Fifth Meeting of the Specialised Committee on Road Transport established by the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement

Brussels and Online

30 October 2025 at 13:30 BST /14:30 CEST

Minutes

1. Opening statements

The Parties welcomed the generally smooth operation of the road transport titles of the TCA.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted as proposed.

3. Update on legislation since the 2024 Specialised Committee and a forward look to the legislative programme for the next year.

UK:

The UK co-chair provided a short update on the UK's new style domestic driver certificate of professional competence (DCPC), which was introduced following consultation with the UK road freight industry. The aim of these reforms was to tackle industry dissatisfaction with the qualification, increase flexibility for those working in the sector and improve the attractiveness of the sector to new and existing drivers.

The reformed qualification, which the UK introduced in December 2024, allows people working as professional drivers domestically, within the UK, to undertake the 35 hours of training over 5 years in a more flexible way. The half day, 3.5-hour courses, allow drivers to undertake their compulsory training in a more flexible way, so that it can be more easily fitted in with work and private commitments. In addition, the changes allow a wider range of subjects to be covered, and for greater flexibility in the application of e-learning. These flexibilities have been achieved without compromising standard or rigor of the required training.

The UK has also addressed the barriers that people can face when returning to vocational driving as a profession. Responding to concerns regarding the cost of training, the UK Government has introduced a Return to Driving Course. This new 7-hour course, introduced in February 2025, is available for drivers whose CPC qualification expired for between 60 days and two years. This training covers issues such as vehicle safety, tachographs, road traffic laws, load security, and vulnerable road users.

Drivers undertaking the course can return to work and spread the remaining 28 hours of CPC training, and the cost, over the next 12 months. Professional drivers holding this reformed qualification are only currently able to undertake work domestically within the UK.

The UK expressed its interest in exploring the possibility of the EU recognising the UK's new domestic CPC qualification pathway for UK drivers making journeys into the EU. Whilst the new style courses have only been running for a short period, the potential take up and benefits to the industry are limited by the fact that drivers taking these new format courses are restricted to being only able to undertake domestic work in the UK.

The UK's training sector has developed over 1,300 approved 3.5-hour courses with over 6,500 courses taken by UK drivers since December 2024. In addition, since its introduction in February 2025, over 1,700 drivers have returned to the profession through the Return to Driving course.

Since the courses launched less than a year ago, the UK has received positive feedback on the benefits to drivers and businesses of the new shorter format training. There has already been considerable take up, but this would be further encouraged if the new format courses were recognised for driving in the EU.

The UK also expressed interest in sharing further details on the approach they have taken if this could usefully inform any reforms the EU may be considering in this area.

European Register of Road Transport Undertakings (ERRU): The UK has prepared the necessary legislation *The European Registers of Road Transport Undertakings (Disclosure of Information) (Amendment) Regulations 2025* to implement the decisions of the Specialised Committee which they plan to lay in parliament in mid-November. This will allow the legislation to come into force on 1 January 2026.

The UK is pleased that after discussing the possible reconnection at the 2023 and 2024 meetings of this Specialised Committee, this piece of our work has almost come to fruition. The three decisions to be adopted in the meeting cover the types and seriousness of infringements, the data that will be exchanged and finally the financial contribution the UK will make in return for access to road transport databases including ERRU.

The development of the UK's system is almost complete, and UK are about to enter the testing phase. Because of the complexity of the systems that are being connected on the UK side, they have been recently advised that the final stages of the testing may continue into January. The EU will be kept closely informed of progress in the system ahead of its launch.

Interbus: In accordance with Article 485 of the TCA, the temporary arrangements for regular and special regular services within the TCA ceased to apply to both parties after 31 March 2025, with the exception of Article 475 provisions (2), (5), (6) and (7) of the Road Passenger Transport Chapter which still remain in place.

The UK confirmed that the RSR Protocol entered into force for the UK with effect from 1 April 2025. This was an important step in ensuring international coach and bus services continue to run without disruption between the EU and UK, and the states of other Interbus Contracting Parties. The UK's domestic legislation *The Road Transport (International Passenger Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2024* that supported the ratification of the RSR Protocol also came into force on 1 April 2025. These regulations made several amendments to existing legislation to implement the Protocol, including the removal of references to EU Regulations – specifically Regulation (EC) No 1073/2009 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 361/2014. This was

intended to bring the UK's domestic legislation in line with the terms of Interbus and the RSR Protocol.

Earlier this year several reports of UK coach operators were received on fines by enforcement officers in two Member States for alleged non-compliance with the terms of the Interbus Agreement. The UK welcomes the confirmation it has since received from the Interbus Secretariat stating that they agreed with the UK position and were satisfied that the operator licences carried and tachographs installed by UK coach operators meet the requirements of the Interbus Agreement. The operators look forward to receiving confirmation from the relevant national authorities regarding this confirmation by the Interbus Secretariat, together with details for how affected operators can apply for reimbursement.

