



GUIDANCE FOR CLUBS

TRAILERS AND TOWING IN EUROPE 2026

Guidance Note: UK Trailers Travelling to and from Europe

Background

This note has been produced to aid clubs' awareness of local legislation in different countries before undertaking journeys to or from the continent with towing vehicles and loaded boat trailers.

In practice some regulations have not been firmly applied nor consistently enforced in recent years. However, clubs may wish to proceed on the basis that the regulations may be enforced strictly and as written.

Maximum Lengths and Overhang Rules for Rowing Trailers in Europe

The table below is intended as a practical reference for clubs travelling with rowing trailers. It summarises the commonly applicable maximum vehicle combination lengths and highlights whether particular attention should be paid to forward overhang at the hitch/tow point. Clubs and drivers should always verify current local requirements before travel, as enforcement practices and technical interpretations may vary between jurisdictions.

Country	Main Highway Code / Regulation	Typical Maximum Combination Length (Vehicle + Trailer)	Specific Concern Regarding Hitch / Forward Overhang?	Notes for Rowing Trailers
Italy	<i>Codice della Strada</i> – Articles 61 & 62; DPR 495/1992	18.75m	Yes	Italy has a focus on whether boats project forward of the tow hitch/coupling. Enforcement may occur even where excess length is marginal.
France	<i>Code de la Route</i> – Articles R312-10 to R312-18	18.0m	No - General overhang restrictions apply	France applies a stricter overall combination limit than other nations. Vehicle immobilisation and fines are possible for non-compliance.
Belgium	Belgian Highway Code / EU vehicle dimension framework	Generally 18.75m	No - General overhang restrictions apply	Belgium broadly follows EU dimension standards. General overhang and safe loading rules apply.

Spain	<i>Reglamento General de Vehículos</i>	18.75m	No - General overhang restrictions apply	Spain additionally requires ECE 70 rear marker plates for combinations exceeding 12m.
Portugal	<i>Código da Estrada /</i> vehicle dimension regulations	18.75m	No - General overhang restrictions apply	Portugal broadly aligns with wider EU vehicle dimension rules. ECE 70 rear marker plates are commonly required for combinations exceeding 12m.
Germany	<i>Straßenverkehrs-Zulassungs-Ordnung (StVZO)</i> and Road Traffic Regulations	18.75m	No - General overhang restrictions apply	Germany broadly follows EU vehicle dimension standards. Loads must be safely secured and compliant with general overhang rules.
Netherlands	<i>Regeling voertuigen /</i> Dutch Vehicle Regulations	18.75m	No - General overhang restrictions apply	The Netherlands broadly applies EU dimension standards. Clubs should be aware that some Dutch transport operators and clubs use sectional or split boats (particularly for 4+s and 8+s) to assist with compliance and manoeuvrability, although this is not understood to be a specific legal requirement. Care should still be taken regarding overall length and load positioning.

Maximum width Requirements

Clubs should also be aware that standard European vehicle width limits commonly apply (**typically 2.55 metres maximum overall width**). However, requirements may vary depending on vehicle type, load configuration and jurisdiction, and clubs and drivers should satisfy themselves that their vehicle and trailer combination complies with all applicable local requirements before travel

Maximum Length Requirements

For a typical rowing trailer combination (car or truck plus trailer), the maximum permitted overall length is shown in the table above. A tolerance of approximately 2% may be applied to account for measurement uncertainty.

For a country with an overall maximum combination length of 18.75 metres, this gives an effective upper threshold of 19.31 metres. However, this should not be relied upon in planning, and combinations should be configured to remain clearly within 18.75 metres. Any vehicle exceeding this limit is non-compliant unless specific authorisation has been obtained.

Load Overhang

Particular care must be taken with how boats are positioned on the trailer. While forward projection beyond the hitch is not permitted in certain countries, rear overhang is also restricted and must remain within the limits set out in the regulations. A trailer that is compliant in overall length may still be deemed non-compliant if boats are incorrectly positioned.

Practical Recommendation for Clubs

Before departure (leaving or returning), clubs should:

- physically measure the full vehicle/trailer/load combination from the foremost point of the towing vehicle to the rearmost point of the load;
- check the safety of the load and positioning of boats, including any overhang considerations;
- avoid relying on tolerances, informal practices or set-ups that have previously been used without issue.

Where there is any doubt, configurations should be adjusted conservatively. Failure to do so may result in enforcement action, including impoundment of the trailer, damage to equipment, and significant disruption to travel.

Driver Responsibility

Responsibility for compliance rests with the driver. Drivers are expected to take all reasonable steps to understand and comply with the road traffic laws of the countries in which they are travelling. This may include consulting UK Government guidance, the AA and RAC, as well as official sources within the countries through which travel is planned.

In addition to understanding local legal requirements, drivers should ensure they are familiar with the key dimensions and characteristics of the vehicle and trailer combination being used. Drivers should be able to readily confirm:

- the total combined length of the towing vehicle, trailer and loaded boats;
- the overall height of the trailer and load;
- the approximate total weight of the vehicle/trailer combination ("train weight"), ensuring that loading limits are not exceeded.

Drivers should also ensure that relevant documentation is available during travel, including where applicable:

- vehicle registration documentation (V5);
- trailer [registration/licensing documentation](#);
- required trailer identification plates;
- insurance documentation covering both the towing vehicle and trailer;
- roadside assistance and emergency contact details.

Particular care should be taken before the return journey as well as the outbound journey. Trailer configurations can change during camps and events due to differences in boat loading, equipment storage

or alterations in positioning. Clubs and drivers should therefore re-check overall dimensions, particularly total length and load positioning, before commencing the return journey and should not assume that a configuration remains compliant simply because it completed the outward journey without issue.

Additional Considerations

It should be noted that enforcement may take place **at any point** during a journey and may not be consistent across all regions or occasions. Clubs should also be aware that other countries en route may impose different limits. For example, France applies a maximum combined length of **18.0 metres**, meaning that some trailers may already be non-compliant upon entry to mainland Europe. Routes should be planned carefully.

Disclaimer

This note is intended for general guidance purposes only. It provides a summary of certain vehicle length and load overhang requirements that may apply to rowing trailers in commonly used European jurisdictions, based on information available at the time of publication.

It does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied upon as a definitive statement of the law in any jurisdiction. Legislation, official interpretation and enforcement practices may change and may vary between countries, regions and enforcement authorities.

Responsibility for ensuring compliance with all applicable road traffic, vehicle, trailer and load regulations rests solely with the driver, vehicle operator and/or club undertaking the journey.

British Rowing accepts no responsibility or liability for any loss, damage, delay, enforcement action, penalty, impoundment, or other consequence arising from reliance on this guidance or from any failure to comply with applicable legal requirements.