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

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The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report by Jörg LEICHTFRIED (S&D, AT) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 96/53/EC of 25 July 1996 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.

The committee recommended that Parliament's position in first reading following the ordinary legislative procedure should amend the Commission position as follows:

Definitions: Members deleted the definition of 'electric vehicle' and inserted the term '**low carbon technology'**, being technology which does not fully rely on fossil oil sources in the energy supply to transport and which significantly contribute to the decarbonisation of transport. The sources include: (i) electricity, (ii) hydrogen, (iii) synthetic fuels, (iv) advanced Biofuels, (v) natural gas, including biomethane, in gaseous form (compressed natural gas – CNG) and liquefied form (liquefied natural gas – LNG), and (vi) waste heat.

The report specified that vehicles equipped with low-carbon technologies **should be permitted to exceed the maximum weight by up to one tonne**, depending on the weight required for the technology. However, the extra weight should not increase the load capacity of the vehicle. The principle of technological neutrality should be maintained.

Improve aerodynamic performance of vehicles: with the aim of improving the aerodynamic performance, vehicles or combinations of vehicles equipped with devices that meet the relevant criteria may exceed the maximum lengths provided for in point 1.1 of Annex I **by up to 500 mm.**

Amongst the criteria referred to above were the following:

- secure attachment of the devices in such a way as to ensure that there is no risk of their detachment;
- day and night markings in accordance with type-approval rules on the installation of lighting and light-signalling devices;
- a design which does not reduce the driver's visibility of the rear of the vehicle.

The exceedances of maximum lengths must allow the construction of tractor cabs improving the aerodynamic characteristics of vehicles or combinations of vehicles, and improving **road safety** for vulnerable road users and vehicles involved in rear-end collisions.

The requirements for cabs must allow:

- improvement of direct vision to make vulnerable road users more visible to the driver, in particular by reducing the blind spots under the front windscreen and all around the cab, and, where necessary, by fitting additional equipment, such as mirrors and camera systems;

- reduction of the damage in the event of a collision with other vehicles and improves the energy absorption performance by fitting of an energy absorbing crash management system;

- improving pedestrian protection by adjusting the frontal design to minimise the risk of overruns in case of collisions with vulnerable road users by encouraging the sideways diversion of vulnerable users.

The requirements for the comfort and safety of drivers to which drivers' cabs must conform were:

- compliance with the requirements set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Framework Directive 89/391/EEC, with its hierarchy of prevention measure for the elimination of sources of whole-body vibration and of musculoskeletal disorders;

- the provision of the driver's cab with safety features starting with a secure fire exit of the cab;

- the increase in size of the driver's cab to adapt to comfort and safety requirements for driver's seats and couchettes taking into account emergency situations.

Within seven years of the entry into force of the Directive new N2 and N3 vehicles and combination of vehicles shall use cabs that comply with the safety requirements referred to in the directive.

Facilitate intermodal transport: by 2017, the Commission shall, if appropriate, make a legislative proposal to amend Directive 92/106/EEC and, in particular, the existing definition of combined transport, in order to take into account the development of containerisation and in view of facilitating the development of efficient intermodal transport.

Infringements and checks: Member States shall ensure that the information concerning the number and severity of any infringements of the Directive that an individual undertaking had committed was introduced into the **risk rating system** established under Directive 2006/22/EC.

When identifying vehicles to be subject to checks, Members States may **select as a priority vehicles operated by undertakings with a high-risk profile**. Vehicles may also be selected randomly for checks.

Report: the Commission should review Annex I to Directive 96/53/EC and report on its implementation, taking into account, inter alia, impacts on international competition, modal split, costs of infrastructure adaption and the environmental and safety objectives of the European Union as set in the 2011 White Paper on Transport.