

**To:
UK & EU Taskforce on Brexit**

Brussels 28/09/2020

Ref: Brexit negotiations - ETF warns of road transport chaos at UK border

As the EU and the UK government continue to negotiate the modalities of Brexit, the ETF fully shares the UNITE the UNION's concerns that Brexit will come with chaos and confusion on the UK border and with delays at ports due to incomplete IT systems. We are extremely concerned about the lack of progress in the EU-UK negotiations given the short time remaining before the end of the year. A recent leaked document by the UK government confirms our worst fears: queues of 7,000 lorries in Kent once Brexit comes into effect on 31 December and two-day delays to cross into the EU.

Indeed, computerised post-Brexit customs systems are still under development. Unions and professional drivers fear that the software won't be ready by the time the UK's transition phase ends on 31 December 2020. Thus, leaving them no time to become accustomed to complex new border arrangements.

This prompts the question: will coach and truck drivers, who are in no way responsible for arranging customs declarations, face personal fines if they are found travelling to ports without the correct electronic documentation? The answer is certainly 'they must not'! To this end, we reiterate our message: our workforce must not pay the price for the UK government's errors in managing Brexit!

Moreover, our concerns go with UNITE's belief that the 29 parking areas the government is planning to build across the UK is a stitch-up solution. The locations of the vast majority of parking areas have still not been announced let alone developed and there is now less than four months to go. But therein lies a much wider problem: judging by the level of planning in all this, it's very likely that these parking areas will be devoid of any amenities and services. We are looking at drivers being stuck in their cabs for hours and hours without any access to clean toilets, washing, food or rest facilities.

With all this, short-haul journeys to continental Europe and back will become a fatigue-trap and waiting time for border clearance will account for most of the driver's time. After eleven hours of queuing at the border, even if this means staying put in a parking area, they will then have to continue their driving activities. Driver fatigue and precarious working conditions will be on the rise - putting the health and safety of drivers at risk as well as the safety of our roads.

It is thanks to drivers that our shelves are filled and factories stocked, and they have proven their importance and key role many times over during this pandemic. Packing them into unfinished parking areas, insecure journeys and fears for unjustified sanctions is a poor way to repay them.

Taking into consideration all of the above, we are rightfully wary of the dangers of a bare-bones deal that doesn't contain any solid commitments towards preventing a race to the bottom by respecting a level-playing field.

We hereby call on all the Brexit negotiating parties to negotiate in full awareness that the future of skilled work in road transport depends on the solutions they find to this problem in the months to come. Trade unions should be involved in the preparations for any scenario, and the Commission must take heed and reach out to Member States in order to ensure this.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob. Parrillo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roberto Parrillo
ETF Road Transport Section Chair