

EUROPEAN RAILWAY AGENCY (ERA)

AND

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION FOR INTERNATIONAL CARRIAGE BY RAIL (OTIF)

APPLICATION GUIDE

FOR

VEHICLE KEEPER MARKING CODE (VKM) REGISTER

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. SUBJECT

This application guide is common to the European Railway Agency (ERA) and the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) in accordance with the agreement described in section 1.2.

This application guide specifies the setting up and administration of the register of keepers of railway vehicles and their vehicle keeper marking (VKM) code to be used as regulated in Appendix 6, Part 1 of Decision 2007/756/EC¹, amended by Commission Decision 2012/757/EU² of 14 November 2012 concerning the technical specification for interoperability relating to the 'operation and traffic management' subsystem of the rail system in the European Union. This register is managed by ERA and OTIF in cooperation (ERA for the EU and OTIF for all non-EU OTIF Member States). The keeper is recorded in the NVR. Appendix 6 specifies other global central registers (such as vehicle type codes, interoperability codes, country codes, etc.) to be managed by a 'central body' resulting from cooperation between ERA and OTIF.

1.2. AGREEMENTS BETWEEN ERA AND OTIF

The main principles for a common solution have been agreed between the OTIF Secretariat and ERA:

ERA and OTIF will together form the "central body" specified in the Annex to amended Decision 2007/756/EC in Chapter 2.1.

Rules and specifications will be set up in cooperation (principle of consensus), but the administration will be split.

ERA will register keepers who have their registered place of business in an EU Member State or a State Member of the European Economic Area (EEA); OTIF will register keepers who have their registered place of business in an OTIF Member State that is not also a member of the EU or the EEA and will register keepers situated in other States linked to the European-Asian rail networks. The latter will be done in cooperation between OTIF and OSJD with regard to the members of OSJD which are not also members of OTIF, if OSJD so wishes. All data collected by OTIF will be transmitted to ERA every last Friday preceding the publication day.

The specifications and procedures laid down in this joint document can only be changed if both parties agree to the changes.

There will be close cooperation between ERA and the OTIF Secretariat in the following areas:

- The specifications and rules will be laid down in a joint document which shall appear on the websites of ERA and OTIF;
- The register will be set up, kept and administered by ERA;
- At the request of EU/EEA MSs and OTIF, ERA will keep the VKM register updated;
- ERA will publish the full list (all records) of registered VKMs on its website; an update will be published on the first Wednesday of every month, OTIF should provide a link to this register on its website;

¹ [Official Journal of the European Union L 305, volume 50 of 23.11.2007](#)

² [Official Journal of the European Union L 345, volume 55 of 15.12.2012](#)

- The public information may be limited to some data elements; but there shall be no access restriction to the full information between the two organisations;
- An application for a VKM shall be checked for uniqueness in the whole system before a VKM code can be issued;
- An application for a VKM code from a keeper with his registered place of business in an EU Member State or a State Member of the EEA shall be sent to the National Safety Authority (NSA) of that State; after checking that the applicant keeper fulfils the applicable regulations, the NSA of that State forwards the application to ERA;
- An application for a VKM code from a keeper with his registered place of business in an OTIF Member State which is not an EU Member State and not a State Member of the EEA shall be sent to the competent national authority of that State, if any appointed; after checking that the applicant keeper fulfils the applicable regulations, the competent national authority forwards the application to OTIF; if no competent authority is appointed, the keeper sends his application directly to OTIF;
- ERA and OTIF will only check the uniqueness, not that the allocation rules, defined in Appendix 6, Part 1 of Decision 2007/756/EC, have been observed;
- OTIF is responsible for the agreements and coordination with OSJD;
- A provisional list of VKM codes was set up from the acronyms known to the organisations and published on 9 July 2007; no objections from keepers arrived within the requested deadline of one month, all codes were assigned to the keepers as published in the provisional list;
- Only VKMs appearing in the published list can be regarded as assigned and unique;
- As far as possible, VKMs that are not "live" should be avoided; e.g. VKMs that are registered in order to register "trade marks" or to prevent competitors from using them;

