

REPORT ON PARKING PROVISIONS FOR MOTORISTS WITH MOBILITY HANDICAPS

[CEMT/CM(97)10/FINAL]

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly people with disabilities are availing of opportunities to travel abroad for occupational, social and cultural purposes. As access to accommodation facilities and stop off points on auto-routes and services in general have improved, so more and more people with disabilities have opted to travel using their own cars. For many, this is the preferred form of travel as it affords the disabled person freedom of movement and independence at his ultimate destination. For many people it is also the most economic means of travelling from one country to another.

For most people with disabilities, good planning and accurate information are key components in ensuring that journeys undertaken are both pleasant and free from anxiety. The disabled motorist taking his car to another country must be reassured that he can park his car close to amenities, that he can avail of concessions to his disability, ideally, similar to those he enjoys in his own country.

The ECMT have long recognised these needs and on the 6th December 1977 at a meeting in Paris, the Council of Ministers issued the following recommendations:-

1. To enable handicapped persons who have difficulty in moving about to park their cars beyond the specified time at points where parking time is restricted.
2. Where necessary to provide reserved parking space for these handicapped persons by means of road signs supplemented with an additional plate bearing the international symbol for handicapped persons
3. To provide handicapped persons eligible for the facilities mentioned under
4. paragraphs 1 and 2 above with a document bearing at least the handicapped person's symbol and the name of its holder. This document should be visibly displayed on the vehicle when the handicapped person concerned is making use of these facilities.
5. To give the same facilities to holders of this document coming from another member country as they do to their own nationals.
6. To take the necessary steps to ensure that this reciprocal treatment regarding parking facilities for handicapped persons will be applicable in all countries not later than Jan 1st 1980.

As can be seen from the brief summary of concessions available in 16 countries listed below most countries offer similar concessions i.e. parking without time limit or extended time limit, parking in areas prohibited to regular vehicles provided no hazard or obstruction is caused. Furthermore, there exists in most countries a formalised or at least informal recognition of parking badges issued by other countries. This general policy is in line with the ECMT recommendation. Nonetheless for the disabled motorist travelling abroad there always exists the doubt that the badge issued in his country of residence will not be recognised in the country he is visiting. This uncertainty constitutes a real anxiety for the disabled motorist and furthermore lack of information as to where he may or may not

park can also lead to inadvertent infringement of local regulations on his part. Where badges of one country are not recognised by the authorities of another, disabled motorists may incur fines or penalties for parking in an area where they thought they were entitled to park but were precluded from so doing as their parking badge was not valid for that area.

Overall it is fair to say that the 1977 ECMT recommendation has been accepted by member states in that if formal recognition does not exist at least tolerance is shown to visitors whose cars display a parking badge bearing the International Logo. There are however notable exceptions and in some instances badges issued in one area are not recognised in other areas of the same country. Furthermore there are a variety of national requirements which can further complicate the situation - e.g. local badges must be obtained for the duration of a visit or only badges issued by a state authority will be recognised.

2. PARKING BADGES AND PARKING CONCESSIONS IN ECMT MEMBER STATES

AUSTRIA

The Austrian parking card is issued by the authorities and is awarded to an individual rather than to a specific vehicle.

The card is issued to drivers with disabilities and also to people with disabilities who themselves being unable to drive as a result of their disability must be driven by others. Blind people may also benefit from this scheme.

The scheme entitles the badge holder to park without time limit where time limits normally apply, and also to park in pedestrian zones where loading and unloading is normally permitted.

Degree of disability is the principle condition for granting a parking card to an individual. His/her disability must be such that his/her ability to walk is very severely restricted or he/she must be blind.

If a parking badge is used by persons other than the individual named on the card, the badge may be withdrawn.

Austria affords the same parking concessions to people with disabilities of other nationalities provided their vehicle carries a badge issued by the authorities of their country of residence, which displays the international logo.

BELGIUM

The Belgian parking card is issued by the authorities. It is awarded to both drivers and passengers with disabilities which prohibit their ability to walk over a very short distance (circa 100m). The badge is awarded to an individual rather than a specific vehicle, and misuse of the badge can result in its withdrawal.

The badge entitles the holder to park without time limit where time limits normally apply, and to park in spaces designated for use by people with disabilities.

