

# Procedure file

Basic information		
SYN - Cooperation procedure (historic)	<a href="#">1993/0486(SYN)</a>	Procedure completed
Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification Amended by <a href="#">2000/0060(COD)</a> Amended by <a href="#">2013/0105(COD)</a> Amended by <a href="#">2018/0130(COD)</a>		
Subject 3.20.05 Road transport: passengers and freight 3.40.03 Motor industry, cycle and motorcycle, commercial and agricultural vehicles		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	<b>TRAN</b> Transport and Tourism	ELDR <a href="#">WIJSENBEEK Florus A.</a>	26/07/1994
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Budget	<a href="#">1945</a>	23/07/1996
	<a href="#">Transport, Telecommunications and Energy</a>	<a href="#">1893</a>	08/12/1995
	<a href="#">Transport, Telecommunications and Energy</a>	<a href="#">1870</a>	28/09/1995

Key events			
15/12/1993	Legislative proposal published	COM(1993)0679	Summary
23/02/1994	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
10/10/1994	Vote in committee		Summary
10/10/1994	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	<a href="#">A4-0015/1994</a>	
14/11/1994	Debate in Parliament		
15/11/1994	Decision by Parliament	T4-0104/1994	Summary
26/06/1995	Modified legislative proposal published	COM(1995)0193	Summary
08/12/1995	Council position published	<a href="#">11101/3/1995</a>	Summary
18/01/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 2nd reading		
22/02/1996	Vote in committee, 2nd reading		Summary

22/02/1996	Committee recommendation tabled for plenary, 2nd reading	<a href="#">A4-0044/1996</a>	
14/03/1996	Debate in Parliament		Summary
14/03/1996	Decision by Parliament, 2nd reading	T4-0121/1996	Summary
14/05/1996	Modified legislative proposal published	COM(1996)0208	Summary
23/07/1996	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		
23/07/1996	End of procedure in Parliament		
17/09/1996	Final act published in Official Journal		

### Technical information

Procedure reference	1993/0486(SYN)
Procedure type	SYN - Cooperation procedure (historic)
Procedure subtype	Codification
	Amended by <a href="#">2000/0060(COD)</a> Amended by <a href="#">2013/0105(COD)</a> Amended by <a href="#">2018/0130(COD)</a>
Legal basis	EC before Amsterdam E 075
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	TRAN/4/07381

### Documentation gateway

Legislative proposal	<a href="#">COM(1993)0679</a> <a href="#">OJ C 038 08.02.1994, p. 0003</a>	15/12/1993	EC	Summary
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	<a href="#">CES0755/1994</a> <a href="#">OJ C 295 22.10.1994, p. 0072</a>	01/06/1994	ESC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	<a href="#">A4-0015/1994</a> <a href="#">OJ C 323 21.11.1994, p. 0005</a>	10/10/1994	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading	T4-0104/1994 <a href="#">OJ C 341 05.12.1994, p. 0021-0039</a>	15/11/1994	EP	Summary
Modified legislative proposal	<a href="#">COM(1995)0193</a> <a href="#">OJ C 247 23.09.1995, p. 0007</a>	26/06/1995	EC	Summary
Council position	<a href="#">11101/3/1995</a> <a href="#">OJ C 356 30.12.1995, p. 0013</a>	08/12/1995	CSL	Summary
Commission communication on Council's position	SEC(1996)0037	11/01/1996	EC	Summary
Committee recommendation tabled for plenary, 2nd reading	<a href="#">A4-0044/1996</a> <a href="#">OJ C 078 18.03.1996, p. 0003</a>	22/02/1996	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, 2nd reading	T4-0121/1996 <a href="#">OJ C 096 01.04.1996, p. 0221-0233</a>	14/03/1996	EP	Summary
Modified legislative proposal	<a href="#">COM(1996)0208</a>	14/05/1996	EC	Summary
Follow-up document	SWD(2023)0070	24/03/2023	EC	

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

With a view to making it easier for road haulage operators to undertake cabotage operations, this proposal for a directive sought to extend Council Directive 85/3/EEC on the maximum vehicle weights and dimensions authorised in international traffic to national traffic, by means of changes which would as far as possible mean that most of the national standards currently in force, which varied considerably from one Member State to another, could be met. Directive No 85/3/EEC would be coded and recast as a single text. In concrete terms, the proposal eliminated national differences by applying the definitions of the ISO standards to measure vehicle length, width and overall height. It also made it impossible for a Member State to ban the vehicles of non-resident carriers. It prohibited vehicles from exceeding the overall weights and dimensions set out in the directive (some of those in the proposal were greater than those in Directive 85/3/EEC: maximum width of non-refrigerated vehicles up from 2.5 to 2.55 m; total laden weight of all combined vehicles with environmentally friendly suspension up from 40 to 44 tonnes). But exemptions would be possible if no major implications for international competition were anticipated. A transitional period was envisaged, allowing vehicles currently in service but not meeting the proposed standards to remain in service up to 2001.?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

