



Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre
Road Safety Authority

Implementation of Directive (EU) 2015/719 concerning vehicle weights and dimensions in Ireland

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Contents

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Changes to Weight & Dimensional Limits	4
2.1 Increase to the permitted laden weight of two axle buses from 18 to 19.5 tonne.	4
2.2 An increase in weight limit for vehicles using alternative fuels technologies.	4
2.3 Increase in the weight limit relating to intermodal transport operations.	5
2.4 Increase in the length of vehicles involved in intermodal transport operations	6
2.5 Increase to the maximum authorised length of certain vehicles.....	7
2.6 Shipper statements of weight.....	7
3.0 Summary of Principal Changes to Weight Limits	8
4.0 Further Information	9

1.0 Introduction

This document provides an overview of the technical and legal measures introduced to the *Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) Regulations, SI 5 of 2003* in order for National legislation to comply with Directive (EU) 2015/719 of The European Parliament and of The Council of April 29th 2015 (“2015 Directive”). The 2015 Directive amends Council Directive 96/53/EC which sets out the maximum authorised weights for certain vehicle types circulating internationally and maximum authorised dimensions for both national and international traffic within the European Union. Regulations giving effect to the implementation of the Directive in Ireland have been signed into law by the Minister for Transport and the Statutory Instrument can be found on www.irishstatutebook.ie and are now effective.

The new Directive has brought about changes in a number of key areas relating to the transport sector in Ireland including;

- Promoting both environmental and safety changes in the national fleet and permitting an increase of both length and weight of certain vehicle types. For example, the maximum permitted laden weight for two axle buses has been increased by 1.5 tonnes, whilst the maximum permitted length of certain articulated vehicle combinations has been increased by 15cm when carrying containers or swap bodies.
- Providing more scope for manufacturers of certain vehicle types to develop more aerodynamic and safer vehicles (without loss to load space), by allowing some increases in the maximum authorised length of certain vehicles to facilitate this.
- Bringing about significant changes in the area of Alternatively Fuelled Vehicles (AFV’s). Specifically, the Directive aims to help industry who use such vehicles by increasing the maximum authorised weight by up to one tonne for certain vehicles in International Traffic which use alternative fuel technologies¹. This is so that any extra weight of the powertrain (when compared to a conventional powertrain) does not result in a reduced payload.
- Bringing in a number of changes in the area of intermodal transport operations with respect to weights and dimensions.

¹ As set out in article 2 of the new Directive 2015/719: “Electricity consumed in all types of electric vehicles, hydrogen, natural gas, including biomethane, in gaseous form (Compressed Natural Gas – CNG) and liquefied form (Liquefied Natural Gas – LNG), Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), mechanical energy from on-board storage/on-board sources, including waste heat”

- Implementing requirements whereby shippers with goods loaded in containers and swap bodies must provide haulers with a “shippers statement”, that the weight of the cargo and transport unit added to the weight of the truck and chassis will not exceed legal weight limits on roads.

The Road Safety Authority (RSA) has prepared this information note as a practical guide for industry and other interested parties to explain the changes brought about by the new Directive and the impact of these changes on day to day operations within the transport sector. Further detail is set out below.

2.0 Changes to Weight & Dimensional Limits

2.1 Increase to the permitted laden weight of two axle buses from 18 to 19.5 tonne.

The maximum permitted authorised weight laden of two-axle buses has been increased by 1.5 tonnes. The weight increase is to facilitate the rise in the weight of both luggage and loads carried on buses. The increase also compensates for any alternative fuel technologies as well as technical features required to meet type approval standards such as emission standards. The increase of 1.5 tonnes to the maximum gross weight of two axle-buses will apply to both new vehicles and those currently in service. Vehicles that are already in service (which were originally designed with a capacity of 19.5 tonnes or greater) may operate at the increased weight subject to the fitment of an amended authorisation plate. Operators of a vehicle which qualifies for the increase in weight should contact an NSAI Authorised Plating Centre to get their vehicles re-plated.

