"Spain raises the maximum permitted weight for road freight transport to 44 tonnes."[1]

The Ministry of the Presidency has published in the Official State Gazette a Ministerial Order amending several annexes of the General Vehicle Regulations in order to modernize and make road freight transport more sustainable. The main development is the increase of the maximum authorized mass for combinations of five or more axles, which rises from 40 to 44 tonnes, with the aim of improving efficiency, reducing trips, and advancing decarbonization.

The regulation also provides for an increase of up to two additional tonnes in intermodal transport operations, thereby strengthening the connection between different logistics modes. In addition, it introduces specific adjustments for sectors such as forestry and metallurgy, with the goal of adapting the regulation to their productive characteristics.

Another noteworthy measure is the removal of the prior authorization requirement for Euro-modular combinations, which simplifies procedures, facilitates their circulation, and helps reduce both the number of vehicles on the road and the administrative burden on the sector.

Analysis by Fundación Valenciaport

Road transport is a **key sector of great importance** for the Spanish economy, not only because of its contribution to GDP and employment, but also due to its **capacity** to **connect territories, industries and markets**. Its role goes beyond the mere movement of goods: it acts as the **main backbone of the productive fabric**, ensuring the continuous supply of industry, commerce and distribution throughout the country, as well as international connectivity with the surrounding environment.

According to the latest report from the Transport and Logistics Observatory in Spain (OTLE), under the Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility, a total of **1,583 million tonnes of goods** were transported domestically across all **inland transport** modes in 2023. This represents a 1.1% increase compared to the previous year and confirms the recovery of activity after the pandemic.

The **modal distribution** of these goods has remained **remarkably stable** over the past decade. According to the **Permanent Road Freight Transport Survey (EPTMC)**, the share of **road transport** rose from a minimum of 93.4% in 2014 to a maximum of **95.7%** in 2023, slightly exceeding the 2020 figure (95.6%). In parallel, the rail share has remained around 4%, with only minimal variations during this period.

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[1] Source: Original press release published by the Spanish Directorate-General for Traffic (DGT), available at: https://www.dgt.es/comunicacion/notas-de-prensa/20250723-espana-eleva-a-44-toneladas-la-masa-maxima-permitida-transporte-mercancias/

The **evolution** of **recent years** has **consolidated** this **leadership**. Following the contraction caused by the 2020 health crisis, road transport demonstrated a remarkable **capacity for recovery**, driven by the rebound in industrial and commercial activity, the consolidation of e-commerce, and its greater operational flexibility compared to other modes. Thanks to these factors, the sector has swiftly adapted to **new logistical demands**, strengthening its role as an essential pillar of the economy and a key element in the integration of national and international supply chains.

From an **economic perspective**, this **sector** is equally **strategic**. In this regard, **transport and storage together** account for **around 4.5% of Spain's GDP**, with **road freight transport** representing the most significant segment of this activity. Various market estimates place its annual turnover at around **35 billion,** in addition to its role as a driver of employment, generating hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs. The evolution of this activity is closely linked to cycles of industrial production, trade and consumption, so any regulatory change affecting its capacity or costs has an immediate impact on the national economy.

As for its **business structure**, the sector is characterized by a **high degree of fragmentation: more than 95% of companies** have fewer than ten employees, and many **operate** with **very small fleets**, often ranging from one to three vehicles. According to the EPTMC, this configuration is also reflected in the distribution of activity: in 2023, small companies and self-employed operators accounted for the majority of domestic transport services, which explains the sector's extensive capillarity and flexibility. However, this structure also makes it more vulnerable to cost fluctuations — fuel, tolls, maintenance — and to the investments required to comply with new regulations.

Nevertheless, in recent years a **trend** towards **concentration** and **professionalization** has been observed, with **medium and large operators** increasing their relative weight thanks to their greater investment capacity and the provision of comprehensive logistics services, capable of meeting the demands of an increasingly complex market.

More specifically, **trucks play** a **key role** in **traffics** such as **containers**, **roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) cargo**, and certain **agri-food and industrial bulk goods**, and are particularly important in the "**last mile**," even when part of the journey is carried out by rail or other modes. Thanks to **their capillarity, speed and flexibility**, road transport serves as a regular connector within intermodal chains, helping ports maintain high levels of operational efficiency and service quality. This role fits within an intermodal logic, in which coordination with rail and maritime transport is crucial.

