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Ms Adina-Ioana Vălean
Commissioner for Transport
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 24 March 2020

EC Communication on COVID-19 and green lanes: sends wrong signals and doesn't address the real problem

Dear Commissioner,

From the perspective of road transport, the EC Communication and its recommended measures – meant to keep intra-EU borders open during this time of crisis - seem to be somehow disconnected from reality, both with regard to the development of the pandemic and to the expected transport trends. Why?

Because the pandemic has yet to reach its maximum contamination levels in Europe, so it is only normal that Member States adopt increasingly drastic measures to cut down contacts with the outside world.

Because in transport:

- Border queues have gradually reduced; the most impacted borders were Germany – Poland, Poland – Lithuania, and these were mainly caused by the massive repatriation of vehicles and drivers originating from Poland, Baltic States and the non-EU countries bordering them
- It is more than likely that the transport of goods, both domestic and international, will be considerably reduced in the days to come, due to the economic slow-down associated with the pandemic

In the above context, the Communication, unfortunately, goes against the efforts of the Member States to contain the pandemic and address its impacts. It also comes too late to deal with the real border-crossing problems occurred in the past days.

But what can be retained from the Communication?

- that the EC calls for drivers to be rushed through borders with minimal health checks, to be confined in their vehicles for 30 days (in-vehicle sleeping and even eating is strongly recommended by the European Commission), which sends a bad signal regarding the care and respect shown by the EU legislator to the EU citizens in general and in particular to professional drivers. The latter, together with the medical staff, are key in fighting off this pandemic



President Frank Moreels

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- that the EC calls for almost no controls: the European Commission is the guardian of the EU Treaty and compliance with its rules, but this call exposes the Commission as precisely the contrary

To answer the question: What kind of transport this Communication refers to, and what it *should* refer to: The Communication gives the green light to the transportation of **all** goods, as opposed to goods of strict necessity. But this approach proves once again ineffective and inconsistent. Transport of all goods will cause more waiting times at borders rather than reduce them as more vehicles will be stuck in the waiting lines. Furthermore, it is widely acknowledged that one of the main causes of the pandemic proportions in Italy was the late lock-down of unnecessary activities ([21 March](#)).

For all the reasons described above, we wonder: what is the added value of the Communication, what problems is it striving to address, and how effective it is in dealing with the pandemic crisis?

The ETF has always proven to bring constructive approaches to the table and has come with concrete proposals on how to move forward in terms of the functioning of road transport in times of crisis. Our proposals are centred on the health and safety of the driver and of the people they come in contact with. All this, with great care and concern for the public health and safety as a whole – please see our statement dated [19 March](#). In the ETF statement of [13 March](#), the European Commission can equally find clear proposals regarding road passenger transport and the use of temporary relaxation of driving and rest time rules. To the latter, the ETF has stated already that no such relaxation of rules should be adopted in the red zones such as Italy. They represent a risk for drivers and people they come in touch with (fatigue, exposure) and do not make sense if we consider the low levels of transport and traffic in the countries in question.

To add to our list of concrete proposals: controls should be focused, in these times of crisis, on compliance with driving and rest time rules (to include the temporary derogations), on the type of transported goods (as means of checking whether derogations are correctly applied), and on Community licence as an indicator of the operator's general compliance record. A pre-notification should also be introduced, mandatory for transport operators engaged in the cross-border transport goods, as proof that driving and rest time derogations are used for the purpose, they had been granted for by Member States.

To conclude: the ETF, its member organisations and its transport workers have been part of moving goods across Europe to help fight the COVID-19 pandemic. We are well aware of our role and importance in times of crisis, and beyond. We have proven a credible dialogue partner, and have come up with concrete proposals. In the past weeks, dialogue between trade unions and governments led to very constructive approaches in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. We expect no less from the European Commission.

Yours Sincerely,



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ETF Acting General Secretary



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