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## REPORT

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/ Council
No. Cion doc.:	ST 11722/23 + ADD 1
Subject:	Preparation of the Council meeting ( <u>Transport</u> , Telecommunications and Energy) on 18 June 2024  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 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 "Directive on Weights and Dimensions for certain road vehicles", to the European Parliament and to the Council on 13 July 2023 as 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 the Council Directive as regards a support framework for intermodal transport of goods and the Regulation as regards the calculation of external costs savings and generation of aggregated data (Combined Transport Directive).

3. The proposal to amend 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 IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS**

4. 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. The European Parliament adopted its report at its plenary session on 12 March 2024.
5. The European Economic and Social Committee adopted its opinion at the 582<sup>nd</sup> plenary session, on 26 October 2023. The Committee of the Regions adopted its opinion at the 159<sup>th</sup> plenary session on 31 January 2024.

## **III. WORK WITHIN THE COUNCIL AND ITS PREPARATORY BODIES**

6. 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 examined the proposal. The Spanish presidency presented a progress report to the Council (15668/23) on 4 December 2023.

7. Under the Belgian presidency the Working Party continued the examination of presidency compromises on 23 April, 7 May, 21 May and 7 June 2024.

#### IV. WORK TOWARDS A COMPROMISE

8. During the Belgian presidency the work has focused on finding a solution for allowing heavier vehicles on European roads, as a number of Member States are worried that this might have a negative impact on their road infrastructure and might compromise safety. This is especially the case for Member States that have a lot of transit traffic. To limit this impact, the Presidency proposed to add an infrastructure impact mitigation formula in the annex to ensure a sufficient distance between the different axles, as an additional condition for five and six axle vehicles, while other Member States also proposed to add additional axles to the vehicle. Overall, several Member States considered the proposed formula as a possible way forward to address this issue. Also, a maximum weight of 46 tonnes for all vehicles, like in the current directive, was welcomed by many Member States in this regard.
9. Different options have been presented to find a solution to allow zero-emission vehicles to compensate for the additional weight of the zero-emission technology. Several Member States have issues with allowing a heavier load on the driven axle (above 11,5 tonnes), which would be required for some configurations of vehicles to manage an extra weight of four tonnes. A compromise proposal where 12 tonnes on the driven axle is only granted for battery electric vehicles gained some support but a majority of Member States insisted on a limitation to 11,5 tonnes. Some Member States also find it very difficult to allow for more than two additional tonnes for zero-emission vehicles.

10. The other main outstanding issue relates to Member States that allow the circulation of vehicle combinations heavier than 40 tonnes in national transport and how these heavier vehicle combinations could be allowed to circulate in international traffic. The suggestion of allowing for specific technical or operational requirements looks promising, but requires more work. Further solutions were sought by limiting the scope to EURO VI vehicles and by allowing additional weight for zero emission technologies to give an incentive to the uptake of zero emission vehicles in international traffic. In addition, the solution of a safeguard clause was also discussed. This would require the authorisation of the Commission and be based on evidence provided by a Member State. This idea was introduced in the text to address the concerns of several delegations regarding the risk of reverse modal shift. Some Member States also question why from 2035 onwards the additional weight allowance should only apply to zero-emission vehicles.
11. The Working Party started to look into a positive network of TEN-T roads in Art. 7, where heavier vehicles could be allowed to drive. To see if this option could help requires more work. Member States would need to get a better picture of the conditions for such a network.

## V. CONCLUSION

12. In light of the above, Coreper and Council are 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.

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