

Strasbourg, 10 September 2013

Honorable Vice-President Kallas,

Over the last months many owners of inland vessels, yachts and shippers faced great economic damage and much discomfort due to continuing strikes of lock-keepers in Germany. The lock-keepers, officials of the Wasser- und Schifffahrtsverwaltung, are in conflict with the German Transport Ministry and the Interior Ministry about a planned reorganization. This week the trade union Ver.di, which represents the interests of the lock-keepers, announced it will continue and enlarge the strikes to all German waterways in the coming weeks.

We discussed the matter in our Coordinators meeting of the Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament on 5 September and the signatories decided to ask for your help to bring an end to this harmful conflict.

First of all we believe that the free movement of goods and persons is at stake. These freedoms are cornerstones of the European internal market and are firmly and clearly established in European treaties and jurisprudence. Therefore all European institutions and Members of the European Union should guarantee these rights, unless there is a justified reason to suspend these rights temporarily. Therefore we ask you, as guardian of the European treaties, to contact the German government as soon as possible to emphasize their responsibility to respect the treaties and to come to an agreement with Ver.di, thus ending the strikes of the lock-keepers.

Secondly, while fully respecting the applicable social rights in the Member States, we believe that the economic damage and discomfort of the strikes is now disproportionate. The damage of the strikes for the European inland navigation industry, which suffers hard from the current European economic crisis already, is estimated on over 1 million euros a day. Furthermore the strikes caused great economic damage to many, many companies and shippers depending on inland navigation and the strikes ruined the holidays of many yacht owners.

Honorable Vice-President, we ask for your help and conflict-solving presence in the dispute between the German Ministries of Transport and Interior and Ver.di / the lock-keepers. We urge you to do whatever is in your power to ensure the free movement of goods and persons on the German rivers, canals and waterways and to prevent more (economic) damage and discomfort for those involved.

Yours sincerely,

Mathieu Grosch, TRAN coordinator EPP-group

Gesine Meissner, TRAN coordinator ALDE-group

Robert Zile, TRAN coordinator ECR-group

Dieter-Lebrecht Koch, TRAN Vice-President

Peter van Dalen, TRAN Vice-President