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LEGAL STATUS AND CURRENT CONDITION OF DRIVERS' WORK AND REST SCHEDULES

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Abstract

This article examines the legal and practical status of drivers' work and rest schedules in road transport. The study focuses on the regulatory framework governing maximum driving time, mandatory breaks, daily and weekly rest periods, and the role of tachographs in monitoring compliance. The analysis shows that this field is primarily shaped by the AETR framework and European Union rules, especially Regulation (EC) No 561/2006, which establish common standards aimed at improving road safety, protecting drivers' health, and ensuring fair competition in transport operations. The study also finds that digital and smart tachographs have become central tools of enforcement, increasing transparency and improving the detection of violations. At the same time, practical challenges remain, including inconsistent compliance, operational pressure on drivers, and gaps between legal requirements and actual transport practice. The article concludes that effective regulation in this field depends not only on clear legal norms but also on strong enforcement, digital supervision, and a better compliance culture among carriers and drivers.

Keywords

driver work schedule, rest periods, driving time, mandatory breaks, tachograph, AETR, road transport law, transport safety, labor protection, compliance

Introduction

Today, in road transport, the regulation of drivers' work and rest schedules is considered one of the most important factors in ensuring road safety, increasing the stability of transport operations, and strengthening labor protection. Especially in international and intercity transport, excessive working hours, insufficient rest, and uncontrolled extension of driving time significantly increase the risk of road traffic accidents and reduce the quality and reliability of transport services. For this reason, drivers' work and rest schedules should be regarded not only as a matter of practical transport management, but also as an important sphere of social and labor relations regulated by law. At the international level, this issue is primarily governed within the framework of the AETR system; in the European Union, Regulation No. 561/2006 establishes rules concerning drivers' driving time, breaks, and rest periods.[1,2] The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that the growth of freight and passenger transportation, the increasing complexity of logistics chains, and the rising demand for faster delivery often lead to a heavier workload for drivers. As a result, in some cases, minimum rest requirements are violated, working hours are not properly recorded, or control mechanisms remain weak in practice. Such situations are not merely matters of labor discipline; they also directly affect road safety, the lives and health of passengers, and the safety of cargo. In this regard, studying the legal status and the current practical condition of drivers' work and rest schedules is of both scientific and practical importance.[3]

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From a legal perspective, the requirements related to drivers' work and rest schedules are закреплены in normative sources at different levels. In international transport, AETR documents serve as the main regulatory basis in this field, while in the European Union additional requirements concerning digital tachographs and control devices are also applied. In the legislation of Uzbekistan, the general legal framework of transport activity is defined by the Law "On Transport," which states that transport legislation consists of this Law and other legislative acts, and that the provisions of international treaties prevail over national law. This demonstrates the high practical significance of international legal documents regulating drivers' work and rest schedules in international transport.[4] An analysis of the current situation shows that although legal norms regarding drivers' work and rest schedules have been established in many countries, the issue of their full implementation in practice remains highly relevant. In particular, due to tight transport schedules, economic pressure, insufficient automation of control mechanisms, and the failure of some carriers to properly organize internal labor procedures, a gap may arise between legal norms and actual practice. Therefore, in studying this topic, it is necessary not only to describe the rules contained in legal documents, but also to assess the existing practical situation, control instruments, and implementation mechanisms.[1,3]

This article analyzes the legal status and the current practical condition of drivers' work and rest schedules. The main focus is placed on international and national regulatory frameworks, their content, their role in transport safety, and the problems encountered in practice. In addition, the article examines approaches aimed at improving drivers' labor regimes, strengthening control systems, and increasing the practical effectiveness of legal norms.

Methods

This study is aimed at examining the legal framework and the current practical situation of drivers' work and rest schedules, and it is based on a qualitative analytical approach. The research was organized in accordance with the IMRAD structure, and legal, analytical, and comparative methods were used to present the topic in a systematic way. The main sources of the study consisted of normative legal documents, international conventions, scientific articles related to transport, official reports, and analytical literature. In particular, international legal norms concerning drivers' work and rest periods, including documents regulating the labor of crews engaged in international road transport, as well as relevant provisions of national legislation, were examined. In addition, scientific sources related to transport safety, labor protection, and transport organization were also analyzed.[3]

First of all, the **legal analysis method** was applied in the study. Through this method, the issues of drivers' driving time, mandatory breaks, daily and weekly rest periods, the procedure for using control devices, and the obligations and responsibilities of carriers were examined. Legal analysis made it possible to explain the content of normative documents, clarify their practical significance, and evaluate the existing regulatory mechanisms. [4,5] The **comparative analysis method** was also used. This method made it possible to compare international legal requirements with the norms established in national legislation and to identify their common and differing features. The comparative approach helped determine the advantages of international experience in regulating drivers' work and rest periods, assess the effectiveness of control mechanisms, and identify possible gaps in national practice.

