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Key transport challenges

IRU Spring Cocktail

**Speaking Points**

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## ***Introduction***

Dear colleagues and friends, dear IRU Members,

Good evening. Thank you for the invitation to be here. I am very pleased to be back after some years and to address you all, this time in my capacity as the Director General for Mobility and Transport.

Let me try to shortly outline a couple of key challenges facing the road transport sector.

## ***Internal Market for Road Transport***

For a well-functioning Internal Market for Road Transport, clear and commonly applied rules are essential. Equally important are unhindered border crossings between Member States.

Unfortunately, we are seeing a number of developments these days going in the opposite direction.

I strongly believe there is need to find a right balance between an efficient and well-functioning Internal Market for road transport, the protection of workers and fair competition. A goal that the current legal framework is trying to achieve.

Today, we are unfortunately seeing several examples, where EU Member States are taking own initiatives which are at the same time also unduly restrictive. Let me underline that the Commission has engaged in dialogue with the Member States and if there is no progress, we will not hesitate to address these issues via infringement procedures when necessary.

This said, we equally know that the current rules are far from perfect. They are unclear in some important points, and this leads to different interpretations between Member States. We plan to tackle these issues as part of the announced Road Initiatives by clarifying those rules and, whenever possible, by simplifying them.

We are also facing new challenges, the re-introduction of border controls as a result of the migrant crisis would really be a serious impediment to the free movement of goods in the Internal Market. We know this situation could have a significant impact on road transport. Our estimation is that the impact on the road haulage sector could be at least 3 billion euros. In this context, let me just underline that we will do our utmost to ensure that the specific situation of the road transport sector is properly taken into account.

## ***Efficiency of Road Transport***

Road Transport is generally a very efficient mode of transport, as demonstrated by the high share of goods and passengers transported by road.

The question today is how to maintain an efficient Road Transport sector, while at the same time reducing its negative environmental side-effects?

As you know, the Commission is working on a strategy to decarbonise the transport sector. This work is ongoing and will result in a Communication later in the year. We believe that Road Charging is an important instrument in this context to incentivise cleaner vehicles and cleaner fuels, as well as more efficient transport operations. Does this mean paying more? Not necessarily. Without increasing road charges, one could think of a bonus/malus system where the 'good' pay less and the 'bad' pay more.

I believe another answer to efficiency is to work on innovation in road transport. Infrastructure capacity is limited so we must strive to use it in an optimal way. Many initiatives are ongoing that we can only encourage. For example, the Netherlands initiated a "European Truck Platooning Challenge 2016" whereby truck platoons will rally to the Netherlands from different cities like Vienna, through Frankfurt am Main. The Commission will continue to support technology developments, for instance within Horizon 2020 and via the ITS Platform established by DG MOVE. I can also see a lot of perspective through better use of IT solutions in the logistics chain and to that effect also in road transport. We need to use all the means available to increase the efficiency and to benefit from the modern tools !

# ***Passenger Transport***

Passenger transport by coach or bus is among the safest and most energy efficient means of transport. The latent demand by users is vast. This has recently been clearly seen in Member States where markets for regular domestic transport have been opened (e.g. DE and FR): as a result, such services have really flourished.

We need to keep promoting these kinds of developments. This is one of the elements we plan to present in the context of the Road Initiatives the Commission is going to put forward at the end of this year.

## ***Conclusion***

Dear friends, I think we can all agree that there are many challenges ahead of us. It is only by working together that we will be able to solve them. I therefore take this opportunity to say that we must keep up our good and close cooperation. The Commission is going to ask for your input on a number of occasions in 2016. It will be as part of the public stakeholder consultation on the Road Initiatives and also at the Road Transport conference in April.

It is by working together that we will contribute to maintaining a strong, sustainable and competitive road transport sector in Europe. Thank you very much.