

Road transport

Debate opens on ginaliners

By Isabelle Smets | Monday 15 April 2013

Transport & Environment (T&E), the European association campaigning for greener transport, has welcomed the European Commission's proposals amending legislation on the maximum weight and dimensions of trucks, published on 15 April (see *Europolitics*[4625](#)). The proposals soften the current rules (Directive 96/53 EC) in order to allow for more aerodynamic vehicles, which will reduce fuel consumption, cut emissions of greenhouse gases and enhance the safety of other road users. They allow for trucks to carry additional weight in order to accommodate the use of the heavier batteries required by alternative propulsion systems (hybrid, electric). They also provide for more flexibility regarding the dimensions of the driver's cabin, allowing for rounder cabins, which are more aerodynamic and less dangerous in case of a collision, and safer for cyclists and motorcyclists since they improve drivers' sideways field of vision.

According to the Commission, these measures will save around €5,000 per year in fuel costs for a typical long-distance truck covering 100,000 kms. In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, this represents a reduction of 7% to 10% (or 7.8 tonnes of CO₂ for the same truck covering the same distance). The EU executive believes these measures will also save between 300 and 500 lives a year.

T&E is therefore celebrating "a small step towards freight transport fit for the 21st century". However, it is less welcoming of new rules on ginaliners. As expected, the debate on the proposals is honing in on the fact that they allow trucks that exceed current limits on weight and dimensions to cross borders, and to circulate between two member states that authorise their use on their own territory. This concerns ginaliners of 25 metres and 60 tonnes, which are already on the road in certain member states, but also, and much more generally, all trucks that may not reach these dimensions but still exceed the current limits for international transport. According to T&E, "the Commission has opened the door to cross-border use of megatrucks in Europe without appropriate guarantees either for citizen safety or environmental protection".

This point of view is shared by the rail sector. UNIFE, representing the railway industry, and the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER), say that these measures will have a domino effect and lead to the general use of giant trucks in Europe. They are particularly concerned by the fact that the Commission has put forward these proposals "without an impact assessment on the implications" of the measures. "Studies undertaken for the rail sector have shown that the wider use of megatrucks will undermine the viability of rail freight in many areas, in particular single wagonload freight."