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DRIVER SHORTAGE ALSO NEEDS LEGAL IMMIGRATION

IRU Resolution adopted at the IRU General Assembly on 12 May 2023.

The IRU General Assembly, the voice of over 3.5 million companies operating mobility and logistics services, calls on governments to focus on tailored immigration policies to address the dramatic shortage of drivers in the road transport industry.

The commercial road transport industry is the backbone of modern supply and mobility chains, serving citizens and customers efficiently anytime, anywhere, and moving our societies and economies where they need to be. While serving businesses and consumers, the shortage of drivers seriously affects passenger transport operations and has tremendous knock-on effects on supply chains.

In 2022, more than 2.6 million commercial vehicle driver positions globally were unfilled. Increased transport demand, an ageing professional driver population, and an insufficient number of younger drivers joining the profession are the main reasons for the chronic driver shortage. IRU predicts that in some countries the shortage will be so dramatic that 50% of the total number of driver positions could be vacant by 2026.

The road transport industry will continue doing its utmost to increase the attractiveness of the profession. Specific actions include raising awareness on the essential contribution that professional drivers make to societies and economies, improving the image of the profession, improving working conditions, advocating for safe and secure parking areas and reduction of border waiting times, increasing salaries and facilitating the path to becoming a professional driver. In particular, attracting young people and women to the profession remains an urgent priority for the road transport industry.

Bearing in mind that other sectors are also affected by a shortage of skilled labour force, resulting in strong competition between sectors for the same workforce, the industry has not been able to stop, let alone reverse, the negative trend. Therefore, while resolutely continuing concerted actions on a national level, the road transport industry equally needs tailored legal immigration policies as a complementary measure to adequately address the current, urgent crisis.

There are already positive examples of countries and regions that have successfully introduced legal immigration policies to help tackle commercial vehicle driver shortage. It should be noted that it is not the intent of the industry to simply acquire cheap labour nor to create a detrimental skills drain in other countries. Rather, the aim would be to bring a net economic benefit to the families, the road transport industry and economies of the host country and home country. Jobs in a host country need to be paid in line with national wages, alongside respecting the social and decent working conditions and training standards already in place. It must also be highlighted that safety and security standards are imperative and cannot, under any circumstances, be compromised.

Given the overarching public, economic and labour market interest in addressing the skills shortage gap and avoiding a skills drain in other countries while ensuring high professional standards, IRU calls on:

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and other relevant international and regional organisations to:

- Address skills shortage of the road transport industry within the social sector dialogue to ensure social cohesion.

- Foster international coordination and cooperation on tailored, legal immigration and integration within the road transport industry.
- Foster a framework of guidelines aimed at easing integration and establishing decent work programmes for legal immigrants willing to work in the road transport industry.

National Ministries of Transport, Labour, Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, to:

- Increase cooperation between Ministries and take urgent action to implement tailored and structured labour and immigration measures specifically oriented to the road transport industry.
- Harmonise professional qualification training and requirements based on industry driver skills profiling and ensure cross border recognition of existing qualifications.
- Work in partnership with the road transport industry through IRU members to implement political and operational facilitation measures (including training centre twinning programmes, and training programmes offered in the country of origin of the workforce), and reduce red tape aimed at easing legal immigration and integration processes, while at the same time mitigating risks.
- Amend labour immigration procedures to allow the legal immigration of workers interested in becoming and staying professional drivers, for example by allowing immigration upon presentation of a professional driver training contract or professional driving licence.
- Amend existing and conclude new agreements with third countries for the recognition of professional driving licences.
- Develop favourable financing mechanisms and training centres, including language courses, for the integration and training of legal immigrants in the road transport industry's workforce.

Road transport companies to:

- Manage their drivers through proper talent management processes, focusing on driver skills profiling to address performance gaps and mitigate risks.
- Develop and implement specific operational integration programmes for legal immigrants.
- Further develop and extend training and retention programmes for drivers, specifically for legal immigrants.

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