2.2 An increase in weight limit for vehicles using alternative fuels technologies.

The Directive facilitates an increase in the weight laden limit of 1 tonne for certain vehicles using alternative fuel technologies. Vehicles affected include;

- 2 and 3 axle heavy goods vehicles
- 3 axle buses

Examples of vehicles using alternative fuel technologies include hydrogen-fuelled hybrid electric buses and Liquefied Natural Gas powered heavy goods vehicles. An example of an alternatively fuelled vehicle is a compressed natural gas (CNG) vehicle as shown in figure 1.0 below.



Figure 1 – Example of CNG powered bus

The additional weight that is due to the alternative fuel technology of certain vehicles will be assessed as part of the type approval process with the resulting type approval documentation specifying the additional weight. The additional weight will be included in the maximum gross weight of a motor vehicle displayed on the manufacturer’s plate or authorisation plate.

2.3 Increase in the weight limit relating to intermodal transport operations.

The Directive stipulates the maximum authorised weight limit relating to the following vehicle combinations carrying in intermodal transport operations, one or more containers or swap bodies, up to a total maximum length of 45 feet (13.716 metres):

- two axle motor vehicle + three axle trailer articulated vehicle combinations (2+3),
- three axle motor vehicle + two axle trailer articulated vehicle combinations (3+2),
- three axle motor vehicle + three axle trailer articulated vehicle combinations (3+3)

The Road Traffic (Construction and Use) Regulations up until now did not clearly distinguish the maximum authorised weight limits for intermodal transport operations. The Road Traffic (Construction and Use) Regulations 2003 has now been amended to reflect the weight limits set out in table 1 for intermodal transport operations:




Vehicle Category	Maximum Authorised Weight
<p>2+3 articulated vehicle combinations in intermodal transport operations</p> 	42 tonne
<p>3+2 articulated vehicle combinations in intermodal transport operations</p> 	44 tonne
<p>3+3 articulated vehicle combinations in intermodal transport operations</p> 	44 tonne

Table 1 - Weight limits for intermodal transport operations

The changes are primarily of benefit to operators of 2 axle tractor units in combination with 3 axle trailers in intermodal operations, who will avail of a 2 tonne increase in their permitted weight. Operators of 3+2 combinations will continue to operate at 44 tonnes. Operators of 3+3 combinations will also be subject to a maximum authorised weight of 44 tonnes. Operators of 2+3 articulated combinations, which are not engaged in intermodal transport operations, will continue to operate at a maximum weight laden of 40 tonnes.

2.4 Increase in the length of vehicles involved in intermodal transport operations

The Directive provides for an increase in the length of vehicles and vehicle combinations carrying containers or swap bodies up to 45' (loaded or unloaded) as part of an intermodal transport operation. The maximum permitted length of articulated vehicles has therefore been increased by 15cm when

carrying containers / swap bodies, for all of the different vehicle combinations listed in section 2.3 above.



2.5 Increase to the maximum authorised length of certain vehicles.

The Directive facilitates an increase to the maximum authorised length of certain vehicles² for the fitment of aerodynamic devices and for the improvement of cab design. Aerodynamic devices are fitted to increase the energy efficiency of the vehicle by installing retractable and foldable devices at the rear. Within the current provisions of the Directive 96/53/EC, such an improvement is not possible without reducing the vehicle’s load capacity. Enabling vehicles to have new cab profiles would contribute to improving road safety by reducing blind spots in the driver’s vision. Longer cab profiles also incorporate energy absorption structures in the event of a collision. This can only come into effect after appropriate amendments to the technical requirements for type approval of aerodynamic devices exceeding 500mm in length are developed by the EU. The RSA will advise further on this in due course.

