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THE IMPACT OF AUTHORIZATION IN THE ASSESSMENT OF RISKS AND SAFETY MEASURES OF OVERSIZED TRANSPORT ACTIVITY

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Abstract. The article aims to analyze the regulations and regulatory framework regarding the authorization of oversized transport, highlighting their importance in ensuring road safety and protecting the infrastructure. It also assesses the risks associated with oversized transport and implement the necessary safety measures. A descriptive and analytical approach is used, examining the doctrine in conjunction with relevant national and international legislation in the field of oversized transport. The author analyzes researchers' views, national and international normative acts that regulate the road transport of oversized goods, the conditions necessary for obtaining special transport authorizations, and the specific risks associated with these operations. The study highlights that the authorization of oversized transport is essential for preventing accidents and protecting road infrastructure. Existing regulations impose strict requirements for obtaining the Special Transport Authorization (AST), including approvals from the competent authorities and compliance with specific technical conditions. It also emphasizes assessing risks such as damage to goods, road obstacles, adverse weather conditions and proper load handling. Implementing safety measures, such as the use of properly equipped escort vehicles, is crucial to reducing the risks associated with oversized transport.

Keywords: *Oversized transport, special transport authorization, excess weight, authorized route, specific risks, safety measures.*

Rezumat. Articolul își propune să analizeze reglementările și cadrul normativ privind autorizarea transportului agabaritic, relevând importanța acestora pentru asigurarea siguranței rutiere și protecția infrastructurii. De asemenea, se urmărește evaluarea riscurilor asociate cu transportul agabaritic și implementarea măsurilor de siguranță necesare. Este utilizată o abordare descriptivă și analitică, examinând doctrina în coroborare cu legislația națională și internațională relevantă în domeniul transportului agabaritic. Autorul analizează viziunile cercetătorilor în domeniu, actele normative naționale și internaționale care reglementează transportul rutier de mărfuri agabaritice. De asemenea, se discută despre condițiile necesare pentru obținerea autorizațiilor speciale de transport și evaluarea riscurilor specifice asociate cu aceste operațiuni. Studiul realizat, evidențiază că autorizarea transportului agabaritic este esențială pentru prevenirea accidentelor și protejarea

infrastructurii rutiere. Reglementările existente impun cerințe stricte pentru obținerea Autorizației Speciale de Transport (AST), inclusiv avize de la autoritățile competente și respectarea unor condiții tehnice specifice. De asemenea, se subliniază importanța evaluării riscurilor, precum deteriorarea mărfurilor, obstacolele rutiere, condițiile meteorologice nefavorabile și manipularea corectă a încărcăturilor. Implementarea măsurilor de siguranță, cum ar fi utilizarea vehiculelor de însoțire echipate corespunzător, este crucială pentru reducerea riscurilor asociate transportului agabaritic.

Cuvinte cheie: *Transport agabaritic, autorizație specială de transport, masă depășită, traseu autorizat, riscuri specifice, măsuri de siguranță.*

1. Introduction

Oversized transport refers to the transport of goods that exceed the standard weight or size limits established by the legislation in force. These transports are strictly regulated, and their implementation is admissible only under the conditions of obtaining a Special Transport Authorization (AST). Therefore, the quality of the existing regulations in the field of oversized transport authorization determines the prediction of risks and ensuring the safe conduct of oversized transport activities. This situation determines the prospects in the oversized transport sector in the context of the evolution and development of transport enterprises.

2. General description of the regulatory framework regarding the authorization of oversized transport

The regulatory framework regarding the authorization of oversized transport is regulated by a series of legislative acts and specific norms that establish the conditions and procedures necessary for the conduct of these types of transport. These regulations are fundamental for ensuring road safety, protecting the infrastructure, complying with the legislation in force and anticipating the risks of disastrous and fatal events.

In accordance with the provisions of point 11 of the Regulation on the performance on public roads of road transport exceeding the total mass, axle masses and/or maximum permitted dimensions, approved by Government Decision No. 326 of 18.05.2022, the circulation on public roads of road vehicles exceeding the maximum permitted mass and/or dimensions is possible only in exceptional cases, with the possession of a special transport authorization, for the transportation of indivisible loads or for vehicles that, without load, constructively exceed the maximum permitted masses and/or dimensions [1]. This permissive act issued by the National Road Transport Agency is mandatory and absolutely necessary for the operation of oversized transport. Based on the reference document, the route and the tariffs charged for this route will be established by the road administrator [2].

