



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

##### Fifty-fifth session

Geneva, 6–7 November 2012

Item 10 of the provisional agenda

##### Weights and dimensions of loading units in intermodal transport

### New developments with “mega-trucks” on European roads

#### Note by the secretariat

#### I. Mandate

1. As requested by the Working Party, a detailed discussion may be held at the current session on weights and dimensions of loading units in intermodal transport, including the modular concept as stipulated in European Council Directive 96/53/EC applicable in the territory of the European Union (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/129, para. 62). Below, the secretariat presents a brief update of the latest developments in this field that may be complemented by information provided by participants at the session.

2. More detailed information on this subject has been provided at previous sessions of the Working Party in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/8, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2010/5 and ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2011/6.

#### II. New developments

##### A. France

3. As of 2013, France plans to allow a maximum gross weight of 44 tonnes for lorries with at least five axles for national transport. As of today, 44 tonnes is permissible in France for agricultural vehicles or lorries and lorry combinations operating in combined transport (terminal hauls) only.

## **B. Germany**

4. On 1 January 2012, Germany started trials with mega-trucks up to a maximum length of 20.25 m and a maximum weight of 40 tonnes (44 tonnes in combined transport). Operation of these vehicles is confined to designated German motorways and secondary roads as well as to selected parking and rest areas in seven out of 16 German States (Länder). Road vehicles with tractor units of a maximum length of 17.80 are allowed to use all roads in the above participating German States. In principle, passage of rail level crossings is not allowed for such vehicles.

5. According to the relevant German administrative instruction from 19 December 2011, drivers of such lorries or lorry combinations must have a driving licence for at least five years and must provide proof of at least five years of experience in commercial road transport. Overtaking other road vehicles, with the exception of very slow vehicles of not more than 25 km/hours, is prohibited.

6. Participating lorries and lorry combinations must technically be able for use in combined transport. In addition, they must be equipped with a number of technical control and safety features, such as air suspension, automatic axle weight control, lane departure warning and electronic distance control systems. Furthermore, a rear view camera system is required.

7. Participating road vehicles are not allowed to carry liquid and dangerous goods. However, during trials it is planned to allow a limited amount of dangerous goods, as long as this will not require affixing an orange plate on the vehicle.

8. The trials are planned to last five years and will be scientifically followed and monitored by the German Federal Highway Research Institute (BASt), which also carries out safety tests on possible side impacts and on the passage of tunnels.

9. As of 13 June 2012, nine German companies with 15 lorries have been registered to take part in these trials.

## **C. Sweden**

10. Since January 2012, a 32 m long mega-truck has been tested in regular traffic between Göteborg and Malmö as part of the Swedish "DUO2 project", which has been undertaken by industry groups, public authorities and universities. The road vehicle consists of a three-axle tractor and a three-axle semi-trailer of 13.6 m coupled to a five-axle trailer of 13.6 m. This 11-axle unit may weigh up to 60 tonnes, but has an individual axle pressure of no more than 9 tonnes.

11. In 2012, further tests with heavy goods vehicles of up to 90 tonnes of gross weight are planned to be undertaken in Sweden.

## **D. European Union**

12. European Council Directive 96/53/EC of 25 July 1996 lays down the maximum authorized dimensions in national and international traffic on the territory of the European Union. This Directive will be reviewed in order to allow for better energy efficiency of heavy goods road vehicles by providing for possibilities to improve the aerodynamics of lorries and lorry combinations and to allow the installation of environmentally friendly engines without necessarily increasing the loading space of such road vehicles.

13. For this purpose, an open consultation process was initiated by the European Commission, which was closed at the end of February 2012.

14. In accordance with the above European Directive, 25.25 m long trucks are permissible at the national level, if countries so decide. Whether the Directive will allow international traffic of such lorries or lorry combination between EU countries that do allow such long vehicles in national traffic is currently under discussion within the relevant European Union organs.

Figure

**Possible tractor/semi-trailer/trailer combination with an overall length of 25.25 m**

