

**COMMUNICATION**

**to the European Parliament and the Council**

**from the EU Committee of the Bundesrat**

**of 7 May 2013 under Article 23f(4) of the Federal Constitution (B-VG)**

**COM (2013) 195 final**

**Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 95/53/EC of 25 July 1996 laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic**

The Commission's proposal for a new Directive would allow the authorisation of a new generation of lorries that may be up to 60 tonnes in weight and up to 25 m in length.

In its proposal, the Commission also points primarily to the potential fuel savings that would result from the installation of streamlined flaps at the back of the vehicle, leading to a reduction in fuel consumption of 5-10%. Any reduction in fuel consumption is worth supporting, and so we support the construction to increase the aerodynamics of the vehicle referred to in the proposal. However, these measures could be equally well applied to conventional lorries. With regard to the reduction in consumption for gicaliners, any saving should also be viewed in the context of necessary road reconstruction measures. In this context, the saving in fuel consumption is disproportionate, being clearly out of proportion to the infrastructure costs. Austria's road network is not designed for vehicles weighing 60 tonnes and of more than 25 metres in length. Tunnels, roads, guard rails, bridges, emergency lay-bys, motorway parking facilities, filling stations, crossroads, curvatures are not suitable for gicaliners. It would be very expensive to adapt the roads, and differences in landscape mean the cost impact would vary from Member State to Member State. The cost of modernising the road network alone is estimated at EUR 5.4 billion. The European Commission also justifies the proposal by pointing to an opportunity to improve road safety by a reduction in the driver's blind spots. In our view, longer overtaking lanes mean that road safety will actually worsen.

The Commission argues that Member States are free to choose whether or not to authorise such gicaliners on the roads. Pilot tests of gicaliners are currently underway on roads in Sweden, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark. However, if a Member State does not permit gicaliners because it decides against them, there would be a significant risk of competitive disadvantages and the distortion of the internal market, as the cost of transporting goods by gicaliner is lower than by conventional lorry. The option for Member States to oppose the authorisation of gicaliners is thus not enough.

For the reasons above, we reject the proposed introduction of gicaliners in international traffic.