

Homologation

“Well there’s a mouthful for you”. I suppose that could be the slogan for Burger King, but this mouthful is a term used throughout the motoring industry to confirm, approve or ratify a vehicle. For the word nuts amongst you the word has both Greek and Latin derivations, both meaning “to agree”. Amazing what you can learn on Google isn’t it? Pronunciation is hommo-log-ayshun

So what has this got to do with motoring? Modern vehicles are made to agreed standards which since 1996 has applied to many vehicles and component parts made for the European market. Before this, each country may have had internal standards or none at all. An extreme example of a non-homologated vehicle is one that I have recently been approached about that has a kit body on a Jaguar chassis with a BMW engine, has never been registered in any country and cannot be immediately registered in Spain. Could be a bit of a challenge

Approved parts

As all parts and complete vehicles are homologated, fitting a part to a car outside of the standard may not be possible. A good example of this is a tow bar, the subject that causes much debate amongst the chattering classes of the expat community. The rules in Spain are much tighter than in the UK in relation to vehicle safety (I’m talking cars here, not the drivers!) so a tow bar must itself be of an approved standard, be suitable for the specific car it is being attached to and be inspected at an ITV station before it is finally recorded on the ITV card or technical record as it is more accurately called

Being the sad old obsessive that I am, the seeds for this article were sown when I recently had a bike inspected for re-registration. Much to my surprise none of the lights were homologated. It is an older bike (so previous rules may have been in force) made in Japan then imported into the UK where the rules may be ignored or not applied; huh and we think that the Spanish are more relaxed about rules and regulations. How did the testing station know this? No they did not get out torches and see that enough light was passing through the lenses, nor check the amber and red against a Dulux colour chart, they merely looked for the ubiquitous “e” number which commences any Type Approval; simples eh? New lenses are now being fitted in order to obtain that all-important ITV pass

How does this affect you?

Well if your vehicle is not homologated you may not be able to re-register it unless you owned it before coming to Spain; this is a very important point. A regime exists allowing vehicles owned by a person moving to Spain to register them even if the vehicle is not homologated. This is because the vehicle was legal at the time it was registered in the country of origin and it could be seen as discriminatory not to allow you to bring it with you as a personal possession when immigrating

Check before you buy

Motor homes and caravans have only been homologated in the last few years and it is these vehicles that cause expats the most problems when trying to become legal and have them Spanish plated. Because of the high cost of such homes- on- wheels, especially in Spain, searches are made in the UK, so people buy them, drive them over and then look to have them re-registered, only to find that they cannot; you know why. This is a less common problem with cars and bikes but it is always worth checking before you buy to see if your potential pride and joy can eventually sport that other “E” number which is displayed on the left side of the registration plate.

Explanation and use

Well it’s anorak time so I will explain what a Homologation (a.k.a Type Approval Number) looks like. Here is an example e13*97/27*0040*02

“e” is for Europe as this is a European system; countries outside of the EU may use a different protocol. “13” is the country, in this case Luxembourg as the number relates to where the approval was granted, not necessarily where the vehicle was made. “97/27” is the applicable European directive. “0040” is the actual approval number for the directive. “02” indicates that the homologation has had two changes since the original number was issued. Fascinating eh? You will see that the system is exact and anything deviating from it may not be accepted

Right, so an entire vehicle is homologated and so are its individual components. Now the devious, mischievous or just plain potty amongst you may be thinking that if you take an approved part made for one vehicle and put it on another approved vehicle that may be alright. Er, yes and no, it depends. For example if you have a 49cc pop-pop and attach an exhaust approved for a Harley-Davidson Electra Glide, apart from looking odd and weighing more than the moped it is unlikely to be accepted as the part whilst homologated, is not approved for the moped

A more practical example is those of you who drive American cars such as Chrysler. Parts for cars are much cheaper in the USA so it is tempting to source them there, but beware as such items are not European approved and obvious parts such as headlights not showing the “e” number will likewise not pass scrutiny

Certificate of Conformity

Finally, a fully homologated vehicle will have had a Certificate of Conformity (CoC) prepared when the batch was first made. Such a document shows the exact specification and dimensions of the important elements of the vehicle. These are routinely issued in continental countries but rarely in the UK unless requested. The engineer’s inspection (ficha reducida) which precedes the import standard ITV inspection replicates the CoC

Hope that this meets with your approval!

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