

Driving Licence Exchange and or Registration

By & copyright to Steve Robinson
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Please note the links contained in this document were active at the time of writing but some links do become inactive from time to time so you might need to ask that nice Mr. Google for more up to date links.

Holders of driving licences from EU member states have the option to either register their driving licences with IMT or exchange them for Portuguese driving licences & holders of driving licences from (most) non EU member states are required to exchange them for Portuguese driving licences soon after you become a registered resident of Portugal.

NOTE:

It has recently come to my notice that different Portuguese Government websites have differing criteria on the driving licence exchange processes. However, I have written this piece according to the criteria & processes found on the website of IMT themselves as IMT are the Portuguese traffic department & common logic would suggest one should be guided by that site & that site alone but I will point out that in my opinion it is better to err on the side of caution & never put anything off until tomorrow if it can be done today so if it can be done, then do it.

Changes in the law on 15th January 2020 (Lei 2/2020) seem to have been somewhat confusingly worded & it was first thought that the exchange limit had been extended from 90 days to 2 years but upon much closer examination that does not appear to be the case and rather the 90 day exchange limit actually remains the same but they will (in some/most cases) exchange a time expired licence if the licence is less than 2 years expired. Therefore, I'd strongly suggest you consider the 90 day exchange limit as being correct & always work on the principle of better to do it sooner rather than later.

Also note that when completing the licence exchange documents from IMT that before you print them BE SURE TO TURN YOUR TRANSLATOR PROGRAM OFF as it will incorrectly translate the categories & some such as full motorcycle will magically disappear & then reappear with the translator turned OFF!

If in doubt of any of the licence exchange criteria or processes especially about retention of categories you have passed a test for then the answer could well be in whether the national licence you are exchanging is a signatory of the bilateral agreement between that country & Portugal & the answer to that is to be found in the link below & you may well have to explore the other links on that page to check which countries are on or off of that list.

<https://www.imt-ip.pt/sites/IMTT/Portugues/Condutores/TrocaCartaConducao/OutrasSituacoes/Paginas/OutrasSituacoes.aspx>

IMT (Portuguese Traffic Department) have recently launched the page below which allows holders of Portuguese driving licenses to check both renewal & revalidation dates as due to a recent law change, some licenses will show an incorrect expiry date etc so I suggest you check VERY carefully.

<https://eportugal.gov.pt/en/noticias/imt-lanca-plataforma-a-minha-carta-de-conducao?fbclid=IwAR2n0eTSsZHJM2rvCXAr-o2SRIkZPesZvLtsXEG-mQXsDmsXFOzhc0yv36g>

If you have a driving licence from another EU member state then you need to exchange it for a Portuguese driving licence before your old one expires so in most cases, it's a better long term plan to exchange than it is to register & better to do it sooner rather than later.

On 1st August 2022 a new law was introduced about driving licences issued by CPLP (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries) and OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries being recognised in Portugal.

This means that as a Resident in Portugal, with a driving licence issued by one of those countries, you may be exempt from exchanging your driving licence to a Portuguese licence within 90 days, as the rules were previously.

However, this recognition/exemption only applies when ALL the following conditions are met:

The driving licence is issued in a CPLP/OECD State that is a signatory to one of the conventions or a bilateral agreement with the Portuguese State If no

more than 15 years have elapsed since the issue or the last renewal of the licence

The holder is under the age of 60

The driving licence is valid

The driver is of the minimum age established in Portugal to drive the vehicle(s) of the category(s) listed on their driving licence

The driving licence is not seized, suspended, expired or revoked by virtue of an administrative or court decision applied to its holder in Portugal or in the issuing State.

If you do meet all these conditions, as a Resident in Portugal, you do not need to exchange your driving licence to a Portuguese licence and you also do not need to register it with the IMT. It is recognised in Portugal until the expiry date. If you are still a Resident in Portugal when it expires, you must then exchange it to a Portuguese licence.

