
Survey finds that citizens favour combined transport over bigger and heavier trucks

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The Community of European Railway & Infrastructure Companies (CER), alongside fellow associations ERFA, UIRR, UIP and UNIFE, echo the findings of a recent survey, which reveals that the majority of European citizens consulted are unaware of the serious impact of introducing 'gigaliners' or 'mega trucks' on the road network.

Respondents were unaware that these mega trucks bring with them a whole plethora of safety concerns and pose a significant risk to existing infrastructure. A vast majority consider the promotion of road-rail combined transport as preferable to reduce road congestion and ensure higher safety standards.

A survey (available [here](#)) conducted in 9 Member States (FR, DE, BE, AT, IT, PL, HU, ES and RO) between the 18th and 23th of April and involving 8,037 online interviews has revealed that 'mega trucks' (vehicle combinations of the European Modular system) were largely unknown to the majority of respondents (14% recognised the issue, 34% had a vague knowledge and 52% admitted were not aware).

After receiving information on the characteristics of these vehicles, a majority considered the use of mega trucks to be negative, expressing concerns on the impact on road infrastructure, congestion, road safety and noise. Close to 85% recognised the safety risks that 'mega trucks' can pose to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists, and the impact on public budgets.

75% of the participants believe that the introduction of mega trucks could reduce transport of freight by rail and, in member states where the transport of freight by rail is more established (including combined transport operations), 6 out of 10 citizens believed that those countries should not allow the circulation of mega trucks.

94% of the participants considered it important (for half it was considered very important) to promote combined transport as an alternative solution to the introduction of mega trucks, as this would greatly reduce congestion and safety risks.

These clear concerns are reflected in the very split vote which took place on the Weights & Dimensions Directive in the European Parliament's Plenary on the 12th of March. The cross-border circulation of mega trucks which may be introduced under

the EU Weights and Dimensions Directive is extremely contentious and fails to consider the wider social and economic impacts. It also undermines the EU's ambition to decarbonise the transport sector, working against the intention to promote electrification of road transport and at the same time leading to a modal shift from rail to road, which contradicts the EU's proclaimed goals.

The Weights and Dimensions proposal as it stands is not aligned with the EU's main objectives in terms of enhancing its strategic autonomy by moving away from imported energy sources, and fails to provide increased energy efficiency, emission reductions and enhanced road safety standards for all EU citizens.

Facts to consider:

- Rail is 9 times more CO₂-efficient than road transport.
- Rail is 7 times more energy-efficient than road transport. This is of critical importance at a time when Europe is dependent on outside supply for 58% of its energy needs.
- One locomotive driver can replace up to 40 lorry drivers– a significant advantage considering the severe shortage of lorry drivers in Europe.
- Rail makes use of the low-carbon energy produced within the EU, and with an increasing contribution from renewables and other sources of low-emission electricity, providing zero emission mobility for passengers and freight already today.
- The European Rail Industry is a benchmark worldwide and strengthens the EU's competitiveness and strategic autonomy on technology.

CER Executive Director Alberto Mazzola said: “The findings of this survey show clearly that when informed on the effects of ‘mega trucks’ on EU roads, European citizens are concerned about the consequences on both their safety and environment. These citizens support safer, more efficient solutions like Combined Transport, which can contribute to the reduction of road congestion. This same concern is evident in the European Parliament’s split position when voting on the Weights & Dimensions proposal. We hope this survey will also resonate with Member States and National Authorities, who are on the verge of defining a common position on this issue. We urge Member States to avoid creating incentives that can hamper modal shift to rail, by allowing cross-border circulation of mega trucks.”

The CER position on Weights & Dimensions can be downloaded from the CER website [here](#).

ERFA Secretary General Conor Feighan said: “This survey highlights that there is a convergence between the concerns expressed by a large majority of EU citizens against longer and heavier trucks on EU roads and the opinion of the rail freight sector

expressed against the revision of the Weights & Dimensions Directive as it stands today. Member States must acknowledge this reality and adopt consistent transport policies favouring the greenest and most energy efficient modes.”

UIRR President Ralf-Charley Schultze said: “Besides the Commission proposal to proliferate EMS trucks working against rail freight and modal shift, as well as against public sentiment, it is also worth mentioning the ‘salami tactic’ encoded into the Weights and Dimensions proposal, whereby bilateral Member State agreements would be sufficient to allow for the cross-border circulation of these longer and heavier trucks. This „mechanism”, if left unchanged, would completely go against harmonisation in Europe and create a constant state of uncertainty and threat that no EU Member State should allow to happen.”

UIP Secretary General Gilles Peterhans said “As studies have shown, opening the door to the cross-border traffic of longer and heavier trucks entails negative impacts with regards to road safety, infrastructure, and the general sustainability of European logistics. Adopting this new legal framework without major amendments would go directly against what the EU has stood for since 1992 and the first White Paper on Transport! This new survey shows that the European people understand what is at stake. We call on national governments to make the right decision, common sense must prevail.”

UNIFE acting Director General Klaus Mindel said: “The results of this survey show when this issue is made clear to European citizens, they are worried about the potential consequences of the revised Weights and Dimensions Directive. Based on environmental – but also safety, congestion and infrastructure impact reasons – a strong majority of Europeans are in favor of a modal shift to rail for freight transport. The European legal framework should reflect this call.”

(CER)