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Ford Ka in Europe and in Brazil - An ocean of difference when it comes to safety

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While the Brazilian model has not achieved a single star in crash-tests, the Ka+ sold in Europe managed to get 3 of them under much more demanding evaluations



When it was introduced, in June 2014, the **third-generation Ka was proudly presented by Ford as a Brazilian developed project**. From Brazil to the whole world. Nowadays sold also in Europe as the Ka+, the little commuter has had a major setback last Wednesday (25) in Brazil: it did not get a single star by Latin NCAP, the South American version of the Euro NCAP. Among other reasons, **because it does not have side impact door beams**. At least in Brazil. In Europe, as the cutaway above clearly shows, the Ford Ka+ comes with these items, something that has started to be incorporated in Brazilian cars around the 1990s. It was promoted by automakers at the time as a very special feature. In such intensity that people started to believe it was a standard equipment on all cars and did not give it any further attention. That allowed some automakers to simply suppress them. Even in products that were designed from the ground up to present them, such as the Ford Ka and some PSA vehicles built over the PF1 platform (Peugeot 208 and 2008 and the Citroën C3, C3 Picasso and AirCross) in the Brazilian market. The fact that all these vehicles are also sold in developed countries highlights the ocean of differences that exists between the Ford Ka+ Europeans can buy, **approved by Euro NCAP**, and the one sold at the very place where it was designed.

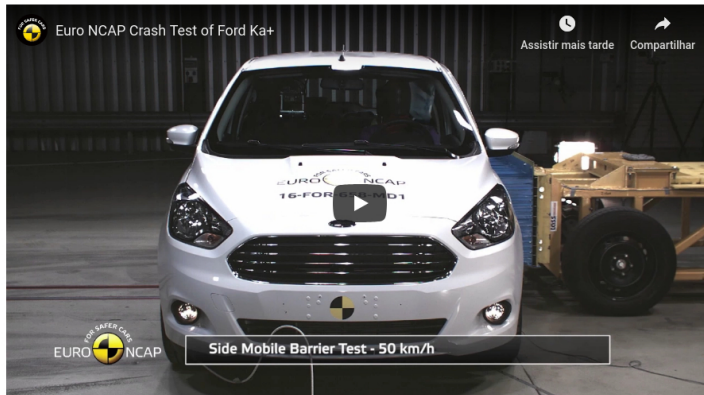
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More than writing about these differences, it is meaningful to present them. The video below is from the Euro NCAP crash-tests, published last March:



Notice that the Ford Ka+ has gone through 6 crash-test evaluations: front offset deformable barrier, frontal full width, lateral impact with a side mobile barrier, side pole test, whiplash and damages to pedestrians. The Brazilian Ford Ka, which can be seen in the video below, has endured only 2 of these tests.



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In the situations that can be compared, or else, the front offset deformable barrier test and the lateral impact with a side mobile barrier, always at the same speed and under the same standards that are used by Euro NCAP, you can see that the Ka's behavior is substantially different. Even at the offset crash, which looks pretty similar, there are diverse scores, as reports show. But it is on side impacts, the deadliest ones, that disparities are more evident.



Lateral Impact



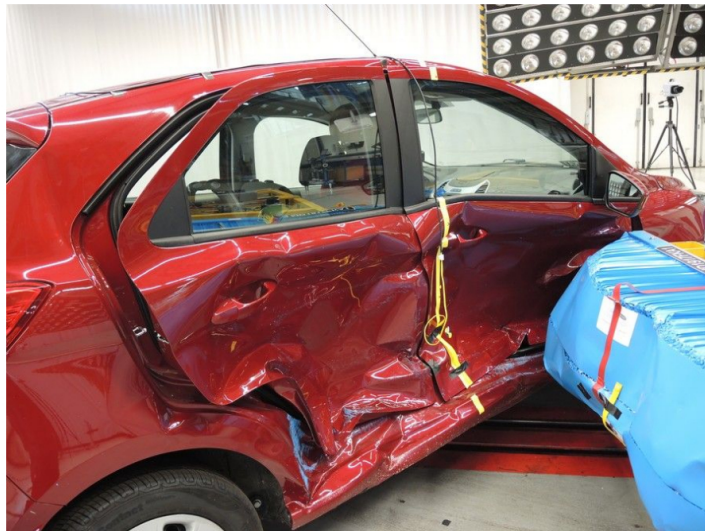
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While an European front occupant would be well protected in side crashes, the Brazilian (and South American) passengers would have a poor protection for their chests. In other words, the European would get out of the car walking. A lucky Brazilian would get to the hospital. An unlucky one would have his body carried to the morgue.



It is important to stress that this problem is not related solely to the fact that the Ka+ comes with side airbags as standard while the Brazilian Ka does not offer them. Not even as optional equipment. Check the image above. It shows the high cabin penetration the Brazilian Ford Ka suffers. And that the rear door opens, something that may expose passenger to even more harm. The European model can be seen below.





Have you noticed the door have bent (very little) around the B pillar? That was exactly the body integrity that the Brazilian model lacked. One that more B platform Ford models may present in Brazil.



Ford Ka front door shell

The image above is from a Ford Ka front door shell. Search at will: you will not find the side impact door beams. Just like you won't find them at the door shell below, which belongs to a Ford EcoSport.



Ford EcoSport rear door shell

Under less severe Latin NCAP parameters, the **Ford EcoSport was tested and earned 5 stars**, having been evaluated on side impacts and approved by the UNECE95 standards. Perhaps even without the side impact bars. The **new EcoSport sold in Brazil comes with 7 airbags and traction and stability control even in its cheapest derivatives**. Ironically, the first generation Ford Ka sold in Brazil came with side impact door beams. Just like a 2000 Ford Fiesta Rocam, as its door shell below testifies.





Ford Fiesta Rocam rear door shell

The bar you can see in its lower part, inside the shell, helped make this old Fiesta safer. Are they present at the so called New Fiesta sold in Brazil, nothing more than the Fiesta Mk7? In Europe, the side impact door beams are "thicker" and made of boron steel, what makes them more resistant. The image below, created by Ford, shows how these structures make the car "stronger and safer". Indeed.



We have asked Ford which of its vehicles do not have side impact bars, but the company has not provided us any answer on this matter so far. We'll update this article as soon as the company gets in touch with us.

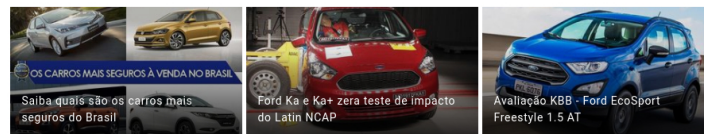
In the official statement on Latin NCAP tests, **obtained by 'A Tribuna'**, Ford says that the "Ka is available in Brazil since 1997 and fulfills the respective Brazilian rules. The Ka is also offered with standard items that go beyond Brazilian legal requirements for safety, such as Electronic Brake Distribution (EBD), ISOFIX, head restraints and 3-point seat belts for the middle back seat passenger, as well as a seat belt reminder for the driver seat".



This answer is very similar to the one given by GM when its Chevrolet Onix, the best selling car in Brazil for some years, also did not earn even 1 star at the Latin NCAP tests. Considering what this article presents, it allows us to infer that the Brazilian laws need urgent update. UNECE95 rules, which Latin NCAP demands to be respected, are from the 1990s. What the automaker's answer does not clarify is how a project that was proudly conceived by Ford's Brazilian team, worthy of 3 stars in a much more demanding environment, cannot even get a rating beyond zero at home.

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