In addition, the study employed the **descriptive method**. This method was used to summarize the current condition of drivers' work and rest schedules, the practices applied in transport enterprises, the use of control devices, the recording of working hours, and the level of compliance with rest requirements. Descriptive analysis made it possible to present the topic

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consistently from both theoretical and practical perspectives.[5] The study also used elements of the **content analysis method**. Official documents, legislative texts, scientific sources, and analytical materials related to the transport sector were examined in order to identify recurring key concepts and problems. In particular, categories such as “working time,” “rest time,” “mandatory break,” “tachograph control,” “labor discipline,” and “road traffic safety” were placed at the center of the research.[3]

No empirical experiment or experimental approach was used in this work. The study was mainly based on the review, systematization, and analysis of existing legal and scientific sources. Therefore, the methodological basis of the paper is characterized by theoretical-legal and comparative analysis. The selected methods made it possible to comprehensively examine how drivers’ work and rest schedules are reflected in legal documents and how they function in current practice, as well as to identify the main problems in the field and formulate scientific conclusions for their improvement.

Results

The results of the study show that the legal regulation of drivers’ work and rest schedules is already well established in international transport law, but its practical implementation remains uneven. The analysis found that the current system is mainly based on two pillars: first, legally defined limits on driving time, breaks, and rest periods; second, control through tachographs and related enforcement mechanisms. In the European context, Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 sets common rules on maximum driving times and minimum daily and weekly rest periods for drivers engaged in road haulage and passenger transport, while tachographs are used to record driving time, rest, other work, and availability in order to reduce fatigue and improve road safety.[6,7] Another major result is that the legal framework has gradually moved from paper-based and manual supervision toward digital control. Current practice shows increasing reliance on digital and smart tachographs, which improve the recording of drivers’ activities and make it easier to detect violations or misuse at an earlier stage. This means that the modern approach to drivers’ hours is no longer limited to prescribing legal norms; it also depends on technological monitoring tools that support enforcement and help transport operators maintain compliance.[4]

The study also found that the legal rules are closely connected with broader policy goals. The regulation of work and rest periods is not intended only to discipline drivers, but to protect health, reduce fatigue-related accidents, improve working conditions, and ensure fair competition among carriers. In this regard, the current legal situation demonstrates that driver time regulation is both a labor protection issue and a road safety mechanism.[8] At the same time, the analysis of the existing situation indicates that there is still a gap between legal standards and actual practice. In real transport operations, compliance may be affected by delivery pressure, long routes, weak internal management, insufficient automation in some fleets, and attempts to bypass the legal limits. This suggests that the presence of legal norms alone does not guarantee full compliance. The effectiveness of the system depends on regular monitoring, the quality of control devices, enforcement capacity, and the responsibility of both drivers and transport companies. UNECE’s AETR work and the European Commission’s transport materials both reflect the continuing importance of implementation and harmonized supervision.[9]

A further result is that the legal regulation of drivers’ hours is becoming more comprehensive over time. Recent developments in the EU framework show that transport law increasingly covers not only traditional heavy goods vehicles but also a wider category of commercial transport through broader tachograph and compliance requirements. This indicates

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that the scope of driver work-and-rest regulation is expanding in response to changes in transport practice and market structure.

Table 1. Main results on the legal and current status of drivers' work and rest schedules

No.	Area of analysis	Main result	Practical significance
1	Legal framework	Drivers' work and rest schedules are regulated by international and regional legal instruments	Creates a uniform basis for transport safety and labor protection
2	Driving and rest limits	Legal rules define maximum driving periods and minimum breaks/rest periods	Helps prevent fatigue and reduce accident risk
3	Control mechanism	Tachographs are the main instruments for recording driver activity	Strengthens monitoring and enforcement
4	Digitalization	Smart and digital tachographs are increasingly used in practice	Improves transparency and early detection of violations
5	Safety function	Legal norms are directly linked to road safety and driver health	Protects both drivers and other road users
6	Labor protection	Work-rest rules support fair working conditions in road transport	Reduces exploitation and excessive workload
7	Practical challenges	Full compliance is still affected by operational and managerial pressures	Shows the gap between law and implementation
8	Regulatory development	The legal system continues to expand and modernize	Reflects new transport realities and enforcement needs

In summary, the results confirm that the legal status of drivers' work and rest schedules is relatively strong and well defined, especially in international and European transport law, while the current practical situation is more complex. The rules exist, monitoring tools are developing, and policy goals are clear, but effective implementation still requires better compliance culture, stronger supervision, and wider use of digital control technologies.

