European Cyclists' Federation

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Summary: European Cyclists’ Federation; Gigaliners/Megatrucks and Road Safety for Cyclists
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Within the European Union, Directive 96/53/EC regulates the permissible dimensions and weights for lorries and trucks in international traffic. Currently the maximum length of lorries for crossborder use in the EU is limited to 16.5 metres for articulated vehicles and 18.75 metres for combination lorries, and weighing up to 40 tonnes. The European Commission has committed itself to updating this Directive. There is pressure from the Road Haulage industry to increase the length of the lorries up to 25.25 metres and weighing up to 60 tonnes. If this were to be the case and if these lorries were allowed to mix with urban traffic, the ECF would have grave misgivings about the effects that this would have on road safety, particularly for cyclists and other vulnerable road users, for the following reasons:

- **Blind Spots** - A UK TRL report claims that when cornering, most of the LHVs assessed would suffer some additional blind spots. These would be similar for the B-double...rigid/A- dolly/semi ... and the C-train...configurations. For each of these, the rigid vehicle or front trailer would prevent vision of the area in front of the rear trailer.

In other words this would make LHV’s less safe and would increase the number and size of blind spots. It would be a reasonable assumption to conclude that with a decrease in the ability of the driver to see into the most dangerous areas around the lorry, there would be an increase in fatalities and serious injuries to cyclists and indeed other road users.

- **Manoeuvrability and Handling** - A Commission sponsored report produced by Transport & Mobility Leuven claims that the additional 6.5 m length of LHVs type 1 to 4 (see previous diagram on different trailer types) can lead to a decrease of manoeuvrability and thus potentially increases the accident risk.

A German Federal Highway Research Institute report states that:

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text](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=31996L0053&model=quick
text)
5. Auswirkungen von neuen Fahrzeugkonzepten auf die Infrastruktur des Bundesfernstraßennetzes Schlussbericht, Klaus-Peter Glaeser et al, 2006

Mission Statement of ECF:
Founded in 1983, The European Cyclists’ Federation (ECF) is the umbrella Federation of more than 65 bicycle user and related associations in Europe and beyond. On behalf of our members, we are pledge to ensure that bicycle use achieves its fullest potential so as to bring about sustainable mobility and public well being.
“Room for manoeuvre and safety distances are generally no longer available, so that even small deviations from a correct line will result in adjoining surfaces being driven on” [...] “Driving over or touching surfaces in adjoining areas can endanger other road users (pedestrians and cyclists)[...]."

In terms of stability there are also problems with how the trailers react when being driven in a straight line. In tests carried out\(^6\) most, and sometimes, all of the large lorry combinations performed worse than conventional lorries in straight ahead driving performance. Research from SWOV\(^7\) the Dutch national road safety research institute has shown that lorries with trailers in general (the vast majority of Gigaliners will have trailers) have an almost equal if not greater risk of cyclists collisions occurring on the side of the lorry and/or on the side of the trailer, this area of the lorry would be another major area of concern to add to the ‘right-turn blind spot’.

**Conclusion**

There is little empirical research on interaction of Gigaliners with vulnerable road users within the European context, particularly on safety issues. There has not been much data coming out of the countries that are trialling\(^6\), or are exempt from, Gigaliners, possibly due to the limited time or limited interaction with vulnerable users. However we remain very sceptical that changing Directive 96/53/EC to accommodate larger lorries up to 25,25 metres and with/without 60 tonnes, if put forward by the Commission, would have anything other than a negative effect on road safety for cyclists if they were allowed to mix with regular urban traffic.

**Surrounding ‘out of scope’, though related, issues**

This brief summary has focussed on the interaction between cyclists and Gigaliners and cyclists. However there are three out of scope though possibly related issues to consider

**Decreased haulage prices** – With the introduction of Gigaliners there would be a decrease in road haulage prices, due to their being able to take bigger loads, which would then lead to a shift from rail, and/or other cleaner modes of transport to the road sector and consequently an increase in the numbers of lorries on the road\(^8\). Again this would have serious consequences for road safety in general given the disproportionate number of accidents per lorry on the road (they make up about 3% of the EU vehicle fleet, but give rise to 14% of fatal collisions).

**Infrastructure changes** – We would have major concerns about whether the necessary road adaptation and maintenance would take away important resources for cycling infrastructure and for the maintenance of road surface to provide a safe environment for all road users

**Perceived danger for cyclists** - For cyclists the proven best policy to increase safety on the roads is to have more cyclists on the road; this is the ‘safety in numbers’ principle\(^10\). Figures show that across the board, with an increase in cycling numbers comes a decrease in cycling casualties per cyclist trip or distance travelled. Larger and heavier lorries would give the impression of roads being more dangerous, and, unless cyclists were completely separate from them, would have the effect of discouraging cycling uptake, which would in turn make the roads less safe for those remaining cyclists.

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\(^6\) Longer and/or Longer and Heavier Goods Vehicles (LHVs) – a Study of the Likely Effects if Permitted in the UK: Final Report, TRL Limited. UK: 98, Knight, Newton, Mckinnon, 2008

\(^7\) http://www.swov.nl/rapport/R-2008-11A.pdf

\(^8\) We would also be sceptical of the type of data that would come out of these trials given that they are not under typical logistics deadlines, they are also using optimal routes and highly experienced drivers.

\(^9\) Many can be found here http://www.nogigaliners.eu/the-facts/independent-research/

\(^10\) More details on ECF website here http://www.ecf.com/road-safety/