The authorization of oversized transport is regulated by legislative and regulatory acts at international and national levels.

Internationally, the authorization of oversized transport is regulated by:

1. The European Convention on the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR) [3], which regulates the international carriage of goods by road, establishing the rights and obligations of the parties involved. Although it does not focus exclusively on oversized transport, the CMR is essential for understanding the general rules applicable to international transport.

2. The European Agreement on the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods (ADR) [4], regulates the transport of dangerous goods, including aspects related to vehicles that may exceed standard weight and size limits. It is important that operators comply with these regulations when transporting oversized goods that are also considered dangerous.

3. The EU-Moldova Agreement on the Road Transport of Goods (2022) [5], which regulates the road transport of goods between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, including oversized transport. The Agreement provides for common standards for the operation of transport, including authorisation requirements and technical regulations for vehicles carrying out transport with excess weight and dimensions.

4. Directive (EU) 2015/719 [6], which sets maximum limits for the dimensions of road vehicles in the European Union. Although it does not apply directly to the Republic of Moldova, it influences national regulations, given that Moldova aspires to align its legislation with European standards.

5. Regulation (EC) No 1071/2009 [7], which defines the requirements for road transport operators, including those carrying out oversized transport. Operators must demonstrate professional competence and financial reliability.

6. Directive 2008/68/EC [8], regulates the internal transport of dangerous goods, including aspects related to oversized vehicles transporting such goods. It imposes strict requirements regarding safety and information required for dangerous transport.

In the Republic of Moldova, the authorization of oversized transport is regulated by:

7. Road Transport Code Code no. 150/2014 [9], which in art. 5 defines oversized road transport as a road transport operation carried out with exceeding the maximum mass and/or maximum permitted dimensions. It also regulates the organization and conduct of road transport, implicitly establishing the obligations of transport operators to comply with the legal conditions for carrying out road transport, including oversized ones.

8. Road Law no. 509/1995 [10], which regulates the admissibility of the movement on public roads of means of transport with masses and/or dimensions exceeding the permitted limits only on the basis of a special transport authorization, issued by the National Road Transport Agency.

9. Regulation on the performance of road transport on public roads exceeding the total mass of axle weights and/or maximum permitted dimensions, approved by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova No. 326 of 18.05.2022 [1], which regulates: the conditions for performing road transport, the issuance and validity of special transport permits; control of vehicles with/or without load, with masses and/or dimensions exceeding the maximum permitted limits; responsibility in the event of movement without a special transport permit, failure to comply with its conditions and immobilization of the vehicle.

10. ANTA Instruction on the issuance of a Special Transport Permit for exceeding the maximum permitted limits [11], which describes in stages the AST issuance procedure.

3. Conditions for authorizing oversized transport

The state regulates the activity of entrepreneurs through mandatory norms, imposing on them a number of obligations [12]. Thus, an essential feature of the road transport activity, being an entrepreneurial activity, is the fact that road transport services are subject to the authorization regime in the manner established by the legislation in force [13]. Oversized transport in the Republic of Moldova is regulated by a specific legal framework, which imposes certain requirements for obtaining the necessary authorizations. These requirements

are essential for ensuring the safety and legality of transport on public roads. But these requirements cannot be qualified as excessive formalism in access to the profession and would serve as an obstacle to the normal development of the road transport sector [14]. However, the establishment of strict authorization conditions for this type of transport is necessary to ensure road safety, infrastructure protection and the efficiency of logistics operations.

