



INFORMAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING ON TRANSPORT RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS - VTC 9 JUNE 2020

Key messages from DDG Matthew Baldwin (DG MOVE)

- Welcomes the discussion on this Advisory Group within the UNECE-Inland Transport Committee.
- The pandemic has been a game changer for the inland transport sector: there is a '**before COVID-19**' (BC) and an '**after COVID-19**' (AC) in all its different segments (passenger, freight, regulation about crews and driving).
- The European Commission has been coordinating EU-level efforts and advocating international coordination in transport-related measures to respond to Covid-19.
- Specific measures covering "*Customs, transit and border management sector*", will be presented by a Commission colleague from DG TAXUD.

Transport measures to respond to the Crisis – key principles

- The **key principles** that informed EU action during this emergency was to ensure the necessary safety conditions for transport (for both passengers and transport workers) through **transparent, proportionate, non-discriminatory and coordinated** measures.
- Global coordination is essential to restore and maintain a resilient global transportation infrastructure and industry that supports the global supply chains.
- EU supports sharing the key principles of the policy responses to the Covid-19 crisis with key international transportation partners. These include the G20, relevant technical multilateral organizations, such as ICAO and IMO, inter-governmental fora such as ASEM and of course the **UNECE-ITC as regards inland transport issues**.
- Key objective for the EU from the outset is to act quickly in order to ensure effectiveness of national measures, while securing the free movement of goods (notably the essential supply to cope with the pandemic) in the EU.
- **In the railway sector**, we noted -85% long distance rail passenger service, -80% regional rail passenger service (including sub-urban), near standstill on international rail passenger services.¹
- **Rail freight transport** is largely exempted from restriction measures but operators have reported a reduction of freight volumes in the range of 20-50% due to the economic slowdown.
- -55% contraction is possible for the overall European **road passenger transport** market in 2020, all segments included (**urban, peri-urban** bus transport services).²

¹ Source : CER (European Railways)

² Source : IRU (International Road Union)

Measures taken at EU level

- Introduction of the **green lanes** for operational continuity at road and rail cross borders. These entailed:
 - o Approach extended to all goods and provide for **max 15 min** of BCP time (within the EU, where normally no checks at all take place).
 - o Set up a **network of contact points** exchanging regularly. This network was extended to non-EU countries with borders to the EU.
 - o Set up an **online portal** providing access to information about measures and rules taken at national level.
- The Pandemic has made administrative formalities and activities complicated in Member States. To ensure continuity in transport operations during these extraordinary times, it was important to **temporarily derogate from more than ten legal acts on the renewal, extension or continued validity of certificates, licences and authorisations, or on periodic checks**.
- Other measures addressed various possibilities for introducing State support, including under a new **Temporary Framework for State Aid**.
- A European Commission Recommendation on **Travel and transport services** addressed the important question of vouchers offered to passengers as an alternative to reimbursement.
- Of course, these measures reflected the EU decision of 16 March 2020 on a **temporary restriction on non-essential travel** to the EU, for an initial period of 30 days, which has been prolonged twice **until 15 June 2020**.
- This is of particular importance for categories of transport workers in the aviation and maritime sectors. Exchanging information about the **repatriation rules** in place is essential to avoid negative effect on travellers (such as future personal travel bans, refusing visa, problems with transit, etc.) once the restrictions are lifted.

Restoration measures AC

- In the field of transport, a **package of guidelines and recommendations to help Member States gradually lift travel restrictions** and allow tourism businesses to reopen, after months of lockdown, while respecting necessary health precautions.
- The Commission's Tourism and Transport recovery strategy includes:
 - o Restoring free movement and lifting restrictions at EU internal borders in a gradual and coordinated way;
 - o Framework to support the gradual re-establishment of transport whilst ensuring the safety of passengers and personnel;

Road Safety

- Concerning this key policy area for UNECE-ITC, we estimate - **for the EU as a whole** - that while the number of road fatalities was relatively stable in January (+1%) and February (+4%), **it fell by around 30% in March and 50% in April** (compared to same period in previous years). This reduction represents several hundred saved lives.
- We also note **developments in relation to coronavirus and what they could imply**. For example, potential consequences of mobility that is more active, changes to urban mobility infrastructure but also risk of speeding offences on empty roads,.

- As we exit the crisis, we must not neglect safety in favour of getting the economy going again. **We can do both!**
- An **increase in enforcement efforts** could be needed if indeed there is a problem with speeding offences.
- Many cities have used the crisis to roll out **temporary infrastructure measures**, like “pop-up bike lanes”.
- Let’s think about the **urban mobility mix**: we need to re-establish confidence in public transport, and we need to integrate public transport with walking and cycling as well as with sharing schemes and micromobility solutions.
- And lastly, we must **not abandon our leadership role in the world**. Many of you were at the **Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety in Stockholm**. I was impressed with the motivation and resolve of the community. Let’s maintain this resolve through the crisis and emerge with a **strong agenda for road safety for the coming decade**.