

European Parliament and EU Member States must bring clarity on the first mobility package

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MEPs and member states must bring clarity on the first mobility package, argues IRU's Matthias Maedge



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The European Parliament and Council are now under scrutiny by the road transport sector as they work to deliver key initiatives proposed by the European Commission aimed at reforming and modernising the industry.

Precious time is running out. MEPs have already missed two opportunities to find consensus on proposals included in the first Mobility Package and are entrenched in disagreement with various EU member states and national industry stakeholders.

Road transport is the backbone of the European economy; it is an irreplaceable means of production. 70 per cent of overland freight is transported by road, with a further 60 per cent growth in volume projected by 2050.

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The commercial road transport sector alone employs nearly 11 million people directly, accounting for five per cent of total EU employment. At IRU – the world’s road transport organisation – we stand committed to help MEPs work out a path to modernisation that produces a safer, more efficient, and more environmentally-sustainable industry for the benefit of all.

We welcomed the Commission’s Mobility Package initiatives to reform and harmonise market regulations as a step forward towards clearer rules and more efficient mobility. But important questions still need to be clarified.

For drivers and operators, legal loopholes and lack of clarity in the current EU regulations have led to a patchwork of national rules open to conflicting interpretations. Regulatory reforms at EU level are therefore necessary and, we believe ultimately inevitable.

To begin with, potential new rules on the posting of workers must minimise operators’ administrative burdens. Allowing operators to organise driving and rest time hours over a four-week reference period would ensure seamless European trade and would safeguard drivers’ well-being.

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With over a billion vehicle operations in the EU annually, inflexibility around driving and rest time rules would prevent long-haul drivers from returning home. Secondly, modernisation requires digitalisation of enforcement procedures.

Efficient enforcement of existing cabotage rules, to take one example, is best supported by new technologies such as second- generation smart tachographs and the introduction of digital consignment notes (e-CMR).

Such technologies also provide for fair competition among operators, and will improve working conditions in the EU road freight transport sector.

Finally, public and private sectors must also make joint efforts to develop, improve, and maintain safe

and secure truck parking areas across Europe. We have taken an active role in a European study aiming to define standards and recommendations on how to achieve this goal.

The findings of the study will be presented by the end of the year. Stumbles in the legislative process of the first Mobility Package were to be expected as important issues are at stake and European-wide agreements are never achieved easily.

In the IRU, we count on the Parliament and Council's cooperation in understanding the urgency of road transport reform and call on them to start negotiations to establish clear, enforceable and efficient rules before the next EU elections.

About the author

Matthias Maedge is the General Delegate of the IRU Permanent Delegation to the EU

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