Badge holders are exempt from paying parking meter fees where such charges usually apply. Belgium affords the same parking concessions to people with disabilities of other nationalities, provided their vehicle carries a badge issued by the authorities of their country of residence - which displays the international logo.

DENMARK

The Danish parking card is issued to people with disabilities who comply with the conditions for obtaining aid for buying a car as stated in the Danish Aid Act - drivers and drivers of passengers with disabilities may apply for the badge which is issued on a specific vehicle rather than an individual.

To qualify a person's functional capacity must be reduced to the extent that his/her ability to travel by any means other than using his/her own car would cause severe hardship. A person with a disability travelling as a passenger must require help getting in or out of a vehicle and need more space than usual when parking.

Occupational health and social circumstances are considered when applications are made for a parking badge. Blind people may be eligible but frail or elderly people are excluded. People with disabilities have recourse to an appeals system if they feel their application has been treated unfairly. Badges are normally issued for 6 years, but may be withdrawn if misused.

The badge entitles the holder to:

- park for 15 minutes where parking is normally prohibited
- park for 1 hour where space is normally restricted to 15 to 30 minutes
- park for an unlimited time in spaces where one may usually park for more than 1 hour
- park for an unlimited time at parking meters as long as the maximum amount is paid on arrival and the arrival time is indicated on a parking disc.

Denmark affords the same parking concessions to people with disabilities of other nationalities provided their vehicle carries a badge issued by the authorities of their country of residence which displays the international logo.

FINLAND

The Finnish parking badge is issued by the police authorities on the basis of medical certificates submitted by the applicant. They are valid for 5 years, but if a disability is of a permanent nature medical certificates are not essential when applying for renewal. Badges are issued to persons whose ability to walk independently is severely restricted or to persons who are blind or who have greatly reduced vision.

Badges are issued to drivers and passengers with disabilities, but their use is restricted to those vehicles indicated on the permit.

The badge entitles the holder to:

- park free of charge in parking meter areas
- park in areas where parking is normally prohibited provided no obstruction or hazard is caused to other road users
- park free of time-limit in parking areas where there normally are time-limits

People with disabilities visiting Finland can obtain a Finnish parking permit when they contact the local police and provide them with a parking permit issued in their country of residence. However, according to Finnish law, a foreigner visiting Finland does not need a Finnish permit and can use a permit issued by a foreign authority with the international logo. This entitles the visitor to the same concessions as Finnish nationals. Permits may be withdrawn if they are misused.

FRANCE

Parking cards in France are issued by the departmental authorities, but the criteria and conditions of eligibility are set by the national authorities.

Cards are available to both drivers and passengers with disabilities. The degree of disability assessed by medical examination is the main criterion for entitlement to a card.

Cards are usually valid for five years. The expiry date is printed on the front of the card.

Parking provisions vary from one locality to another. In urban areas, disabled people are usually exempt from parking fees or may be entitled to park at a reduced rate. More detailed information on exemptions can be obtained from the local police.

The police generally show leniency to vehicles displaying a parking badge which carries the international logo, provided that the vehicle does not create difficulties or risks for traffic, pedestrians or other drivers. A number of parking spaces are set aside for disabled people in all public and private car parks. The rates charged vary.

The international logo is well known and even if parking badges issued in foreign countries are not officially recognised, foreign drivers displaying a badge with the international logo on their windcreens are treated in the same way as residents.

GERMANY

In Germany the local road traffic authorities usually issue parking cards for seriously disabled people and the appropriate permit for two years free of charge. The parking card is valid throughout Germany.

The following groups are entitled to such cards:

- Severely disabled people who find walking extremely difficult and who, because of their disability, need their car as they cannot go out unaccompanied or without making a great effort. They include:

Paraplegics, those who have lost both upper or lower legs, those who have a dislocated hip and those who have lost one upper leg and cannot be given an artificial leg, or can be given only a pelvic harness, or have at the same time have lost the other lower leg or an arm, as well as other severely disabled people who, according to the medical authorities, can also be included in this list because of illnesses.

- Seriously disabled people who find walking extremely difficult and have no driving licence, and blind people who have to use a car and cannot go out unaccompanied. In such cases a permit is issued to disabled people to the effect that the person driving them is entitled to use the parking facilities provided.