EU:

Eurovignette: The Commission proposed in June to extend by five and a half years until July 2031 the period in which Zero Emission Heavy Duty Vehicles (ZE-HDV) can be exempted from tolls in the Union. The European Parliament (EP) and the Council voted positively in October, paving the way for the entry into force of this proposal. This measure strengthens the business case to invest in new, cleaner vehicles by lowering the gap in the total cost of ownership with diesel vehicles. Two Member States currently apply a full exemption, and eight Member States apply significant toll discounts.

The Commission proposal amending the Weights and Dimensions Directive (Directive 96/53/EC, WDD), was adopted in July 2023 as part of the Greening Freight Package. It responds primarily to the objective of supporting the uptake of ZE HDVs. In addition, it aims at safeguarding the internal market by harmonising the rules in maximum weights and dimensions of heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs). The EP adopted its First Reading on 12 March 2024 and confirmed it October 2024. In particular, as regards the incentives for the purchase of ZE-HDV. The Council has discussed the initiative under the previous presidencies and the current one of Denmark.

As a result of the adoption of Regulation (EU) 2024/1258 by EP and Council on specific rules for drivers engaged in occasional passenger services, the Commission was tasked with revising the tachograph technical specifications with a requirement to make the tachograph able to record occasional passenger services. The Commission is currently working on this. The Commission is also using this opportunity to look into other possible small improvements of the smart tachograph, for example in relation to remote access tachograph monitoring data, based on the feedback received by some enforcement authorities.

It is also noteworthy that the EU has extended the road transport agreements with Ukraine and Moldova until 31 March 2027. The Moldova agreement was extended without any modification.

On the driver CPC training, the Commission thanked the UK for providing information on their new, simplified, scheme related to certificates of professional competence of lorry drivers active only on UK territory. Driver shortage is an issue the EU is also facing, and they are also being approached by the sector with ideas how to make driver training more flexible and hence more attractive. They are grateful to hear about the initial experience with the measures already taken in the UK and would be happy to be kept informed on further experiences. As the EU prefers a uniform approach for all drivers under the TCA, changes to the system should only

be made once they apply to all drivers concerned. A more flexible approach only for some drivers would immediately raise calls for a more flexible approach to be offered to all drivers. Unless the changes are applicable to everyone, the EU cannot endorse them under the TCA. As the TCA reflects the rules which are currently applicable in the EU, changes to the TCA rules would require changes to the EU rules. Depending on their nature and scope, such changes may take some time. However, they have started internal reflections on how to modernize the CPC training in the EU and will be happy to share their views with the UK as they develop. They may be inspired by some of the points raised by the UK.

4. Exchange of views on the operation of the road transport titles in the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA)

UK:

The UK acknowledged that the overall operation of the road transport between the United Kingdom and the European Union is working well. In particular, the quota free transport of goods and facilitation of trade has resulted in economic benefits to both sides.

Since the 2024 meeting, the UK has finished rolling out the Electronic Travel Authorisation, or ETA, a digital permission to travel for visitors to the UK including EU citizen lorry drivers who do not need a visa for short stays of up to 6 months or for those who already have a UK immigration status. The UK granted 13.4million ETAs between the introduction of the scheme in October 2023 and June 2025 to individuals who come to the UK from countries, including those in the EU where a visitor Visa is not required. The UK expressed interest in receiving feedback on the impacts of the ETA system on the commercial road transport sector.

The UK expressed satisfaction that the beginning of the phased implementations of the Entry/Exit System (EES) has not resulted in any significant disruption to road transport. They value the close cooperation with European partners on the phased implementation of EES at the shared borders, especially within the context of Juxtaposed Controls. This collaboration is essential to ensuring a smooth transition and maintaining operational efficiency, ensuring border fluidity, and minimising disruption especially that affect UK and EU hauliers. This will be particularly important as the EES registrations increase over the 6-month roll-out – there remain real risks around peak travel periods and when the registration thresholds increase next year.

The UK will continue to monitor EES closely. This includes targeted research into how HGV and coach operators anticipate being affected, particularly in relation to increased monitoring of drivers' compliance with the 90/180-day rule. The UK remains committed to facilitating secure and efficient travel while maintaining robust border controls.

The UK welcomed continued engagement with European partners to ensure the effective rollout of new border systems such as ETA, EES and soon the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS). These systems represent a significant change for the travelling public and transport operators. It is important that the UK and EU continue to work together to clearly communicate new requirements for travel and to identify potential challenges to implementation. They anticipate discussing these developments at the next meeting in 2026.

