

PRESS RELEASE

COVID-19: Mastering the challenges for Freight Transport now and in the Transition to the Post-pandemic Era

Brussels, 6 May 2020 – At the first webinar organised by the European Logistics Platform (ELP), over 60 EU policy-makers and industry representatives met virtually to discuss how the freight transport sector was mastering the challenges caused by the crisis following the COVID-19 outbreak, and what would be needed for a successful transition to the post-pandemic era.

Caroline Nagtegaal, Member of the European Parliament and Vice-Chair of the Transport Committee (TRAN), opened the webinar with an overview on the European Parliament’s initiatives in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the area of freight transport, in support of the Commission’s rapid response with the Green Lanes, which proved to be instrumental to quickly reduce blockages and long waiting times at borders for freight. Ms Nagtegaal highlighted the package of relief measures for transport that had been adopted by the Commission and noted that the Parliament will seek to finalise urgent legislative proposals to ensure business continuity in these hard times. In conclusion, she noted that: ‘this crisis proves the importance of freight transport and logistics for the EU economy and citizens and this is owed to the great job of workers in this sector who have continued to bring food and medicines to all in need.’

Tobias Larsson & Mirko Woitzik from **Resilience360**, an innovative supply chain risk management software platform that helps businesses mitigate the risk of supply chain disruption, outlined how COVID-19 has quickly emerged as the number one risk to global activity. This became very clear with the data presented on the impact of COVID-19 on global supply chains in particular on the various modes of transport, warehousing and manufacturing industry in Europe. Mr Woitzik warned for uncoordinated border re-openings, which could cause another wave of border delays and disruptions, the risks of bankruptcies for small businesses who need financial support and different national responses to the second infection wave. EU guidelines for transport sector should remain valid beyond the initial recovery period.

Matthew Baldwin, Deputy Director-General of DG MOVE, explained that the European Commission, in its efforts to address the pandemic focusses particularly on fixing practical problems, avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens and providing the necessary flexibility to adapt to the unprecedented context. He highlighted two main initiatives of DG MOVE to address the impact of COVID-19 on the transport industry, namely the transport contact points network established among EU Member States and the Green Lanes concept that ensured open EU borders for the movement of freight. The Commission set up a network of national contact points and a [platform](#) to provide information on national transport measures taken by Member States in response to the coronavirus. He further presented other important streams of work, noting that communication and good coordination techniques were key. Looking at the future, Mr Baldwin said that the Commission was exploring how to restore transport services and connectivity as quickly as public health allowed it and reassured the industry that the Green Lanes would remain in force. In that context, he stressed the importance of well-coordinated proportionate and non-discriminatory measures. Finally, Mr Baldwin assured the participants that sustainability would be at the forefront of the Commission’s strategy for recovery post-COVID-19.

Thomas Fabian, Director Commercial Vehicles at ACEA, gave an overview on the impact on the automotive industry, which had been hardly hit by the COVID-19 crisis, causing the shut-down of basically all operations at the beginning of March. He noted recently there had been a slow restart of industrial production, which was still being challenged by diverging measures taken in EU Member States. Mr Fabian concluded by outlining key elements for a successful restart including a coordinated relaunch of industry activity, appropriate measures to maintain the liquidity of businesses, a strong foundation for sustainable economic recovery in line with the Green Deal and an overall adequate regulatory framework.

Mark Dijk, Manager External Affairs at Port of Rotterdam, noted that the port was running well, with all services operational 24/7, accompanied by necessary health and safety measures, not the least because shipping handling and the associated processes in the logistics chain were designated as vital to keep society running. The crisis was however having a serious impact on volumes and therefore support measures remained important, also to revitalize the economy after the lockdown period. Mr Dijk was pleased with the good cooperation and coordination between parties which included continued coordination of port services, intensive communication with port users and stakeholders and continued development of ongoing port projects and preparation for post-crisis scenarios.

Libor Lochman, Executive Director at the Community of European Railways (CER), highlighted the importance of rail freight transport during the COVID-19 crisis, by transporting large quantities of cargo and serving society with necessary supplies while requiring minimal human resources. The EurAsian Landbridge provided the means to import goods from Asia during a time when air freight capacity was scarce. He highlighted that a shortage of the capacity for rail freight transport should be prevented once passenger demand would again increase.

In concluding the event, Ms **Nicolette van der Jagt, Chair of the ELP**, thanked the speakers for their valuable contributions and highlighted the transport sector's view that a patchwork of national measures should be avoided during the transition to the post-crisis era.

The European Logistics Platform consists of more than twenty industry stakeholders representing a wide variety of actors involved in logistics and supply chains across Europe. Current members are ACEA, Amazon, BDL, CER, CLECAT, Deutsche Bahn, Deutsche Post DHL Group, Duisport, ECG, ECSLA, ERFA, ESC, ESPO, FEPORT, FERRMED, FTA, Goodyear Operations Europe, Hutchison Whampoa, IRU, Michelin, NLA, Port of Rotterdam, P&G, TLN, UIRR, Volvo Group.

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