

18 November 2013

His Excellency Enrico Letta
Prime Minister of Italy

Palazzo Chigi
Piazza Colonna 370
00187, Rome
Italy

segred@governo.it
uscm@palazzochigi.it
segrgen@governo.it
usg@mailbox.governo.it

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Re: Fines on minibuses with Ukrainian license plates

The Ukrainian World Congress is gravely concerned about the enforcement by Italian authorities of fines on lightweight minibuses (under 3.5 tons) with Ukrainian license plates traveling between Ukraine and Italy, and fully supports the efforts of the Associazione Cristiana degli Ucraini in Italia, a Ukrainian community organization in Italy, to resolve this matter.

Since Ukraine's independence in 1991, Italy and Ukraine have established and maintained strong diplomatic relations. In addition to the solid investment ties between the two countries, over 250,000 Ukrainians legally reside in Italy. Ukraine and the EU have also initialed, and are on the verge of signing, the *EU-Ukraine Association Agreement*, an event that will no doubt bring Italy and Ukraine even closer.

Despite these ties, the Ukrainian community in Italy has become very perturbed over the mistreatment of minibuses traveling between Ukraine and Italy. Italian police are stopping the minibuses from Ukraine, fining the drivers 4,130 Euros, and even seizing the minibuses on the basis that they do not have transportation licenses.

For many of the over 250,000 Ukrainian citizens legally residing and paying taxes in Italy, these minibuses are the sole connection with their relatives in Ukraine. They provide the only affordable transportation service of both passengers and parcels. Without the minibuses, these Ukrainian citizens in Italy would be physically cut off from their families in Ukraine, many of whom rely on them for their day-to-day subsistence. The goods shipped between family members are of a humanitarian character and should not be categorized as commercial in nature, as they are not meant for resale.

Minibuses traveling from Romania, Poland and Bulgaria to Italy are not subject to the same standards, scrutiny and fines. Thus, the fines on minibuses from Ukraine seem discriminatory in nature. The amount of the fines also makes them punitive.

Moreover, there is no procedure allowing the drivers of the minibuses from Ukraine to “legalize” their operation.

In spite of two meetings between leaders from the Associazione Cristiana degli Ucraini in Italia and representatives from Italy’s Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, no progress has been made on this issue to date.

The Ukrainian World Congress therefore calls upon you to ensure that meetings between high-level officials of the Italian government and leaders of the Associazione Cristiana degli Ucraini in Italia are held in order to find a reasonable and practical solution (i.e. similarly to the minibuses from Romania, Poland and Bulgaria, exempt the lightweight minibuses from Ukraine from the obligation to obtain transportation licenses or issue them such licenses).

In addition, until such a solution is found, the Ukrainian World Congress requests that you place a moratorium on the levying of fines on the minibuses from Ukraine.

Please let us know if there is any way that we could help facilitate a successful resolution of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

UKRAINIAN WORLD CONGRESS



Eugene Czolij
President

c.c. Mr. Oleksandr Horodetsky, President Associazione Cristiana degli Ucraini in Italia

The Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) is the international coordinating body for Ukrainian communities in the diaspora representing the interests of over 20 million Ukrainians. The UWC has member organizations in 33 countries and ties with Ukrainians in 14 additional countries. Founded in 1967 as a non-profit corporation, the UWC was recognized in 2003 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with special consultative status.