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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Council

Subject: **Any other business**

Achieving an interoperable electronic freight information exchange system
in Europe

*- Information from the Estonian delegation, supported by the Finnish,
Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish delegations*

Delegations will find attached an information note containing a joint position paper supported by Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania on the above-mentioned subject for consideration under "Any other business" at the meeting of the Council (Transport, Telecommunications and Energy) on 3 June 2021.

Joint position paper**Achieving an interoperable electronic freight information exchange system in Europe****Supported by Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania**

A quick shift from paper to electronic documents is a great opportunity for both businesses and government authorities to gain efficiency and transparency. Almost 99% of all cross-border transport operations in the EU still involve paper-based Consignment Note (CMR) at one stage or another. The digitalisation and trusted sharing of road freight data is a key solution for increasing the transport process transparency, reducing the administrative burden and mitigating negative environmental impacts.

On the 15th of July 2020, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (EU) approved the new Regulation on electronic freight transport information (eFTI)¹. The aim of this Regulation is to encourage the digitalisation of freight transport and logistics to reduce administrative costs, improve enforcement capabilities of competent authorities, and enhance the efficiency and sustainability of transport.

In order to quickly provide a fully interoperable system for the safe and secure exchange of freight information between businesses and authorities, we stress the need to strengthen cooperation towards an electronic Consignment Note (e-CMR) data exchange scheme that will allow cross-border control of digital transport documents in a secure and trustable way.

¹ Regulation 2020/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council on electronic freight transport information

Cross-border B2B and B2G electronic freight initiatives represent a high potential as practical input for eFTI technical rules and standards and could prepare the market for offering and using relevant business services. Further engagement of partners is necessary for the quick development of the e-CMR data exchange model through expanding functionality, raising data security and creating trust among stakeholders. We welcome the recent creation of the Digital Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee to better facilitate the swift adoption of eFTI implementing acts.

The main beneficiaries of digitization will be road transport operators. Data quality in the freight process will be improved by reducing recurring errors, and raising efficiency thanks to optimising processes, exchanging resources, and integrating activities into a single network of information systems. For hauliers, digitalisation is an opportunity to reduce unfair competition through equal treatment and transparency. Another motivating aspect is the possible simplification and acceleration of routine roadside control procedures, which have a negative impact on delivery times, delivery accuracy and compliance with driving time and rest period rules.

For the public sector authorities, the use of e-CMR, as a part of real-time economy, will reduce the time necessary to conduct routine checks. Public institutions will benefit from increased freight process transparency. Receiving real-time freight information data will enable them to perform controlling activity remotely and seamlessly. They will also be able to use advanced tools for monitoring and thus to focus on high-risk cases instead of daily random checks.

Having regard, among other initiatives, to:

- the adoption of the eFTI regulation (2020), while the delegated and implementing acts still need to be developed,
- Tallinn (2017)², Passau³ (2020) and Vilnius⁴ (2020) declarations on digital transport,
- ongoing regional cross-border projects and prototypes: DIGINNO, DIGINNO-Proto, DINNOCAP⁵, FEDeRATED⁶, Benelux⁷,
- completed national B2B/ G2B solutions

We **encourage the European Commission** to take swift steps for establishing the implementing technical framework, to provide for further investment certainty and allow setting up a system of interoperable electronic freight information exchange in Europe on a voluntary basis in advance of the deadlines set by the eFTI.

In addition, we urge to speed up the preparatory work for the development of eFTI platforms, which will contribute to the timely implementation of eFTI and a smooth transition from paper CMR to e-CMR. Therefore, to contribute to the work led by the European Commission in establishing the implementation specifications for the eFTI Regulation by means of delegated and implementing acts, with a view to enhance interoperability of systems for the safe and secure exchange of information between business and authorities on the movement of goods; **we call upon all stakeholders to work together towards:**

- eFTI compatible **e-CMR solutions for data exchange (e.g. indexing scheme)** to enable public institutions to identify where the digital document is stored and to receive agreed available data in a secure and trustable way

² Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment at the ministerial meeting during Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU on 6 October 2017.

³ PASSAU Declaration on the occasion of the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers of Transport under the auspices of the German EU Council Presidency, Passau, 29/30 October 2020.

⁴ The Declaration on Digital Freight Transport Data Exchange among the Eastern Baltic Sea Region and Eastern European Partners, Vilnius, 05.11.2020.

⁵ DIGINNO is a network for innovative solutions in public-private co-operation to speed up the process towards the Baltic Sea Region digital single market, <https://www.diginno.eu/>. DIGINNO-Proto and DINNOCAP are spin-off projects of DIGINNO.

⁶ FEDeRATED – EU project for digital co-operation, www.federatedplatforms.eu

⁷ Benelux – an eCMR project between Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg.

- A **decentralized data sharing and control infrastructure** that ensures high security, data immutability, transaction transparency and no single central point of control.
- Exploring **standardized national or regional joint access points** given that the logic and technology of information systems vary greatly from country to country. Member states should have freedom in organizing their national data exchange processes, which would allow making the most of the **solutions that already exist** in the public and private sectors.
- **Seeking opportunities to cooperate** in the exchange of electronic freight information by offering technical solutions for Partner countries in the EU as well as outside.
- A focus on **machine-readable data only** and on creating synergies between different technologies, based on the interaction between eIDAS and eGovernance principles and, where possible, blockchain technologies.
- **Lower cybersecurity risks** by exploring common minimum requirements for data exchange and combining different authentication methods, including information received from third countries.
- **Ensuring the reliability of data** entered into the data exchange registry by developing means to perform initial **data verification at the level of service providers**, which can be realized by granting them **limited and regulated access to data stored in public registries**.
- **Expanding the data exchange method** from international road transport to the sea (in correlation with the European Maritime Single Window environment), train, air and **multimodal cargo**.
- **Contributing to the development of private services and end-user awareness**.