



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

### Inland Transport Committee

#### Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics

##### Fifty-third session

Geneva, 4–5 October 2010

Item 9 of the provisional agenda

##### **Weight and dimensions of loading units in intermodal transport: The modular concept**

### **New developments with mega-trucks on European roads**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

#### **I. Mandate**

1. The UNECE Working Party on Intermodal Transport and Logistics (WP.24), at its fiftieth session in October 2008, requested the secretariat to continue monitoring developments, positions and research results on weights and dimensions of loading units in intermodal transport and to inform the Working Party accordingly (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/121, para. 43).

#### **II. Background**

2. At its previous sessions in 2007 and 2008, the Working Party had considered the impact of “mega-trucks” with a maximum length of 25.5 m and weights of up to 60 tonnes on the European road network and on intermodal transport (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/115, paras. 36–38, ECE/TRANS/WP.24/117, paras. 38–46; ECE/TRANS/WP.24/119, paras. 22–24 and ECE/TRANS/WP.24/121, paras 41–43).

3. In August 2008, the secretariat had issued a summary of the discussions held on this subject by the Working Party that included also the latest developments within the European Union (EU) within the framework of EC Directive 96/53/EC and in Norway (ECE/TRANS/WP.24/2008/8).

4. The present document complements this secretariat note and reports on the latest developments in this field, mainly within EU countries.

### **III. New developments**

5. Since August 2008, the following new developments with mega-trucks on European roads have been noted by the secretariat:

#### **A. Austria**

6. In Austria, the Government as well as the Chamber of Commerce were quoted as viewing the use of mega-trucks with a weight of 60 tonnes very critical. Such road vehicles would increase the risk of road traffic accidents and required considerable additional investments in appropriate road infrastructure, including reinforced safety fences, emergency rest points and tunnels.

#### **B. Denmark**

7. Since 24 November 2008, Denmark allows mega-trucks on selected motorways. Road vehicles of up to 60 tonnes are allowed to participate in this trial that is planned to last for three years. There is no obligation to register such vehicles and there are no specific restrictions on the number of participating vehicles. In September 2009, around 100 vehicles participated in the trial that has been extended to thirty-six destinations within Denmark. Roundabouts and crossroads have been altered in advance to accommodate these vehicles. The Danish road transport association (DTL) is expecting up to one thousand participating vehicles.

#### **C. Germany**

8. In October 2007, the Conference of German State Ministers of Transport recommended not to undertake further trials with “mega-trucks” in Germany (by a vote of 10 to 6). Nevertheless, trials continued in some German Federal States. While, trials in Lower Saxony have been terminated, the German States of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein will continue such trials until the end of 2010 and 31 January 2013 respectively.

9. On 1 July 2010, the German Federal Transport Ministry announced plans to undertake trials with mega trucks as of 2011. No specific criteria would be imposed for participation in these trials nor limits on the number of vehicles involved.

#### **D. Netherlands**

10. Trials with truck-trailer combinations with a length of 25.25 m and total weights up to 60 tonnes have been carried out for several years in the Netherlands. Since November 2007, trucks up to a length of 25.25 m are allowed to use the Dutch road network as part of a so-called “experience phase”, but with a maximum gross weight of 50 tonnes only. Following first experiences and the results of a scientific study that concluded that no damage and, in particular, no additional wear and tear is to be expected from the use of such trucks on road transport infrastructures, including bridges, the permissible gross vehicle weight was increased to 60 tonnes as of May 2008.

11. In early 2010 around four hundred such truck-trailers were in use on Dutch roads.

**E. Norway**

12. Since 1 June 2008, Norway allows the use of lorries with a length of up to 25.25m and 60 tonnes on a trial basis on a number of main roads. In principle, these trials are planned to last for three years, but could be shorter, with a view to determining the economic, ecological and safety impact of such road transport operations in Norway.

**F. Sweden**

13. The use of mega-trailers in Sweden includes trucks of a total weight of 90 tonnes and a total length of 30 meters. Trials with these vehicles on designated roads are scheduled to last three years.

**G. Switzerland**

14. In Switzerland, parliamentary initiatives have been prepared, submitted or approved in all cantons along the north-south axis. These initiatives ask the federal Council of Switzerland to take a stand against the admission of 60 tonnes trucks.

**H. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

15. On 15 July 2010, the Minister of State for Transport was quoted to say that mega-trucks would damage rail freight's competitiveness and would be unsuitable for use on roads in the United Kingdom.

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