



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

The Director-General

Brussels

Umberto de Pretto
Secretary General

International Road Transport Union

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Dear Mr de Pretto,

DEAR SECRETARY GENERAL

Thank you for your letter you sent to Commission President von der Leyen on 20 January 2021. The President asked me to answer you on her behalf.

I fully agree with your observations that restrictions implemented by some Member States and in general the variety of containment measures introduced in Europe put stress on the transport system, logistics companies and individual drivers and crew.

While precautionary measures are necessary to protect the health of citizens, they need to be proportionate and avoid the disruption of logistics and essential transport. We all remember the situation in March when the uncoordinated border closing resulted in empty shelves, panic reactions, desperate consumers and businesses. We also need to recall that it was the capacity of our overall transport and logistics system, particularly with the Green Lanes concept at its heart that played a crucial part of overcoming this episode, as we were able to reassure consumers and customers that goods would continue to flow. It indeed was a great achievement thanks to the good cooperation with your organisation and your members, too.

I can reassure you that the position of the Commission has not changed since the beginning of the pandemic. Frictionless transport chains are vital to the Union and a responsibility for our citizens and businesses. Fortunately, the vast majority of Member States are continuing to respect the Green Lanes and are excluding freight and transport workers from new requirements. This secures that the risk of traffic accumulation at borders remains limited.

You rightly pointed out that the specificities of the road transport sector – drivers working alone and following very strict safety measures– are guarantees that the sector remains crisis-resistant. This is a fact, which has indeed been seen in Dover last year, and I am sure it will continue to be demonstrated in other occasions. This resilience cannot be taken for granted however, we must continue working together and prove it every day. I know that IRU plays an important role in this strive and I am thankful for it.

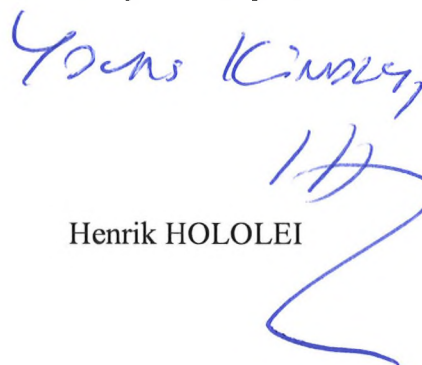
I also agree with you that there is a potential risk that the new testing requirements in some Member States – you mentioned Germany but others equally impose requirements vis-à-vis certain groups of transport workers – may create a burden for the sector and jeopardise the Green Lanes principles. In addition, because these new measures are taken unilaterally, they confront the freight industry with an ever-changing patchwork of rules. This bears a risk that transport workers face being subject to different testing regimes while travelling through Europe, paying penalties and ultimately quarantine measures if the patchwork of rules are not followed.

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to keep Green Lanes operational at all times. My services continue monitoring the waiting times at the border crossing points and – in the spirit of the successful Green Lanes initiative – the Commission stands ready to coordinate whenever traffic issues related to COVID-19 arise.

In this work, the role of the national transport contact points network is crucial. It allows the Commission and Member States to efficiently discuss potential issues, highlight concerns in order that measures can be re-considered and this way the negative impacts mitigated. I am aware that your organisation keeps a close contact with the services of DG MOVE and I appreciate that you help us and the network by feeding useful and indispensable information that derives from the field.

Keeping Green Lanes operational is even more important now, when essential goods such as vaccines need to be distributed quickly around Europe. Our goal is the same, we need to keep freight transport running and ensure that European citizens and businesses do not face short supplies, empty shelves and hauliers can smoothly do their job.

Yours sincerely,


Henrik HOLELEI