E-mails from IMT

We are aware that IMT have emailed everyone who has a process underway for exchange of a foreign driving licence issued by one of the CPLP/OECD countries (specified below), whether or not they meet the conditions above, asking them to confirm if they wish to continue or cancel the process. There is a link to an IMT form to fill in, in order to choose, HOWEVER we have contacted the IMT, and they informed us that if you do not meet the conditions above (if for instance you are over the age of 60) then you simply need to ignore the email, as your process will automatically be continued. So, in other words, the only people who needs to fill in the form from IMT are people who meet all the conditions AND who wish to CANCEL their application for a Portuguese licence. If you do wish to fill in the form to continue the process, you can indeed do that, but it is not necessary.

For those who cancel their process, they will subsequently receive another email from IMT with further instructions.

The countries that are covered by this law are:

CPLP member states, which are signatories to one of the Traffic Conventions (1949 or 1968 Convention) – Brazil and Cape Verde

CPLP member states, which signed a bilateral agreement with Portugal – Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe

OECD member states that are not members of the EU or EEA and that are signatories to the transit conventions (1949 or 1968 Convention) – Australia, Canada, Chile, Republic of Korea, United States of America, Iceland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, UK, Switzerland and Turkey.

It should be noted that if the criteria for the new non exchange mentioned above is NOT FULLY MET then the licence holder will not be able to legally drive until they have taken the practical part of the driving test here to regain the right to drive.

Also note that on 13th October 2023 the British Embassy in Lisbon published a press release that says the UK & Portuguese Governments have come to a reciprocal agreement that will (from 1st January 2023) allow UK driving licence holders to register their UK driving licences with IMT for the duration of validity of that licence after which it must be exchanged as per the existing criteria explained in this PDF.

Driving licence application form link below.

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/IMT6/TROCADET%C3%8DTULOSDECONDU%C3%87%C3%83OESTRANGEIROS30?fbclid=IwAR3pxVzYslpcrNqfbhBKTnVaZEaUi-lq15W7P5ryqTjsGeHzvRCsq3LhVY8>

Some driving licences from some countries (such as South Africa) only have the Christian name initials + surname SA drivers & in these cases, IMT often request a declaration that it's the same person & in this case, you need to go to your Junta da Freguesia with 2 residents of the same parish & who are on the electoral roll of that parish (and not related to you) & have them issue a document to that effect.

There are however a few countries (such as Swaziland) whose driving licences are not recognised by Portugal & in those cases, the holder will be required to take a driving test here & you'll find a list of licences that are recognised on the IMT website at

<https://www.imtip.pt/cartasconducao/cartasconducao.asp>

The documents required to register an EUMS licence are:

- 1) Passport.
- 2) Residency document.
- 3) NIF Document.
- 4) Driving licence.

Cost is in the region of €30

The documents required to do the licence exchange are:

- 1) Letter from a Doctor in Portugal who has access to your medical records on the Portuguese NHS database stating there is no medical reason to prevent you driving & listing the classifications of vehicles you are entitled to
& you need to check the issuing Doctor has listed ALL your entitled categories correctly.

If you are not registered on that data base then you will not be able to obtain the correct document which in turn means you cannot exchange your licence.

If you are registered on the NHS database but cannot see a GP for any reason then you can get the relevant Doctor's letter from <https://www.dronline.pt/> for a cost of (at the time of writing) €50.

- 2) Residency document.
- 3) NIF document/number.
- 4) Driving licence.
- 5) Proof of vehicle classification categories issued by traffic dept from the country you're coming from. For example, in the case of the UK, it's the DVLA & the document is called the D737 & of South Africa it's from the SA Road Traffic Dept & in the latter case, you get this by sending an email to CTC@rtmc.co.za with a copy of your current drivers license and your ID number. You should get an email confirming receipt & another when it is ready for collection. You can have a courier or third party collect it for you but they will not email it to you & in some cases you might need to get that document 'notarised/apostilled' by DIRCO or the SA High Court or the

national body that fulfil the same function as DIRCO or the High Court in South Africa does.

Holders of South African driving licences should note the recent statement from the SA traffic department below.

Kindly note that we are experiencing high volumes of requests for Driving License Confirmation Letters.

We are currently working from 08:00 till 15h00, Monday to Thursday. Our turnaround time is 3 - 4 weeks.

We will respond to your email shortly and provide you with the address where the letter must be collected when it is ready.

