

Ms Ana Paula Zacarias
Secretary of State for European Affairs of Portugal
Rua da Cova de Moura, 1
1350-115 Lisboa
Portugal

Brussels, 11 February 2021

Subject: Cross-border trade in the Single Market and lack of uniformity

Dear Ms Secretary of State,

On 29 January, upon the proposal by the European Commission, a new Council Recommendation was adopted on the temporary restriction on non-essential travel within the EU and the possible lifting of such restrictions. European Chambers of Commerce and Industry positively assess this Recommendation, which addresses the right issues. It is of utmost importance that the Single Market, amid the current economic challenges, continues to function properly.

Despite the non-legally binding nature of a Recommendation, the need for a unified and consistent approach cannot be underestimated. A considerable number of companies operate across borders in the EU and would benefit from understandable, clear and uniform rules. As it stands today, Chambers are still being flooded with questions from businesses, of which many in the transport sector, about unevenly applied rules in the EU Member States.

Among the issues raised, Chambers report that businesses face excessive administration with regard to the translation of documents, inconsistent quarantine times, inaccessibility of official documents, unintelligible rules and congested green lanes due to disproportionate enforcement measures deployed at internal borders. Other members have also received complaints from businesses from neighbouring countries whose employees travelling within the EU need to show a new negative COVID result at each border crossing between member states. The mutual recognition of tests as well remains an important issue.

These obstacles have a direct impact on intra-EU trade and make it difficult for companies to fulfil contractual obligations. EUROCHAMBRES therefore pleads for a more uniform approach to national measures aimed at restricting non-essential travel within the EU. In particular, we support exceptions to travel restrictions for transporters and cross-border commuters foreseen in the Council Recommendation. Employees in the logistics sector (mostly drivers) should be able to return home without running the risk of having to quarantine or the obligation to demonstrate negative test results. Furthermore, in order to reduce bureaucracy, we would welcome an EU-wide uniform travel certificate in times of pandemic, which includes a translation in all official EU languages and has a sufficiently long validity.

What matters most in the current circumstances is legal certainty for businesses in order for them to avoid unexpected obstacles. Doing away with the current patchwork of rules and their uneven application is needed to ensure this. National governments are the actors who can *de facto* achieve this by means of increased coordination.

Finally, we call on the Presidency of the EU and national governments also to look to the near future. We believe that discussions on vaccination passports should be held already as an important element in Europe's recovery.

Yours sincerely,

Juho Romakkaniemi

Marko Čadež



Co-Chair of the
EUROCHAMBRES
Single Market Committee and
CEO Finland Chamber of
Commerce

Co-Chair of the
EUROCHAMBRES
Single Market Committee and
President Serbian Chamber of
Commerce