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INFORMATION MEMOWeights and dimensions of commercial vehicles

The Commission has submitted to the Council a final proposed directive on the weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles and on further technical requirements applicable to these vehicles.

At present the regulations in the Member States on the maximum weights and dimensions of commercial vehicles differ widely in some respects. This has led to distortion of competition, since the cost of producing motor vehicles is determined partly by weight and dimensions. Furthermore, differences between regulations in the individual countries limit trade in commercial vehicles and consequently affect output in the same way as restrictions on imports and exports.

The proposed directive, amended in accordance with Article 149(2) of the Treaty and taking into account the opinions given by the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Council, provides for the following changes:

From January 1, 1965 the Member States will permit only those commercial vehicles that comply with special rules to operate between their national territories. Vehicle trains, for example, shall not be longer than 18m. This length is rendered necessary by trends in the transport of light materials and agricultural products under the provisions at present in force in Community countries.

The maximum single axle weight is to be 13 metric tons. This provision, however, shall take effect only at the end of a long transition period (January 1, 1965 - December 31, 1973), in order to give certain Member States time to adjust their infrastructures accordingly. In view of the relation between the single axle load and the other weights, the latter have also been altered.

During the transition period the maximum axle load to be applied will be that laid down in the original proposal. However - particularly in view of the fact that new roads will be built and others extended - it seems necessary, during this period, to gradually designate certain routes on which the definitive maximum axle weight is permitted. It is also laid down that each Member State whose regulations allow greater maximum weights than those in force during the transition period shall permit motor vehicles coming from the other Member States and conforming to its national rules regarding weights to circulate on its territory until December 31, 1973.

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A maximum weight of 9 metric tons has been adopted for the pressure exerted by the wheels of one axle of a twin axle, in connection with the attempt to minimize the disequilibrium in the total load-sharing between two axles which might arise from swaying caused by unevenness in the road. This makes it necessary to reduce the imbalance between the loads on each axle of a twin axle measured statically.

Likewise, the minimum ratio between the effective total weight of the towing vehicle and that of the trailer has been changed from 1:1.3 to 1:1.37, in order to allow for a towing vehicle of 16 tons and trailer of 22 tons, since this is a very widespread combination in some countries.

The date has also been fixed for extension of the Community directive to commercial vehicles operating within Member States. It has, however, been fixed late enough to allow the extension to take place without causing inconvenience, viz. at January 1, 1974.

The amendments have made certain alterations necessary in the arrangement of the directive, mainly regarding the order of the articles and implementation provisions.

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