Studies show that oversized cargo poses significant risks to road safety. According to a recent analysis by Sterett Crane & Rigging Company, obtaining the necessary permits is essential to ensure compliance with legal regulations and prevent road accidents [15]. Without proper authorization, vehicles carrying oversized cargo can create obstacles and cause collisions with other vehicles or road infrastructure. Oversized transport regulations are designed to protect road infrastructure from damage. To this end, oversized transport must comply with the maximum permissible size and mass limits set by law. Without strict licensing conditions, there is a risk of damage to roads, bridges and other structures, which can lead to significant repair and maintenance costs. The establishment of clear authorization conditions contributes to the efficiency of logistics operations. According to several doctrinal analyses in this field, to safely carry out this transport process, the following tasks must be performed: cargo identification, verification of transport capacity, selection of appropriate vehicles, and detailed planning of the optimal route. Particular attention should be paid to the width of the roads, as well as the height and width of bridges, the existence of signs and pillars, roundabouts, electrical networks and the condition of the roads on which the route is planned [16]. This not only optimizes delivery time but also reduces costs associated with transportation.

According to the legislation, road transport of goods with weights or dimensions exceeding the established limits is permitted only with a special authorization issued by the National Road Transport Agency (ANTA). This applies to both vehicles registered in the Republic of Moldova and those from other states.

In order to obtain a special oversized transport permit, the applicant must meet the following conditions [11]:

- Submit an application according to the template established by ANTA.
- Collect the necessary approvals from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other relevant entities.
- Pay an appropriate fee for processing the application.

The application for the issuance of the special transport permit is completed in full by the applicant, who bears full responsibility for the correctness and veracity of the information provided regarding [1]:

- 1) the applicant's identification data;
- 2) the road transport operator's identification data;
- 3) the model, registration numbers and valid technical inspection report of the vehicle with excesses, including the backup vehicle, if applicable;
- 4) the point of departure and destination of the transport on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, as well as intermediate points if he opts for a specific route between the point of departure and destination;
- 5) the configuration of the vehicle in terms of axles, type of axles, suspensions and wheels, distance between axles;
- 6) total mass and dimensions of the vehicle and/or overtaking load;

- 7) vehicle axle masses;
- 8) type of load transported;
- 9) requested validity period;
- 10) interested person, model, registration numbers and technical inspection report of the vehicle with which the overtaking vehicle will be accompanied.

The application together with the documents necessary for obtaining the AST, according to point 39 of the Regulation on the performance of road transport on public roads exceeding the total mass of the masses per axle and/or the maximum permitted dimensions can be submitted at the single counter, at the Agency's profile electronic address or through the information system "e-Transport Authorization" [1].

An important achievement in the procedure for submitting documents in order to obtain the AST is the automation of this procedure through the use of information systems, which have generated multiple benefits for transport operators, such as: debureaucratization of the authorization procedure, provision of efficient and accessible services for applicants, ensuring transparency in the authorization process etc.

Depending on the characteristics of the vehicle with overtaking and the route to be traveled, the Agency, in the special transport authorization, will enter [1]:

- 1) the obligation to accompany the vehicle with overtaking, indicating:
 - a) the number of accompanying vehicles necessary for carrying out the overtaking transport;
 - b) the interested party, model, registration numbers of the vehicle with which the overtaking vehicle will be accompanied;
- 2) other conditions imposed for the movement of the overtaking vehicle that contribute to the safe passage of the authorized route, such as:
 - a) traffic restrictions established on the authorized route during certain periods of the year, days or time intervals;
 - b) temporary and local interruption of traffic for the passage of certain road sections, for crossing engineering works or for undercrossing elements of the road infrastructure and utilities;
 - c) bypassing or dismantling elements of the road infrastructure;
 - d) position while driving when crossing engineering works or undercrossing elements of the road infrastructure and utilities;
 - e) dismounting of self-propelled equipment from transport vehicles in order to limit the masses and/or dimensions of the transport;
 - f) existence and use of height reduction devices;
 - g) maximum speed of crossing the works of art;
 - h) informing the road administrator and the media about the transport program;
 - i) the obligation to comply with the conditions imposed by the transport project or by studying the route.

The authorization may be used only by the carrier in whose name it was issued and may not be transferred to another person [1].

