
Using your ICC

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 an ICC.

The validity of the ICC

The validity of the ICC is frequently misunderstood. There is a misconception that the ICC is of EU origin and it is frequently but wrongly thought to be 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.

As the ICC's validity is determined by the visited country it is not a truly international qualification. The ICC is however the only international evidence of competence that exists for pleasure boaters in Europe.

Flag state versus Coastal state

Where evidence of competence is required by the country of registration (the Flag State), pleasure boaters must comply with those regulations and they must also comply with any requirements of the visited country (the Coastal State).

Acceptance of the ICC by the visited country should be because the visited country itself has adopted the ICC Resolution (UNECE ITC Resolution 40). However, as the UK is one of only a few countries which have fully accepted the Resolution this is quite often not the case. The ICC may also be recognised as acceptable evidence of competence in the visited country's national legislation or it may be accepted on a purely informal basis.

The onus is on ICC holders to determine its acceptability. 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.

Chartering Abroad

If you are chartering a vessel abroad, you will generally need evidence of your competence. There is no international requirement for another

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.

country to accept a UK qualification in place of their own - except under certain conditions full STCW qualifications (for working aboard large commercial vessels). It will therefore be up to the country in question's maritime authority whether or not your ICC or another RYA certificate is acceptable.

When planning your overseas charter, it is prudent to obtain from the charter company (preferably in writing) details of the certification they require, what cruising area this is acceptable for and that this certification will meet the requirements of their insurance.

In case you are asked for evidence of your competence in the places you visit during your charter you should also confirm that your certificate will be acceptable to the maritime authorities in the area concerned.

Certificate Translations

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 outnumber its scope. We cannot make every country accept our qualifications, but the translations of the practical certificates provided on the RYA web-site should make it easier for port officials to understand them and make an informed decision.

Commercial use

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

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