



Drink driving limits across Europe

























Drinking and driving is never a good idea but it becomes especially bad when you go abroad where some countries have zero tolerance. Read our guide for more information on the legal blood alcohol limit for driving in countries across Europe and the potential consequences if caught with levels exceeding the limit.






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When driving abroad, not only are you unfamiliar with the roads and driving customs, but driving on the other side of the road and the different speed limits are experiences that need complete concentration. These factors all add up. But there is also one more important factor to take into consideration and that is – the legal blood alcohol limit for driving in individual countries across Europe.

Below are the maximum drink driving limits across Europe for drivers as well as the special limits for commercial and novice drivers where applicable. Shown in grams per litre.

	Standard	Commercial Drivers	Novice Drivers
 Austria	0.5	0.1	0.1
 Belgium	0.5	0.2	0.5
 Bulgaria	0.5	0.5	0.5
 Croatia	0.5	0	0
 Cyprus	0.5	0.2	0.2
 Czech Republic	0	0	0
 Denmark	0.5	0.5	0.5
 Estonia	0.2	0.2	0.2
 Finland	0.5	0.5	0.5
 France	0.5	0.5 (0.2 bus drivers)	0.2
 Germany	0.5	0	0
 Greece	0.5	0.2	0.2
 Hungary	0	0	0
 Ireland	0.5	0.2	0.2
 Italy	0.5	0	0
 Latvia	0.5	0.5	0.2
 Lithuania	0.4	0	0
 Luxembourg	0.5	0.2	0.2
 Malta	0.5	0.2	0.2
 Netherlands	0.5	0.5	0.2
 Poland	0.2	0.2	0.2
 Portugal	0.5	0.2	0.2
 Romania	0	0	0
 Slovakia	0	0	0

		Standard	Commercial Drivers	Novice Drivers
	Slovenia	0.5	0	0
	Spain	0.5	0.3	0.3 (0.0 for under 18s)
	Sweden	0.2	0.2	0.2
	UK	0.8	0.8	0.8
	Switzerland	0.5	0.1	0.1

European Transport Safety Council - last updated December 2021

Consequences

0.5 mg is equivalent to one small beer, so nowhere in Europe is there much tolerance for drinking. Also be aware that there are variances within this framework. In Germany, for example, the 0.5 mg limit applies unless you're picked up for another traffic offence, in which case it drops to 0.3 mg and if you are over that, it will be a criminal offence. If you are in a fatal accident in Germany and over the limit, you could serve five years imprisonment.

In many parts of Europe, the police don't need 'probable cause' to stop your vehicle and breathalyse you. They are permitted to make random stops and checks, which means you could easily find yourself stopped unexpectedly.

Do not expect leniency if convicted of drink-driving abroad. The penalties differ greatly from country to country, but at the very least you're going to receive a large fine. You can, for example, receive a six month sentence in the UK and Ireland, and anywhere from one day to three years in Luxembourg. Drink-driving convictions in France can bring jail terms of two months to two years, and in Finland up to six months. In all cases your driving licence will be suspended or you'll be banned from driving in the country.

Of course, in all cases the best advice is simply not to drink at all. But note that, if you enjoy a good night out, that could mean allowing up to 12 hours between having your last drink and taking the car out the next day. Note that the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia all have a zero limit.