In accordance with point 10 of the Regulation on the performance on public roads of road transport exceeding the total mass of masses on axles and/or the maximum permitted dimensions, the movement of vehicles with overhangs may be carried out on the public road network of the Republic of Moldova under the following conditions [1]:

- a) they are admitted to circulation;

- b) they correspond in terms of technical condition and traffic safety requirements;
- c) they do not exceed the maximum authorized masses of vehicles, established by the manufacturing plant;
- d) hold a valid special transport authorization, issued by the issuing body;
- e) comply with the provisions set out in the special transport authorization.

4. Risk assessment, design and implementation of safety measures for oversized transport activities

Oversized goods transport involves a number of specific risks that must be carefully managed to ensure the safety of operations. Risk assessment, design and implementation of safety measures in oversized cargo transport are essential to ensure the efficient and safe conduct of these operations. The main risks associated with oversized cargo transport include:

a. Damage to goods. Oversized cargo is susceptible to damage during handling, loading, unloading and transport. Large dimensions and irregular weight can lead to structural or internal damage. A solution to mitigate this risk would be to use specialized packaging equipment and conduct detailed inspections of the cargo before and after transport to detect any defects.

b. Road obstacles. Oversized cargo transport may encounter obstacles such as low-height bridges, narrow or damaged roads, which can affect the smooth conduct of the transport. Therefore, detailed route planning is required, including identifying all potential obstacles and obtaining the necessary permits.

c. Adverse weather conditions. Extreme weather (rain, snow, strong winds) can affect the safety of transportation and the stability of the goods. Therefore, it is necessary to monitor the weather conditions before transportation and adjust the delivery schedule according to the forecast.

d. Regulatory and compliance issues. Oversized and heavy goods require special permits for delivery to different areas. In addition, there are strict safety standards for loading and unloading oversized goods that land freight companies must adhere to. These include guidelines for the correct use of loading ramps and special platforms to maintain stability. Goods must be secured with locks, straps, and brackets on these structures to prevent any movement that could lead to accidents. Another important aspect is the angle of the ramp, regulated to provide a gradual incline and reduce the risk of the cargo slipping or tipping. Alignment with the load is also meticulously checked for a smooth transition. And to ensure the stability of the transport vehicle, land freight companies are responsible for positioning the cargo on the vehicle's loading surface in such a way that it maintains balance during transport and meets the center of gravity requirements. In this chapter, we highlight the need and importance of collaborating with the relevant authorities to ensure compliance with all local and international regulations [17].

f. Improper handling. Improper handling of oversized cargo can cause accidents or damage. Thus, it is imperative that transport operators ensure that personnel are well trained in the application of correct handling techniques and the use of appropriate equipment.

g. Increased risk of accident. Due to their large size, vehicles carrying oversized goods have a higher risk of causing traffic accidents. Therefore, it is mandatory to use properly equipped accompanying vehicles (with light signals, reflective markings) to warn other road users [18]. A road transport accident is a disaster not only for our country, but also for all countries in the world. As a result of road accidents, more than 10 million people in the world

are killed and injured every year. A significant increase in the country's car fleet, with a simultaneous decrease in traffic organization and deterioration of road quality, has led to a sharp increase in the number of road accidents, which very often result in the loss of drivers, passengers and pedestrians. This has led to an increase in the number and danger of transport accidents and crimes, accidents and disasters that lead to the loss of human life and the destruction of property [19]. The road user is the first link in the road safety chain. Whatever the technical measures adopted, the effectiveness of road safety policy ultimately depends on the behavior of the traffic participant [20].

The control over exceeding the limits and maximum authorized total masses of road vehicles used in road transport operations will allow reducing the damage to public roads caused by these exceedings. Regulations on the authorisation of oversized transport facilitate the standardisation of processes in the field. According to a study by the European Commission, the establishment of good practices in oversized transport helps to create a uniform framework that can be applied in all Member States of the European Union [21]. This not only improves cooperation between the different entities involved in transport, but also ensures better coordination between national and local authorities. The opportunities for sustainable development of the Republic of Moldova are closely linked to the existing road infrastructure to meet the economic needs of the population [22].