The parking card for seriously disabled people makes it possible to:

- park for up to three hours in restricted areas. A longer parking time may be permitted for some of these areas. The parking time must be shown on a parking dial.
- exceed the parking time limit at authorised points in otherwise "no stopping" areas.
- park beyond the time limit on car parks marked as such, and on pavements where parking is allowed and the time limit is indicated.
- park in pedestrian zones during the time when loading/unloading is permitted.
- park at parking meters free of charge and without a time limit.
- park for up to three hours on parking space for residents.
- park in traffic-calmed zones outside the areas marked, provided through traffic is not impeded and there is no other parking space at a reasonable distance.

Parking concessions are allowed only for private cars and motorcycles.

The maximum parking time is 24 hours. A parking card must be prominently displayed behind the windscreen. The wheelchair symbol as well as the official stamp and name of the issuing authority must be shown on the card.

Germany provides the same parking concessions for people with disabilities from other ECMT Member countries provided their vehicle has a card which has been issued by the authorities in their home country and which displays the international logo.

GREECE

There is an increasing number of on street designated parking bays for people with disabilities. They are clearly identified by means of the International Logo. The authorities will also provide a parking bay adjacent to a disabled persons home or place of employment. These spaces may only be used by the individual to whom they are assigned

Greece has no formal reciprocal arrangements with other members states but Greek authorities are tolerant of visitors with disabilities where cars carry a parking badge bearing the International Logo.

IRELAND

While Non-Governmental Organisations issue badges to motorists with mobility difficulties, official permits are issued by local authorities for the administrative area in which they are issued. In practice, all permits are recognised nationally. The permits are issued only to drivers with disabilities, and for a specific vehicle, allowing parking in spaces designated for people with

disabilities, or at meters without the need to pay a fee. The permit also removes the obligation to abide by certain time restrictions.

To qualify for a badge or permit, a person must submit medical evidence of disability.

New regulations will shortly be introduced which will radically overhaul the provisions in relation to parking permits for disabled people. Permits will in future be available to disabled persons, whether they are drivers or not, and will have national application. Both the local authorities and the relevant Non-Governmental Organisations will be empowered to issue permits which will feature the recognised international logo.

While no official reciprocal arrangement exists, Ireland unofficially recognises parking badges issued in other countries, provided they display the international logo. Visitors with disabilities may avail of the same concessions as Irish nationals.

LUXEMBOURG

Parking badge is issued by authorities to people with disabilities who meet the required medical criteria. Badges are issued to both drivers and passengers with disabilities, including people who are blind. The card is issued to the individual rather than to a specific vehicle. Cards are issued for 5 year periods.

Badge holders are entitled to:

- park in spaces designated for use by people with disabilities, but in exceptional circumstances badge holders may not exceed general parking time limits

Luxembourg recognises parking badges issued in other states, provided they display the international logo.

NETHERLANDS

Parking cards are issued to drivers and passengers with disabilities who meet medical criteria. Applicants are subject to medical examination.

Permits are issued to persons whose ability to walk more than 100m is severely restricted. Cards are issued to individuals rather than on a specific vehicle.

A badge holder is entitled to:

- park in spaces designated for people with disabilities
- park for an unlimited time in areas where time limits normally prevail
- park for a maximum of three hours - where parking is normally severely restricted or prohibited (this concession does not apply if alternate parking facilities exist within a reasonable distance - separate disabled person's parking disc must be used in these areas)

Dutch authorities recognise parking badges issued by the authorities of other countries when badge displays the international logo.

NORWAY

Parking cards are primarily issued to drivers and passengers with disabilities but can also be issued to organisations/institutions who frequently transport people with disabilities. Applications are subject to individual assessment where the applicants documented medical disability and practical need of parking concessions are taken into consideration.

Badges are issued by the authorities for each region and normally apply to a named individual and a specific vehicle. Badges are valid for a minimum 2 years and maximum 5 years but can in a case of periodical need be issued for a shorter period of time.

Badge holders are entitled to:

- park in spaces reserved for people with disabilities.
- park in areas where a charge is normally levied free of charge and without time limit
- park in residential parking zones

Norway has no formal reciprocal arrangements with other member states. The Norwegian Parking Regulation states, however, that foreign vehicles with a parking card with the international logo are entitled to the same parking concessions as Norwegian vehicles.

