

Road Transport

The need for higher capacity and longer trucks

The issue

Freight transport in Europe has increased by 36% over the last 15 years. It is expected to increase by another 40% by 2020. More European countries will become transit countries and road transport bottlenecks will increase in Member States such as Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. Concerns about increasing congestion, CO₂ emissions, road safety and noise are also on the increase.

The EU has implemented a regulation⁽¹⁾ that limits the maximum length for trucks in the EU and EEA to 18.75m. Finland and Sweden are exceptions where trucks are permitted to be up to 25.25m long and weigh up to 60 tonnes. The use of longer trucks and the innovative systems such as the European Modular System (EMS) have been common practice for years in Sweden and Finland and have been tested successfully in other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands. Maximum gross weight limits for trucks and trailers in Member States range from 40-60 tonnes and most countries allow 44 tonnes for intermodal container transport.

Impacts on the industry

The paper industry transports around 250 million tonnes of raw materials and finished products across Europe each year. Trade within the internal market has developed dramatically along with exports outside the EU as production levels have increased over the last 10 years.

As with many industry sectors, road is the main mode of transport for European distribution and this will continue to be the case as long as alternative modes of transport (e.g. rail) offer low cost-efficiency, low quality of service and a fragmented network. Equally, alternative networks are highly unlikely to have the capacity to absorb forecast freight transport increases. External logistics costs average 10% of turnover for the sector and further cost increases are anticipated in the coming years due to stricter minimum safety standards and factors such as road-pricing, Eurovignette and fuel taxation.

The EMS allows flexible combinations of vehicles to be utilized according to the local infrastructure up to a 25.25m in length. Short length and low weight limits create additional costs and hinder the smooth transport of goods throughout the EU. This constitutes an obstacle to the smooth functioning and completion of the Single Market.

CEPI's position

Road transport legislation should support the European Modular System for the following reasons:

- It offers a cost-effective, safe and environmentally friendly solution for European shippers and boosts competitiveness. (This includes reduction of CO₂ emissions by around 15% at EU level⁽²⁾).
- It is excellent in terms of transport efficiency, cutting international trips by up to 30%⁽³⁾. It also offers other advantages in the form of intermodal benefits, as it is built on ISO standard 20 and 40 feet containers.
- It does not require major investment in equipment and can be introduced quickly.

It will give stability to future EU demands on vehicle weight and dimensions.

Legislation should encourage increased weight limits with a minimum of 44 tonnes in all countries to help boost the competitiveness of the European pulp and paper industry. Such a move would also bolster the prospect for achieving the ambitious Lisbon objectives and will go toward meeting overall sustainability targets.

Additional information

- In March 2006, CEPI released a position paper entitled "Road transportation: the need for higher capacity and longer trucks". Additional information can be obtained on request
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(1) COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 96/53/EC of 25 July 1996 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

(2) Swedish Transport Research Institute - TFK: Improved performance of European long haulage transport - 2002

(3) Swedish Transport Research Institute - TFK: Improved performance of European long haulage transport - 2002