Risk management in oversized transport is essential to ensure efficient and safe operations. To minimize these risks, it is advisable to carry out several preventive actions, including:

a) Impact analysis. Assessing the potential impact of the identified risks on road safety and the integrity of the goods is crucial. This includes analyzing possible material damage and risks to road users.

b) Designing safety measures, which includes planning and logistics. It is essential to develop a detailed plan that includes the type of vehicle required, the most appropriate route and obtaining special permits. Equally important is effective coordination through collaboration with all parties involved in carrying out transport operations (suppliers, customers, authorities), which is essential to avoid delays and additional costs. Complex logistical planning is required to determine the type of vehicle required, the most appropriate route, and obtaining special permits. This involves collaborating with the competent authorities to ensure compliance with road regulations.

c) Use of appropriate vehicles and their regular maintenance. The use of specialized vehicles and appropriate equipment is essential for reducing risks. Modern vehicle fleets must be equipped to handle oversized transports effectively. Vehicles used for oversized transport must be properly maintained to prevent technical failures that could lead to accidents. Regular technical checks are essential

d) Personnel training. Drivers and personnel involved in handling oversized goods must be properly trained on the specific risks and safety measures. This includes knowledge of the correct handling of equipment and reaction in emergency situations. There is much research and evidence on the impact of professional training on the efficiency of logistics operations. Well-trained drivers are able to plan routes more efficiently, minimize delays and manage resources better, which leads to significant savings for transport companies [23].

e) Continuous monitoring of transport conditions and evaluation of the effectiveness of the implemented measures are essential for rapid adaptation to any changes or problems that arise during transport.

Risk estimation is an essential step in identifying and anticipating hazards occurring on the oversized transport route. According to some researchers [24], risk estimation should include the following forecasting stages:

- the possibility of a hazard occurring
- the probability of a hazard occurring
- the possibility of identifying the hazard
- the hazard¹ effect and the possibilities of remedying the harmful consequences.

The implementation of preventive actions in the previous stage (calculations and analyses) determines the operation of the necessary actions in the oversized transport process. The purpose of risk estimation is to eliminate or reduce the possibility of critical errors, which could cause the occurrence of irreparable hazards, as well as to identify or mitigate their negative effects.

Risk assessment, design and implementation of safety measures in oversized transport are interdependent processes that contribute to ensuring safe and efficient transport. Continuous collaboration between transport operators, authorities and other stakeholders is extremely important for the success of these activities.

5. Trends in the field of oversized transport

A condition for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the European Union is the harmonization of national legislation with European regulations in the field of road transport [25].

Oversized transport is in a state of continuous evolution, influenced by technological advances, market requirements and environmental regulations. This section will explore the emerging trends and innovations that are transforming the oversized transport sector, highlighting their impact on operational efficiency and sustainability. Trends and innovations in the oversized transport sector are influenced by technological advances, market requirements and constantly changing regulations. Some of the most important trends and innovations observed in this sector include:

1) Increased demand for oversized transport services. According to ANTA [26], the demand for oversized transport has increased significantly, being stimulated by the rapid development of industries such as construction, renewable energy and the automotive sector. This trend is due to:

- Expansion of global trade. The growth of international trade has led to a greater need for oversized transport.
- Infrastructure projects. Infrastructure investments in various European countries have generated an increased demand for the transport of large equipment

2) Digitalization and automation of processes, is becoming an essential element in streamlining oversized transport operations. This includes:

- Transportation Management Systems (TMS). These software solutions allow for real-time tracking of deliveries, route optimization and resource management.
- Automation of orders and deliveries, which reduces processing time and improves transparency for customers, who can receive real-time updates on the status of their shipments

3) Autonomous vehicles [2] represent a major innovation in oversized transport. They use advanced sensors and artificial intelligence to navigate the roads autonomously. The advantages include:

- Reduction of accidents. Autonomous technology can reduce human error, thereby increasing road safety.
- Operational efficiency. Autonomous trucks can operate without breaks, increasing delivery efficiency.

4) Sustainability and green energy. In Europe and beyond, there has been a significant increase in concern for the state of the environment. Climate change and pollution are major issues facing most countries on the European continent [27]. Sustainability is becoming a priority in the transport sector, and current trends include:

- Fleet electrification. Electric vehicles are increasingly used for heavy-duty transport, reducing carbon emissions and dependence on fossil fuels. Recent projects aim to develop charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- Alternative fuels. The use of hydrogen and biofuels is expanding in the maritime and air transport sectors, contributing to the reduction of polluting emissions.

