

CALL FOR EVIDENCE FOR AN EVALUATION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT RUN IN PARALLEL

This document aims to inform the public and stakeholders about the Commission's work so they can provide feedback on the intended initiative and participate effectively in consultation activities.

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Commercial vehicles – weights and dimensions (evaluation)
LEAD DG (RESPONSIBLE UNIT)	DG MOVE, Unit C1
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Legislative
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q1-2023
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-modes/road/weights-and-dimensions_en

A. Political context, problem definition and subsidiarity check

Political context

Transport is a key strand of the single market because transport services help ensure the free movement of goods and passengers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated that keeping the single market running smoothly is vital for the EU. In this context, EU rules aim to ensure **fair conditions of competition in the transport industry and eliminate obstacles to traffic between Member States**.

Making Europe climate neutral by 2050 is one of the Commission's top political priorities ([European Green Deal](#)). Greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector represent a quarter of the EU's total emissions. Road transport is responsible for around 72% of transport emissions, with 26% coming from heavy-duty vehicles, such as lorries.

To reduce greenhouse emissions, as set out in the [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#), the Commission will base its future actions on 3 strands:

1. making all transport modes more **sustainable**
2. making **sustainable alternatives** widely available in a multimodal system
3. putting in place the right **incentives** to drive the transition

The current rules on weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles should be in line with the Commission's commitments to reaching the full potential of the single market and significantly reducing greenhouse emissions from transport.

Revising [Council Directive 96/53/EC](#) on the maximum weights and dimensions of heavy-duty vehicles (the 'weights and dimensions directive') is part of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy and its action plan.

Evaluation

The directive sets standards for the maximum weights and dimensions of heavy-duty vehicles used in national and international transport to ensure the free movement of goods. It removes the obstacles to traffic between Member States and improves the conditions of competition, while protecting the infrastructure and ensuring road safety.

The directive was amended in 2015 ([Directive \(EU\) 2015/719](#)) to help make road transport energy efficient, to reduce greenhouse emissions and improve road safety and working conditions for drivers. It also aimed to improve enforcement of the rules to have an impact on internal competition and road infrastructure.

The directive was amended again by [Regulation \(EU\) 2019/1242](#), introducing measures to encourage market take-up of zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles. These are generally heavier than conventional heavy-duty vehicles, mostly due to the weight of the battery.

The evaluation will cover the period of application of the directive and its subsequent amendments (17 September 1997 to 31 December 2021). It will focus on the problems encountered implementing the directive. **It will determine whether the current rules are sufficient to ensure the free movement of goods, reduce greenhouse emissions and mitigate road safety risks.**

