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The EU Directive on the Weights & Dimensions of Road Vehicles jeopardises the greening of transport

It will lead to more trucks, more CO₂ & higher energy use, reduced safety and all this at the expense of the EU taxpayer

(Paris, 5 March 2024) While it is intended to green transport by allowing more weight & space for batteries, it in fact endangers Europe's Green Deal objectives, as it only optimises road transport while ignoring the enormous impact this will have on the transport sector in general.

"While we fully support the electrification of road transport, particularly when it focuses on short-distance truck transport, we strongly oppose increased weights & size for non-electrical trucks being allowed, as well as cross-border flows not just for these trucks but also for Giga liners" says Dr Sigrid Nikutta, CEO of DB Cargo and Chair of Rail Freight Forward.

According to Sabrina De Filippis, CEO of Mercitalia Logistics, *"The result will be a big loss for the European public and the overall environment, due to the negative impact it will have on the transport system in terms of road safety and infrastructure maintenance, as well as engendering an increase of up to 6.6 million tons in CO₂ emissions. Additionally, the rail sector will suffer a loss of approximately 21% in door-to-door rail freight transport."*

The CEO of ÖBB Rail Cargo Group, Clemens Först has given statistics, showing that instead of this resulting in fewer trucks on EU roads, 10.5 million more truck journeys are to be expected. Moreover, with truck loads increasing by 10%, a 46% hike in road damage is forecasted, for which the taxpayer will bear the burden.

Frédéric Delorme, CEO of Rail Logistics Europe and Fret SNCF, also highlighted that, *"It is impossible to understand why the road sector, consuming 7 times more energy than rail, even if fully electrified, is being favoured over rail or other green and less energy-consuming alternatives, given the scarcity of green*

electricity within the EU.”

“Greening the transport sector by simply introducing heavier trucks and Giga liners is counterproductive. However, with a holistic view of the transport sector, a win-win is still possible,” says Dirk Stahl, CEO of BLS Cargo and President of ERFA.

Therefore, the Weights and Dimensions, and Combined Transport Directive need to be revised in tandem, and the amended Weights and Dimensions Directive needs to:

- Ensure that the weights and dimensions of electric trucks are compatible with combined transport and allow additional weight exclusively for electric trucks.
- Consider all modes of transport when assessing the Directives’ impact, not just optimising road haulage.

If not, the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy goals, to “increase rail freight by 50% by 2030 and double this by 2050”, will be out of reach. *“Ultimately, this is not a business decision but a political one with profound implications for society and the taxpayer. It is about finding the best solution for the entire transport sector, not simply the roads,”* concludes Dr Nikutta.

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