For all these reasons, the **operational efficiency** and **strategic position** of **Spanish ports rely**, among other factors, on a **solid**, **modern** and **sustainable road transport** system, whose proper functioning has a direct impact on the logistics chain. In this context—marked by the significant weight of road transport within the logistics chain and the growing demand for efficiency, competitiveness and sustainability—**any regulatory change affecting load capacity, operating costs or fleet configuration** acquires **considerable strategic relevance**. In recent months, one of the measures with the greatest potential impact on the sector—and, by extension, on port activity—has been the approval of the regulation increasing the Maximum Authorized Mass (MAM) for certain articulated vehicles from 40 to 44 tonnes, as well as the introduction of adjustments to the **weight and dimensions of intermodal vehicles**, with the aim of facilitating their integration into different logistics chains. Its entry into force, scheduled for the end of 2025, could mark the beginning of a new stage with opportunities and challenges that will need to be closely monitored and analyzed.

On **23 July 2025**, Ministerial Order PJC/780/2025 was published in the **Official State Gazette** (BOE), **amending** the **General Vehicle Regulations** with the **aim** of **modernizing and making road freight transport more sustainable**. This provision, which concludes several years of debate within the sector, **raises** the **Maximum Authorized Mass** (MAM) for certain transport combinations from **40 to 44 tonnes**.

Its approval is the result of a **lengthy process**. Having been part of the public debate for several years, since **2023** shippers' and hauliers' associations had been calling for an update of weight and dimension limits in order to improve efficiency and reduce emissions. During Spain's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2023, the intention was already expressed to conclude the debate before the end of that mandate, and in 2024 a public **consultation process was launched** to incorporate these extensions into the regulation. The 2025 decision, therefore, did not come about unexpectedly: it forms part of the **European decarbonization strategy** and the revision of Directive 96/53/EC, aimed at harmonizing weights and dimensions, authorizing cross-border transport of heavy vehicles between countries that already apply the European Modular System, and facilitating the use of high-capacity combinations—such as Euro-modular vehicles and duotrailers—in line with Spain's commitments under the European recovery funds. In this context, more than a dozen Member States have already raised their national limits to 44 tonnes, while others maintain the cap at 40, reflecting the current fragmentation and the importance of moving towards full harmonization.

The **order** is not limited to the increase in weight. It also includes **other relevant complementary changes**:

- **Simplification of procedures** for Euro-modular combinations — including duotrailers — which will be allowed to operate without specific authorization, subject only to the general traffic conditions and the restrictions established by the Directorate-General for Traffic. This measure promotes the adoption of high-capacity configurations on high-volume logistics corridors.
- **Increase in vehicle height** up to 4.5 metres for certain special transports, such as agri-food bulk goods, other bulk materials or live animals, provided that the journeys are limited — for example, supplies to industries within a 50 km radius. This measure makes it possible to improve efficiency in sectors with low added value and high specific weight.

As regards its **implementation**, the order extends the use of the **44-tonne** limit to **articulated vehicles with five or more axles and to road trains** consisting of a three-axle motor vehicle with a two- or three-axle trailer, including special configurations such as those used for roundwood transport or certain agri-industrial flows.

Deployment will be gradual in order to facilitate fleet adaptation, the updating of technical records, and investments in braking systems, weight control systems and infrastructure adjustments — such as access roads, bridges or parking areas. The timetable provides for:

Date	Key milestone
23 July 2025	Publication in the Official State Gazette of Ministerial Order PJC/780/2025, amending the General Vehicle Regulations and introducing the increase of the maximum authorized mass to 44 tonnes.
23 October 2025	General entry into force: articulated vehicles with five or more axles and road trains (3+2 or 3+3 axles) that meet the technical requirements may legally operate with a Maximum Authorized Mass (MAM) of up to 44 tonnes.
23 January 2026	Entry into force for tanker vehicles: additional adaptation period to allow tanker combinations to meet the requirements of the new regulation and operate at 44 tonnes.
From 2026 onwards	Progressive consolidation: gradual extension of the use of 44 tonnes as fleets update their technical records during vehicle inspections (ITV) or carry out the necessary modifications.