2.6 Shipper statements of weight

Shippers must now give a statement of weight to the haulier who is transporting their container or swap body. The aim of this new requirement is to help address the concern that a container or swap body arriving by ship, for example, may be heavier than lorries can carry legally for the onward journey. This will ensure that hauliers are now fully aware of the weight they are carrying and so assist such hauliers / drivers from being penalised if they are stopped by the enforcement bodies and the vehicle is found to be overloaded due to the weight of the container or swap body being heavier than expected.

² This applies to “motor vehicles [of the relevant types] in categories M2 and M3 and their trailers in category O and motor vehicles in categories N2 and N3 and their trailers in categories O3 and O4, as defined in Annex II to the Whole Vehicle Type Approval Directive.

In instances where the vehicle is found to be overloaded, the shipper could be found to be liable if they have not provided the statement of weight or if the declared weight is incorrect.

3.0 Summary of Principal Changes to Weight Limits

The following tabulates the principal changes to Irish maximum weight limits for international and national traffic.

Table 2 – Summary of weight limit changes

Maximum weights permitted (Kg)						
	Vehicle Type	Total no. of axles	Irish maximum weight limit for national traffic before amendments	Directive 96/53/EC limits for international traffic (before amendments)	Amendments to Directive 96/53/EC (for international traffic) by (EU) 2015/719	Amendments to Irish maximum weight limit for national traffic
Bus	Rigid Bus	2	18,000	18,000	19,500	19,500
	Rigid Bus	3	26,000	26,000	26,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)	26,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)
	Articulated Bus	3	26,000	28,000	28,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)	28,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)
Rigid Motor Vehicles	Rigid motor vehicle	2	18,000	18,000	18,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)	18,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)
	Rigid motor vehicle	3	26,000	26,000	26,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)	26,000 (+ a maximum of an additional 1,000Kg where vehicle is approved with an alternative fuel powertrain)
Articulated Vehicle Combinations	Articulated Vehicle	5	40,000 (2+3 (44,000 ³ 3+2 combinations)	40,000 (44,000 ³ 3+2 combinations)	(42,000 ³ 2+3 combinations)	N/A (increase only applies to intermodal transport operations)

³Operation at over 40000kg in respect of 2+3 combinations and 42000Kg in respect of 3+2 combinations is restricted to Intermodal Transport Operations.

4.0 Further Information

1. *When do these new regulations come into force?*

These regulations took effect from 14th July 2017.

2. *Where can I get copies of the Regulations?*

These are available to view and download from the RSA website at www.rsa.ie or from the office of the Attorney General at www.irishstatutebook.ie.

3. *Where can I get a copy of the revised RSA weights and dimensions leaflet?*

Copies of the revised RSA weights and dimensions leaflet are available for download from www.rsa.ie.

4. *What is meant by the terms ‘Design Gross Vehicle Weight’ (DGVW), ‘National Weight Limits’, ‘already in service’, ‘intermodal transport operations’ and ‘alternatively fuelled vehicles’?*

‘Design Gross Vehicle Weight’ (DGVW) means the gross weight of a vehicle laden with the heaviest load which it can carry in accordance with the manufacturer’s specifications.

‘National Weight Limits’ means predefined maximum permitted weights and dimensions for use on roads in Ireland. Such limits have been put in place to protect Ireland’s road and bridge infrastructure.

‘Already in service’ in the context of this information note means a two axle bus that was registered with the Revenue Commissioners before 14th July 2017.

‘Intermodal transport operations’ – In summary “intermodal transport operation” means transport operations engaged in the transport of one or more containers of swap bodies, where the following conditions are met:

- (a) the total maximum length of the vehicle is no more than 45 feet;
- (b) the initial or final leg of the journey uses the road;
- (c) another leg of the journey uses rail or waterborne transport;
- (d) no goods are added to or removed from the loading unit between the time when the journey begins and when it ends; and
- (e) the length of the initial or the final road leg does not exceed 150 km in Great Britain, except where necessary to reach the nearest suitable transport terminal.”

