Brussels, 05.05.2021

Mr Eduart Kasa
President
Mr Adrian Albu
Secretary General
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Mr Apostolos Kenanidis
President
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Lefter Andonov
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Dear Mr Kasa,
Dear Mr Albu,
Dear Mr Kenanidis,
Dear Mr Andonov,

Thank you for your letters sent to Commissioner Vălean about the situation at the border crossing point of Evzoni. The Commissioner asked me to answer you on her behalf. Allow me to answer you in a single letter, given that the letter you send was identical.

European transport largely came to a halt and risked to create major disruptions to our economies in March 2020. In response to this turmoil, the Green Lanes concept has supported the functioning of the Single Market and ensured that the supply chains in the EU are uninterrupted while transport workers can move across borders to carry out their essential tasks.

The measures introduced at the border crossing point of Evzoni early March have indeed severely impacted the border crossing time of lorry drivers to Greece. Recognising the seriousness of the situation, the Commission quickly acted and started discussions with the Greek Government including a letter Commissioner Vălean sent to her Greek counterpart in order to find a solution that is mutually beneficial to all parties.
I am pleased that the Greek government has already amended the original measures by the beginning of April. I understand that truck drivers can cross the border much faster than in March. At the same time, we are aware that border crossing is not yet completely fluid and there is room for improvement. I assure you that the Commission services continue engaging with the Greek authorities on this matter.

On the other hand, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that health measures are within the remit of Member States, and it is their obligation to take appropriate, proportionate and transparent measures that protect their population.

Concerning border crossing at the external borders of the European Union, such as the one in question, the recently adopted Council Recommendation1 shall serve as basis for the EU’s coordinated approach. They take into account the high number of cases and the inherent risks posed by new variants while ensure that Green Lanes are guaranteed for freight transport. This Recommendation allows for testing requirements for transport workers, albeit limited to rapid antigen tests. The Recommendation hold no legal obligation vis-à-vis Member States however.

Finally, I would like to refer you to the most recently adopted Commission Communication2 about the safe and sustained re-opening. This document reaffirms that the Green Lanes principles for freight transport must continue to be applied in full in any circumstances when internal border controls are temporarily reintroduced as a measure of last resort.

Yours sincerely,

Walter GOETZ

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2 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council A common path to safe and sustained re-opening, COM(2021) 129 final