

Rail Sector expresses dismay with outcome of vote on Weights & Dimensions Directive

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) has expressed dismay with today's vote in the TRAN Committee of the European Parliament on the revision of the road vehicle Weights & Dimensions Directive (WDD), in particular its uncoupling from the ongoing revision of the Combined Transport Directive. CER and numerous organisations in the sector have repeatedly explained that increasing the size and weight of vehicles will hinder intermodal operations, deliver a far inferior performance in terms of energy efficiency and emissions, and induce reverse modal shift from rail to road.

The WDD is creating a real and underestimated risk of a modal shift from rail to road. While the circulation of goods is expected to grow gradually over the coming decades, the WDD creates an immediate incentive for bigger and heavier road vehicles on cross-border operations, which will give an increased competitive advantage to road. While rail has been operating in line with the EU's standards for emissions for decades (drawing from the EU's energy grids and participating in the cost of the very much needed energy transition), this is not the case for other modes of transport, which will only be gradually subject to the same standards from 2030 onward.

A [recent study](#) by the research institute D-fine, commissioned by UIRR, CER, ERFA, UIP and UIC, has shown clearly that the road sector would increase efficiency and competitiveness by capturing market share from the much more efficient and less emitting mode of rail. The result will be an overall increase in emissions per tonne of transported goods, which is contrary to the very purpose of the WDD and goes against the EU's objectives of decarbonising transport.

CER also regrets that the incentive for cross-border operation of "44-tonne" combustion vehicles has remained unchanged. No restrictions were included targeting a solution for zero-emission vehicles or introducing a shorter deadline for the phase-out of the use of internal combustion-powered vehicles, as was the intention of the Rapporteur backed by some shadow MEPs.

Regarding vehicles running the European Modular System (EMS) combination, some steps in the right direction have however been taken through the introduction of new safeguards to be taken into account before deploying these extra heavy and long vehicles in cross-border operations.

Finally, the incorrect idea that 'bigger and heavier' containers running on intermodal operations would be of added value, regrettably remains in the text. CER underlines that creating an incentive for the use of 48-foot containers in intermodal transport will effectively hinder intramodality by excluding the possibility of using the railway, due to the excessive and incompatible size, and possibly weight, of the containers.

Facts to consider:

- **Rail is 9 times more CO₂-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 TRAN Committee on the WDD opens the door to increasing the weight and size of trucks Europe wide to the benefit of extra payload rather than 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 de facto further open the long-distance market to road operators, jeopardising this important rail market segment and the EU's decarbonisation goals".*

CER's full position on the Weights & Dimensions Directive 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 or follow us on Twitter [@CER_railways](#) or [LinkedIn](#).