1.3. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this application guide, a

"Vehicle keeper" *means the person or entity that, being the owner of a vehicle or having the right to use it, exploits the vehicle as a means of transport and is registered as such in the national vehicle register referred to in Article 33 of Directive 2008/57/EC*³;

"Railway vehicle" *means a vehicle that runs on its own wheels on railway lines, with or without traction. A vehicle is composed of one or more structural and functional subsystems or parts of such subsystems - Article 2 (c) of Directive 2008/57/EC*;

"Registered place of business" means the address where the keeper's principal business (headquarters) is registered;

"Central body" means ERA and OTIF working in cooperation with each other;

"VKM" means vehicle keeper marking, which is the code and the related data registered.

"EEA" means the European Economic Area, which includes Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

³ [Official Journal of the European Union L 191, volume 51 of 18.07.2008](#)

1.4. DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

In the sections, where necessary, relevant legal text from Appendix 6 of Decision 2007/756/EC is presented by italic letters.

The related application instructions follow in normal script.

1.5. FIELD OF APPLICATION

The application for a VKM is mandatory for railway vehicle keepers with their registered place of business in a Member State of the European Union, a State Member of the EEA or in a Member State of OTIF⁴.

Vehicle keepers not having their registered place of business in an EU or OTIF Member State

By means of voluntary registration, the register will include vehicle keepers (including Railway Undertakings) situated in those OSJD Member States which are not members of OTIF; this will be done by OTIF through arrangements with OSJD.

In order to avoid confusion, the register, also by means of voluntary registration, will include vehicle keepers (including Railway Undertakings) situated in other States connected to the Eurasian railway network.

⁴ *Although formally, OTIF is only competent to make mandatory rules for markings in international traffic, for the sake of uniqueness and as the EU regulations and the mandatory UIC leaflets 438-1 to -4 both include vehicles in national traffic, it is important to include keepers who only have vehicles used in national traffic.*

2. ORGANISATION OF THE VKM REGISTER

2.1. GENERAL

The VKM register will be kept with all the records on ERA website. Updates will be made upon request from National Safety Authority (NSA) of EU/EEA MSs and OTIF.

Before a VKM code is assigned to a keeper there will be coordination between ERA and OTIF in order to check whether the code applied for with one organisation has also been applied for with the other organisation.

The overall architecture is shown in annex 2.

2.2. ERA

ERA will register keepers with their registered place of business in an EU Member State or a State Member of the EEA.

Requests concerning VKM for a keeper with his registered place of business in an EU Member State or a State Member of the EEA must be submitted to the NSA of this EU/EEA Member State.

After having checked that applicable regulations have been complied with, the NSA forwards the request to ERA. If regulations have not been complied with, the request is declined.

ERA will check for uniqueness with existing VKMs in the register and with applications which may have arrived earlier with ERA or OTIF, but which have not yet been assigned and published.

If the uniqueness check is successful, ERA will assign the VKM to the applying keeper and update the register. ERA will inform NSA/OTIF of the assignment of the VKM code and NSA/OTIF will inform the applying keeper.

2.3. OTIF

OTIF will proceed requests of keepers with their registered place of business in

- a) an OTIF Member State which is not also a Member of the European Union or the EEA.
- b) a State which is a Member of OSJD but not a Member of OTIF; see point 2.4.
- c) other States in the Eurasian area connected to the international rail network.

Requests concerning VKM for keepers in States falling under c) must be submitted to the OTIF Secretariat.

In the case of a), the request must be submitted to the competent national authority (if any) of the State where the keeper has his registered place of business; a list of notified competent authorities will be published on the OTIF website. After having checked that applicable regulations have been complied with, the competent authority forwards the request to the Secretariat of OTIF with information on the result. If the regulations are not complied with, the request is declined. If the list contains no indication of a competent authority of the State, the application can be submitted to the Secretariat of OTIF.