PORTUGAL

Parking badges are issued to drivers and passengers with disabilities who meet specific medical criteria regarding their level of disability and who are in possession of a vehicle adapted to their needs. Badges display the name of the disabled person and the registration number of the vehicle to which it is allocated.

Badge holders may:

- park in spaces designated for use by people with disabilities
- Badge holders do not enjoy any other parking concessions such as parking in areas prohibited to other road users.

Portuguese authorities recognise parking badges issued in other countries when such badges clearly display the international logo.

SPAIN

Parking badges for people with disabilities are issued in each municipality of Spain. A wide variety of cards exists and concessions only apply to the region of issue.

Parking badges are issued to drivers on evidence of severe disability, and may also be issued to passengers or first degree relatives of passengers with disabilities, parking charges vary from region to region and it is advisable to clarify matters with the local police.

Spain has no reciprocal arrangements with other member states and it is necessary to obtain a badge specifying disability and registration in each different municipality.

SWEDEN

Parking cards are issued to drivers and passengers with disabilities on production of evidence of severe disability, i.e. cannot walk more than 100m without severe difficulty or have severe visual disability.

Badge holders are entitled to:

- park for three hours in areas where parking is normally severely restricted or prohibited
- park for 24 hours in areas where time limits are normally imposed
- park in spaces designated for use by people with disabilities

People with disabilities are expected to pay local parking fees but some areas offer exemptions. Local police can advise on this matter.

Swedish authorities recognise parking badges issued by authorities in other countries where such badges carry the international logo.

A Swedish company Veridata have prepared a proposal regarding a common parking license for disabled motorists for the European Union.

SWITZERLAND

Parking cards are issued to disabled drivers and passengers by the authorities of each canton in Switzerland.

A variety of licenses are issued, i.e.

- for drivers with physical handicaps
- for persons regularly transported by another person
- for the transport of physically disabled people (frequent services)

An authorisation card is given to the beneficiary. It must contain at least the following information:

- on the front side: the type of authorisation card, identification details, office of issue and/or issuing authority's stamp, year of validity, authorisation number and/or vehicle number;
- on the reverse side: full name and address of beneficiary.

Parking cards are valid for all Switzerland. Application for badges is made to the authority in each canton, and must be accompanied by medical certification of disability.

Badge holders are entitled to:

- park for up to 4 additional hours where parking is normally restricted to 20 minutes or more. The authorisation is also valid for places in the “Blue Zone” as well as those equipped with parking meters.
- park for up to 2 hours where parking is prohibited.

These parking rules only apply when there is no public or private parking space free which is available to the public with unlimited parking time and is in the close vicinity of the parking area.

Some cities and towns exempt disabled motorists from parking meter fees. Local police can advise on concessions pertaining in each canton.

Switzerland recognises parking badges issued by authorities in other countries and affords visitors with disabilities the same concessions as Swiss nationals.

UNITED KINGDOM

The Orange Badge Scheme U.K. provides a national arrangement of parking concessions for people with severe walking difficulties who travel either as drivers or passengers, registered blind people and people with severe upper limb disabilities who regularly drive but who cannot turn a steering wheel by hand.

A person may apply for a badge if he/she

- (1) is in receipt of a specific allowance or
- (2) is registered blind or
- (3) uses a vehicle supplied by a government department or
- (4) receives a grant towards the cost of his or her vehicle
- (5) has a permanent substantial disability resulting in an inability to walk or considerable difficulty in walking or
- (6) has a severe disability in both upper limbs and regularly drives a car but cannot turn the steering wheel by hand even if it is fitted with a turning knob.

Eligibility for an Orange Badge is determined by the local authority

The Orange Badge is issued to an individual in respect of the vehicle he drives or in which he is carried as a passenger. An applicant must supply his registration number to the issuing authority. The new Orange Badge has space for a photograph of the holder to be displayed.

The Orange Badge Scheme applies throughout the UK with the exception of the following:

The City of London
 The City of Westminster
 The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
 The London Borough of Camden (Part)

These four authorities operate independent concession schemes to people with disabilities who live and work in their areas and also offer limited concessions to Orange Badge holders.

