



Joint Statement: Weights and Dimensions Directive

Brussels, 4 December 2025: When it presented the *Greening Freight Transport Package* in summer 2023, the European Commission promised “*more economic gains with less environmental impact.*” With today’s adoption by the Council of a general approach on the weights and dimensions of commercial road vehicles, the road transport sector can expect economic gains – but society will have to wait for any reduction of the environmental footprint of logistics.

European associations representing rail and intermodal freight transport wish to highlight **the damaging impact that the proposal may have by consciously widening the competitiveness gap that has disadvantaged rail freight for far too long.**

We recall that the weights and dimensions proposal was meant to go hand in hand with the revision of the Combined Transport Directive. Achieving a positive and ambitious result in that revision was – and remains – essential to ensure that all land transport modes become more efficient, contribute to more sustainable European logistics, and support the EU in meeting its *Clean Industrial Deal* targets by incentivising rail and intermodal freight transport solutions. In that respect, the intention of the Commission (2026 work programme) to withdraw the proposed revision of the Combined Transport Directive – part of the same *Greening Freight Transport Package* – is a negative signal and should be kept in mind when assessing the weights and dimensions proposal.

In a market highly sensitive to cost, any facilitation of the cross-border operation of European Modular Systems (EMS) trucks will make rail and intermodal transport less attractive. This runs counter to **the EU’s stated objectives: strengthening the internal market, balancing the freight sector by promoting high-capacity modes such as rail**, increasing energy efficiency and reducing emissions together with road accidents and congestion. Reinforcing the economic attractiveness of end-to-end heavy goods transport by trucks will further accelerate the degradation of the road infrastructure resulting in more road works and more works-related congestion.

Moreover, **allowing the cross-border circulation of longer and heavier trucks risks undermining efforts to build interoperable multimodal supply chains** based on a robust combined transport ecosystem, since a significant number of intermodal terminals and freight wagons will not be able to accommodate EMS vehicles.

As the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament prepare for interinstitutional negotiations, the European associations representing rail and intermodal transport urge EU legislators not to lose sight of the broader, long-term vision of a logistics ecosystem that is interoperable and capable of delivering on shared transport, energy, climate, environmental, and social objectives.

This vision can still be achieved by:

- Ensuring that the incentives contained in the Weights and Dimensions Directive apply only to zero-emission vehicles and vehicles involved in intermodal transport;
- Safeguarding technical and operational compatibility between the various transport modes;
- Requiring Member States to conduct prior public assessments of the potential impacts of EMS on road safety, road infrastructure, modal cooperation, environmental performance, and modal split.

Any outcome falling short of these parameters will trigger an undesirable reverse modal shift from rail to road – as shown in the 2024 “Study on Weights and Dimensions” conducted by d-fine on behalf of CER, ERFA, UIC, UIP and UIRR – increasing transports external costs and harmful emissions, while reducing road safety, increasing congestion and raising road infrastructure maintenance expenditures.



The signatories

CER – The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (www.cer.be)

Founded in Brussels in 1988, the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together close to 70 railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. CER's role is to represent the interests of its members on the EU policy-making scene, in particular to support an improved business and regulatory environment for European railway operators and railway infrastructure companies.

ERFA – European Rail Freight Association (www.erfarail.eu)

ERFA is the European Association representing private and independent rail freight companies. ERFA members share a commitment to work towards a non-discriminatory, competitive and innovative Single European Railway area by promoting attractive, fair and transparent market conditions for all rail freight enterprises.

UIP – International Union of Wagon Keepers (www.uiprail.org)

UIP is the European umbrella association of national associations from fourteen European countries representing wagon keepers, ECMs and more than 255 000 freight wagons, performing 50% of the rail freight tkm throughout Europe. By means of research, advocacy and focused cooperation with all stakeholders and organisations interested in rail freight transport, UIP wants to secure on the long term the future of rail freight transport.

UIRR – The voice of Europe's intermodal freight transport (www.uirr.com)

UIRR brings together 113 leading Intermodal Transport Operators, Transshipment Terminal Managers, Technology Partners and National Associations to steer the EU policy agenda towards a competitive zero-carbon intermodal transport freight sector for Europe. UIRR also advocates for stronger standards, increased interoperability and harmonised digital, operational, and technical processes.

UNIFE - The European Rail Supply Industry Association (www.unife.org)

UNIFE, the European Rail Supply Industry Association represents European train builders and rail equipment suppliers. The association advocates for more than 115 of Europe's leading rail supply companies – from SMEs to major industrial champions – active in designing, manufacturing, maintaining and refurbishing rail transport systems (trains, metros, trams, freight wagons), subsystems and related equipment. UNIFE also brings together national rail industry associations from 12 European countries.