All applications for confirmation of driving licences (for immigration) must be sent to DLconfirmations@rtmc.co.za for assistance. Please ensure that you complete the form on

<https://www.rtmc.co.za/images/rtmc/docs/dlconfirmations/DL-ConfirmationApplication-Form.pdf> and attach a scanned copy of your RSA identity or passport and driving licence to your email.

<https://www.rtmc.co.za/index.php/publications?fbclid=IwAR0AV75LKfFoGw9Po0JQzF7ldiGGyA3jbwniqGypElPJbr-GszA7yHhGvjQ>

If you have HGV or PSV classifications on your licence, you need to sit a psych test beforehand..... This presumably is to ensure you're psycho enough to tailgate every car you possibly can? Lol!

Then after paying the required fee (€30 at the time of writing) they issue you with a temporary licence usually valid for 3 months & if your new licence has not arrived in that time period you need to return to IMT for another temporary licence before the old one expires & note, this temporary licence only covers you to drive in Portugal & no-where else & an International Driving Permit does NOT apply to this temporary licence and there is a separate info piece in the files entitled 'International Driving Permit' that you might like to read if you need to know more about IDPs.

All licence exchanges have to be done in person as they will photograph you & you will need to give an e-signature.

A few words of warning:

I often refer to Portugal's propensity for what I call AVBS (Acute Variable Bureaucracy Syndrome) and as a prime example of that, it is 'not at all uncommon' for some IMT issuing officers to require that driving licences and/or Letters of Entitlement (that lists the categories of vehicles you have passed a test for) be Apostilled by the designated authority in the country of issuance of those documents but despite extensive searching of the IMT website & also the e-portugal website I can find no reference whatsoever of any Apostille being required for either document & the only single source I have found is on the South African traffic dept website & that only refers to South African licences & I have my doubts of that claim as I can find no mention of in on the Portuguese sites previously mentioned.

That said, it might be sensible to work on the principle of better to have it & not need it than to need it & not have it as having to send the original document back to the country of issuance for an Apostille would be highly frustrating to put it politely. Therefore, only you can make that decision.

IMT often 'forget' to issue the full/unlimited motorcycle category so if you're entitled to it, check it's on the temporary licence before you leave the office & if it's not, be prepared to argue there and then as your only other options are to file an appeal which takes almost forever or fill in the complaints book & you will find info on that last option in Consumer Rights In Portugal in the files section of the groups.

Portugal requires a separate test to tow trailers in excess of 750 kg laden weight so if you already have that on your licence try to ensure they add that as well. - If you don't then you cannot tow trailers above that weight.

Until March 2021 Portugal's policy was that whilst you were entitled to retain all categories you have actually passed a test for, you would lose and & all categories that you had under 'Grand Father rights' which meant (for example) if you passed your UK car test before the separate trailer test was introduced then you would lose the larger trailer category.

Which means that if you are exchanging an EUMS licence then you WILL be entitled to retain the Grand Father rights categories you previously had & this will be especially important to owners of large motorhomes & similar.

Please not the use of the word 'entitled' in the previous paragraph & be warned that you might need to sit & argue your case as some issuing officers will be very likely to be unaware of this recent change.

However in early 2021 this policy was appealed & PT has now amended Article 128.3 of their Road Code (amended by Lei 102-B/2020) to bring it into compliance with the relevant EU Directive but note this only applies to licences from other EU Member States & NOT to any non EU Member States.

"The new redaction of article of article 128 (3) of the Portuguese Road Code seems prima facie to have brought this article in line with Article 2 of Directive 2006/126/EC. We do not see any remaining legal obstacles to the recognition your category BE driving licence by the Portuguese authorities."

Also be aware that with very few exceptions indeed it is illegal to hold more than one national licence at any one time & in the case of Portugal (amongst others) if you commit false information to any official document such as in an attempt to obtain a driving licence whilst you hold one from a different country it can attract a jail term + other serious penalties & you can learn more of that by reading 'Dispelling The Myths' which is also in the files section of this group.