Orange Badge Holders may:

- Park free of charge and without time limit at parking meters and pay-and-display on street parking
- Park without time limit where other motorists may only park for a limit period.
- Park on single and double yellow lines for up to 3 hours in England, Wales or without time limit in Scotland except where loading and unloading are prohibited. In England and Wales a special orange parking disc showing time of arrival must be displayed to avail of this concession.

3. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN PARKING BADGES

Of the 16 countries surveyed all parking badges displayed some or all of the following:-

- (1) The International Logo (pictogram)
- (2) Name of badge holder
- (3) Registration of vehicle for which the card is valid.
- (4) Stamp of issuing authority
- (5) Period of Validity

The principle differences were:

- (1) Colour: Blue, Yellow, Orange, Black and White and Green
- (2) Size of logo
- (3) Amount of text displayed on the front of the badge

4. ECMT AGREEMENT IN PRACTICE

Recommendations 1 2 and 3 have clearly been adopted in almost all member states in that:

- (i) Most countries offer an extended time limit or no time limit to disabled motorists parking their cars in areas where time limits normally apply
- (ii) All member states are increasingly providing designated parking bays for people with disabilities in appropriate locations.
- (iii) All member states issue parking badges displaying the International Logo to disabled motorists.

Recommendations 4 and 5 have not been quite so effective. At present most countries claim to recognise disabled motorists badges issued in other countries. To a great extent this recognition is based on a tolerance exercised by officials in each locality rather than a stated formal agreement or

mutual recognition. However, in other countries, the fact that he will be 'tolerated' does not always reassure the disabled motorist.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 1) The ECMT recommendations of 1977 have been largely implemented but questions remain concerning the application of the reciprocal arrangements between member states.
- 2) While the majority of disabled motorists can drive and park with relative ease in other member states nonetheless a minority experience difficulties.
- 3) Procedures for issuing parking badges and conditions of use vary widely from country to country. Regulations are linked to National Legislation and it would require considerable change to try to achieve any degree of harmony between member states on this issue.
- 4) Concessions to disabled motorists also vary from country to country. Change in levels of concessions available would necessitate amending Road Traffic Laws in Member States and as such this issue should be pursued at National rather than at European level.
- 5) All member states are increasing the provision of on-street designated parking bays for motorists with disabilities.
- 6) All members states impose penalties on motorists who misuse their parking badges
- 7) All member states can impose penalties on non-disabled motorists who park in areas clearly designated for motorists with disabilities. Some authorities are much more effective than others in this regard.
- 8) The variety of badges used in member states make it difficult for local traffic police to recognise legitimate entitlement to avail of parking concessions for motorists with disabilities.
- 9) Absence of clear information concerning parking concessions in member states is one of the principle areas of confusion for motorists with disabilities.
- 10) While a common parking badge for all member states would be useful and would overcome some of the difficulties highlighted it would be an onerous task to introduce a badge which could be formally adopted by all members of ECMT. At present, the EU is discussing the possibility of introducing a single badge for disabled motorists. However, it is important that any EU actions do not worsen conditions for people living in countries outside the EU. A simpler solution to the problem of a common parking badge could be introduced for the purposes of recognition only and could be displayed on a car in conjunction rather than instead of, a national parking badge when travelling abroad.

Some Recommendations

- 1) ECMT members should address the issue of reciprocal recognition of parking badges with the appropriate authorities in their own countries
- 2) Procedures for issuing parking badges to motorists with disabilities and conditions of their use are best left to the authorities in each country given the complexity of legislative and regulatory frameworks on which they are based.

- 3) Concessions to disabled motorists should also remain the responsibility of National Authorities. However, samples of good practice should be prepared to assist countries who are beginning to make improvements in this area.
- 4) The possibility of an international parking card might be examined which could be used for travel purposes only. This might be linked to existing structures for issuing international drivers' licences.
- 5) All member states should be encouraged to provide designated parking bays for motorists with disabilities. The numbers and locations of such spaces should respond to expressed needs of motorists with disabilities in each country. Member states should monitor the use of such spaces in order to avoid abuse and establish whether the number of spaces provided are adequate.
- 6) Member states should be encouraged to produce clear information regarding parking concessions in their countries. Ideally, information from all member states should be published in booklet format and information contained therein should be updated at regular intervals.