

Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

1993/0486(SYN) - 10/10/1994

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report of Mr. Florus WIJSENBEEK (NL, Lib.) on the weights, dimensions and technical characteristics of road vehicles. A great number of amendments carried will change the Commission's proposal on this very technical but essential issue, which has been discussed in Parliament for a long time. With the introduction of cabotage; hauliers from all Member States can provide services within their own Member States and across internal borders. But if the existing considerable variations in maximum permissible dimensions and weights were to persist, distortions in competition could arise. There is, as yet, no uniform weight either in international and national transport. The UK and Ireland still have a maximum permissible weight of 36.2 tonnes and 38 tonnes for five axles. But the UK allows 40 or 44 tonnes for combined transport. On the other hand, The Netherlands and Denmark have higher maximum weights for domestic transport of 50 and 48 tonnes respectively. In addition, Sweden and Finland have considerably greater sizes and weights, because of their geography. The maximum permissible length and width laid down in Directive 85/3/EEC must be rationalized and adjusted to take account of technological developments. The maximum load length of 18.35m should be increased to at least 18.75m for ergonomic and environmental reasons alone. But rapporteur WIJSENBEEK takes the view that maximum dimensions and weights are actually outmoded concepts which stand in the way of technological progress. Traffic safety, the best possible environmental policy and the maintenance of infrastructure should remain the principal criteria. The maximum width, the turning circle and the axle pressure would thus be the only factors to be taken into account. The effect of the axle pressure is tempered considerably through the use of pneumatic suspensions and twin tyres which spread the weight, and this should be recognized in the maximum permissible weight. The Committee adopted amendments asking for the following maximum lengths: - motor vehicle 12.00 m - trailer 12.00 m - articulated vehicle 16.50 m - road train 18.75 m - articulated bus 18.00 m Finally, the amendment on articulated vehicles with five or six axles was adopted, stating that three-axle motor vehicles with two or three-axle semi-trailer carrying a 40-foot ISO container as a combined transport operation may have a maximum weight of 44 tonnes. The Committee also came to a new definition of a bus: bus shall mean a vehicle with more than nine seats including the driver's seat, and constructed and equipped to carry passengers and their luggage. It may have one or two decks and may also draw a luggage trailer or, as the Committee amended, a vehicle equipped for transporting luggage or other facilities associated with bus transport.