For all three cases a), b) and c) OTIF will check for uniqueness with existing VKMs in the register and with applications which may have been received earlier by ERA or OTIF, but which have not yet been assigned and published.

If the uniqueness check is successful, OTIF will forward this information to ERA.

2.4. OSJD

Keepers with their registered place of business in an OSJD Member State which is not also an OTIF Member State may – for the time being - submit their request to OTIF. Depending on an agreement between OTIF and OSJD, future requests may be submitted to OSJD, who will forward them to OTIF for registration.

2.5. COMPETENT NATIONAL AUTHORITY

If a competent national authority is in place, it shall have the obligation to assess whether a keeper complies with the regulations in force, e.g., whether he has a license, if required.

In the EU Member States the competent authority is the National Safety Authority (NSA). Applications for a VKM, a change to the VKM code and/or change of name of the keeper shall be submitted to the NSA.

Other States with applicable regulations in force shall designate a competent authority. Information on the current competent national body shall be notified to the Secretariat of OTIF.

3. CONTENT OF THE VKM REGISTER

3.1. FORMAT OF THE VKM

3.1.1.

A Vehicle Keeper Marking (VKM) is an alphanumeric⁵ code, consisting of 2 to 5 letters.

The VKM is representation of the full name or abbreviation of the vehicle keeper, if possible in a recognisable manner. All 26 letters of the Latin alphabet may be used. The letters in the VKM are written in capitals. Letters that do not stand for first letters of words in the keeper's name may be written in lower case.

For checking uniqueness, the letters written in lower case will be taken as written in capitals.

Other characters outside the Latin alphabet, such as a hyphen ("-"), slash-sign ("/"), colon (:) or any numbers are not permitted because this could interfere with the correct interpretation of the marking. The inscription rule already foresees a hyphen to separate country code and VKM (see example below) and a slash-sign to separate different written forms.

Correct:

23 TEN
80 <u>D</u> -RFCF
7369 553-4
Zcs

Not correct:

23 TEN
80 <u>D</u> -R4C-F
7369 553-4
Zcs

3.1.2.

Letters may contain diacritical signs. Diacritical signs used by these letters are ignored for checking uniqueness. Diacritical marks are "accent-signs", such as in Å, Ç, Ö, Ć, Ž, Å etc."

3.1.3.

"Special letters such as Ø and Æ will be represented by a single letter; in tests for uniqueness Ø is treated as O and Æ as A."

These special letters will be regarded as one letter in view of the maximum number of characters allowed.

3.1.4.

For vehicles of keepers that reside in a country that does not use the Latin alphabet, a translation of the VKM in its own alphabet may be applied behind the VKM separated from it by a slash-sign ("/"). This translated VKM is disregarded for data-processing purposes.

In this case, uniqueness shall be ensured using only the first part of the VKM in Latin characters.

⁵ The TSI text prescribes in several sentences "letters" to be used; alphanumeric is an error. Digits may not be used.

- 3.1.5. VKM may not be identical to any country code defined in Appendix 6, Part 4 of Decision 2007/756/EC.
- 3.1.6. The National Authorities, the ERA or OTIF may refuse the registration of a requested VKM if the letter combination might lead to confusion or deception. In this case a justified decision shall be issued.
- 3.1.7. The VKM register shall contain two sets of information for each record:
- (a) VKM as written on the vehicle
 - (b) VKM as considered for uniqueness check.

