Road transport: maximum authorised dimensions and weights for certain road vehicles

2013/0105(COD) - 15/04/2013 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to amend Directive 96/53/EC on the maximum authorised weights in road traffic vehicles, with the aim of reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, so as to adapt the legislation to technological developments and changing market needs and to facilitate intermodal transport.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council (amendment of Council Directive 96/53/EC).

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: it has become crucial **to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the consumption of petroleum products in the field of transport**, and even more crucial for road transport, which accounts for 82% of the energy consumption of the transport sector. Furthermore, the steady rise in the price of fuel prompts the need to identify solutions to reduce vehicle fuel consumption. In the light of the evolving market and the technologies available, the question today is whether the choices made when the Directive was adopted in 1996 are still relevant.

The White Paper on Transport Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system published in 2011 set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2050 in comparison with 1990 levels. In this context, the White Paper announced the revision of the 1996 Directive, with the aim of allowing more energy- efficient, aerodynamic vehicles to be put on the market.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: the proposed measures are the result of public and sectoral consultations held in 2011 and 2012 and organized by the Commission. They were examined in an impact assessment which looked at several options in terms of economic and environmental efficiency.

The option selected combines technical harmonisation work conducted with a group of experts with a view to adopting delegated acts and a moderate regulatory approach, in order to avoid imposing disproportionate or inapplicable obligations, which would penalise small and medium-sized enterprises in particular.

LEGAL BASIS: Article 91 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

CONTENT: the Commission proposes to amend Directive 96/53/EC **to improve the aerodynamics of vehicles and their energy efficiency, while continuing to improve road safety,** and within the limits imposed by the geometry of road infrastructures. Specifically, the proposal:

- **grants derogations from the maximum dimensions of vehicles** for the addition of aerodynamic devices to the rear of vehicles or to redefine the geometry of the cabs for tractors, improving drivers' field of vision, and improving their safety and comfort. The Commission will, with the assistance of a Committee, specify these requirements at a later stage;
- authorises a **weight increase of one tonne for vehicles with an electric or hybrid propulsion**, to take account of the weight of batteries or the dual motorisation, without prejudice to the load capacity of the vehicle. Furthermore, the maximum weight of **buses** will be increased by a tonne to

take account of various developments such as the increase in the average weight of passengers and their baggage, of new equipment imposed by the safety regulations, and the new Euro VI class;

- will **facilitate the development of intermodal transport** by allowing a derogation of 15 cm in the length of trucks carrying 45-foot containers, which are increasingly used in intercontinental and European transport;
- confirms that **cross-border use of longer vehicles** is lawful for journeys that only cross one border, if the two Member States concerned already allow it and if the conditions for derogations under the Directive are met;
- adds new provisions to enable the inspection authorities to **better detect infringements and harmonise administrative penalties that apply to them**. The Commission will publish guidelines on inspection procedures to ensure harmonisation of inspection methods between all Member States. The latter must carry out a minimum number of vehicle checks, using either weighing systems built into the road or by means of onboard sensors in vehicles that communicate remotely with roadside inspectors. The Commission will define the technical standards for onboard weighing devices that can communicate with the inspection authorities.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS: the proposal has no implications for the EU budget.

In order to accelerate the introduction of vehicles that are more aerodynamic and have hybrid motorisation, the Commission will use the budgets at its disposal, in particular those allocated to trans-European networks and the EU programmes for research, development and innovation, to help industrial research, and equipping vehicle fleets.

DELEGATED ACTS: the proposal contains provisions empowering the Commission to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.