



Francesco Del Boca



UETR and UEAPME Transport Forum President

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Welcome message

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

I warmly welcome all of you to the Second UEAPME Transport Forum in my function as President.

I am very pleased to be here today and I thank you very much indeed for having responded positively to our invitation.

This Forum represents a new co-operation platform facilitating the exchange of opinions and points of view, bringing together SMEs from road transport as well as other sectors. That is much needed I think, in today's crisis we all need cooperation.

Last month European road haulage associations participated in the public hearing organized by the European Commission to assess the effects of the crisis.

Associations agreed on a number of measures to survive the crisis: real and effective access to credit, delay collection of taxes, remove administrative burdens, reducing fuel costs.

We see plans and measures at EU and national level for finance sector- but we have seen nothing so far for our sector, "the backbone of real economy"...

Today many important topics will be discussed: first, the proposal of modification of Eurovignette directive (so-called "Eurovignette III"), we have an intervention by a major representative of the European Commission, Mr. Remi Mayet- I thank him very much indeed for having accepted our invitation.

It is a very controversial proposal, which has caused much debate.

Later on, a round table will allow you to report on current economic situation in transport sector, in your experience.

Finally we will discuss current issues concerning road transport at EU level: I highlight that one aim of this Forum is reporting to you "what's going on".

I would like to conclude stressing that maintaining employment levels in the road transport sector is a priority in the current economic downturn, while at the same

time the long-term objectives of harmonising and liberalising Europe's internal market to achieve fair competition in transport services remain valid of course.

European Union must provide the best possible regulatory framework and policies to achieve the fullest development of competitiveness and economic growth, taking into account the existing differences between Member States- costs included- I refer to social dumping and unfair competition, affecting also road safety.

In brief: fair competition needs clear market rules.

A final remark: a financial sector supervisors system has been proposed at EU level, as I know it seems that three Authorities will be in charge of supervising three different markets (banking, securities, insurance)- once again, nothing for transport sector- why not proposing an Authority responsible for transport sector capable of assuring fair competition ?

I thank you again for being here today and I give the floor to Mr. Frank Baumeister, UEAPME Transport Forum.