



European Commissioner for Transport
Mrs Andina Vălean
Rue de Loi -Wetstraat 200
1049 | Brussels
Belgium

Per email: cab-valean-contact@ec.europa.eu

Leiden: June 6th, 2023

Marking:sml-TKN2306-1

Subject: Abnormal Transport permitting in Germany

Dear Mrs Vălean

I am writing to you on behalf of ESTA, the European Association of Abnormal Road Transport and Mobile Cranes. We have members in 25 countries working on many of Europe's most important energy, industrial, transport and construction projects.

The recent news from northern Germany that the delays in granting permits to heavy and abnormal transport look set to be the norm for many months to come illustrates an outrageous and damaging dereliction of duty by the authorities concerned.

Central and regional governments - both politicians and officials - and Autobahn GmbH have to date completely failed to recognise the gravity of the situation.

They have declined to adopt any immediate, short-term measures to ease this crisis or shown any sign of developing the long-term policies required for an efficient, modern industrial economy.

Heavy transport is an increasingly important service industry. We deliver heavy equipment from the factory to the ports for export, we transport the wind turbines essential for Europe's net zero ambitions, we carry the growing number of industrial and building units that are constructed offsite before being taken to their destinations. The German government's grand plans for an energy turnaround and a green economy are an illusion without functioning abnormal transport. We could go on.

Yet the transport companies and our clients are hampered every step of the way by a bureaucracy that is unable or unwilling to consider realistic solutions and politicians who are too often afraid to look beyond the next election.

The statement last week from the Northwest Branch of Autobahn GmbH des Bundes underlined the scale of the problem.

They said they are unable to reply to emails, because they are too busy; there is a telephone line, but that is just to check on the status of applications - not to expedite them - and they admitted it is very difficult to get through.

ESTA Office

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EU Transparency register

870060728390-52



Their long-suffering clients – the abnormal transport companies - have simply been told to be patient and to expect a permit processing time of nine or ten weeks, instead of nine or ten days. In fact, the issuance of most permits takes 15 weeks and there is a backlog of about 15,000 pending permit applications.

We are told that the situation will eventually improve - without any firm evidence whatsoever to back up that assertion. At no point is there any suggestion of serious action to try and improve the situation as it is today. According to Autobahn GmbH, the solution lies in a new automated permit handling system whose development will be accelerated by a few months and which should now go live in July. The current experiences with the dysfunctional VEMAGS system makes us fear the worst.

And in the long-term, what is the plan? On the part of the national authorities, we only hear statements about unrealistic plans to shift abnormal transport to railways (which are already overloaded) and to inland waterways (whose infrastructure in Germany may be in even worse condition than the road network)

Can we suggest an agreed programme of infrastructure investment, the development of agreed heavy transport routes, the creation of an agreed Europe-wide electronic permitting system, and common rules and regulations on the size and weight of loads (along with the rules on marking and lighting and escort cars)?

In our view that is the only way to develop an abnormal transport infrastructure where rail and inland waterway ambitions can be realised and the road network can be spared as much as possible. It opens the only realistic path to realise the German governments' green ambitions.

None of this is difficult. It just needs will and ambition.

But if the authorities continue to turn a deaf ear to these very real problems, German - and European - industry will suffer great harm. This is, we stress, not just an issue for German companies but for Europe as a whole.

As a result, we call on the German national and regional governments - and Autobahn GmbH - to turn this crisis into an opportunity, and lead all of Europe towards a series of sensible and long overdue policies to support heavy transport that will have a great and positive economic impact. The revision of the Directive 96/53/EC on weights and dimensions for road transport, currently in progress, offers a golden chance to realise such an initiative.

ESTA will wholeheartedly support you in any initiative towards greater harmonisation and streamlining of abnormal transport licensing in Germany and Europe. We look forward to hearing from you and to advance the discussions we will be sending copies of this letter to other parties concerned.

Ton Klijn
ESTA Director



Herrn Bundesminister
Dr. Volker Wissing, MdB
Bundesminister für digitales und Verkehr
Invalidenstr. 44
10115 Berlin

per E-Mail min@bmdv.bund.de

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