Please note that if you exchanged your driving licence for a Portuguese one in your early 60s (for example) the expiry date shown on the new licence will be 10 years hence when you are 70 but if you read the PT Road Code you'll see that you need to revalidate it at every renewal date as dictated by the Portuguese Road Code which is actually: 60 – 65 – 70 – 72 – 74 – 76 etc so don't get caught out & you can revalidate the licence online at:

<http://www.imt-ip.pt/sites/IMTT/Portugues/Condutores/CartaConducao/Revalidacao/Paginas/Revalidacao.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1zN1DdUezXoQz6PhTS0syOfcGuGV1E3VFkCYLABJ7HhO2jgY8MAWDGSG>

Note: The revalidation time period may be shorter than those mentioned above if the holder has some chronic illnesses such as diabetes & in the case of diabetics their revalidation periods are every 3 years so don't be caught out & bear in mind that whilst the renewal dates are marked on the licence the revalidation dates are NOT.

The links below might be of help to get you started on driving in Portugal & the first one is the online version of the Portuguese highway code.

<https://www.bomcondutor.pt/biblioteca/codigo->

estrada?fbclid=IwAR18IMESOWNOhxiuL7f4AdGIjFiyDoAGLtQJE2pYerwbMPals
f_u2AKi2Q#18

<https://www.facebook.com/BritsInPortugal/videos/551905138821369/>

NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH

IMT have introduced a system in September 2020 that in some cases, allows part of the process to be achieved online as per the links below & please note the first is for EUMS licences & the 2nd for non EUMS licences.

http://www.imtonline.pt/index.php/troca-de-titulos-conducaoestrangeiros/driving-licence-exchange108/9-uncategorised/200-1stsituation-2?fbclid=IwAR3Yu6BBrhhlCjJbHJDojEKCJfDs8CdWf4mmwq78MQZu_oWhFd0h6_3bh8

<http://www.imtonline.pt/index.php/troca-de-titulos-conducaoestrangeiros/driving-licence-exchange108/9-uncategorised/197-2ndsituation-2?fbclid=IwAR15m1Bsu-pxtVuogqRZ0dEALbxdyEKYWBeX8V0CBxG-JbnbCWPpD5o6rQo>

And if those links don't work (as they sometimes don't) then try this one:

[PEDIDO DE TROCA DE TÍTULOS DE CONDUÇÃO ESTRANGEIROS V2
\(cognitoforms.com\)](http://cognitoforms.com/PEDIDO-DE-TROCA-DE-TITULOS-DE-CONDUCAO-ESTRANGEIROS-V2)

NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH NEWSFLASH

My crystal ball tells me that IMT have finally updated their web page re the recent change to the law regarding exchange of non-EUMS licences (which a UK licence holder will have to comply with post 31/12/20).

Of note is that the licence must be exchanged within **90 days** (see above in red) from becoming **RESIDENT**, not 90 days AFTER 31/12/20. So those who don't exchange before 31/12/20 under existing rules will have to be very mindful of the date they became resident.

This could apply to an awful lot of UK passport/licence holders who have steadfastly refused to exchange and means anyone who became resident in PT prior to **31/9/2020** will immediately have an invalid licence on **1/1/2021** when the (Brexit related) transition period ends.

http://www.imt-ip.pt/sites/IMTT/Portugues/Condutores/TrocaCartaConducao/OutrasSituacoes/Paginas/OutrasSituacoes.aspx?fbclid=IwAR2G-A2ZSofvQt5RdPBBA0cEi1nvIdvgvg3r_G1d79nXlpW8Hb8ucJ_5SRg

The link below will allow UK licence holders to click 'Edit Workbook' & then enter the date they established residence in Portugal & discover the date their licence need to be exchanged for a Portuguese one. Please note this function can only be used by one person at a time & if the letter G appears, it means it's already in use so you need to try again later.

<https://onedrive.live.com/view.aspx?resid=B8156239C3B216C!29540ithint=file%2cxlsx&authkey=!ALbOQpqwUaVAFNA>

You have been warned!

In closing, let me add that if you do feel you are being treated unfairly & IMT are wrongfully withholding a category that you believe you are entitled to retain then I suggest you ask them to show you the actual legislation that proves they are right in their claim & if they are unable or refuse to do that then do not hesitate to insist on being given the complaints book & completing it in as much detail as you can & you are allowed to do that in English & by doing so then your case will be dealt with by a higher authority & if you need to know more about that procedure then read "Consumer Rights In Portugal" which is also to be found in the files section of this group.

Good luck!