

EU proposal amending vehicle regulations – Implications for Northern Ireland

Briefing note

An announcement from the Department of Transport (DfT) on 19 March 2026 revealed the European Commission has proposed amendments to several vehicle-related EU Regulations covering drivers' hours, tachographs, type-approval, safety requirements and Euro 7 emissions testing. Some of these amended regulations fall within scope of the Windsor Framework and will therefore apply directly in Northern Ireland.

Background

The EU proposal amends a suite of existing legislation relating to drivers' hours, tachographs, vehicle type approval, vehicle safety systems and Euro 7 emissions testing. It also repeals earlier noise-related instruments and replaces them with harmonised UN Regulations. The following titles refer to each regulation and proposed changes.

Drivers' Hours and Tachographs

Removal from scope of electric light commercial vehicles (LCV) exceeding 3.5t–4.25t maximum authorised mass from scope to reflect the additional battery mass. This is not within scope of the Windsor Framework, so there will be no automatic application in Northern Ireland.

Type Approval Framework

Create a new M1E category for small electric vehicles and grant the Commission powers to set technical requirements for vehicle charging infrastructure communication.

Vehicle safety

Remove the requirement for speed limitation devices on electric LCVs exceeding 3.5t–4.25t. This has the potential for divergence between Great Britain requirements and Northern Ireland requirements.

Euro 7 emissions

Remove the low temperature laboratory emissions test, change legal terminology from vehicle types to vehicle categories, and clarify data reporting obligations.

Noise regulations

Repeal Directive 70/157/EEC and Regulation 540/2014, shifting to UN Regulations already used by the UK.

Implications for Northern Ireland

All amendments, except those relating to drivers' hours and tachographs, will apply directly in Northern Ireland under the Windsor Framework. No additional legislation is required.

Devolved considerations

Type approval is a reserved matter. Devolved Governments have been consulted and no comments were received.

Financial and legal implications

There are no financial implications for the UK Government. Legal implications relate only to monitoring and potential alignment measures in Great Britain.

Next steps

DfT officials will continue monitoring EU developments, particularly regarding small electric vehicle categories and Euro 7 implementation (planned for later in 2026). Officials will assess the need for any GB legislative changes to avoid future divergence.