However, the mere entry into force of the regulation does not guarantee its automatic application. Only those combinations that meet strict technical requirements — such as axle arrangement and number, technically admissible mass, and braking capacity — will be able to **benefit from the new Maximum Authorized Mass** (MAM). Vehicles that already have a technical capacity equal to or greater than 44 tonnes may record the new figure in their technical file at the next vehicle inspection (ITV), while the rest will need to carry out the necessary modifications.

The increase of the Maximum Authorized Mass (MAM) to 44 tonnes represents a **major shift for Spanish logistics.** Its repercussions will be felt in the cost structure of transport companies, in the organization of port–hinterland chains, and in the competitive balance between the different modes of transport.

At a **general level**, it is argued that the possibility of transporting up to four additional tonnes per trip **could increase vehicle productivity** by reducing the number of journeys needed to move the same volume of goods. According to these assessments, this could translate into **lower fuel consumption, reduced personnel costs and transit times**, as well as a decrease in emissions per tonne-kilometre. In this regard, estimates by AECOC and the Polytechnic University of Catalonia (UPC) suggest that the measure **could prevent more than 2 million transport operations per year and cut around 129,000 tonnes of CO_2**, particularly in high load-intensity sectors such as construction, timber or minerals, where a direct impact of around 12% of kilometres travelled is expected.

However, it is also noted that these **effects would not be uniform**: while **companies with more modern fleets** could **adapt relatively quickly**, some SMEs and self-employed hauliers would need to make investments in vehicles or modifications to comply with the new technical requirements. Along the same lines, the CETM (Spanish Confederation of Road Freight Transport) estimates that **operating costs** per trip could **increase** by between 14% and 18%, due to factors such as greater wear on tyres, brakes and suspensions, higher fuel consumption, and longer loading and unloading times, without any guarantee that these additional costs will be reflected in freight rates. Other associations, such as Tradisna, have **expressed concern** over the **absence** of **mandatory economic compensation mechanisms**, which, in their view, penalises smaller carriers.

Similarly, various analyses suggest that the increase in authorized weight could lead to **greater wear on pavements**, **bridges and access roads**, which may require reinforced maintenance efforts and even **additional investments** in certain road infrastructures.

In the **port sector**, the new regulation is expected to create **opportunities** to **improve the efficiency** of the **sea–land chain**, as a lower number of trucks to move the same tonnage could help reduce congestion at access points and docks and improve the turnover of containers and bulk cargo. However, **adaptation challenges** are also foreseen, including the need to ensure that internal roads, bridges and waiting yards can safely withstand the new weights, as well as guaranteeing that the potential benefits for road transport do not result in a loss of market share for rail.

In this regard, some voices in the port sector have expressed concern — as reported by El Mercantil on 31 July 2025 — about a possible risk of **unfair competition in intermodality**, should the higher authorized weight for trucks reduce the attractiveness of **rail** on certain corridors. Within the broader sectoral **debate** that is emerging, rail is seen as the **mode of transport potentially most exposed** to this new competitive scenario. It has been noted that the increased efficiency resulting from the higher authorized weight on roads could shorten the range of distances over which rail maintains economic advantages, particularly in medium-distance traffics.

At the same time, various sources stress that rail retains **structural strengths**, such as its high **capacity on major corridors** and its **lower carbon footprint** over **long distances**, which reinforces its role in traffics requiring massive volumes and regular, high-quality services. In this context, it is considered that the rail sector's response should focus on strengthening reliability, reducing transit times, improving terminals and offering competitive rates that efficiently integrate the road "last mile."

Overall, the regulation on **44 tonnes** is interpreted as a scenario of both **opportunities and challenges**, the outcome of which will depend on whether **fleet and infrastructure adaptation progresses** at the expected pace and whether the economic and environmental benefits can be distributed fairly among hauliers, shippers, ports and rail operators, in line with the goal of making Spanish logistics more competitive and sustainable.

For the **Spanish port system**, the entry into force of this regulation underlines the need for close **coordination** between **hauliers, shippers and public administrations**. Such coordination will make it possible to anticipate infrastructure and access adaptation needs, facilitate fleet renewal and **ensure** that 44-tonne **road transport operates** as a **complement to intermodality** rather than a substitute. Likewise, integrating the monitoring of this measure into the Logistics Observatory would provide a real-time evaluation tool, useful for analysing both the degree of implementation of the regulation and its impact on the modal share between road and rail.