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European Transport Workers' Federation
Fédération Européenne des Travailleurs des Transports
Europäische Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Federación Europea de los Trabajadores del Transporte

Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels 17 March 2020

Dear Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius,

Re: COVID-19 crisis and workers in the fishing sector

The ETF is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces transport trade unions from the European Union, the European Economic Area and Central and Eastern European countries. The ETF represents more than 5 million transport workers from more than 200 transport unions and 41 European countries.

We also represent the interests of employed fishermen and we would like to bring your attention to the difficult situation faced by the sector in light of the Covid-19 public health crisis. The fishing sector generates important economic multipliers, from supporting fishing communities to providing food producers and the HORECA sector with sustainable fish.

Our members across Europe have reported that vessels, in particular the ones that fish near the coast and do not stay more than 72 hours at sea, have stopped fishing or expect to stop within the next few days. This is because nobody is buying their fresh fish, as restaurants and open markets are closed. To safeguard livelihoods, support to fishermen for suspension of activity needs to be considered. Employed fishermen face the risk that fishing activities could start and then stop shortly again due the entry into force of the biological rest periods. As you know, most of employed fishermen are paid by a share of the catch, so a suspension of fishing activities means no income for workers.

Even if at this stage it is difficult to establish a timing for the way out from this crisis, we expect that for some segments the end of the crisis may correspond with the start of rest period. While rest periods are an important method of conserving fish stocks which has proved effective, and an essential instrument for the sustainable management of fisheries, this would aggravate the situation of workers in the fishing sector. With the current situation it would be only fair to grant support to employed fishermen during the period of inactivity due to the health emergency caused by COVID 19 that brings high and unpredictable economic consequences to quantify at the moment as well as in the medium or long term. The ETF welcomes the decision to relinquish this year's obligation to request refunding of unspent pre-financing for the EMFF. However we call upon the European Commission to



President Frank Moreels

Acting General Secretary Livia Spera

Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
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monitor the Member States' use of these funds, which should be used to support employed fishermen income.

We ask the European Commission and the Member States to play their role in helping fishermen navigate these times of intense uncertainty.

Yours sincerely,



Livia Spera
ETF Acting General Secretary



President Frank Moreels

Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
Ekaterina Yordanova

Acting General Secretary Livia Spera

