

25 February 2003

Use of lights during daytime in Italy
(Transmitted by the expert from Italy)

1 - Use of dipped beam headlamps

On January 5, 2002 the Italian "Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti" (Dept. of Infrastructures and Transports), in the frame of the "National plan for roads safety", published the Legislative Decree No. 9 requesting, among other safety provisions, to switch-on the dipped beam headlamps during daytime driving in the following manner:

- whenever put in motion, on every roads, for two wheeled vehicles;
- when in motion on motorways (autostrade) for four or more wheeled vehicles.

The above requirements should be mandatory for the use of vehicles (i.e. as a provision for the drivers) starting from 1st January 2003.

This date was anticipated to August 8, 2002 when the original Legislative decree was confirmed (with some amendments) by the Law No. 168 of August 1st, 2002 and the mandatory switching-on of dipped beam headlamps was extended to main roads outside built-up areas (strade extraurbane principali).

Since the requirements do not explicitly allow the use of dipped beam headlamps during daytime on roads other than those indicated above there was the risk of misapplication problems; they were solved by means of instructions to the traffic law enforcers not to punish the use of dipped beam headlamps during daytime in town or "normal" roads.

During the following months the above provisions proved to be satisfactory in improving the visibility of motor vehicles on motorways especially during changes of lanes for overtaking or similar manoeuvres and in particular in dusk while the efficiency of dipped beam headlamps in the central hours of the day was less appreciable, due also to the summer high ambient luminance.

The public, in general, considered positively the new provisions; there was not great complains from the point of view of disturbance/glare, but some complains came for the increase in fuel consumption (estimated in about 1 %) and particularly in the increase of bulb failures.

Since the final balance cost/efficiency was deemed positive, it was decided to extend the application of the above provisions.

A proposal extending to all roads outside built-up areas the mandatory switching-on of the dipped beam headlights during daytime and officially allowing their use in town was prepared and it is expected to be adopted by June 2003.

In annex you will find an English translation of the provisions on this matter contained in the "Nuovo Codice della Strada" (New Road Code) presently in force (included the definition of "main roads outside built-up area").

2 - Fitting and electrical connection of Daytime Running Lamps

The "New Road Code" at present does not include DRL, neither as a specific lamp nor as a special adaptation of an existing lamp, in the list of lighting and light signalling devices that must or may be fitted on vehicle for their circulation.

Even now that the use of dipped beam during daytime is compulsory there is nothing about the possible alternative use of specific devices for the same function.

On the other hand, both EC Directives 97/28 and 97/30 and ECE Regulations No. 48 and 87, allowing the approval and fitting of specific DRLs, were introduced in the Italian legislation (the EC Directives as mandatory requirements while the ECE Regulations are of optional application, as an alternative to the EC requirements).

Consequently, there is a contraddiction in the present Italian legislation: vehicles on which DRL approved on the basis of ECE Regulation No.87 (or EC Directive 97/30) are fitted and electrically connected as per ECE Regulation No. 48 (or EC Directive 97/28) are accepted in Italy but formally they could not be used on the roads.

In practice the circulation of such vehicles has never been forbidden but in some cases the DRLs (particularly when they are specific devices fitted independently of the other front lighting and light signalling devices) could be misrecognized as front fog lamps and consequently their switching-on in good visibility condition could be punished by the traffic law enforcers as a front fog lamps misuse.

In any case the use of specific DRLs is not presently considered sufficient to fulfill the provision mandating the driver to switch-on the dipped beam during daytime driving on motorways or main roads.

Since the "New Road Code" is still under revision, a correction to the above contraddiction will be studied and possibly introduced into the "Code" in short time.

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Abstract of Articles 152 of the "New Road Code"

(Decree of the President of the Republic No. 285 of April 30, 1992 as amended by the Law No. 168 of August 1st, 2002).

Article 152 - Light signalization and lighting of vehicles

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Paragraph 1 bis For mopeds and motorcycles, in whenever condition of motion, the use of the dipped beam headlamps and of the position lamps is mandatory.

Paragraph 1 ter During the motion on the motorways and on the main roads outside built-up areas ^(*), the use of the position lamps, of the rear registration plate lamps, of the dipped beam headlamps and, where required, of the end-outline marker lamps is mandatory

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The Article 152 in the wording above indicated is into force from August 8, 2002.

(*) **Article 002** of the "New Road Code" define the "Main road outside built-up areas " (Strada extraurbana principale) as follows:

"Main road outside built-up areas" is a road with [more than one] carriageways independent or separated by a dividing strip not intended for traffic, each having at least two traffic lanes and a paved road shoulder on the right side, without level crossroads and on which the access to properties bordering on the road is permitted by specific lanes; it is reserved to the circulation of certain motorvehicle categories - areas for [the circulation of] other road users, if any, being provided for - and the prescribed road signals shall indicate its beginning and its end.
It shall be provided with service areas, including parking zones, having acceleration and decelation lanes.
