



**ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Minister

European Commission - DG Mobility and Transport
Vice President Kallas
BE-1049, Brussels
Belgium

Your ref

Our ref

Date:

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Background note to the meeting with Vice President Kallas 6 March 2014 - Competence to drive under winter conditions

Dear Vice President Siim Kallas

I refer to our previous correspondence and to our planned meeting 6 March 2014. I take the liberty to send you a background note in advance on a matter I wish to discuss with you at the meeting.

During the winter period we experience some serious challenges concerning the ability for heavy motor vehicles to navigate on Norwegian roads. The cold and changing climate combined with our topography and geography, makes driving in the winter period particularly challenging. Heavy goods vehicles that are not sufficiently equipped for our roads, or drivers that are unexperienced with winter driving conditions, represent a serious risk to road safety and a major impairment to the traffic flow.

The Norwegian government has already introduced several measures in an attempt to comply with the challenging situation. The number of road side inspections have been extended quite massively. So far this season more than three times the number of vehicles have been checked, compared to the previous season. Requirements for winter tyres on all wheels of heavy motor vehicles, was introduced last October. Furthermore comprehensive information towards foreign truck drivers on the matter of driving under winter conditions (The truckers Guide), translated into several European languages, has been provided and widely distributed.

In Norway we have an extensive mandatory training for drivers of heavy vehicles, which includes thorough training to make the drivers skilled to handle challenging winter roads. However, the system of mutual recognition of driving licenses and professional drivers qualifications within the Community implies that not all foreign drivers have the necessary competence to drive under difficult winter conditions. Statistics show that foreign vehicles

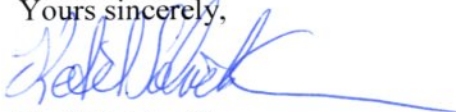
clearly are overrepresented in the number of vehicles that get stuck or slips on icy winter roads and lack of competence to drive under difficult winter conditions is a major contributing factor in this respect.

Taking into account that we all have a common goal of reducing the fatalities in road transport and securing efficient transport it would be merit to explore how to secure the necessary qualifications to drive under difficult winter conditions. In cases where the traffic flow and road safety is severely jeopardized it should be possible to establish proportionate requirements of competence. The ability to temporarily close down challenging roads for heavy vehicles during severe weather conditions, and only allow trucks and drivers that comply with certain requirements as regards competence and technical requirements, is desirable. I stress that such requirements in the field of competence will apply both to national and EU-drivers, and therefore cannot be considered as a means to distort competition, but more as a mean to secure equal competition between the transport companies. Norwegian authorities will take the necessary steps to establish a system to facilitate for foreign drivers to comply with such requirements, e.g. in the form of providing the necessary driver training.

In a more long term perspective the introduction of modules on driving under difficult conditions as a part of the initial and periodic training in directive 2003/59/EC (CPC directive), is a welcome initiative. I understand that the directive is currently being revised, and Norway has in the public hearing of last year suggested harmonized requirements on training, in this area. It was also suggested that use and competence to use tyre chains should be a part of the periodic training. Assumably, the introduction of modules on driving under difficult conditions in the professional driver training would make most drivers capable to drive safer and more secure in such circumstances in the future. I would once again emphasize the importance of this initiative.

I would also take the opportunity to address another important issue concerning driver competence. We have recently seen cases of driving licence forgery which are quite alarming. Forgery of driving licenses is a huge impairment to road safety. I would like to take the opportunity to draw the Commission's attention to this serious matter and discuss how we all on a European and national level can address this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Ketil Solvik-Olsen

Copy:

Norges EU-delegasjon i Brussel