3.2. CONTENT OF THE REGISTER

Each VKM has its own record, which contains the following 5 items:

PUBLIC PART (the list)

- 3.2.1. **The VKM – as written on the vehicle**
which is a code consisting of 2 to 5 letters, including letters with diacritical signs or in lower case. Following a slash-sign, the VKM in Latin characters may be supplemented by a transliteration using the alphabet of the country concerned, e.g. Cyrillic alphabet.
- 3.2.2. **VKM – as considered for uniqueness check**
which is a code consisting of 2 to 5 capital letters, without diacritical signs. In the case of a VKM in two different alphabets, only the first part of a VKM with letters in Latin script is registered here.
- 3.2.3. **Full name of the keeper**
The Latin alphabet shall be used. In addition, the keeper's name may appear in the alphabet of the country concerned.
- 3.2.4. **Country**
The country where the keeper has his registered place of business.
- 3.2.5. **Website**
If the keeper has a website, this will be registered.
It is strongly recommended that every keeper should publish on the registered website a contact point where any technical problems can be addressed concerning its vehicles.
- 3.2.6. **Status of the VKM**
3 different entries are used:
- in use
 - revoked as of (dd/mm/yyyy)
 - reserved
- Infrastructure managers and railway undertakings that are not keepers (cf. section 1.5) are given the status "reserved".

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For administrative purposes, some additional data will be required and stored, such as:

Full address of the keeper

Contact person for administrative information

Phone number

e-mail address

internal reference number (with the keeper)

Competent authority

e-mail address

internal reference number (with the authority)

4. REGISTRATION PROCESS

4.1. ALLOCATIONS PROVISIONS

A vehicle keeper can be issued more than one VKM, in case:

- *the vehicle keeper has a formal name in more than one language;*
- *a vehicle keeper has good cause to distinguish between separate vehicle fleets within his organisation.*

A single VKM can be issued for a group of companies:

- *that belong to single corporate structure that has appointed and mandated one organisation within this structure to handle all issues on behalf of all others;*
- *that has mandated a separate, single legal entity for handling all issues on their behalf, in which event the legal entity is the keeper.*

A VKM can be transferred to another holder, which is the legal successor to the original holder. A VKM stays valid when the holder changes his name to a name that does not bear resemblance to the VKM.

4.1.1. Rules of priority

In general, the “first come, first served” principle will apply. The basis of consideration is the date when the request is received from a keeper with his registered place of business in

EU and EEA: by ERA via the National Safety Authority

OTIF: by OTIF.

If there is more than one request for a particular letter combination, the VKM will be allocated to the keeper whose request arrives first.

For conflicts between VKMs which may arrive on the same day or which are already in use (first issue), the following principles apply, in the order shown:

1. VKMs already on the list have first priority;
2. Vehicle Keepers with their registered place of business in an EU or an OTIF Member State (EU and OTIF registered place of business is treated equally);
3. The number of vehicles "belonging" to the keeper;
4. Vehicle keepers with vehicles of 1435 mm gauge;
5. Vehicle keepers with vehicles in “commercial” use (not “museum railways”);
6. The number of years for which the VKM has been used (evidence from applicant).

4.2. SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION (FOR A NEW VKM, CHANGES OR A REVOCATION)

4.2.1. General principles

“An application for a VKM is filed with the applicant's competent national authority and forwarded to the central body. A VKM can be used only after publication by the ERA”.

The aim of the coordination is to ensure uniqueness of the VKM. Therefore ERA/OTIF will not investigate the VKM proposal forwarded by competent (national)

authorities in respect of the allocation rules defined in the Appendix 6 (part I, sections 3 and 4) of Decision 2007/756/EC⁶.

ERA/OTIF will consider only whether:

- The proposed VKM fulfils the formal requirements;
- The VKM is unique (not yet assigned to another keeper).

NB: Before asking for a new or changed VKM registration, the applicant shall ensure, by consulting the public list, that the requested VKM, both the (a)-form and the (b)-form, is not already in use.

4.2.2. **Content of the application**

The applicant must fill in the application form (Annex 1). If the fields indicated as mandatory are not properly filled in, the application shall not be accepted.

The form can be downloaded from the ERA and OTIF websites and filled in and transmitted electronically.

The form should also be used for a request for changes to the information in the public part (the list), cf. section 3.2.

