
Essential steps to help you stay on the right side of the law

1. Know what legislation you are required to comply with

Where evidence of competence is required by the country of registration (the Flag State) pleasure boaters must comply with those regulations. Additionally, when in the waters of another country you must also comply with any requirements of the visited country (the Coastal State).

Many European countries require the skipper of a pleasure craft to be able to provide evidence of his or her competence. In practice documentary evidence may seldom be inspected, but it is generally useful and in some countries essential to carry evidence of your competence, such as an ICC.

There is no international requirement for another country to accept a UK qualification in place of their own - except under certain conditions full STCW qualifications (for working aboard large commercial vessels). Some countries may accept the ICC as an alternative to their national qualification on their nationally flagged vessels, but this should never be assumed, as the ICC was never intended to be an alternative to individual national qualification requirements.

The RYA's advice (intended for British recreational boaters) on where evidence of competence is necessary is based both on what we understand the law to say and boaters' experiences in the country. It is available at www.rya.org.uk/go/eoca.

2. Understand the limitations of the ICC

The fact that you are eligible to receive an UK ICC issued by the RYA does not mean that it will be acceptable to the flag state of the boat you own, use or hire and it does not mean that it will be accepted as evidence of competence in the country in which you plan to go boating.

It is up to you to make the necessary enquiries to ensure the UK ICC issued by the RYA is the correct document specific to your circumstances.

The validity of the ICC is frequently misunderstood. The ICC is **not** the boating equivalent of the EU driving licence for road vehicles, which all EU member states are obliged to accept.

The ICC is in fact of United Nations¹ (UN) origin and although the ICC allows the holder to voyage internationally this is only where the country to be visited has chosen to accept it.

It is essential that you check that the ICC is acceptable to the authorities in the country in which you intend to use the boat (bearing in mind the size and type of boat and where it is going to be used) and you make sure that you

¹ The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Inland Transport Committee Working Party on Inland Water Transport's Resolution 40 regulates the issue of the International Certificate for Operators of Pleasure Craft (commonly referred to as the International Certificate of Competence - ICC), subject to any prescriptions the country concerned may have made.

have the evidence of competence required by the legislation of the vessel's flag state.

The ICC issued by the RYA is issued on behalf of the UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA); it does not entitle you to any other certificate (in the UK or abroad).

The ICC cannot be commercially endorsed and should never be used as evidence of competence for commercial activities.

3. Continued eligibility

The RYA is authorised by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to issue a UK ICC to the nationals of any country EXCEPT individuals who are a national of another UNECE member state which has accepted Resolution 40 and who are also resident in another UNECE member state which has accepted Resolution 40, unless the RYA has been given written permission to do so by the Government of the relevant country.

The list of UNECE member states that have accepted Resolution 40 is subject to change without notice (i.e. whenever the government of a country adopts Resolution 40). The current list is available on the RYA web-site at www.rya.org.uk/go/icc-no.

A person's eligibility can therefore change during the period the ICC is valid for. Should this be the case, the certificate holder must notify the RYA and surrender the certificate; no refunds of any nature will be given. If the certificate holder cannot satisfactorily demonstrate his or her continued eligibility when the certificate expires it will not be renewed by the RYA.

4. Help foreign officials help you

As yachtsmen travel further afield, the acceptance and knowledge of RYA certification by port officials is of greater importance. The ICC often assists, but the countries to which RYA certified skippers now venture far exceed its scope. We cannot make every country accept our qualifications, but the translations of the practical certificates provided on the RYA web-site and on the reverse side of newly issued certificates should make it easier for port officials to understand them and make an informed decision.

Who to contact

If you have a query relating to the ICC, this is best directed as follows:

Certification department

☎ 0844 556 9520 or +44 23 8060 4158 ✉ certification@rya.org.uk

Request an ICC application form (www.rya.org.uk/go/iccform)

Find out what has happened to an application

Cost of having an ICC issued

Training department

☎ 0844 556 9528 or +44 23 8060 4181 ✉ training@rya.org.uk

How to arrange an ICC assessment

How to arrange a CEVNI test

Cruising department

☎ 0844 556 9517 or +44 23 8060 4233 ✉ cruising@rya.org.uk

Foreign regulations - is an ICC required or recommended

General advice on taking your boat outside the UK for short trips