

**ESC-ERC Recommendations for the Use of
Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)
in Europe**

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Supplement 2

AED Legislation & Organisation in Europe

Unfortunately, after so many years, AEDs-programmes are only partially implemented in Europe. Reasons for slow implementation are lack in awareness and discrepancies in organisational and legislative aspects. The structure and organisation of the EMS-system and the legislation controlling defibrillation are still very different throughout in Europe. In some countries no law regulates the use of defibrillators, but where legislation is established it is essential that it ensures the permission to health care workers and lay people to use AEDs. Furthermore, despite that in the 1997 European Union had recommended that the emergency telephone number 112 should be operational in all member states, this goal is still far from being accomplished (Table I). In all European countries, the number 112 exists, but in most countries another telephone number is currently in use for medical emergencies. It is clear that unless organisation and legislation of EMS across Europe is harmonized, it is difficult to set common goals and to allocate resources to reach them in Europe.

The Panel of the Consensus Conference has performed a survey by distributing a questionnaire to key physicians actively involved in EMS-systems and in out-of-hospital resuscitation in order to obtain updated information on legislation and organisation of defibrillation in Europe. The outcome of the survey is reported in Table I and Table II.

Data emerging from the survey suggests that there are striking differences in the organisation of the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) system in Central and Eastern European countries as compared to Western European countries. In most Central and Eastern European countries, but only in a few Western European countries, a medical doctor has an active role in the first responding emergency team, and is very often responsible for operating the manual defibrillator that is on board of the ambulance. In most Western European countries, the first responding emergency team consists of ambulance personnel with qualification for performing Basic Life Support (BLS) indicating the existence of an infrastructure for providing early defibrillation.

In most European countries, the police force is not integrated in the EMS system, while in several countries fire-fighters are a fundamental component of the EMS systems.

Legal support for the use of a defibrillator by non-medically trained people is extremely heterogeneous throughout Europe but the overall legal climate is rather positive. Defibrillation by trained first responders is covered by law, or is covered by the medical authorities. The absence of a specific legislation in the remaining countries should, in theory, not be a formal obstacle, but it may slow down the implementation.

Nowadays it is a legal or moral duty for every citizen and common person in Europe to provide help to the best of their knowledge to a person in danger, providing this does not involve personal risk.

Only in 2 of the responding countries, common citizens are legally explicitly not allowed to purchase or to use an AED.

In summary, the legislation in Europe is heterogeneous but ready to incorporate the use of AEDs by non-medically qualified first responders. Slow implementation is mainly the result of limited perception of the importance of early defibrillation programmes and by traditions and reluctance to introduce novel systems. A Europe-wide legislation or recommendation issued by the European policy makers and supported by all involved major health care and scientific societies, would promote implementation of this lifesaving strategy that is strongly supported by scientific evidence.

Abbreviations for tables I & II:

CA = Cardiac Arrest; EMT = Emergency Medical Technician; EMT-B = ambulance person qualified to perform BLS; BLS = Basic Life Support; EMT-D = ambulance person qualified to perform Defibrillation; EMT-ALS = ambulance person qualified to perform ALS; ALS = Advance Life Support; RN= Registered Nurse; MD= Medical Doctor;

Table I. Organization of EMS Systems in European Countries

Country	Phone number for CA	1st tier qualification	Police involvement?	Fire brigade involvement?
Austria	144	EMT-D	no	no
Belgium	100 (112)	EMT-B or EMT-D or RN	no	no
Croatia	94	MD + EMT-B	no	no
Czech Republic	155	MD or RN + EMT-B	yes	yes
Denmark	112	EMT-B or EMT-D	no	no
Finland	112	EMT-D or fire-fighter	no	yes
France	15, 18, 112	fire-fighter	no	yes
Germany	112 (19222)	EMT-B, EMT-D MD, EMT-ALS	no	uncommon
Greece	166	MD + EMT-B	no	no
Hungary	104 (112)	EMT-B or MD	no (start in 2003)	yes +AED
Iceland	112	EMT-ALS + MD	yes	no
Ireland	999 (112)	EMT-D	uncommon	uncommon
Italy	118	EMT-B or EMT-D	uncommon	uncommon
The Netherlands	112	RN	uncommon	uncommon
Norway	113	EMT-D or EMT-ALS or MD or RN	no (start in 2003)	no (start in 2003)
Poland	999 (112)	MD + RN + EMT-B	no	no
Portugal	112	EMT-B or MD	uncommon	uncommon
Russian Federation	3	MD + EMT-B	no	yes
Slovak Republic	155	MD + EMT-B	yes	yes
Slovenia	112	MD + EMT-D	no	no
Spain	112 (061)	EMT-B or EMT-D ± RN or MD	no	uncommon
Sweden	112	EMT-D, EMT-ALS	yes	yes
Switzerland	144	EMT-B or EMT-D ± RN ± MD	uncommon	uncommon
Turkey	112	MD + RN + EMT-B	no	uncommon
UK	999 (112)	EMT-B or EMT-D or EMT-ALS	yes	yes

Table II. Legal aspects relating to use of AEDs in European Countries

Country	Is there a law for use of AED in ambulances?	Is a private person obliged to do CPR?	Is a private person allowed to buy an AED?	Is a private person allowed to use an AED?
Austria	yes, if trained	yes	yes	yes
Belgium	yes (delegation if trained)	yes	no law	no law
Croatia	no law	no law	no law	no data
Czech Republic	yes (only MD, RN or EMT)	yes	yes	yes, good samaritan
Denmark	yes, if trained	yes	yes	yes, good samaritan
Finland	No	yes (obligation to help)	yes	yes, good samaritan
France	yes, if trained	no law	no	no
Germany	depends on state (in some: yes, if trained; in most: no)	yes (obligation to help)	Yes	yes, good Samaritan
Greece	no	yes	yes	yes, if trained
Hungary	yes (best care)	yes, if trained	yes	yes, if trained
Iceland	yes, if trained	yes	no (soon yes)	no (soon yes)
Ireland	no (all EMTs trained)	no law	yes	yes
Italy	yes, if trained	yes	yes	yes, if trained
The Netherlands	No	yes (obligation to help)	Yes	Yes
Norway	yes, if trained	yes, if trained	yes	yes, if trained
Poland	Yes	yes	yes	yes
Portugal	yes, if trained	yes (no law)	no law	no law
Russian Federation	yes, if trained	yes	yes, if trained	yes, if trained
Slovak Republic	yes (only MD, RN or EMT-ALS)	yes, if trained	no	no
Slovenia	Yes	yes	yes	yes, if trained
Spain	4 autonomies	yes (obligation to help)	no law	3 regions
Sweden	no, but AED in all ambulances	yes (obligation to help)	Yes	yes, if trained and medical control
Switzerland	yes, if trained	yes	yes	yes
Turkey	yes, manual defib in all ambulances	yes, if trained	yes	no law
UK	Yes	yes	yes	no law