4.2.3. **Vehicle keepers with their registered place of business in an EU or EEA Member State:**

The application must be submitted to the National Safety Authority of the country where the keeper has his place of business.

4.2.4. **Vehicle keepers with their registered place of business in an OTIF Member State which is NOT an EU or EEA Member State and keepers in other States:**

The application must be submitted to the competent national authority (if any) of the State where the keeper has his registered place of business; a list of notified competent authorities will be published on the OTIF website. If there is no competent authority of the State indicated in the list, the application can be submitted directly to the Secretariat of OTIF.

Keepers having their registered place of business in a country which is not an OTIF Member State shall submit their application directly to the Secretariat of OTIF.

4.2.5. **National check**

In an EU or EEA Member State and in the OTIF Member States which have notified a competent authority, the authority has the obligation to check that applicable regulations have been complied with.

If the regulations have been complied with, the authority shall send the application to ERA/OTIF respectively indicating the date when the application was received from the applying vehicle keeper and the authority's internal reference number (if applicable).

For reasons of priority, all requests forwarded shall contain the date of receipt from the applicant.

⁶ [*Official Journal of the European Union L 305, volume 50 of 23.11.2007*](#)

4.3. SUBMISSION OF CHANGES TO THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Changes to the additional information (cf. section 3.2) may for keepers with their registered place of business in the EU or EEA be sent to the competent National Safety Authority. Changes concerning keepers situated in an OTIF Member State which is NOT an EU or EEA Member State or in a State which is not a Member State of OTIF, may be sent as indicated above in point 4.2.4.

4.4. REVOCATION

A vehicle keeper **must** at any time revoke the VKM that is assigned to him by filling in the application form (Annex 1) and submitting it by mail to the National Safety Authority of the country where the keeper has his registered place of business or for OTIF according to point 4.2.3 and 4.2.4. The keeper in question shall receive confirmation of the revocation from NSA/OTIF.

A VKM that has been revoked at the request of the keeper shall not be reissued for 10 years, unless it is reissued to the original holder or at his request to another holder.

If, during 3 consecutive years, a particular keeper is not shown in any NVR as having any vehicles listed in his name, his VKM shall automatically be revoked by ERA. In this case, the VKM shall remain in the register for 7 years following the date of revocation, in which period the VKM in question may not be assigned to another keeper. The keeper in question, upon ERA request shall be informed by NSA/OTIF 1 month before the revocation is carried out in order to give him the opportunity of justifying the continued need for his VKM.

4.5. METHOD OF COMMUNICATION

The applicant may choose between ordinary mail and e-mail.

E-mail may also be used in the communication between ERA/OTIF and a NSA/competent authority. In this case the authority shall nominate a contact person in written form. Afterwards ERA/OTIF will communicate using this e-mail address.

Electronic communication may not be used for revocations.

Applications shall be forwarded to the following addresses:

EU and EEA:

An applicant in a Member State of the EU or EEA shall send his application to the National Safety Authority (NSA) of that State. See list of NSAs on website:

<http://www.era.europa.eu/The-Agency/Cooperation/Pages/National-Safety-Authorities.aspx>

The NSA shall forward it to ERA:

vkm@era.europa.eu or ERA, 120 Rue Marc Lefrancq, BP 20392, FR-59307 VALENCIENNES, France

OTIF and other States:

An applicant shall send his application to the notified competent national authority of the State where he has his registered place of business. See list of Authorities on website:

<http://www.otif.org/en/technology/registers.html>

The Authority shall forward it to

vkm@otif.org or

OTIF, Gryphenhübeliweg 30, CH-3006 BERN, SWITZERLAND

This address must also be used if the list does not contain information on a competent authority in a Member State of OTIF and for keepers with their registered place of business in States, which are not Member States of OTIF.

4.6. PUBLICATION

4.6.1. The VKM register will be published on the internet, on the website of ERA under the “Interoperability” domain.

It will be available in “pdf” and “xls” document formats, and will contain a list of all valid, revoked and reserved VKMs.

