

# Road vehicles: maximum dimensions in national and international traffic and maximum weights in international traffic. Codification

2021/0400(COD) - 07/12/2021 - Legislative proposal

**PURPOSE:** to set maximum limits for heavy goods vehicles, buses and coaches engaged in international transport within the EU (codification of Council Directive 96/53/EC).

**PROPOSED ACT:** Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

**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:** in the interests of clarity and transparency of the law, the purpose of the proposal is to undertake a **codification** of 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. This directive has been substantially amended several times. The new directive will supersede the various acts incorporated in it, without prejudice to the content of the acts themselves, and will simply bring them together with only such formal changes as are required by the codification exercise itself.

**CONTENT:** the proposed directive lays down harmonised **maximum weights and dimensions** for road vehicles carrying passengers or goods and their trailers. The maximum weights and dimensions and related vehicle characteristics are defined in Annex I to the directive.

## *Authorisations and derogations*

A Member State may not reject or prohibit the use on its territory: (i) in international traffic, of vehicles registered or put into circulation in any other Member State for reasons relating to weights and dimensions, (ii) in national traffic, of vehicles registered or put into circulation in any other Member State for reasons relating to dimensions, if these vehicles comply with the limit values specified in Annex I.

For **national transport**, any vehicle exceeding the dimensional limits will not be allowed to operate on the roads of any EU country.

Vehicles exceeding the maximum dimensions may only be allowed to circulate on the basis of special permits issued by the competent authorities on a non-discriminatory basis when these vehicles carry **indivisible loads**, i.e. loads which cannot be divided into two or more loads without cost or risk of undue damage.

**Derogations** from the limits set are also provided for vehicles carrying out certain national transport operations which do not significantly affect international competition in the transport sector, such as transport operations related to forestry and the forest industry or those involving the use of combined motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers.

Similarly, with a view to improving their energy efficiency, vehicles equipped with **aerodynamic devices** meeting the requirements of the Directive may exceed the maximum lengths to allow the addition of retractable or foldable aerodynamic devices to the rear of the vehicles.

Member States may allow vehicles incorporating new technologies or concepts which cannot comply with the requirements of the Directive to carry out certain local transport operations for a trial period.

### ***Restrictions at local level***

The directive provides for the possibility of imposing local restrictions on the maximum authorised weights or dimensions of vehicles that can be used in specified areas or on specified roads, where the infrastructure is not suitable for long and heavy vehicles, such as city centres, small villages or places of special natural interest.

### ***Compliance***

Member States should ensure that vehicles can demonstrate their compliance with the rules by means of:

- a manufacturer's statutory plate accompanied by an additional plate indicating the dimensions; or
- a single plate comprising the two plates mentioned above; or
- a single document issued by the EU country in which the vehicle was registered, containing the same information, which must be accessible for inspection and adequately protected.

Vehicles with proof of compliance may be subject to: (i) random checks in respect of the common standards on weights; (ii) checks in respect of the common standards on dimensions only if there is a suspicion of non-compliance with the Directive.

### ***Identification and control of vehicles***

Member States should take measures to identify vehicles in circulation which are likely to exceed the maximum authorised weight and which must therefore be checked by their competent authorities. These weight limits may be taken by means of automatic systems placed on the road infrastructure, or by means of on-board weighing equipment.

Each Member State should carry out each calendar year an appropriate number of checks on the weight of vehicles or combinations of vehicles in circulation which is proportionate to the total number of vehicles inspected each year on its territory.

### ***Application of the rules***

Member States should determine the system of penalties applicable for infringements of the Directive. Every two years, Member States should transmit to the Commission the necessary information concerning: (i) the number of checks carried out during the previous two calendar years; (ii) the number of overloaded vehicles or vehicle combinations detected.