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SOCIAL DUMPING IN ROAD TRANSPORT

***“Slavery” for foreign drivers? /Unfair competition for Belgian drivers?/
Postbox Companies (Slovakia)?***

New Actions by the Belgian Authorities in ZEEBRUGGE 20/11/2017

(21/11/2017)

We refer to previous messages and especially to our analysis dated 05/10/2017.

Monday morning the 20 November the Belgian Social Inspection assisted by the Federal Police proceeded to a thorough search / inspection at one of the largest road haulage operators in ZEEBRUGGE (NSE: NORTH SEA EXPRESS).

112 Tractor Units registered under the name of the Slovakian Transport Company ETL-East European Leasing were seized by the authorities who suspect these companies of “Social Dumping” via the use of a Slovakian “Post Office Box” Company...

The action was apparently triggered by the Belgian Transport Unions of truck drivers and complaints of Rumanian drivers...

For evident reasons, all concerned with the transport & logistic industry will agree that workers are entitled to decent wages and of course decent working conditions. Therefore we must refrain from comments on particular cases like NSE or recent previous actions where the Courts will have the last word (the transport companies involved disputing most firmly the accusations).

Nevertheless, one can ask if this kind of spectacular actions will not lead to a result exactly opposite to the aimed one by the authorities.

It might be absolutely – *politically* speaking – incorrect to comment the present actions but at the end of the day we will all be forced to face the *economic* reality...

../...

Wim Dekeyser
Lic Priv det: 14.191.05

Dimitri Dekeyser
14.1674.02

Frederik Dekeyser
14.1642/11

We can't but repeat our analysis of the 05/10/2017, and express our doubts i.r.o. achieving the aimed results of the social actions (to fight social dumping in Eastern-Europe and to protect jobs in the transport industry in Western-Europe) based on the following economic realities whether we like them or not...:

- the delocalization in international road transport is a fact since many years;
- the (Belgian) transport companies targeted now are precisely companies having maintained a considerable employment in... Belgium (head office / administrative services / maintenance / storage facilities etc...);
- similar actions are – for obvious reasons – not possible against pure foreign transport companies based for inst. in Rumania, Slovakia, Bulgaria etc...(as the competence for such extensive site controls lies upon the national authorities in these countries...);
- so a possible result of the present actions might be that the targeted companies will completely delocalise out of Belgium which would – quite contrary to the goals of trade unions and authorities- only result in a further loss of employment in Belgium!!
- consequences for our transport & logistic industry could even be disastrous at the end...;
- it seems also an illusion to think that all Eastern-European drivers can be replaced by Western-European ones: there is the undeniable cost gap (up to a factor x 3) but there is also and already a shortage of truck drivers in countries like Belgium and Holland which is expected only to increase in the following years...

So at the risk of being politically completely “incorrect” we once again would plead for a return to reality away from spectacular media events to preserve in all seriousness the future of our transport & logistic industry which is – also for our home country – of utmost importance in the next years and decades to come.

Kind regards,

Wim Dekeyser

21.11.2017
