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Printed By **Kate O'Regan**

EU Industry Welcomes New Schengen Strategy's Green Lanes

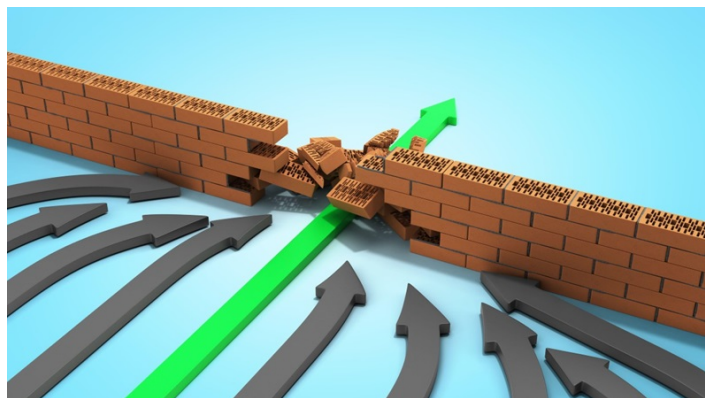
'Milestone' Policy Shows Europe Has Learned Lessons From COVID-19

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Executive Summary

Planned reforms to the EU's Schengen open border system that will allow for transport "green lanes" to be reactivated when necessary have been welcomed by off-patent industry association Medicines for Europe.



GREEN LANES CAN BE REACTIVATED TO HELP EUROPE AVOID TRANSPORT BOTTLENECKS

Source: Alamy

Proposed reforms to the EU's Schengen open border system that will allow priority freight routes or "green lanes" to be reactivated when necessary have been welcomed by off-patent industry association Medicines for Europe.

Such "green lanes" were instrumental in easing transport routes for medicines at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, allowing medicines to cross borders and reducing the risk of shortages across Europe, following Medicines for Europe's call for such a mechanism to be introduced. (Also see "'Green Lanes' Will Help EU Fight Coronavirus" - Generics Bulletin, 18 Mar, 2020.)

Noting that the European Commission's proposal to reform the Schengen open border strategy "includes many of the lessons learned from COVID-19," Medicines for Europe said the step represented "an important milestone in Europe's progression."

"The contingency plan to allow for reactivation of the green lane mechanism is especially welcome and prudent, given the importance of inter-EU circulation of essential goods," the association commented.

"The open border Schengen system is key to EU mobility and internal market, including of essential medicines," Medicines for Europe explained. "Its coherent implementation between member states is crucial to ensure medicines can continue to flow between countries, moving from factories to supply of thousands of hospitals and pharmacies in other countries."

And "the experience from the outbreak of COVID-19 in Europe has shown just how crucial this system is," the association emphasized, recalling that "as countries closed borders in March 2020, tailbacks of cargo trucks carrying essential medicine built up across Europe."

"This was eventually eased by the creation of EU green lanes for medicines, to ensure there was no critical shortage of supply due to border closures," the association noted. "This was one of the key successes of the EU response to the outbreak and kept medicines moving during the emergency period." (Also see "European Industry Played Key Role In Mitigating COVID-19" - Generics Bulletin, 30 Jul, 2020.)

Medicines for Europe director general Adrian van den Hoven said he was "happy to see the proposal for a renewed Schengen zone, integrating many of the recommendations we advocated for last March, including green lanes for essential goods."

"Our industry provides the majority of medicines dispensed in the EU," he pointed out. "During the outbreak of COVID, we were providing the vast majority needed in intensive care units to ventilate critically ill COVID patients. We remember too well the queues of traffic containing essential goods, blocked at internal EU borders and not in the hospital where they were needed most."

More broadly, the European industry association has also previously called for open routes between the EU and third countries to be created, as part of a co-ordinated approach between the EU and other global pharmaceutical hubs such as China, India and the US. (Also see "Reduction In Flights Hits Global Supply Chain" - Generics Bulletin, 23 Mar, 2020.)