



22 November 2017

Return to the ‘home’ country: make it really work for professional drivers!

Open letter by ETF Central and Eastern European organisations to the European Parliament and the governments of the EU Member States

On behalf of hundreds of thousands of drivers spending months away from home, working, living and sleeping in their truck cabins permanently, we make an appeal to the European Parliament and the governments of the EU Member States to deliver clear legal solutions for the drivers’ regular return to their home country.

These solutions are:

- A clear definition of ‘home’ as a country where the driver resides
- A clear legal provision that all travel costs to home and back to the workplace must be covered by the employer
- Clear enforcement measures to ensure that road transport companies comply with these two legal requirements

We also urge you to keep the driving and rest time rules unchanged, and to endorse that weekly rest must be taken outside the truck, in adequate accommodation provided and covered by the employer.

The European Commission proposal on driving and rest time regulation was already a huge disappointment for us, because it changed the distribution of the rest time and it only addressed the conditions of weekly rest without giving viable solutions for the return home of drivers from our region. We remind that under this proposal, the only obligation of the road transport operators is to organise the drivers’ schedules so that to allow them to return home every three weeks, without any specification about who pays for the trip and who pays for accommodation if the driver stays in the country of work.

But now, as different actors and institutions take position on the Mobility Package, we are alarmed of the course these debates take.

The employers’ associations declared in Brussels, on 27 October 2017, during the European Social Dialogue meeting for Road Transport and Logistics that in their view ‘home’ is the country where the road company is established. They justify their interpretation as the most cost effective and the easiest way to deal with this matter. Many of our drivers work for companies established sometimes as far as 1000 kms away from their country of residence. It is unacceptable that, after weeks of

intensive work, stress, fatigue and poor rest and living conditions, companies are freed from any substantial responsibility regarding the driver journey home and back to work.

At the same meeting, the European Commission declared that in Brussels the EU Institutions finally want to give the green light to spending the weekly rest in the truck, if parking areas are equipped with facilities. In our view this is a way to legalise what has been so far illegal: weekly rest spent in the truck. Who will properly control the quality of parking areas? How many parking areas will in fact be controlled and how often, since the road inspectorates are so short of personnel? We also are aware of statements that truck cabins are now modern and look like five star hotel rooms. We do not deny that commercial freight vehicles have modernised with time, but their dimensions have not increased. The drivers from our region must work, live, sleep and keep their belongings in a 4m² space, taken up by a bed of maximum 80 cms, a driver seat, the stir wheel, etc.

If we are to draw conclusions at this stage of the process, we believe that the EU wants to free road transport companies of any obligation to pay for the drivers' travel home and back, to allow companies to send drivers to the country of company establishment, and to also legally allow companies to keep their drivers on trucks during weekly rest. This is no favour to drivers from our region, but it is a great gift to companies exploiting them.

We trust that your commitment is however to genuinely solve out the problem of our truck drivers and that our view point will be reflected totally in your decisions.

Meanwhile we will continue to inform the drivers from our region via all means about the political debates and decisions taken in Brussels, which will have an undoubtful impact on their pay, on their work and on their family and social life. We will also engage in the ETF actions which aim to make the Mobility Package work for the people, for professional drivers.

Yours respectfully,

Sándor Eisen

President

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