Smart Tachograph 2 and Transit journeys in the Island of Ireland: Following a request from DG Move, since 31 December 2024, Irish-registered vehicles undertaking a journey where both loading and unloading occur within Ireland (for example, between Donegal and Dublin) and transiting through Northern Ireland as part of that journey have been temporarily exempted, on an administrative basis, from enforcement of the requirement to fit a SMART 2 tachograph for international travel. The exemption is geographically constrained to Northern Ireland and applies only to Irish vehicles; it does not apply to journeys made into Great Britain, or to vehicles from elsewhere in the EU. The exemption has recently been extended to the end of June 2026.
[UK Post Meeting Note: The UK notified the Commission in November 2025 that the extension to the end of June 2026 would be the final extension.]

The UK welcomed the political agreement with the EU on Gibraltar signed on 11 June 2025. We look forward to the finalisation of the UK-EU Treaty text on Gibraltar.

The UK notes the EU's extension to the exemption of zero emission trucks from tolls up to 30 June 2031, to encourage the shift to zero-emission logistics.

In the UK there are no nationwide toll roads, however tolls are charged on specific roads like the M6 Toll, and some tunnels and bridges like the Dartford Crossing over the river Thames. The UK also has congestion charging zones in London, and Durham and clean air zones in places including Bath, Birmingham, Portsmouth, and Tyneside, (covering Newcastle and Gateshead).

Like the EU, the UK is keen to promote the use of Zero Emission HGVs (ZE-HGV). Dedicated HGV charging provision, including through private investment is growing as the demand for ZE-HGVs increases. There are currently five public sites with dedicated HGV charging. This infrastructure is bolstered by the ZE-HGV and Infrastructure Demonstrator, with 73 planned infrastructure locations including up to seven at Motorway Service Areas, and shared charging infrastructure at depots.

In relation to the HGV Road User Levy, which applies to vehicles weighing more than 12 tonnes, the UK is encouraging the use of ZE-HGVs on journeys to the UK by non-UK operators through an exemption from the HGV Road User Levy. To avoid automatic enforcement cameras identifying a vehicle as non-compliant, hauliers can register their vehicles, using the process published on GOV.UK.

To date, only a small number of vehicles have taken advantage of this exemption. However, as charging infrastructure and battery technology improves, the UK anticipates that the use of ZE-HGVs in international road haulage will grow, leading to an increase in registrations for this exemption scheme.

EU:

The EU explained that, concerning the impacts of the ETA system on the commercial road transport sector, they have not heard so far of any negative reactions from the sector. However, this issue concerns the Schengen legislation which is not covered by the TCA and is therefore not in the scope of this Committee.

This position also applies to the Entry and Exit System, as it was mentioned by the EU at the last meeting.

On Gibraltar, the EU shared the satisfaction about the political agreement signed on 11 June 2025, and hope that the text can be finalised very soon. However, they also reiterated that the Trade and Cooperation Agreement does not cover nor has any effect in Gibraltar.

5. Signing of the Decision on the categories, types and degrees of seriousness of serious infringements which may lead to the loss of good repute for a road haulage operator

6. Signing of the Decision on the national electronic register of road transport undertakings and the modalities of exchange of information contained in these registers

7. Signing of the Decision on the amount and modalities of the UK's financial contribution to road transport information systems managed by the Union and amending Decision No 1/2022 of the Specialised Committee on Road Transport

The three decisions were signed by the co-chairs.

8. Any Other Business

a. Ongoing challenges of specialist hauliers supporting cultural tours.

UK:

In the Common Understanding following the first ever UK-EU Summit on 19 May, the UK and EU jointly recognised the value of travel, and cultural and artistic exchange, including the activities of touring artists and agreed to support travel and cultural exchange. At the previous meetings of this Specialised Committee, the UK had raised concerns about the issues facing some specialist events hauliers who support cultural tours due to the challenges they face operating within existing cabotage and mobility restrictions. Supporting touring artists and others who help facilitate music and cultural tours is still a priority for the UK Government. The UK look forward to building on the Common Understanding and engaging constructively with the European Commission to tackle the challenges facing touring artists.

EU:
The EU reiterated that they have looked into the situation of specialist event hauliers and have come to the conclusion that there is nothing in the TCA that can solve this issue. They are also not in favour of any amendment to the TCA.

In the **closing remarks**, the two parties thanked each other for the very good cooperation and expressed hope that the current, positive working relationship can continue into the forthcoming review of the TCA which will take place in 2026. They also hope that this established and cooperative working relationship can be harnessed to identify and take advantage of further opportunities and mutually beneficial improvements in the field of commercial road transport.

Annex 1: Participants of the Specialised Committee on Road Transport held on 30 October 2025

EU Delegation

- EU Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Road Transport
- European Commission officials
- Delegation of the European Union to the UK
- Official Representatives of EU Member States

UK Delegation

- UK Co-Chair of the Specialised Committee on Road Transport
- UK Government officials from DfT, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other government agencies
- Officials from the Scottish Government
- Officials from the Welsh Government
- Officials from the Northern Ireland Government