If any differences between pdf and xls file, the PDF shall prevail as formally agreed format.

Only VKMs appearing in the published list can be regarded as assigned and unique.

4.6.2. Updates

Updates will be published on the first Wednesday of every month. A version number and issue date will be indicated.

4.6.3. Liability

The keeper assumes the full liability regarding his choice of VKM code.

Annex 1: Application form

Annex 2: Architecture

ANNEX 1.



VEHICLE KEEPER MARKING - APPLICATION FORM

PART 1: To be filled by the applicant

Date of application	_ / _ / _ (dd/mm/yyyy)
Company Name (*)	
<i>Administrative information</i>	
Contact person - administrative, Name	
Office address (street, number)	
Postal code and City	
Country (*)	
Phone number (international)	
E-mail address (company)	
Website (*)	
Name of organisational unit responsible for vehicle management	
(*) Only this information will be entered in the published list;	
REQUEST	
<input type="checkbox"/>	We are NOT listed in the register of Vehicle Keeper Markings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	We are listed in the register of Vehicle Keeper Markings, having the marking: _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ (latin) (national alphabet)
We apply for the VKM code (**)	_ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ (National alphabet is optional) (latin) (national alphabet)
We want to revoke the code as of	_ / _ / _ (dd/mm/yyyy)
Signature	

Green fields are mandatory

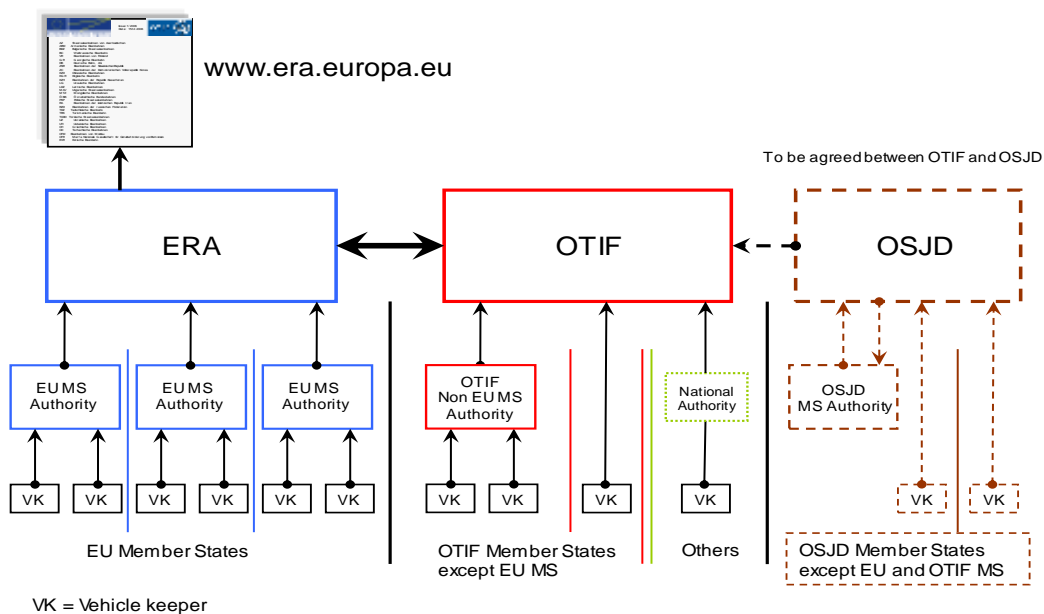
(**) - The keeper assumes the full liability regarding his choice of VKM abbreviation.

PART 2: To be filled by the competent national authority (EU = National Safety Authority (NSA))

Competent Authority, Country and Organisation	
<input type="checkbox"/> All regulation requirements are fulfilled	
<input type="checkbox"/> Refused	Justification
Date of decision	_ / _ / _ (dd/mm/yyyy)
Signature	

ANNEX 2.

Vehicle Keeper Marking - Architecture



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