



Brussels, 26 October 2018

## **Open letter on the potential consequences of obligatory return of the truck**

Dear European and national decision makers,

The Mobility Packages 1 files negotiations are currently at crossroads. Finding agreements on highly controversial files such as access to the profession of road transport operators and to the road haulage market, driving and rest time rules and posting of workers is not an easy task. Modifications to certain rules become necessary in the search for settlements.

However, IRU is very concerned about the current discussions around the obligatory return of the truck and the recent proposed amendments. Any change that would require trucks to return to the country of establishment or to the premises of the company every three or four weeks must not be used as a horse-trade. These changes will hinder on-going efforts to reduce the number of trucks on the road, lower fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and improve efficiency.

### **Empty running**

Road freight transport and logistics sector has been making considerable efforts to increase efficiency, reduce empty mileage and save fuel. According to the European Commission data, empty running has decreased by 2% over the last ten years. The empty running rate as part of total vehicle mileage has been consistently much lower in international road freight (14%) compared to domestic road freight (26%)<sup>1</sup>. Up to 76% of fuel consumption reduction will have to come from different kinds of efficiency improvements.<sup>2</sup>

The newly proposed amendments would create unnecessary heavy goods vehicle movements on EU roads and hinder the road freight transport and logistics industry's efforts to improve efficiency and reduce empty mileage.

Today, most trucks return to the country of establishment of the company only once or twice per year. An obligation for these same trucks to return every three to four weeks could increase the mileage of heavy goods vehicles by 80 up to 135 million vehicle kilometres per year (45 to 75% increase).

This could have a considerable impact on the empty mileage and the additional vehicle mileage could generate up to 100 000 tonnes of truck CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per year.<sup>3</sup>

The negative impacts on road freight transport, logistics, environment and the European economy are considerable. For these reasons, until today, the forced return of heavy goods vehicles to their country of registration or country of establishment of the company has been kept to an absolute minimum.

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission: "Overview on the European Road Transport Market, 2015"

<sup>2</sup> 2017 IEA report – [Future of Trucks](#)

<sup>3</sup> Calculations based on 2017 road freight transport figures of Eurostat.

## **Contradictory objectives**

The European Commission has repeatedly indicated that one of the aims of the EU's Common Transport Policy is to reduce empty mileage in road freight transport and to avoid an increase of empty running through new market restrictions. Therefore, IRU is strongly concerned that such restrictions are now being considered by the European Parliament and the Council.

IRU also recalls that:

- the European Commission has launched the Low Emission Mobility Strategy in 2016 which prioritises measures to reduce fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of heavy goods vehicles.
- the European Commission tabled a new proposal on road user charging in May 2017 aiming at increasing the road freight transport's contribution to payments for the use of the road. One of the objectives of this proposal is to further improve road freight transport's efficiency, increase the load factor and reduce empty mileage.

A change of the return policy will create a direct contradiction between the EU Common Transport Policy and its decarbonisation and transport network efficiency aims. It jeopardises the industry's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and could discourage the road hauliers' use of combined and multimodal transport. When transport operators are forced to drive more with a high risk of returning empty, they might prefer to carry goods only by road for an entire journey rather than using other modes of transport.

IRU calls on Member States and Members of the European Parliament to reconsider the introduction of new rules which would force vehicles to periodically return home. Incentivising the return of drivers through the posting of workers and driving and rest time rules should be focused on instead.

Yours sincerely,



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