



The Transport Response to COVID-19

In view of the ongoing epidemic emergency due to COVID-19, BusinessEurope deems it highly important to safeguard the free flow of goods and the working of supply chains across the EU during this crisis. People and businesses rely on timely delivery of goods, including basic necessities such as food and medical supplies. In order to secure these closely interlinked logistics chains, all transport modes need to continue to work as smoothly as possible.

BusinessEurope strongly welcomes the European Commission's guidelines for border management and practical guidance on the implementation of green lanes for freight transport that are hereby preserving the functioning of the Single Market.

Even though most Member States have publicly committed to keeping their transport system functioning, freight transport is being increasingly challenged by newly created cross-border checks which have resulted in congestion. Initially, delays of more than 30 hours have been reported at some intra-EU border crossings and up to 72 hours at external EU borders. Despite improvements, delays at certain border crossings remain unacceptable. Basic customs procedures should only require 2 to 3 minutes per vehicle. Concrete actions are needed to improve the situation and BusinessEurope expects Member States to live up to the commitments.

BusinessEurope urgently calls on all Member States to **fully implement green lanes without delay and to provide clarity and uniformity of all measures for border management within the EU.**

To ensure smooth flow of freight transport the following elements are important:

Green lanes: As recommended by the European Commission, green lane border crossings should be open to all freight vehicles - regardless of the carried goods - and crossing the border through green lanes should not take more than 15 minutes. This is an absolute minimum that can be done to mitigate impact, as allowing up to 15 minutes to cross intra-EU borders can cause delays of more than 24 hours for logistical planning. Also, any inspections, for example health screenings, should be coordinated between neighboring states and held in the most efficient way, preferably inland at dedicated sites away from the border, such as available parking lots, instead of the border crossing. This will prevent further unnecessary delays in exchange of goods.

Free movement of labor: Some Member States are imposing a 14 days quarantine on carriers returning from other Member States or even banning carriers from driving across EU borders. This will affect the free movement of labor and possibly have significant economic consequences. Member States must take action to ensure safe free movement of all workers involved in international transport, whatever the transport mode, in a harmonized and coordinated way.

Simplification: Bureaucracy for cross-border freight transport should be minimized, forms should be easy to fill in and accessible and electronic papers should be accepted. As provided in the European Commission's guidance, Member States should abandon requirements to oblige asymptomatic transport workers to produce doctor's health certificates, and internationally recognized certificates of professional competence should be considered sufficient.

Transparency and access to information: BusinessEurope welcomes the creation of focal points in the Transport Ministries of Member States and an information platform at the COVID-19 website of the European Commission. We underline the importance of real-time and correct information regarding all pertinent rules and restrictions of Member States.

Required infrastructure: Member States should guarantee the continued availability of required infrastructure and its servicing for the needs for cross-border transport, such as refueling stations, sanitary and food facilities. Workshops and parts warehouses for commercial vehicles must also be allowed to continue operations in order to provide essential repair services for the functioning of commercial transport.

Bans: Member States should temporarily waive all types of driving restrictions for freight transport, for example weekend bans, night bans, sectoral bans, etc. The suspension of these will contribute to increase the fluidity of traffic.

Economic damage: Moreover, and taking into account the extraordinary impact that the coronavirus crisis is placing on the transport sector, we urge the European Commission to examine temporary adjustments to applicable legislation on common rules for compensation in case of travel cancellations by passenger transport operators which could allow them to provide appropriate alternative solutions, that could help soften the massive economic damage in the sector and keep also cargo carrying capacities as much as possible. Financial support should be considered.

Finally, BusinessEurope would like to thank Member States for their lenience concerning the driving and resting times. In these exceptional times when businesses struggle to survive, exceptional measures are required to ensure flow of goods to people and industry. The health crisis has forced the EU to adapt its decision making. Therefore, any new legislation, such as the Mobility Package 1, should be carefully assessed taking into account the current crisis situation, to avoid further substantive pressure on businesses that would jeopardize their existence.

We remain wholly committed in this joint endeavour to ensure Europe's safe and prosperous return.