Discussion

The results show that the regulation of drivers' work and rest schedules has developed into a relatively mature legal system, especially in international and European road transport. Internationally, the AETR framework remains a key reference point, while in the European Union Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 provides common rules on maximum driving times, breaks, and minimum daily and weekly rest periods. This demonstrates that the legal status of drivers' working-time regulation is no longer fragmented, but increasingly standardized across cross-border transport operations. [6,7] At the same time, the findings suggest that the real importance of these legal rules lies not only in formal compliance, but in their direct connection with road

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safety, driver health, and fair competition. The European Commission states that tachographs are intended to record driving and rest periods in order to prevent driver fatigue and support road safety, while UNECE materials on AETR emphasize reducing excessive driving hours and fatigue-related accidents. This means that legal norms on work and rest schedules should be understood not merely as administrative rules, but as preventive safety instruments.[9]

Another important issue revealed by the results is the growing role of technology in enforcement. Earlier legal control relied more heavily on manual supervision and paper records, whereas current practice increasingly depends on digital and smart tachographs. This shift strengthens transparency and allows enforcement bodies to identify violations more effectively. Recent European Commission materials indicate that newer smart tachographs and remote detection tools are helping authorities target roadside checks more precisely, which suggests that the future of legal enforcement in this field will be increasingly digital. [8] However, the discussion of the results also shows that the existence of detailed legal norms does not automatically guarantee full implementation. In practice, transport operators and drivers may still face strong commercial pressure, tight delivery schedules, and weak internal compliance systems. These factors can encourage non-observance of mandatory breaks or manipulation of working-time records. Therefore, the gap between legal regulation and actual practice remains one of the main problems in the field. The continued publication of EU guidance notes and UNECE working materials suggests that interpretation, application, and harmonized enforcement are still active concerns.[4,5]

The results also indicate that legal regulation in this area is gradually expanding and adapting to new transport realities. The regulatory framework increasingly combines social protection, road safety, digital monitoring, and cross-border harmonization. This broader approach reflects the fact that drivers' work and rest schedules affect several policy areas at once: labor law, transport management, enforcement practice, and international mobility governance. In this sense, the current legal situation can be described as dynamic rather than static. [10] Overall, the discussion confirms that the legal framework governing drivers' work and rest schedules is strong in principle but still faces practical enforcement challenges. The most effective model appears to be one that combines clear legal standards, reliable tachograph control, digital enforcement tools, and consistent supervision by competent authorities. For this reason, improving the current situation requires not only better laws, but also stronger compliance culture among carriers, better training for drivers, and wider use of modern monitoring technologies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the legal regulation of drivers' work and rest schedules has become one of the central mechanisms for ensuring road safety, labor protection, and fair competition in road transport. The study shows that international and regional legal instruments already provide a sufficiently strong normative basis for regulating maximum driving time, mandatory breaks, and daily and weekly rest periods. In particular, the AETR framework and EU social rules establish common standards intended to prevent excessive driving, reduce fatigue-related accidents, and harmonize working conditions in international transport. The research also confirms that the legal value of these rules goes beyond formal regulation. Drivers' work and rest requirements directly affect the health of drivers, the safety of passengers and cargo, and the reliability of transport operations. Tachographs play a key role in this system because they record driving times, rest periods, and other work activities, making supervision more transparent and supporting enforcement. In this sense, the legal framework is closely connected with practical control instruments. At the same time, the current situation shows that the existence of legal

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norms does not always guarantee full compliance in practice. Transport operators and drivers may still face long-distance delivery pressure, strict schedules, and weak internal control systems. As a result, there can be a gap between the requirements laid down in legal documents and the realities of transport activity. This proves that the effectiveness of the system depends not only on the quality of legal rules, but also on monitoring capacity, harmonized interpretation, and consistent enforcement. Another important conclusion is that this area is continuing to evolve. Current European practice shows growing reliance on digital and smart tachographs, stronger cross-border enforcement, and broader compliance obligations for commercial transport. This indicates that the regulation of drivers' work and rest schedules is adapting to modern transport conditions and becoming more technology-based. Such changes increase transparency, improve the detection of violations, and strengthen the preventive function of transport law.

Overall, it can be concluded that the legal and practical status of drivers' work and rest schedules is significant and multidimensional. It combines road safety, labor law, transport management, and digital supervision into one unified system. For this reason, future improvement in this field should focus on strengthening compliance culture among carriers, improving driver awareness, expanding the use of digital control technologies, and ensuring more effective implementation of existing legal standards. Only under such conditions can the legal norms governing drivers' work and rest schedules achieve their full protective and regulatory purpose.

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