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REPORT

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
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Subject:	Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic – Progress Report

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission submitted the above-mentioned proposal to the European Parliament and to the Council on 13 July 2023 as a part of the Greening Transport Package.
2. The Commission presented the Greening Transport Package in two parts. The first part was proposed on 13 July 2023 and consists of the proposal in subject, together with a proposal for a Regulation for a harmonised framework for GHG emissions from freight and passenger transport services (CountEmissions EU initiative) and a proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway capacity in the single European railway area. The second part of the package was proposed on 7 November 2023 and consists of the proposal amending Council Directive as regards a support framework for intermodal transport of goods and the Regulation as regards calculation of external costs savings and generation of aggregated data (Combined Transport Directive).

The proposal to amend Council Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic, hereafter the “Directive on Weights and Dimensions for certain road vehicles” has three objectives: (a) to better ensure the free and efficient movement of goods and fair competition, (b) to provide sufficient incentives for the sector to encourage investment in zero-emission technologies and (c) to ensure more efficient and consistent enforcement of the new and existing rules.

II. WORK AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS

3. The European Parliament designated the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) as the responsible committee on this proposal and Ms. Isabel GARCIA MUÑOZ (S&D, ES) as the rapporteur.
4. The European Economic and Social Committee adopted its opinion at the 582nd plenary session, on 26 October 2023. The Committee of the Regions has not yet adopted its opinion.

III. WORK WITHIN THE COUNCIL AND ITS PREPARATORY BODIES

5. During the Spanish Presidency, the Working Party on Land Transport started its work on 24 July 2023 with a general presentation of the proposal and the examination of the impact assessment. On 4 and 19 September, on 6, 16 and 23 October and on 13 November the Working Party continued with the detailed examination of the proposal.

IV. WORK TOWARDS A COMPROMISE

6. Firstly, in order to better ensure the free and efficient movement of goods and fair competition, the work focused on making the existing rules clearer and on complementing the existing Directive with missing rules. The Presidency found a common understanding on most of the elements that were proposed by the Commission on this matter.

7. As regards the permits to be handed out for the carrying of indivisible loads and the proposal that Member States can allow for the circulation of European Modular Systems (EMS), provided a number of conditions are met, there is a common understanding on the way forward. There is also support for the proposal from the Commission that Member States are to establish a one-stop-shop function to ensure a single national access point for permits for indivisible loads, for obtaining and having access to the information to obtain these permits and finally for obtaining and having access to all the relevant information as regards the operations of EMS in a given Member State. Member States do ask for more time to implement it.
8. The Commission proposed to harmonise the rules for vehicle transporters and to clarify the rules as regards the use of load supports and the overhang both in the front and from behind. Member States can also support this harmonisation with minor clarifications. However, a group of Member States cannot agree to increase the maximum height for vehicles carrying high-cube containers.
9. The Commission proposal for amending Council Directive as regards a support framework for intermodal transport of goods was only presented on 7 November and it has interlinkages with the proposal on the Directive on Weights and Dimensions, in particular as regards the concept of intermodal transport operations. For this reason, a significant number of Member States are in favour of both proposals being negotiated and dealt with in parallel. It will require further work to see how to ensure the alignment between these two proposals.
10. Secondly, more work will be required to provide sufficient incentives for the sector to encourage investments in zero-emission technologies, especially to better understand the potential impact of having heavier vehicles driving over the existing infrastructure and what this entails for maintenance and the building of new roads.
11. The Commission proposed some modifications to internalise changes to the type-approval rules that have integrated the rules on aerodynamic cabs and also to allow the extra length allowance to be used to install zero-emission technologies. Member States can support this.

12. As regards the Commission proposal for an increased authorised weight for zero-emission vehicles, further work will be needed to see how much this might have an impact on the existing infrastructure and how the increased weight will be best spread over the different axles of the vehicles. Discussion are ongoing on how best to facilitate the transition to the general use of zero-emission technology vehicles compared to the fossil-fuel powered vehicles today. The exact modalities of this transition will need further investigation.
13. Finally, to ensure more efficient and consistent enforcement of the new and existing rules, Member States understand the Commission proposal in Article 6 related to the proofs to be carried by vehicles, although Member States do not support to alter the rules of the recently adopted eFTI-platform and use the eFTI platform to demonstrate the documentation as regards intermodal transport operations. As regards the control of overloaded vehicles, Member States could agree to the use of automatic systems installed on the road and align it with the requirements and the number of systems to be deployed, as it will be regulated in the TEN-T Regulation. Member States also agree to introduce a new Article 10da as regards the implementation of Intelligent Access Policy schemes to regulate, monitor and ease the access of heavy-duty vehicles to specific roads or areas.

V. CONCLUSIONS

14. In the light of the above the Council is invited to take note of this progress report on the work regarding the proposed revision of the Directive on Weights and Dimensions for certain road vehicles.