Guidance document on UVARs

**Topic “Information/Data provision to drivers/Predictability year by year”**

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**1. Purpose of this document**

This 2-page document is intended to succinctly describe how vehicle access regulations (VARs\*) are communicated to drivers today, in particular the limitations of existing channels, and to consider how these limitations may be overcome. In a next phase, this document will be extended to include guidance on specific VAR information topics, implementing information strategies, preparing and running campaigns etc.

**2. Current situation regarding VAR information provision to drivers – city perspective**

VARs are implemented in more and more cities, local authority districts or regions. Information about such VARs is promoted by the public authority concerned by means of the local media, static road signs, variable message signs and city websites, amongst other. While these information channels are usually sufficient for drivers from within and around the area concerned (and who make up the majority of traffic), this is not the case for drivers coming from outside the area, especially foreign drivers. The latter may not be acquainted with the VAR in place and/or may not understand the language in which the VAR information is displayed on road signs. Such drivers therefore risk ignoring the VAR and consequently being at risk of a financial penalty or other restriction. At European level, there is a central point of information about VARs called the CLARS Platform.

**3. Current situation regarding trip planning for drivers/vehicle operators – drivers perspective**

Drivers and vehicle operators use different sources for planning their routes and trips, including books, maps, atlas, the internet, TV, mobile devices with different applications, in-car-navigation-/information-/entertainment-systems, route planners, personal information via automobile clubs or travel agencies, etc). They expect to find relevant information they need, including VARs information, from the systems and sources they use, to ensure they are compliant with regulations and are not subject to fines and other problems. Since some drivers may visit or pass through more than one city, it is important for them to have the information required for their journey at one single source, instead of having to search for the VARs of each city on their trip in multiple places. Drivers expect customised information to respond to their individual needs. Drivers need to know if their vehicle (car, lorry, coach, etc) is affected by a VAR at a given time and in a given place, and to know in advance to be able to plan. Knowing what future schemes are planned also is particularly relevant for commercial operators.

**4. Current situation regarding digital information on VARs**

Today drivers and vehicle operators increasingly rely on digital information delivered through satnavs and mobile devices to plan their journey and to receive information during the trip, including real-time traffic information, tolling information, height-restriction in tunnels, weight restrictions on bridges, pedestrian areas, etc. Today, these systems are unable to provide detailed, exact and reliable information about VARs. The main reason for this is that the providers of these systems (i) need VAR data to be provided in a digital form, and (ii) are not willing to build a dedicated interface for each city VAR, where such data is provided by means of open data on a city data platform. Digital map makers and ITS providers expect data to be provided in a standardised and electronic form. Firstly, this puts the onus on the data provider (the public authority) to make the necessary data adaptation (and bear the inherent costs) rather than the data user (the ITS provider). Secondly, standardisation for VARs data does not yet exist.

**5. Finding a way forward**

The European Commission has identified VARs as a strategic information set that should be provided through a central point of access in the Single Digital Gateway Directive, which has recently been adopted. This mandates the provision of such information to the SDG portal My Europe. In addition, the EC has already funded the creation of the CLARS portal as mentioned above.

In addition to the above sources of VARs information, the provision of standardised digital information about VARs may offer a solution to enable drivers/fleet operators to access VARs through their mobile device or satnav. This would require public authorities to provide data about their VARs to enable service providers (satnav provider, OEM, app developer, etc) to provide information to the driver. This may sound like a simple exercise, but this is far from the case. It requires amongst others a standardised description of VAR, which does not yet exist, and resources, support and procedures for public authorities to be able to provide this VAR data.

**6. What is needed to move forward?**

**i. Common set of VAR information**

Agreement is needed on the minimum set of VAR information to be provided by any administration with a VAR in operation or planned. It is important that a driver knows what is allowed, what is not allowed, what are the penalties (in case of non-compliance) and how penalties can be avoided.

*The information and topics have to be defined; a differentiation between ‘needed’ and ‘useful’ is important and will help the information owner in providing this information (the less information is defined as "required," the easier it will be to motivate cities to provide them). The SDG requirements will also be included. This work will be done in the working group after this two-pager is agreed by the stakeholders at the 29th November.*

**ii. Information campaigns before and after confirming VAR schemes**

Information- and consultation-strategies are required. Part of these strategies could be information and awareness campaigns. For all conventional media and campaigns it is not necessary to provide information in a special way or format. The authorities or their current partners (eg agencies) in publishing all other information up to now should be able to do this with VAR information (press releases, brochures, advertising campaigns) in all media and channels, too.

*Guidance on strategy and a campaign to support cities will also be provided in the 4-pager.*

**iii. Digital information – technical and financial requirements**

**iiia. A data standard for VARs**

A detailed data-model has to be developed; definitions/recommendations about technical formats, data base structures has to be prepared; it has to be defined, where the data is stored and where the providers can collect them (NAP); an easy to operate user interface has to be developed and provided, which enables the authorities/cities to deliver the information in a suitable way

*The DATEX 2 community is currently working on a data standard for VARs. It is essential that this work is undertaken with the input of relevant stakeholders, including urban transport practitioners, Information suppliers, CLARS, and not only DATEX 2 experts. DATEX is a standard developed initially for the high level (interurban) road network. It is not a standard that is widely used at urban level. Urban transport practitioners need to be consulted on the work in progress and a broad consultation of the draft standard should be organised to ensure it meets the requirements, and hence the process of using it is not delayed.*

**iiib. Support for public authorities**

Cities will need guidance and appropriate support in particular for the effort to provide standardised VAR data in electronic format. This support must be provided by the EU and/or Member States. If it is not forthcoming, it is likely that cities will do nothing since they have more pressing issues to deal with.

\*Today access regulations are not only in force in cities or in urban areas. More and more zones are established in non-urban areas (like in France where whole regions are enforced.

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