

To the attention of:

Transport Ministers  
Health Ministers  
Internal Affairs Ministers

In copy:

EU Permanent Representations

26 January 2021

Dear Minister,

In view of new or stricter restrictions on the movement of goods and transport personnel, which more and more EU Members States are considering or already implementing to counter the more transmissible new variants of COVID-19, CLECAT warns about the dramatic impact that these new rules and controls may have on intra-European and international supply chains.

CLECAT, on behalf of the freight forwarding, transport and logistics sector, welcomes the appeal of Commissioner Vălean to EU Transport Ministers from 19 January 2021, reiterating the importance of keeping the Green Lanes operational at all times “to keep transport moving and to ensure the free movement of goods, thus avoiding supply chain disruptions.” Whereas CLECAT appreciates this initiative, it remains highly concerned with national measures that could, despite the lessons learnt from the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, block freight movement and interrupt seamless supply chains, not least those of critical goods and vaccines.

In this respect, CLECAT is particularly alarmed by the new requirements introduced in Germany, related to the mandatory testing measures for persons entering Germany from countries considered a ‘high incidence area’ or an ‘area of variant of concern’, which are also applicable to truck drivers, train drivers, flight personnel and inland waterway operators as well as seafarers. According to the new federal regulation, introduced on 13 January 2021 and extended last week, the entry to German territory of the above-listed transport workers coming from the rapidly expanding number of risk areas may be blocked unless they can provide a negative PCR test. Not only will this cause blockages in central European freight corridors but may also result in a ‘domino effect’ on the neighbouring countries of Germany, with enormous consequences on wider supply chains across the EU.

Notably, the risk does not really come from professional truck drivers – for instance, only 0.3% of them tested positive as a result of the systematic testing carried out in Dover between 22-31 December 2020, according to the European Commission. This should not be surprising given that truck drivers are usually isolated in their cabin and must comply with strict measures against the COVID-19 infection put in place by their employers and customers, such as no physical contact at pick-up and delivery locations. This makes truck drivers and logistics personnel a safe group with a very low positivity rate.

CLECAT is equally concerned about possible new requirements, similar to those announced in the Netherlands last week with respect to the testing of airline staff, which would negatively impact the air freight supply chains. Whereas a solution has now been found between the national air carrier and the government, CLECAT calls on the Member States to respect the fact that during COVID-19 pandemic the fast and reliable air cargo chain has proved to be indispensable in providing citizens, health services and businesses with the goods and materials they need. In this respect, the European Commission's guidelines on facilitating air cargo operations during the outbreak of COVID-19 have been welcomed.

CLECAT would also like to reiterate that restrictions on drivers and transport workers can significantly disrupt the movement of critical supplies and especially the COVID-19 vaccine distribution, which needs a particularly smooth supply chain along European transport corridors. Accordingly, the freight forwarding, transport and logistics sector cannot efficiently operate with a patchwork of measures in Europe when it seeks to provide logistics solutions for transporting essential goods and vaccines.

CLECAT highly appreciates the work of the European Commission against the spread of the COVID-19, including its recent communication "A united front to beat COVID-19", calling on the Member States to preserve the functioning of the Single Market and to respect the Green Lanes concept. Instead of finding national solutions on a case-by-case basis, CLECAT believes that Member States should follow a coordinated approach on the European level, in view of more certainty for the cross-border transport and logistics sector.

In line with the Commission's proposal from 25 January 2021 to extend the Council Recommendation (EU) 2020/1475 of 13 October 2020 on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage the Member States to prevent any kind of barriers to the transportation of goods and the movement of transport and logistics personnel, in particular the mandatory COVID-19 testing and quarantine requirements, to maintain healthy supply chains and prevent the negative economic consequences for European businesses and citizens. The Member States could also consider making available all relevant information and requirements for transport workers on their websites under a dedicated section to avoid any further confusion.

We thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicolette van der Jagt', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nicolette van der Jagt  
Director General