



Plenary sitting

B9-0201/2024

25.3.2024

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

pursuant to Rule 227(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the handling of heavy goods vehicles at border crossing points based on
Petition 0146/2023
(2024/2540(RSP))

Dolors Montserrat
on behalf of the Committee on Petitions

European Parliament resolution on the handling of heavy goods vehicles at border crossing points based on Petition 0146/2023 (2024/2540(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 26, 28-37, 67(1) and (2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the deliberations on Petition 0146/2023 at the meeting of the Committee on Petitions on 29 November 2023,
- having regard to the public hearing on ‘Schengen Borders - issues raised by petitioners’ held jointly on 18 July 2023 by the Committee on Petitions in association with the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 November 2022 entitled ‘Making Schengen stronger with the full participation of Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia in the area without internal border controls’ (COM(2022)0636),
- having regard to its resolutions of 18 October 2022 on the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area¹ and of 12 July 2023 on the accession to the Schengen area²,
- having regard to the Council’s unanimous decision on 30 December 2023 to welcome Romania and Bulgaria into the Schengen area, starting with the lifting of controls at air and sea borders as of March 2024,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 November 2021 on the safety of truck parking lots in the EU³,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 May 2023 on the new EU urban mobility framework⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 June 2023 on large transport infrastructure projects in the EU – implementation of projects and monitoring and control of EU funds⁵,
- having regard to the proposal for a regulation on guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 and Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 (COM(2021)0812),

¹ OJ C 149, 28.4.2023, p. 11.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0278.

³ OJ C 224, 8.6.2022, p. 95.

⁴ OJ C, C/2023/1058, 15.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1058/oj>.

⁵ OJ C, C/2024/481, 23.01.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/481/oj>.

- having regard to Rule 227(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas hundreds of goods vehicles are held up every day at the EU's internal borders, including the borders between Schengen and non-Schengen EU Member States, where they face extremely long wait times and delays due to processing and checks; whereas the current European legal framework does not specifically address or regulate the maximum time taken to process goods at borders;
- B. whereas the reasons for these queues and delays at Member States' borders can be attributed to multiple administrative, operational, safety, technical or interoperability factors, such as insufficient operational and technical capacity, shortages of staff, control desks or weighbridges for goods vehicles as well as the concentration of many institutional bodies at the borders and time-consuming checks on freight; whereas Article 22 of the Schengen Borders Code⁶ enshrines the principle of the absence of checks and controls at the internal borders between Schengen countries, in line with the principle of freedom of movement set out in Article 26(2) TFEU, whereas Article 24 specifically states that Member States are to remove all obstacles to fluid traffic flow through road crossing points on internal borders;
- C. whereas the accumulation of EU-registered heavy goods vehicles at borders can have a detrimental impact on drivers' health and working conditions, road safety and the operation of haulage businesses as well as having a negative impact on competition and the functioning of the EU single market, as well as increasing road hauliers' costs;
- D. whereas Bulgaria and Romania are still waiting for a Council decision on the date for the removal of checks at internal land borders; whereas lifting checks and controls at internal land borders would have a positive impact on the participation of Romania and Bulgaria in the EU single market, dismantling obstacles to mobility, which are causing delays in business activities as a result of disruption to freight delivery schedules;
- E. whereas delays to goods vehicles at borders cause losses of hundreds of millions of euros for European businesses, particularly in the logistics, tourism and hospitality sectors; whereas the risks posed by these border crossing constraints became particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic; whereas maintaining the status quo considerably weakens the EU's resilience in the face of other potential public health emergencies;
- F. whereas the length of queues of goods vehicles on the EU's external borders with Western Balkans countries is particularly worrisome;
- G. whereas these events severely jeopardise the health and safety of professional drivers, compromising their working conditions and undermining the quality of jobs in the profession, while additionally contributing to the global truck driver shortage; whereas truck drivers across all the EU Member States often suffer from multiple forms of chronic pain, such as lower back pain, knee and shoulder pain; whereas at the same time, the frequent arbitrary requirement to offload and reload freight entails significant additional health risks, often leading to injuries as truck drivers may often not have the

⁶ Regulation (EU) 2016/399 9 March 2016 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code), OJ L 77, 23.3.2016, p. 1.

physical strength or appropriate equipment to lift the heavy weights involved; whereas employers randomly impose this duty and responsibility on truck drivers, without additional remuneration;

- H. whereas the queues of goods vehicles waiting at the borders directly affect the health of European citizens, negatively impacting air quality and causing water and noise pollution, as well as adversely affecting Natura 2000 sites; whereas, for example the Commission communication of 16 May 2023 underlined that 46 000 tonnes of CO₂ are emitted annually due to the persistence of internal border controls for Romania and Bulgaria;
 - I. whereas goods vehicle congestion also degrades the quality of existing infrastructure, while hindering road safety and increasing the risk of road accidents;
 - J. whereas increased public and private financing of safe and secure truck parking areas is needed to allow drivers to take their breaks in total safety; whereas reinforcing security tools, for instance by developing dedicated mobile applications, would reduce the risk of truck drivers becoming victims of crime;
1. Calls for Parliament, the Council and the Commission to focus on specific measures to ensure smooth and efficient border crossings for freight transport when developing key EU policies such as the trans-European transport network;
 2. Calls on the Commission, following an impact assessment on the topics described in this motion for a resolution, to propose immediate and binding legislative measures to create an EU-wide standard of an average of one minute for processing heavy goods vehicles at intra-EU border crossing points so as to guarantee fluidity at internal Schengen and non-Schengen borders, allowing goods and services to move quickly and efficiently; stresses that such a measure would significantly improve the competitiveness of the road transport sector and would ensure its smooth functioning in the single market; stresses that the persistence of land border controls harms the economic interests of all Member States;
 3. Highlights that the Commission has been reiterating since 2011 that both Romania and Bulgaria have satisfied all the formal criteria for their accession to the Schengen area; stresses that the Council's decision of 30 December 2023 to lift the air and maritime border controls on Romania and Bulgaria only partially addresses the issue of the current distortion of the single market; stresses that this decision falls short of addressing the biggest and most pressing issue, namely land border crossings, where checks remain in place on the Schengen land border, hampering the frictionless crossing by goods vehicles, buses, private cars and trains; reiterates its long-standing position in support of the full application of the Schengen *acquis* to Bulgaria and Romania; urges the Belgian Presidency and all Members of the Council to adopt as quickly as possible, and by no later than mid-2024, a decision on the full application of the Schengen *acquis* in Romania and Bulgaria;
 4. Requests, therefore, that the Commission guarantee the compliance and monitoring of the application of the measures taken, including via the imposition of penalties; underlines the need for adequate and sufficient EU funding and technical support;

5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States for EU legislation to allow truck drivers to use smaller border crossings when main arteries are closed for road maintenance in order to avoid drivers depending on arbitrary actions by individual countries, as this is a matter of general EU interest;
6. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States and relevant stakeholders, to put forward concrete measures to address the shortage of professional drivers in the EU by stimulating interest among young people by financing specific (re)training and qualifications and fostering partnerships between vocational schools and transport companies, including with specific EU budget support;
7. Calls on the Member States to further step up their efforts to reinforce cross-border cooperation on theft from goods vehicles;
8. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and relevant national authorities.