

Brussels, 14th May 2018

3rd Ministerial Meeting of “Road Alliance” – Ministers’ Statement

Following the technical meeting, held on February 28th and March 1st 2018 in Vienna, and exchanges between Ministers in Ljubljana on April 25th, the Ministers and Representatives of the members of the Road Alliance, together with The Netherlands attending as an observer, met for their third ministerial meeting on May 14th in Brussels.

On the occasion of this meeting, the Ministers of the Road Alliance formally welcomed Greece as a full member of the Alliance.

The Ministers and Representatives present at this meeting made the following declaration:

We, Transport Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, wish first of all to reaffirm the principles and objectives pursued by the Alliance, conveyed in its initial Memorandum.

The strength and future of the European Union is based both on its single market and on the respect of fundamental rights, especially social rights. These are the fundamental pillars to underline the added value of European integration. Therefore, social convergence is needed in order to improve working conditions in all Member States of the EU.

We aim to move more rapidly towards an integrated Europe where road haulage will be carried out in an economic area, where competition will be fair and healthy between economic actors, where social rights of workers will be better ensured, and where the safety of drivers and road users is enhanced.

To achieve these objectives, we reiterate the following:

- *Only when harmonisation of relevant social legislation relating to road transport will be implemented in practice, discussion about further liberalisation of the road transport market, in particular as regards cabotage by road, could be envisaged;*
- *The legislative framework for driving times and rest periods must ensure a high level of social protection and should not be weakened;*
- *The EU must promote more effective mechanisms for coordinating and enforcing controls to verify, in practice, the proper application of the rules applicable to the sector;*
- *Enhancing the profession of road driver at a time when many Member States are struck by a shortage of workforce in the road transport sector.*

However, we regret that most proposals presented, in recent months, by the Presidency with regard to the Mobility package do not respect these objectives, nor those pursued by the European Commission when it initiated this Mobility package. These proposals risk maintaining legal uncertainty and differences in the interpretation of the regulations, making checks more difficult and leading to a deterioration of working conditions of lorry drivers and road safety,

while further exacerbating social dumping, unfair competition and systematic cabotage practices at the expense of the already fragile balance of the European and national markets.

Furthermore, the texts drawn up so far do not take sufficiently into account the remarks made on many occasions by the countries we represent, mainly with regard to the posting of workers, cabotage and driving times and rest periods. These issues have a direct impact on the lives of European workers.

The Presidency's new proposals do not constitute progress in the search for a real compromise that effectively and concretely prevents the misuse of European road transport law; a compromise on progress, which does not degrade social rules and strengthens the European project, is nevertheless essential.

The prevention of fraud in cabotage, posting and combined transport, as well as the fight against letterbox companies and the control of the exponential development of light-duty vehicles and their uses, are all fundamental questions that must be answered in concrete and operational terms.

Furthermore, we emphasize that the Mobility package must be understood in a comprehensive and detailed approach. We cannot accept a package that is not properly balanced. These rules will commit the European Union and its Member States for at least the next ten years and there is no question of adopting them if they are neither ambitious enough nor easily controllable.

However, it must be noted that a lot of open issues still have to be addressed before an agreement can be reached in Council. Considering the current situation, an agreement by June risks being compromised.

We therefore call upon the Presidency to take into account, as soon as possible, the requests formulated by our countries and reiterate our constructive mind. We are prepared to work out compromises on a reasonable and balanced basis, so that we can offer the citizens of the European Union high-quality road transport that respects everyone's safety and living conditions.