5. What is meant by 'alternative fuels' and 'alternatively fuelled vehicle'?

'**alternative fuels**' means fuels or power sources which serve, at least partly, as a substitute for fossil oil sources in the energy supply to transport and which have the potential to contribute to its decarbonisation and enhance the environmental performance of the transport sector, consisting of:

- (a) electricity consumed in all types of electric vehicles;
- (b) hydrogen;
- (c) natural gas, including biomethane, in gaseous form (Compressed Natural Gas – CNG) and liquefied form (Liquefied Natural Gas – LNG);
- (d) Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG);
- (e) mechanical energy from on-board storage/on-board sources, including waste heat;

'**alternatively fuelled vehicle**' means a motor vehicle powered wholly or in part by an alternative fuel and which has been approved under the framework of Directive 2007/46/EC.

6. What types of vehicles need to be fitted with an authorisation plate (i.e. a national weights and dimensions plate)?

Goods vehicles (and their trailers) which have a design gross vehicle weight (DGVW) exceeding 3,500 kilograms and passenger vehicles with passenger accommodation for more than eight passengers must be fitted with an authorisation plate (i.e. a national weights and dimensions plate) in the absence of an equivalent manufacturer's plate. These plates are fitted by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) appointed plating centres. They must also be displayed at all times when the vehicle is used in a public place.

7. What is the penalty for operating a vehicle in a public place without an authorisation plate fitted where required?

Using a vehicle in a public place without an authorisation plate fitted or if it has been modified such that the information displayed on the authorisation plate is inaccurate is a penalty point offence since 8th Dec 2014. Court prosecutions should not take place unless a fixed charge notice has been issued and subsequently not paid. On conviction up to 5 penalty points and a fine not exceeding €2,500 may be imposed.

8. Do I need to re-plate my two axle bus in order to operate at 19.5 tonnes?

Yes. To have your vehicle re-plated you should contact a National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) appointed plating centre.

9. I have a two axle tractor unit which is used in combination with a three axle semi-trailer for intermodal transport operations as well as other work which does not qualify as intermodal transport operations. What information should be displayed on my authorisation plate for Gross Combination Weight?

Two-axle motor vehicles (i.e. two axle tractor unit) with three axle semi-trailers carrying, in intermodal transport operations, one or more containers or swap bodies, up to a total maximum length of 45ft can operate at 42 tonnes (42,000Kg). However two-axle motor vehicles with three axle semi-trailers used for purposes outside of intermodal transport operations can only operate to 40 tonnes. Therefore where a tractor unit is used for both intermodal and non-intermodal transport operations there should be two weights displayed on the authorisation plate i.e. 40 and 42 tonnes (40,000Kg and 42,000Kg). An example is shown below.



10. Where can I find an NSAI Authorised Plating Centre?

A list of authorised vehicle plating centres can be obtained from the NSAI website (www.nsaie.ie) or by contacting them directly on 01 807 3800.

11. What is meant by a shipper's statement?

A shipper's statement is a statement that the shipper must now give to the haulier to whom it entrusts the transport of a container or swap body indicating the weight of the container or swap body transported. The haulier must make this statement (as well as all other relevant documentation provided by the shipper) available to enforcement personnel upon request.

12. Is there a penalty for breach of national vehicle weight limits?

The penalties for breach of the prescribed national weight limits are outlined in detail [here](#).

13. Where can I find more information if I need it?

- If you have further queries in relation to the new regulations please contact the RSA on 096 25014 or email vehiclestandards@rsa.ie.
- For a list of authorised vehicle plating centres, please visit the NSAI website www.nsaie.ie or contact them directly on 01 807 3800.
- Contact details for the main Irish HGV Distributors who will be able to assist with technical enquiries related to vehicle design capacities etc. are available [here](#).
- Queries regarding updating data contained on a Vehicle's Registration Certificate (VRC) should be directed to the Driver & Vehicle Computer Services Division (DVCS) on +353 61 365000 or Lo-Call 1890 411 412.
- Contact details of each Local Authority Motor Tax in the country are available at <http://www.environ.ie/en/LocalGovernment/MotorTax/>



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