

Instructie Taskforce Interne-markthandhaving (SMET), 19 februari 2021**1. Approval of the draft agenda**

Instemmen.

2. Discussion and assessment, on the basis of Council Recommendation 2020/1475 and the Treaties, of Member State measures restricting free movement within the EU

- The Netherlands would like to thank the Commission for organizing this meeting and shares its concerns with regard to the Green Lanes. It is important to keep discussing urgent developments on the Single Market due to COVID-19.
- The Netherlands takes the risks of the new COVID variants very seriously. That's why we have to ensure an unhampered free movement of goods in order to combat the virus. It is critical that Green Lanes function well. Delays and shortages (e.g. in medical devices or food products) within the Single Market due to queues at Europe's borders severely hamper our efforts to combat the virus, can delay vaccination campaigns and make our food supply vulnerable. Furthermore, border restrictions hamper the provision of cross-border services.
- The aforementioned delays and shortages cause considerable economic damage as well and they should be prevented. What does not help either is the lack of information for businesses and citizens. We need to prevent uncertainty and should enable businesses to prepare for these restrictions. We have to keep in mind that the sectors affected by the measures were already facing enormous challenges during the crisis, hampering our economic recovery.
- The Netherlands thus strongly supports European cooperation and coordination with regard to COVID-19 to minimize the consequences for the free movement of goods and services.
- At the same time, competences as defined in the Treaties should be respected. In our view, restrictions of free movement should be proportional and time-limited.
- It is important to find the right balance between travel restrictions and safeguarding the functioning of the Single Market. Therefore we are pleased with our shared effort to coordinate our measures to limit the spread of the virus.
- However, we have some concerns about far-reaching measures taken by Member States. We would be happy to discuss alternative measures that are perhaps more proportional and less intrusive. We would also like to emphasize the importance of informing Member States, businesses and citizens in a timely manner.
- Practical and operational problems due to the lack of accessible testing facilities need to be avoided as well. Are there any steps foreseen in improving the current situation with regard to testing facilities? We should strongly avoid scenarios which we have witnessed last year at the start of the crisis.
- It is also important to know how and if this topic will be tabled in the IPCR. This would be in our view desirable, but it is, of course, up to the Portuguese Presidency.
- Furthermore, the Netherlands would like to know if the Commission foresees any next steps due to the impact on the Single Market. And if so, how it will involve Member States in these steps.

3. AOB