Press release | 26.03.2012

Mega-trucks

Commissioner Kallas bows to EP pressure and suspends planned reversal of gigaliner policy

EU transport commissioner Siim Kallas today announced he would suspend a planned reversal of EU policy on heavier and longer trucks, so-called gigaliners, with a view to legalising their cross-border use. Speaking in the European Parliament transport committee, the commissioner stated he would reconsider plans to implement a new interpretation of the existing EU legislation (Directive 96/53/EC) (1) following heavy criticism from MEPs. Commenting on the plans, Green transport spokesperson **Michael Cramer** said:

"The announcement by commissioner Kallas that he would suspend a planned u-turn on EU gigaliner rules is to be welcomed. He now needs to stick to his promise and reflect upon the objections raised by the vast majority of MEPs.

"The applicable EU legislation currently prohibits the cross-border circulation of these mega-trucks and with good reason. The commissioner cannot simply perform a hand-brake turn on the rules, revising the interpretation to have the totally opposite impact.

"The foreseen u-turn was not only at odds with the purpose of the legislation, as confirmed by independent experts (2), it also flies in the face of the democratic process. Any substantial change in the legislation cannot simply be implemented by changing an 'interpretation', it would require an ordinary legislative procedure, involving the Parliament and the Council as co-legislators. The Commission's role is to defend the treaties, not to break them."

Green transport spokesperson **Eva Lichtenberger** added:

"Authorising and promoting the use of mega-trucks on EU roads would lead to a shift away from rail for long-distance freight transport. This would be bad for the environment and for road safety, and is the exact opposite of what we should be doing to develop a more sustainable transport system.

"The Commission should unequivocally withdraw these plans and adhere to its previously stated position, which ruled out any cross-border gigaliners (3). If it fails to do so, the Greens will look at the possibility of referring the matter to the European Court of Justice."

Notes:

(1) The new interpretation, prepared by the Commission's legal services, would allow EU member states to conclude bilateral agreements permitting the cross-border traffic of gigaliners.

(2) Research from the German Bundestag's scientific services and a legal opinion authored by the renowned law firm Sherman & Sterlin LLP conclude that not only the content, but also the purpose of Directive 96/53/EC unambiguously prohibits the cross-

border use of gigaliners. Both reports also underline that the current legislation can only be amended through the ordinary legislative procedure, involving the Parliament and the Council as co-legislators.

(3) See the Commission's response to the written question by Michael Cramer on 21/03/2010 at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2010-0200&language=EN

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Michael Cramer

Member

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