<p>The current rules will be evaluated on their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. When looking at efficiency, it will consider costs and benefits, including the impact on businesses and assess any unnecessary burden and complexity. It will also gauge how consistent the directive is with other EU acts and funds addressing intermodal/combined transport and infrastructure standards, particularly the TEN-T network .</p>
<p>Problem the initiative aims to tackle</p> <p>Regardless of the findings of the evaluation and the additional problems it may bring to light, the revision of the weights and dimensions directive should address the problems below.</p> <p>1. Fragmentation of the market for the use of oversized and overweighted vehicles due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the patchwork of national and bilateral/multilateral rules on maximum weights and dimensions (adopted to make road transport more efficient) • different requirements and authorisation systems existing side-by-side. <p>The current EU rules hamper the full potential for using longer combinations of standard vehicles (the ‘European Modular System’) for greening the sector. Other areas of the market are also affected by this fragmentation, such as intermodal transport (transport that uses more than one mode of transport for the same load) and vehicle carriers (whose specific features are not taken into account) leading to additional efficiency losses.</p> <p>2. Insufficient uptake of alternatively fuelled and zero-emission vehicles and aerodynamic rear devices and cabs.</p> <p>This leads to insufficient energy savings and CO₂ reduction in the road transport sector. The fragmentation of the market for heavier and bigger (freight) transport vehicles also creates inefficiencies.</p> <p>The current directive does not offer enough incentives to significantly increase uptake of alternatively fuelled and zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles, especially for long-distance transport, where the lack of technological maturity increases the cost of the available solutions.</p> <p>Several industry groups consider the current allowance for extra weight (including axle weight) and/or dimensions to be insufficient to accommodate zero-emission technologies. In addition, although the rules for rear devices and cabs have only been adopted recently, the industry is not showing much interest in the aerodynamic devices and is very cautious about the new cabs, in terms of both supply and demand.</p> <p>3. Ineffective and inconsistent enforcement of cross-border transport rules for heavy-duty vehicles, due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the patchwork of different national and international rules • the lack of legal certainty (what is/not allowed) • discriminatory control practices. <p>In addition, the directive needs to help meet the climate ambitions of the European Green Deal, enshrined in European Climate Law, while keeping the current level of road safety. The EU should become climate neutral by 2050 and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared with 1990.</p> <p>Given the forecast 50% increase in demand for road freight transport by 2050, as well as its increasing cross-border dimension and growing fuel needs, there is a need for rules that favour the shift to zero-emission transport.</p> <p>These rules will increase energy efficiency and drastically reduce the environmental impact of road transport. The problems mentioned above are likely to worsen over time, making it difficult to achieve the greenhouse gas reduction goals for 2030 and 2050.</p>
<p>Basis for EU action (legal basis and subsidiarity check)</p>
<p>Legal basis</p> <p>Deepening the internal market and improving the efficiency and environmental performance of road transport are essential goals of the EU’s common transport policy.</p> <p>The proposal for amending the weights and dimensions directive will be based on Article 91 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It will respect the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality.</p>
<p>Practical need for EU action</p> <p>EU legislation is necessary to align rules for road transport between Member States. Without EU action, each country will likely continue using the possibilities at their disposal, such as derogations from the EU rules and trial schemes.</p> <p>These allow them to ease the limitations imposed by the current rules, for either economic or environmental</p>

reasons. The impact assessment will analyse how the initiative meets the [subsidiarity](#) principle.

B. Objectives and policy options



This initiative aims to assess whether current rules on weights and dimensions for heavy-duty vehicles are adequate and effective in:

- ensuring smooth functioning of the internal market
- improving the environmental performance of transport operations
- safeguarding road safety for all road users.

Based on the outcome of the evaluation, the initiative will analyse the options to address the identified regulatory and market failures. The key objectives of revising the current rules should be to contribute to:

1. **Greening road transport** by accelerating the uptake of zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles and applying innovative systems and technologies that improve energy efficiency. It will also promote flexibility in the use of different modes for freight, to increase the use of more sustainable modes.
2. **Ensuring the free movement of goods and fair conditions of competition in the internal market for road transport** by removing regulatory and market barriers that can currently lead to efficiency losses, distortion of competition, and risks of discriminatory enforcement practices.
3. **Improving compliance with cross-border traffic** rules by clarifying and simplifying the rules, as well as using digitalisation and communication technologies.
4. **Safeguarding and, where possible, improving road safety** – in particular in the use of heavy-duty vehicles in road transport. Measures considered to increase economic efficiency and environmental performance of heavy-duty vehicles should take into account fully the [road safety objectives of EU transport policy](#).

The evidence gathered through the evaluation and the impact assessment will be needed to properly translate the objectives into concrete policy options. However, these will be built on the basis of the following non-exhaustive list of possible policy measures:

