



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 23.10.2013  
C(2013) 7011 final

Dear President,

*The Commission thanks the Nationalrat for its Opinion concerning the proposal to amend Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorized dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorized weights in international traffic{COM(2013) 195 final}.*

*The main objectives of the proposed amendment are to increase the energy efficiency, decrease greenhouse gas emissions and improve the safety of transport by road of people and goods. This can be achieved by removing some limitations imposed by Directive 96/53/EC, which currently do not allow equipping vehicles falling within the scope of this Directive with new fuel-saving technologies (e.g. aerodynamic devices on the back of trailers, rounded cabins and hybrid drive trains) without compromising loading capacity and consequently the efficiency of road transport. A further important objective of the proposed amendment is the establishment of a level playing field inside the Single Market which is currently distorted by unwarranted abuses related to overweight transport operations. This puts hauliers who comply with the rules at a competitive disadvantage in relation to those who do not.*

*In this respect it is important to note that the existing maximum weight (40 tonnes) and dimension (18,75 metres) for EU wide transport operations will be maintained. The proposed increases and dimensions would be granted as exemptions to conventional lorries and buses for the sole purpose of installing fuel-saving technologies.*

*With regard to vehicles or vehicle combinations exceeding the maximum dimensions set out by Directive 96/53/EEC, the proposed amendment clarifies the current Article 4 of this Directive. While the Commission considers this should always have been interpreted as allowing longer trucks to cross a single border between adjacent Member States which both allow longer trucks internally, its interpretation has been disputed. The clarification makes clear that where (and only where) two adjacent Member States both allow the use of longer trucks internally, then such vehicles can cross the border between them, provided they comply with the conditions in both Member States concerned. It should be noted however that, to prevent significant distortion of competition, only a single inter-state border may be crossed. Further, the provision leaves unchanged a Member State's discretion as to whether*

Ms Barbara Prammer  
President of the Nationalrat  
Dr. Karl Renner-Ring  
A-1017 Wien

*or not to allow such longer vehicles internally: this is a political decision for individual Member States, allowing them to take account of their particular circumstances.*

*Austrian carriers driving in Austria do so on equal terms with carriers from other Member States. Similarly, Austrian carriers driving in a Member State, or between two Member States, where vehicles or vehicle combinations exceeding the usual dimensions are allowed to circulate, would be authorised to transport an additional unit, and thus also to take advantage of the increased vehicle dimensions (this is why the derogations in the Directive related only to modular longer trucks). Therefore, there should be no cause of concern about a competitive disadvantage based on the type of trucks.*

*With regard to road safety, the current shape of lorry cabins hinders drivers from properly detecting pedestrians and cyclists due to blind angles. By allowing additional length of lorries to create rounded cabins, the field of vision will be improved and drivers will be in a better position to avoid accidents. Should accidents nevertheless happen, in low impact collisions vulnerable users will be deflected by rounded fronts thus reducing the risk of over-runs. These improvements are expected to save 300-500 lives per year.*

*Reports on the trials of longer vehicles in Denmark and the Netherlands, and heavier vehicles in France (44 tonnes), point to fewer kilometres driven, reduced emissions, no detrimental impact on road safety and no detrimental impact on infrastructure wear and tear.*

*The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns raised by the Nationalrat and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.*

*Yours faithfully,*

*Maroš Šefčovič  
Vice-President*