\$summary.text

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report of Mr. Florus WIJSENBEEK (NL, Lib.) on the weights, dimensions and technical characteristics of road vehicles. A great number of amendments carried will change the Commission's proposal on this very technical but essential issue, which has been discussed in Parliament for a long time. With the introduction of cabotage; hauliers from all Member States can provide services within their own Member States and across internal borders. But if the existing considerable variations in maximum permissible dimensions and weights were to persist, distortions in competition could arise. There is, as yet, no uniform weight either in international and national transport. The UK and Ireland still have a maximum permissible weight of 36.2 tonnes and 38 tonnes for five axles. But the UK allows 40 or 44 tonnes for combined transport. On the other hand, The Netherlands and Denmark have higher maximum weights for domestic transport of 50 and 48 tonnes respectively. In addition, Sweden and Finland have considerably greater sizes and weights, because of their geography. The maximum permissible length and width laid down in Directive 85/3/EEC must be rationalized and adjusted to take account of technological developments. The maximum load length of 18.35m should be increased to at least 18.75m for ergonomic and environmental reasons alone. But rapporteur WIJSENBEEK takes the view that maximum dimensions and weights are actually outmoded concepts which stand in the way of technological progress. Traffic safety, the best possible environmental policy and the maintenance of infrastructure should remain the principal criteria. The maximum width, the turning circle and the axle pressure would thus be the only factors to be taken into account. The effect of the axle pressure is tempered considerably through the use of pneumatic suspensions and twin tyres which spread the weight, and this should be recognized in the maximum permissible weight. The Committee adopted amendments asking for the following maximum lengths: - motor vehicle 12.00 m - trailer 12.00 m - articulated vehicle 16.50 m - road train 18.75 m - articulated bus 18.00 m Finally, the amendment on articulated vehicles with five or six axles was adopted, stating that three-axle motor vehicles with two or three-axle semi-trailer carrying a 40-foot ISO container as a combined transport operation may have a maximum weight of 44 tonnes. The Committee also came to a new definition of a bus: bus shall mean a vehicle with more than nine seats including the driver's seat, and constructed and equipped to carry passengers and their luggage. It may have one or two decks and may also draw a luggage trailer or, as the Committee amended, a vehicle equipped for transporting luggage or other facilities associated with bus transport. ?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The European Parliament approved the Commission proposal subject to sixteen amendments. Briefly, the purpose of the amendments adopted is to: - include recitals on promoting combined transport and avoiding empty runs; - draw attention to the distortion of competition in international transport which could be followed by derogations within the Member States to the maximum vehicle dimensions. The Commission accepted this amendment; - replace the term "thick-walled refrigerated vehicle" by "conditioned vehicle" and the minimum thickness of 45 millimetres by an average thickness of 45 millimetres. The Commission accepted this amendment; - call on the Commission to conduct a study, within two years, of the consequences of the directive on countries which may join the Union. The Commission accepted this amendment; - specify that the trailers towed by buses are specifically designed to carry luggage or other facilities associated with bus transport, - increase the maximum length of the road train in point 1.1 of annex I from 18.35m to 18.75m. The Commission accepted this amendment; - replace "movable superstructures and standardised cargo items such as containers" by "movable transport equipment such as containers, mobile boxes and standardised cargo items" as elements included in the dimensions stipulated in annex I, - increase the maximum distance from the loading zone from 16m to 16.40m. The Commission accepted this amendment; - delete the specific provision of the maximum weight for vehicles with a semi-trailer with three axles where the value axle is fitted with twin tyres and pneumatic suspensions or suspensions recognised as equivalent at Community level.?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The Commission incorporated 5 of the 16 amendments adopted by the European Parliament at first reading and therefore amended its proposal by: - adding a new recital expressing concern for the environment and road safety; - simplifying and extending the definition of an insulated vehicle; - authorizing a longer maximum length for road trains, but only so that simpler couplings can be used.

