS AND SIGNALS
AND THE 1971 EUROPEAN AGREEMENTS SUPPLEMENTING THEM**

**Proposed Amendment to Article 37 and Annexes 2 and 3 of
the Convention on Road Traffic with respect to the "Distinguishing Sign"**

Transmitted by the International Touring Alliance
and the International Automobile Association (AIT/FIA)

Introduction

In Europe, international cross-border traffic is developing strongly. Each year, millions of vehicles drive in a State other than the country where the vehicle is registered, either as commercial transport or holiday traffic. Article 37 of the Vienna Convention applies to such cars requiring drivers to display the distinguishing sign of the country of registration at the rear when travelling abroad.

A quick survey carried out in 1994 by the AIT-affiliated Royal Dutch Touring Club (ANWB) learned that an increasing number of motorists do not comply with the rules of the Convention. Neither information campaigns nor enforcement initiatives seemed likely to influence and improve the situation. In 1995, the AIT and FIA invited international institutions to come up with solutions.

Within the European Union, this development led the EU Transport Council to adopt a regulation to mutually recognise, within the EU, "Euro number plates" conforming to the annex to the regulation and no longer requiring motorists to use the distinguishing sign according to Article 37 of the UN Convention.

For the AIT and FIA, the EU regulation is only part of the solution. Taking into account that several Central and Eastern European countries have also introduced registration plates including distinguishing signs, more and more European citizens cross borders having the identification of the country of registration incorporated in their vehicle's registration plate. Nevertheless, they still have to comply with the current text of Article 37 of the Convention and are forced to carry an extra distinguishing sign.

The AIT and FIA invite the States that have signed the 1968 UN Convention on Road Traffic to adapt international legislation to the urgent need of facilitating international road transport by amending Article 37 and Annexes 2 and 3 of the UN Convention with regard to the Distinguishing Sign of motor vehicles and trailers in international traffic.

Proposal

Modify Article 37.1 and 37.2 as follows:

1. Every motor vehicle in international traffic shall display at the rear, in addition to its registration number, a distinguishing sign of the State in which it is registered. The distinguishing sign of the State may be incorporated into the extreme left of the (front and) rear registration plates.
2. Every trailer coupled to a motor vehicle and required under Article 36 of this Convention to display a registration number at the rear shall also display at the rear, either in addition to its registration plate or incorporated into it, the distinguishing sign of the State where the registration number was assigned. The provisions of this paragraph shall be applicable even if the trailer is registered in a State other than the State of registration of the motor vehicle to which it is coupled; if the trailer is not registered, it shall display at the rear the distinguishing sign of the State of registration of the drawing vehicle except when it is travelling in that State.

Modify Annex 2 heading and paragraphs, 2(1), and 2(4) as follows:

Annex 2: Registration number and registration plate of motor vehicles and trailers in international traffic.

1. The registration number referred to in Articles 35 and 36 of this Convention shall be composed either of numerals or of numerals and letters. The numerals shall be Arabic numerals and the letters shall be in capital Latin characters. Other numerals or characters may, however, be used, but if so the registration number shall be repeated in Arabic numerals and in capital Latin characters. The distinguishing sign of the State in which the vehicle is registered may be incorporated into the registration plate. It shall comply with the provisions of Annex 3, paragraph 3 of this Convention.

4. Subject to the provisions of Article 32, paragraph 5, the registration plate or surface on which the registration number is displayed or painted may be of a retro-reflecting material. This also applies to the distinguishing sign of the State in which the vehicle is registered that may be incorporated into the registration plate.

Modify Annex 3 as follows:

1. The distinguishing sign referred to in Article 37 of this Convention shall consist of one to three letters in capital Latin characters, and can be displayed on a special plate at the rear or incorporated into the registration plate.
2. When the distinguishing sign is displayed on a special plate at the rear, then:
 - 2.1 The letters shall have a height of at least 0.08m and their strokes a width of at least 0.01m. The letters shall be painted in black on a white ground having the shape of an ellipse with the major axis horizontal. The white ground may be of a retro-reflecting material.
 - 2.2 When the distinguishing sign consists of only one letter, the major axis of the ellipse may be vertical.
 - 2.3 The distinguishing sign displayed on a special plate shall not be affixed in such a way that it could be confused with the registration number or impair its legibility.
 - 2.4 On motorcycles and their trailers, the dimensions of axes of the ellipse shall be at least 0.175m and 0.115m. On other motor vehicles and their trailers, the dimensions of the axes of the ellipse shall be at least:
 - (a) 0.24m and 0.145m if the distinguishing sign comprises three letters;
 - (b) 0.175m and 0.115m if the distinguishing sign comprises less than three letters.
 - 2.5 The provisions of Annex 2, paragraph 3, shall apply to the display of the distinguishing sign on vehicles.
3. When the distinguishing sign is incorporated into the registration plate, then:
 - 3.1 The distinguishing sign shall be displayed on the extreme left of the registration plate. It may be supplemented by a national flag or emblem, or the emblem of the regional economic integration organization to which the country belongs placed above the distinguishing sign.
 - 3.2 The distinguishing sign, and the supplementary national flag or emblem, or the emblem of the regional economic integration organization to which the country belongs, shall not be affixed in such a way that it could be confused with the registration number or impair its legibility. They shall be displayed either on a background of a colour different from the ground of the registration plate or separated

from the registration number by means of a vertical line made of a colour different from the ground of the registration plate.

- 3.3 The distinguishing sign, the supplementary national flag or emblem, or the emblem of the regional economic integration organization to which the country belongs, the differentiated background and the vertical separation line shall be made of the same ground material as that of the registration plate they are incorporated into.
- 3.4 The dimensions of the distinguishing sign shall be:
(a) height: 0.020m minimum
(b) stroke width of characters: 0.003m minimum; 0.005m maximum
- 3.5 The dimensions of the differentiated background shall be at least:
(a) height: 0.098m minimum
(b) width: 0.040m minimum; 0.050m maximum
- 3.6 The dimensions of the vertical separation line shall be at least:
(a) height: 0.098m minimum
(b) stroke width: 0.003m minimum
- 3.7 The dimensions of the supplementary national flag or emblem, or of the emblem of the regional economic integration organization to which the country belongs, shall be such that they can be inscribed within the upper surface of the total area reserved for the distinguishing sign within the registration plate without impairing the legibility of the distinguishing sign.
- 3.8 According to Annex 2, paragraph 2, the dimensions for motorcycles and their trailers or for registration plates taking up two lines may be appropriately reduced.
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