

Ismail ERTUG, S&D Vice-President, Johan DANIELSSON, S&D Coordinator, Transport Committee

To the European Commissioner for Transport & European Minsters for Transport

Brussels, 22 March 2020

Dear Commissioner Vălean, dear Ministers,

## Subject: Ensure the functioning of the European transport sector!

We are writing you this letter because more and more drivers and trade unions are contacting us in the European Parliament, regarding the dire situation on our roads.

Overnight the European driving and rest time regime has virtually been dismantled, we now have various different sets of rules – in some Member States drivers are allowed to drive up to 60 h / week. While it is understandable that more flexibility might be necessary in these times, it is incomprehensible that every Member State adopts its own rules and there needs to be a reasonable limit for the maximum driving time. Accidents due of fatigue are not just disappearing because we have a crisis situation! It is absurd to create artificial obstacles by closing national borders and force drivers to bury the negative effects of such uncoordinated action.

In various Member States, everything but supermarkets and pharmacies is in lockdown. This is the right measure in this situation. Motorway service areas however need to remain partially open. Drivers need some basic facilities like toilets and showers and they require possibilities to get food and beverages while on the road.

Furthermore, the uncoordinated closure of intra-European borders severely disrupted the flow of goods within the common market. While the situation has eased at the Polish-German border for now, it nevertheless remains problematic in a wider European context. We thus urge you all to work together with the European Commission to find a harmonized way to ensure the unrestricted flow of essential goods within the Union. The Guidelines of the Commission has published last Monday are a welcoming step in the right direction; however, they have not improved the situation significantly.

Additionally, drivers are concerned that their employers do not equip them with the necessary protective gear e.g. face masks, protective gloves etc. We appeal to employers to do everything possible to protect their employees from health risks as good as possible.

There is already a great deal of discontent amongst the driver community; some of them are already calling for a strike. It is understandable that a profession whose working conditions were already dreadful under normal circumstances is not willing to bear another – unnecessary – deterioration of their situation.



Dear Commissioner, dear Ministers, we urgently beg you to take this situation seriously. The absolute last thing we are able to endure in this crisis would be a large-scaled strike of truck drivers. These people are inevitable, now more than ever. They ensure the steady supply of our citizens. They enable others to practice the vital *social distancing* and stay home. We have to treat them with the dignity and the respect they deserve.

Yours sincerely,

Ismail ERTUG, // S&D Vice-President

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