- a) Adapting technical standards to the needs of zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles.
- b)  Creating more incentives to increase the uptake of zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles (e.g. by allowing increased loading capacity).
- c) Adapting the technical standards to the needs of new aerodynamic and energy saving technologies.
- d) Providing more incentives to drive the uptake of new aerodynamic and energy saving technologies (e.g. electric trailers).
- e) Adapting the technical standards to the needs of intermodal transport.
- f) **Taking additional measures to promote intermodal transport (e.g. by allowing increased loading capacity).**
- g) Clarifying rules on the cross-border transport of heavier and bigger vehicles. **It would provide legal certainty recognising this common practice.**
-  h) **Authorising automatically the cross-border transport of heavier/longer vehicles between all neighbouring Member States that allow them.**
- i) **Aligning the maximum weights and dimensions to the most common limits currently allowed:**
 - **extra weight of up to 44 tonnes**, as already allowed in 13 Member States.
 - European Modular Systems of up to 25.25 metres long with/without additional weight in cross-border transport, as authorised in 10 and 9 Member States, respectively
 - **a loaded length of 20.75 metres for vehicle carriers.**
- j) Streamlining the EU rules further to reap the full potential of existing and emerging technological solutions, in particular European Modular Systems. This would allow extra weight up to 60 tonnes and an extra length of 25.25 metres in cross-border transport for zero-emission vehicles or vehicles used in combination with other modes of transport.
- k) Establishing safety requirements for the cross-border transport of oversized and overweighted vehicles.
- l) Using modern information and communication technologies to ensure compliance with national permits

and road access limitations.

- m) Revising the [European Best Practice Guidelines for Abnormal Road Transports](#).

C. Likely impacts

The initiative could help speed up the uptake of zero-emission technologies for long-distance transport and so contribute to reducing the greenhouse emissions from road transport. Based on the preliminary findings of the support study conducted in 2020, **aligning the rules on maximum weights and dimensions could help optimise road transport operations by using fewer vehicles to transport the same amount of cargo**. The potential environmental benefits per tonne transported, linked to this optimisation, could be enhanced by improved aerodynamics and other technological innovations that could reduce energy consumption.

The need for additional maintenance, inspections and new/upgraded infrastructure, such as bridges and tunnels, could increase infrastructure costs. The expected increase in energy and operational efficiency of road transport may have an unwanted impact on other transport modes. However, more possibilities for intermodal, technical and operational compatibility may contribute to improved modal cooperation and shift some freight to modes other than road, in particular for long-distance transport operations.

The potential deployment of the European Modular System could have diverse effects on road safety and congestion, and these should be carefully assessed.

The initiative should guarantee freedom to provide transport services, non-discriminatory access to the market and free movement of goods. The administrative burden should also be reduced for transport service users and providers (as regards commissioning cross-border transport operations) and for national authorities (as regards checking compliance with the rules in force).

D. Better regulation instruments

Impact assessment

An evaluation and an impact assessment will be carried out. The evaluation will assess how the directive has been working to date and might identify further problems.

A support study will be contracted out to help collect evidence and perform the analysis.

Consultation strategy

The Commission will conduct a broad range of consultation activities to collect the necessary views and data for fine-tuning the problem definition, developing policy options and assessing their feasibility and impact.

Stakeholders can already respond to this call for evidence.

A **12-week public consultation will be launched in all official EU languages at the beginning** of 2022. It will be accessible via the Commission's central public consultations page ('Have your say'). Replies can be made in any of the 24 official languages. The factual summary report will be published on the consultation page 8 weeks after the public consultation closes.

The public consultation will be accompanied by targeted consultations of key stakeholders (see target audience below).

The results of the consultations will be summarised in a synopsis report that will be made available on the Commission's website.

These consultation activities may be complemented by discussions in meetings of the Road Transport Committee and of the High Level Group on Road Safety.

Why we are consulting?

To reach the full potential of the single market and to reduce transport greenhouse emissions, it might be necessary to revise of the weights and dimensions directive.

This will help deliver the European Green Deal and will be a crucial element of the implementation of the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy.

This consultation will gather views and evidence about the potential impact (positive and negative) of the possible measures and policy options.

Target audience

The Commission is inviting the general public and stakeholders to express their opinion and share information on the impact of the existing directive as well as on possible additional policy measures for its revision.

This consultation specifically invites first-hand experience from the following groups and individuals:

Heavy-duty vehicle and original equipment manufacturers, developers of zero-emission and energy reduction technologies, transport operators, intermodal terminal managers, shippers, wagon suppliers, heavy-duty vehicle drivers, civil engineering organisations, road infrastructure managers, environmental associations, road safety associations, national competent authorities, road users associations, etc.