

POSITION PAPER

WEIGHTS AND DIMENSIONS

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44-TONNE CROSS-BORDER ROAD TRANSPORT A DRIVER OF EUROPEAN COMPETITIVENESS

For almost two decades the Directive 96/53/EC (“Weights and Dimensions”) has set a 40-tonne standard for international road transport across the EU. While several Member have authorized higher weight limits domestically, vehicles above 40-tonnes remain barred from crossing borders even when both sides permit 44-tonnes nationally. This fragmentation increases costs, raises the number of trips, and undermines the Single Market.

A revision that can strengthen the EU single market

Discussions in the ongoing trilogues on the revision of the Directive indicate that higher cross-border tonnages may be permitted exclusively for zero-emission electric vehicles, to compensate (only partially) the battery weight. The current directive as well as the approach compensating for battery weight generate Single Market inconsistency¹. Free movement of goods, a pillar of the European Union market, requires fluid, consistent and non-discriminatory cross-border operations.

The revised Directive should **explicitly** allow all vehicles to operate cross-border at 44 - tonnes, provided that:

- both Member States concerned authorize at least 44- tonnes on their national territory; and
- infrastructure can accommodate it (including existing national restrictions on specific roads/sections).

Non-discriminatory cross-border operations reduce fragmentation and improve logistics efficiency between two concerned countries, without imposing a model on Member States that don’t allow it domestically.

¹ Adding to the administrative complexity by maintaining different cross-border rules depending on propulsion technology

Same load regardless of propulsion technology

Where a Member State cannot accommodate heavy loads on its network, the 44-tonne operations are not authorized. However, the proposal allows higher cross-border weights for zero-emission vehicles, which already implies that infrastructures can support higher weights in practice. What is more, this means that the Member States have considered the increase of 44-tonne loads on their infrastructure. Therefore, they could also accept 44-tonnes conventional loads.

Identical weight and dimension rules should apply regardless of propulsion technology.
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Harmonization can contribute to decarbonization

The EU already has dedicated specific tools to drive the energy transition (CO₂ standards, Green Deal, Renewable Directive, Sustainable Mobility Package, etc.). The broadening of cross-border 44-tonne operations should not be seen or used as an instrument for decarbonization. However, by improving efficiency, it reduces emissions per transported ton through freight “massification” (fewer trips, less empty mileage, better load factors where appropriate).

While the revision of the Directive should respect its original purpose of “consolidating the internal market” of the EU, the Weights and Dimensions Directive can contribute to the EU’s decarbonization objectives.

Our request to the EU decision makers

We call on the Council and the Parliament to ensure that the revised Directive:

- 1. enables 44-tonne cross-border operations for all vehicles between Member States authorizing 44-tonne operations (or more) on their national territory;**
- 2. maintains national ability to apply - for national as well as international transport - lower limits where required and to enforce restrictions on specific roads/sections.**

This requires amendments to the preamble, the articles and Annex I of the Directive.

Signatories

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LA MOBILITÉ EST EN NOUS

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