5) Artificial intelligence (AI). Artificial intelligence plays a crucial role in optimizing processes in heavy-duty transport, which focuses on:

- Data analysis. AI algorithms can analyze traffic and weather data to predict delays and optimize routes.
- Improving safety. AI is used to monitor driver behavior and prevent accidents by detecting signs of fatigue or distraction.

6) Dedicated infrastructure. The development of dedicated infrastructure for oversized transport is an emerging trend that can significantly improve the efficiency and safety of these operations. The necessary measures to be taken in this direction include:

- Building special roads for oversized vehicles, which can reduce congestion on standard routes and improve delivery times
- Improving existing infrastructure. Investments in the modernization of roads, bridges and tunnels are essential to allow the safe circulation of oversized vehicles. For example, governments in many European countries are investing in the development of highways and bridges to facilitate oversized transport [26].

5. Conclusions

Oversized transport is an essential sector for the economic development of the Republic of Moldova and beyond, with significant implications for infrastructure, the environment and road safety. Analyzing current regulations, challenges encountered and emerging trends, we can draw some important conclusions and formulate recommendations for improving the authorization and management process of oversized transport.

- *Complexity of regulations.* The authorization process for oversized transport is often complicated, involving multiple institutions and legal requirements. This complexity can lead to significant delays in delivery and additional costs for transport operators.
- *Impact on infrastructure.* Oversized transport has a considerable impact on road infrastructure, causing premature wear and tear of roads and the need for frequent repairs. This fact reveals the importance of adequate route planning and assessment of the condition of the infrastructure.

- *Environmental challenges.* Emissions generated by oversized transport contribute to air pollution and climate change. It is essential to adopt measures that reduce the environmental impact, including the use of environmentally friendly vehicles and route optimization.
- *Technological innovations.* Technological advances, such as digitalization, the use of autonomous vehicles and drones, have the potential to transform the oversized transport sector, improving operational efficiency and road safety.
- *Inter-institutional collaboration.* Effective collaboration between local authorities, regulatory agencies and transport operators is crucial for the success of the authorization process. Open communication can reduce ambiguities and speed up the obtaining of the necessary approvals.

In order to streamline the authorization process and minimize risks in the oversized transport process, we come up with the following recommendations:

a) Simplify the authorization process.

- Review the legislation. A review of the legislative framework is needed to simplify the process of obtaining authorizations for oversized transport. This could include consolidating the requirements in a single document or online portal.
- Developing a detailed guide for transport operators explaining the steps required to obtain permits could reduce confusion and delays.

b) Infrastructure Investments.

- Allocating funds to upgrade roads affected by oversized transport, including the construction of dedicated routes for large vehicles.
- Regular infrastructure assessments. Implementing a regular programme of road and bridge condition assessments will help identify problems before they become critical.

c) Promoting sustainability.

- Incentivising green vehicles. Offering subsidies or tax incentives to operators using electric or low-emission vehicles can help reduce environmental impact.
- Implementing green technologies. Encouraging the use of modern technologies, such as intelligent traffic management systems, can help optimise routes and reduce emissions.

d) Continuing professional training.

- Organizing regular training courses for drivers and personnel involved in oversized transport will increase awareness of safety and legal regulations.
- Simulations and practical exercises. Carrying out simulations of emergency situations in oversized transport will help personnel react effectively in critical cases.

e) Improving Inter-institutional Collaboration.

- Forming inter-institutional groups specifically dealing with issues related to oversized transport will facilitate the exchange of information and rapid resolution of problems.
- Digital platforms for communication. Implementing digital platforms that allow rapid communication between authorities and transport operators can reduce the time needed to obtain permits.

Oversized transport is a vital sector that requires constant attention from authorities, economic operators and society as a whole. By implementing the proposed

recommendations, a more efficient, safer and more sustainable system for managing oversized transport can be developed, thus contributing to sustainable economic growth and environmental protection. Adaptability to new technological trends and inter-institutional collaboration will be essential in this endeavor.

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