



**RE: Making safety a priority in the revision of Directive 96/53/EC**

Dear Vice-President Kallas,

We write you to express serious concerns about an apparent lack of ambition of the European Commission to improve the safety of lorry cabins in the context of the review of the weights & dimensions directive, for which you issued a proposal on 15 April.

You presented this proposal as an opportunity to make European lorries safer and cleaner; something that is urgently needed.

That is exactly why we supported your proposal. We believe the improvements to the cab design, e.g. to eliminate blind spots both to the front and to the side and improve crash performance and pedestrian protection, have an enormous potential to make European roads a safer place.

Our support for the Commission proposal is based on the assumption that safety is a top priority for the Commission. This also how we read the proposal; the explanatory memorandum states that *“streamlining of cabs must also improve the drivers’ field of vision”* and article 9 stipulates that there will be *“performance and safety requirements to be met by the cabs”*. These requirements are to be mandatory for lorry makers that apply for a length derogation.

We are therefore extremely worried that safety seems to have dropped off the Commission’s list of priorities on this file. The terms of reference of the expert group does not mention safety, and during the first meeting the Commission representative presented safety as a secondary concern, stressing that *“there is no intention in this EC proposal to make safety equipment mandatory.”* (Minutes of the Working Group on Aerodynamics – 30/05/2012). Similarly it was barely mentioned by Commission officials during the hearing in the European Parliament (17/09/2013).

Since safety of other road users is not a sales argument in the lorry market, a non-binding approach would lead to marginal safety improvements at best. With over 4,000 Europeans dying in lorry crashes in 2011 this is unacceptable.

This Directive provides a rare opportunity to tackle this pressing issue and must not be missed. That means safety must be a top priority and that the Commission must drive this issue forward.

It would therefore be very helpful if the Commission would clarify that in its proposal, the proposed new article 9 is to be read as meaning that lorry makers requesting extra design space must achieve legally binding, well-defined safety improvements in addition to aerodynamic improvements.

More clarity is needed because for three reasons. *First*, it would put an end to the existing confusion. *Secondly*, it would also help focus the work of the expert group. As long as it is not clear that the safety improvements will be compulsory for longer lorries, industry efforts will be focused on

preventing them from becoming so and the expert group will not be able to undertake the necessary technical work. *Finally*, more clarity would also increase the chance of the Commission proposal being supported in Parliament. A simple length increase without any substantial safety improvements is a very difficult sell and one that we will definitely not support.

We would go further and argue that, after a suitable transition period, all new trucks should have a redesigned cab providing road safety improvements. We hope that this issue will be fully discussed during the negotiations in the European Parliament and Council. In the meanwhile we count on the Commission to undertake the necessary technical preparations.

We urge you to clarify this matter shortly and look forward to continuing our constructive relationship with you and your staff,

Sincerely yours,

Cc: Director-General M. Ruete, H. Hololei, K. Fitch, F. Karamitsos, K. Hedberg, P. Jean;



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