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European Transport Workers' Federation
Fédération Européenne des Travailleurs des Transports
Europäische Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Federación Europea de los Trabajadores del Transporte

Brussels, 9 April 2018

Open letter to the Members of the European Parliament

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

ETF will accept no compromise on the core driving and rest time rules!

April and May will be key months for the European Parliament, as MEPs will try to reach compromises on the revision of driving and rest time, on the application of posting of workers rules to drivers, on cabotage and on putting an end to letter-box companies.

Driving and rest time rules are crucial for our drivers! They influence pay, time spent with the family, quality of rest, and last but not least driver, passenger and road safety.

The ETF and its affiliated members will not support any compromise to the core rules of driving and rest time: no changes to the reference period of 2 weeks, to the distribution of rest time and the driving hours, no special, laxer regime for bus and coach sector.

As for the weekly rest conditions, not only that we do not support weekly rest spent in the vehicle on reasons of road safety and driver safety, but in our view this 'solution' fails to provide a viable environment for business too. At present only a small percentage of parking areas across Europe are likely to fulfil some sort of criteria concerning facilities for drivers and security for freight. And they are very unlikely to increase in number, in the foreseeable future – in the next, let's say, decade. The persistent lack of such parking areas will lead to chaos, as well pointed out by MEPs during the exchange of views organised by the TRAN Committee of the European Parliament on 20 March. Basically, if the law is adopted with this 'derogation' for weekly rest in the lorry, no business will call their trucks back to the home country for the weekly rest. They will all hope to get a safe parking area on a Friday evening, end of business. And the majority of them will simply not be able to. This, in our view, will expose many companies to sanctions! Hence, this 'derogation' will only set an unclear, unpredictable climate for doing business in road transport. Please see the black book on the parking areas in Belgium:

https://issuu.com/kurtpoelmans/docs/parkingboek_2018_nl_issuu (NL)

https://issuu.com/kurtpoelmans/docs/parkingboek_2018_fr_issuu (FR)

as a piece of convincing evidence in this sense.

To the above, making drivers sleep in trucks on the weekly rest is a practice used by default by the letter-box companies. So, legalising the weekly rest in the lorry is actually legalising practices used by this type of companies to gain competitive advantage against compliant hauliers. It goes without saying that allowing drivers spend weekly rest periods in trucks will lead to more unfair competition in the sector, and will come in full contradiction with the definition of rest, as well as the political objectives of Regulation 561.



President Frank Moreels

General Secretary Eduardo Chagas

Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
Ekaterina Yordanova




The reference periods for driving and rest time and rumours about adopting a special regime for the bus and coach sector generate even more concern among drivers and trade unions. It is perfectly true: bus & coach transport is not freight transport! It is transportation of passengers – hence, even more so, the need for tighter rules, to safeguard passenger and driver safety! To take only one example, the outcome of the investigation into a last year’s bus accident in Sweden, in the south of Sveg, resulted in 3 deaths and many injured passengers. According to the Swedish Accident Investigation Authorities, driver fatigue is closely related to the causes of this accident. In the light of these conclusions, we expect that the European Parliament adopts a legal framework to fully support better rest periods for drivers, placing road safety at the core of the Mobility Package. In freight transport, as the President of the Romanian SLT trade union mentioned during her visit to the European Parliament end of March, truck drivers cannot wait to take their 45 hour break after 2 full weeks of driving. Endorsing the European Commission proposal in these circumstances, would mean going against their call for better rest conditions, for putting an end to fatigue, and against many other calls for the respect of driver health and road safety.

The ETF will closely follow the debates in the European Parliament on the driving and rest hours. Potential changes in these rules, so meaningful for our drivers, are part of our mobilisation call for the European demonstration in Strasbourg, on 29 May.

With the hope that you do take our views into account,

In solidarity,



Eduardo Chagas
ETF General Secretary

The ETF represents more than 5 million transport workers from more than 230 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.



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