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The common position of the Council incorporates the five amendments adopted by the European Parliament at its first reading and accepted by the Commission in its amended proposal. These amendments concern: - a restatement of environmental and road safety concerns; - a change of definition of what constitutes a 'conditioned vehicle'; - a longer maximum length of 18.75 m for road trains, but only to permit simpler coupling mechanisms. It must be noted that the common position adopted in the Council has a more limited scope than the initial proposal: harmonization of the maximum length and width of all freight vehicle combinations, and only international harmonization of the height of freight vehicles. In addition, the Council introduced the following substantive changes to the Commission proposal: - the possibility for Member States to require that conditioned vehicles be accompanied by a document or ATP certification plate as evidence of the vehicle's quality of insulation; - to allow for particular situations in certain regions or industrial sectors, a Member State may permit vehicles used for goods transport to deviate from the dimensions laid down in the directive where such transport does not significantly affect international competition in the transport sector; - Member States which have to adapt their road infrastructure in order to be able to permit the modular concept may prohibit until 31 December 2003 at the latest the circulation in its territory, in national goods transport operations, of vehicles which exceed current national standards on dimensions provided that national legislation continues to apply to all Community carriers in a non-discriminatory manner; - vehicles used for goods transport and registered before the implementation of this directive may continue to be used nationally until 31 December 2006; - buses and coaches are exempt from all aspects of national harmonization, thus double deck buses and 15 m coaches can continue as at present. The maximum width of passenger vehicles on international journeys will be increased to 2.55 m, but from 1 January 1999. ?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The Commission approved the common position. However, parts of the Commission proposal still in abeyance would be discussed at a later date.?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The Committee adopted the draft recommendation for second reading (rapporteur: Mr Florus WIJSENBEEK (NL, ELD)) on the Council's common position with a view to the adoption of a Council Directive laying down the maximum authorized dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorized weights in international traffic for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community. First reading in Parliament was on 15 November 1995. More specifically, the common position: - increases the maximum authorized length of a road train from 18.35 to 18.75; - increases the maximum authorized width of vehicles other than conditioned vehicles from 2.5 to 2.55 meter; - extends to domestic freight transport the rules governing the dimensions laid down of or international transport, excluding the maximum height (4m); - grants up a derogation as regards maximum widths for buses exceeding 2.5 m in width up to 31 December 1999; - fixes at 40 tonnes the maximum authorized weight in international transport. The rapporteur also saw his amendment carried emphasizing the need for pneumatic suspension to prevent excessive road damage, maximum axle loads and vehicles to be capable of turning through 360°. ?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

In adopting the report by Mr Florus WIJSENBEEK (ELDR, NL), the European Parliament approved the common position of the Council on the weights and dimensions of trucks whilst maintaining two amendments concerning: - the need to incorporate certain additional elements in the directive (pneumatic suspension to prevent excessive road damage, maximum axle loads, and vehicles to be capable of turning through 360 degrees); - and the possibility of granting exemptions up to 31 December 2006. Before the end of the transitional period, the Commission shall present a report on any possible exemptions after 31 December 2006 and, if necessary, put forward proposals?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The rapporteur, Mr WIJSENBEEK (ELDR, NL), welcomed the fact that the Council had adopted two of Parliament's suggestions for an increase in the loading width and length of international road haulage vehicles. However, he was critical of the fact that 45-foot containers were no longer to be allowed on the roads. Moreover, he called on the Council and the Commission to follow up their proposal regarding maximum laden weight, in line with Parliament's proposals on this matter, and on the question of turning radius and pneumatic suspension. Finally, he emphasised that the introduction of the measures in question would improve road transport conditions in the EU and provide greater legal security for the companies concerned. Commissioner Fischler thought the proposal acceptable, especially in view of the fact that very few amendments had been proposed. However, the Commission could not accept Amendment No 2, as this would mean that vehicles exceeding the maximum weight would again be allowed to take to the roads after 2006. Mr Fischler was of the view that there was no need to extend the adaptation period, which was already long enough. Nor could Amendment No 3 be accepted, because maximum vehicle length was laid down by international convention.

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

The Commission's amended proposal does not incorporate the European Parliament's amendments seeking to obtain additional derogations in that it considers that granting derogations beyond 2006 would compromise the objective of harmonization and put manufacturers who had adjusted their production lines in order to comply with the directive at a disadvantage. However, it does incorporate the European Parliament's amendment seeking to introduce a number of additional elements in the directive with regard to licensing and using vehicles (pneumatic suspension to prevent excessive road damage, maximum axle loads and vehicles to be capable of turning through 360 degrees).?

## Road vehicles: maximum weights and dimensions (repeal. Directive 83/3/EEC). Codification

---

**OBJECTIVE:** the removal at Community level of obstacles to traffic between Member States which result from differences between standards with regard to the weights and dimensions of commercial road vehicles.

**COMMUNITY MEASURE :** Council Directive 96/53/EC 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.

**SUBSTANCE :** more specifically, the Directive:

- consolidates Directive 85/3/EEC on the weights, dimensions and certain other technical characteristics of certain road vehicles, amended on many occasions, and Directive 86/364/EEC relating to proof of compliance of vehicles with Directive 85/3/EEC;
- increases the maximum authorized length of a road train from 18.35 to 18.75 m, thus increasing from 16 to 16.4 m the maximum distance;
- increases the maximum authorized width of vehicles other than conditioned vehicles from 2.5 to 2.55 m;
- extends to domestic freight transport the rules governing the dimensions laid down for international transport, excluding the maximum authorized height (4 m) which thus remains solely applicable to international transport;
- authorizes Member States to prohibit the use in their territory, during a transitional period expiring on 31 December 1999, of buses exceeding a maximum width of 2.50 m;
- enlarges the current definition of 'thick-walled refrigerated vehicle', such a vehicle now being defined as a 'conditioned vehicle'.

To take account of situations peculiar to certain regions or industrial sectors, Member States may allow vehicles used for goods transport to circulate in their territory with dimensions deviating from those laid down by the Directive where such transport operations do not significantly affect international competition. The Directive exhaustively defines such transport operations.

**DATE OF ENTRY INTO FORCE:** 17 September 1996

**DEADLINE FOR TRANSPOSITION INTO NATIONAL LEGISLATION:** 17 September 1997.