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AK Position Paper

AK position on the admission of gigaliners

About us

The Federal Chamber of Labour is by law representing the interests of about 3.2 million employees and consumers in Austria. It acts for the interests of its members in fields of social-, educational-, economical-, and consumer issues both on the national and on the EU-level in Brussels. Furthermore the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour is a part of the Austrian social partnership.

The AK EUROPA office in Brussels was established in 1991 to bring forward the interests of all its members directly vis-à-vis the European Institutions.

Organisation and Tasks of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour

The Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour is the umbrella organisation of the nine regional Chambers of Labour in Austria, which have together the statutory mandate to represent the interests of their members.

The Chambers of Labour provide their members a broad range of services, including for instance advice on matters of labour law, consumer rights, social insurance and educational matters.

Herbert Tumpel
President

More than three quarters of the 2 million member-consultations carried out each year concern labour-, social insurance- and insolvency law. Furthermore the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour makes use of its vested right to state its opinion in the legislation process of the European Union and in Austria in order to shape the interests of the employees and consumers towards the legislator.

All Austrian employees are subject to compulsory membership. The member fee is determined by law and is amounting to 0.5% of the members' gross wages or salaries (up to the social security payroll tax cap maximum). 560.000 - amongst others unemployed, persons on maternity (paternity) leave, community- and military service - of the 3.2 million members are exempt from subscription payment, but are entitled to all services provided by the Austrian Federal Chambers of Labor.

Werner Muhm
Director

The AK position

The Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK), which represents the legal interests of workers and consumers in Austria and has more than 3.2 million members, took part in the DGTREN survey in May 2008 in order to draw up a study on the introduction of longer and heavier vehicles (LHVs) in international transport. In connection with this, the AK filled in an online questionnaire that was aimed at "stakeholders". In response particularly to the questions "How do you rate this questionnaire in view of the aims of the study?" and "Would you like to make further comments or other suggestions?", the AK expressed the following opinion, which also formed the basis for the AK's assessment of a study presentation by the EU Commission at the beginning of July and which it continues to adhere to:

The AK notes the following in response to the question "How do you rate this questionnaire in view of the aims of the study?":

"The questionnaire is one-sidedly for the introduction of LHVs: The main points of contact are already presumed to be in the loading and freight transport industry as the questionnaire often asks e.g.

- for the „effects on your business“

- for the efficiency of transport/ transport modes without setting parameters that allow for a uniform interpretation of efficiency or
- for cost, emission and energy savings even though LHVs are used up to now in a very limited area of Europe and the stakeholders cannot have any empirically established figures at their disposal.

In this respect, we should scarcely expect objective facts and information, which are supposed to „enhance the search for literature“ and „support the current study“ as information sources (this is the intention according to explanatory notes on the questionnaire) to in fact emanate from the stakeholders mentioned. The questionnaire's underlying trend in actual fact proceeds on the assumption that an amendment will be made to Directive 96/53/EEC with regard to dimensions and weights and that LHVs measuring up to 25 m in length and with a laden weight of 60 t will be introduced. For this, it then asks e.g. what additional equipment is needed, what training drivers need, what infrastructure is required, or what emissions savings can be expected. There is no substantiated analysis of the pros and cons to introducing LHVs."

The AK criticises the lack of a substantiated analysis of the pros and cons to introducing giganliners.

The introduction of gigaliners would be mainly disadvantageous from a transport, social and overall economic viewpoint. The AK therefore declares itself against permitting LHVs for international transport.

The AK notes the following in response to the question “Would you like to make further comments or other suggestions?”:

“The AK feels that the questionnaire to hand does not constitute a suitable means for objectively examining the pros and cons of the Europe-wide admission of LHVs in a transport policy, social policy and overall economic environment. It is aimed first and foremost at stakeholders from industry and the loading and freight transport industry, and therefore already tends to presume the introduction of LHVs up to 60 t.

The AK has weighed up the pros and cons that have already been examined in several international and national studies and has come to the conclusion that the effects of an increase in the dimensions and weights currently stipulated in Directive 96/53/EEC are mainly disadvantageous from a transport, social and overall economic viewpoint. The AK therefore declares itself against permitting LHVs of up to 25 m in length and up to 60 t in weight for international transport.

The AK therefore supports the position of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, which advocates retaining the existing maximum dimensions (18.75 m) and weights (40 t) for HGVs.

The AK sees the following as disadvantages:

- Higher strains on and costs for the road infrastructure (in particular for bridges, tunnels, resting places, junctions and roundabouts, guide rails and dividers)
- Greater risk to road safety (in particular when overtaking, braking, turning, crossing, keeping minimum distances; greater damage due to greater mass)
- Higher strains on and costs for the rail infrastructure (in particular for transshipment and loading terminals, truck on train, tunnels)
- Higher noxious emissions and noise pollution and higher energy consumption (savings in these areas can only be achieved if capacity is over 80%; however, the capacity of the current fleet of heavy goods vehicles is below 66%)
- Shifting transport from environmentally friendly transport carriers – rail and waterways – to the road
- Pressure on the labour market (if two planned LHVs are to replace three conventional HGVs and a reduction in the number of journeys does in fact occur, HGV drivers will lose their jobs)”

As mentioned at the beginning, these points of criticism voiced in the questionnaire also apply to the study presentation made by the European Commission on 10 July 2008 on the admission of longer and heavier vehicles (gigaliners).



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