

## Press release

Brussels, 12 March 2024



# Rail Sector expresses strong concern over Parliament vote on Weights & Dimensions Directive & calls on Council to correct the proposal

The Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (CER), has expressed strong concern and disappointment with today's vote in the Plenary of the European Parliament on the Weights & Dimensions Directive (WDD). Important and necessary amendments tabled by several Members of Parliament, which would have refocused the proposal on the promotion of Zero-Emission Vehicles while safeguarding the safety of EU citizens and road infrastructure, have regrettably been defeated by a very small majority (300 to 295 votes).

As analysis of the proposal is now in progress in the EU Council, CER calls on the Members States to go deeper into the substance of the proposal to be aware of the danger it poses to the EU's objectives on energy efficiency and reduction of transport emissions, as well as to road safety standards.

Without the necessary changes, the WDD is creating an incentive to promote cross-border circulation of 44-tonne trucks powered by internal combustion engines until 2035. Encouraging fossil-fuel-burning vehicles is contrary to the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the EU's dependence on fossil fuels and imported energy sources.

Additionally, the WDD is creating an incentive for the widespread use of "gigaliners" or "mega-trucks", Longer and/or Heavier Vehicles (LHVs) – also known as European Modular System (EMS) – which are truck and trailer combinations that are nearly 9m longer than standard lorries in Europe. They are as long as six passenger cars and a little shorter than but weighing as much (60 tonnes or more) as a fully loaded Boeing 737-300.

Such vehicles bring with them a whole plethora of [safety concerns](#) and a significant risk to existing infrastructure, which would require extensive adaptation. Furthermore, their introduction will further hamper efforts to promote intermodality and risks causing a reverse modal shift towards road – a transport mode with higher emissions and lower energy efficiency and safety standards than rail.

**The proposal as it stands is not aligned with the EU's main objectives in terms of enhancing its strategic autonomy by moving away from imported energy sources, and fails to provide increased energy efficiency, emission reductions and enhanced road safety standards for all EU citizens.**

### Facts to consider:

- Rail is 9 times more CO<sub>2</sub>-efficient than road transport.

- **Rail is 7 times more energy-efficient** than road transport. This is of critical importance at a time when **Europe is dependent on outside supply for 58% of its energy needs**.
- **One locomotive driver can replace up to 40 lorry drivers** – a significant advantage considering the severe shortage of lorry drivers in Europe.
- **Rail makes use of the low carbon energy** produced within the EU, and with an increasing contribution from renewables and other sources of low-emission electricity, providing zero-emission mobility for passengers and freight already today.
- The **European rail industry is a benchmark worldwide** and strengthens the EU's competitiveness and strategic autonomy on technology.

**CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola** said: *"Unfortunately today's vote in the Plenary of the European Parliament on the WDD has not set this proposal on the right track, despite the best attempts of a significant number of MEPs who fully understood the potential negative impact. If the proposed legislation is not amended by the Council, it will create a situation where the extra weight and size of trucks can be used for additional payload rather than for the deployment of batteries, and this for at least the next 10 years. The extension of the use of "gigaliners" to cross-border traffic will further open the long-distance market to road operators, jeopardizing both this important rail market segment and the EU's decarbonisation goals while increasing risks on road"*.

The CER position on Weights & Dimensions can be downloaded from the CER website [here](#).

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### **About CER**

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together around 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 73% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policymakers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit [www.cer.be](http://www.cer.be) or follow us on Twitter [@CER\\_railways](#) or [LinkedIn](#).