

Date: 24 March 2020

Cabinets of Commissioners

Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission

Paolo Gentiloni, Commissioner for Economy

Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Thierry Breton, Commissioner for Internal Market

Commission officials

Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Council of the EU

Croatian Presidency

Re: Ensuring the Testing Inspection and Certification sector is able to continue providing services for a continued safety of workplace plant and machinery during the difficult period in which COVID-19 threatens to disrupt such important work

Dear Executive Vice President Dombrovskis,

The TIC Council, representing the independent testing, inspection and certification (TIC) sector would like to thank the EU authorities and Member States for the robust and swift response to the health crisis caused by COVID-19. Our members are honoured to participate in this fight by following the European Commission's Recommendation [2020/403](#).

Hereby, we are kindly requesting your support for our members to ensure that they can operate throughout this crisis, as the services they provide are critical in this fight.

Our members test, audit, inspect and certify the conformity of pharmaceutical and medical laboratories, as well as the manufacturers of medical devices and protective equipment according to the corresponding legislation and relevant international standards. This for example, includes testing masks, respirators and electrical medical equipment against EU's health and safety requirements.

Moreover, our members test, audit, inspect and certify essential sectors of industrial production and transport, such as drinking water, food, consumer products and commodities. They also audit critical infrastructures, such as refineries, power plants, pipelines and gas stations. As such, our services support the continuity of such operations, including international supply chains for essential products, in safe conditions both for employees and the general public.

Our sector is adapting to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Our members are not only prioritising testing protecting equipment as requested by the European Commission, they are also offering the possibility of remote inspections to maintain continuity of safety and health compliance. In some cases, it was also agreed with the relevant scheme holders to extend certain certificates, which would have expired during the restriction period.

Nevertheless, these adjustments are not always possible. In most cases laboratory testing and site inspections are crucial, however, under the current circumstances they are not always feasible. In some instances, the current regulatory framework unnecessarily restricts, for example, remote methods. As a result, several TIC companies cannot deliver their services and their clients cannot continue with their operation.

In this context, we kindly request you to:

- prevent Member States from requesting testing, inspection and certification companies to stop their activities related to sectors of the economy that continue functioning.
- address in a coordinated matter the disturbance in accreditation activities during the outbreak, so that conformity assessment bodies can continue providing services, also in cases that accreditation activities are temporarily not available.
- ensure that the legislative framework allows and promotes virtual auditing and inspections as much as possible to minimise unnecessary on-site visits.
- ensure that the TIC sector is part of the plan for re-establishing business continuity after the crisis, as our members would need to catch up with the audits of several enterprises that are currently closed or carry out activities that had to be postponed due to the crisis.

Thereby, our members will be able to continue contributing against the COVID-19 health crisis, minimising its financial impact to the European economy and increasing rapidly the capacity for COVID-19 testing, such as by certifying alternative sources of respiratory devices and personal protection equipment.

We stand at your disposal for discussing our specific suggestions over a videoconference, as well as providing our sector's expertise to address the COVID-19 health crisis, such as in making adaptations to health and safety rules in the workplace.

Yours sincerely,



Hanane Taidi
Director General
TIC Council



Dr Michael Fübi
TIC Council President
CEO, TÜV Rheinland