

Ms Ursula von der Leyen  
President of the European Commission  
European Commission (EC)  
Wetstraat 200  
1049 - Brussels  
Belgium



By email

GE1060135/UDP

Geneva, 17 January 2024

### Call to address excessive truck waiting times at internal and external EU borders

Dear President von der Leyen,

IRU, the world road transport organisation, representing over 3.5 million goods and passenger road transport companies worldwide, including one million in the European Union, is strongly concerned that additional measures put in place by Bulgaria and Romania to fight irregular migration are having disproportionately negative consequences on goods transport and trade.

We urge you to support:

- Free intra-EU movement of goods by road at **Schengen and other intra-EU borders** by creating Green Lane corridors for trucks; and
- Efficient truck flows across the **EU's external road borders** to avoid humanitarian crises and trade bottlenecks, making use, where deemed useful, of the additional security provided by the TIR global transit system.

#### Context: Internal borders

While our sector fully agrees that Romania and Bulgaria belong inside the Schengen Zone and hopes that this integration takes place as soon as possible, we understand that both countries are expected to implement additional measures to manage immigration and fight against illegal migration.

As the demand for immigration measures comes from beyond our industry, mainly targeting the transport of people, we would like to draw your attention to the serious unintended consequences that these measures are having on the movement of goods.

Even before the implementation of additional measures agreed last December, the cost of truck waiting times at some internal EU borders was unacceptably high.

For example, 3.9 million trucks entered or exited Romania (excluding transit) in 2022 via its 18 border crossing points with Hungary and Bulgaria. Waiting times at these crossings varied between 30 minutes and 72 hours, with an average of six hours per crossing, totalling 23.5 million hours of time wasted for drivers, trucks and the goods they carry needing to get to market. This directly cost transport operators EUR 90 million, with an additional EUR 2.32 billion in lost annual revenues.

The recent new inspection measures have exacerbated this situation, adding to wasted time and increasing costs. We have reports now of waiting times of up to five days to cross the Bulgarian/Romanian border, both for EU and non-EU registered trucks.

### **Mandate Green Lanes to maintain the EU internal market**

IRU therefore calls on your support to issue an official Commission recommendation for EU Member States to:

- Implement the Green Lane principle, as created during the COVID crisis, for all road freight crossing intra-EU borders. This means prioritising freight transport for the purpose of identity and immigration checks at intra-EU borders to ensure the free movement of goods and to reduce waiting times to an absolute minimum. Priority lanes should apply to outgoing and returning trucks, whether loaded or not.
- Green lanes should also prioritise immigration checks for professional drivers travelling without their truck, for example to comply with the return home obligation under EU driving and rest time rules.

### **Context: External borders**

Information received from road goods transport companies from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Türkiye indicate that truck waiting times at Bulgaria's external EU borders are currently four to five days. Trucks are guided to parking areas where they must wait until inspected; no indications of estimated waiting times are provided.

As for intra-EU borders, wasted days at the EU's external border crossings for professional drivers means lost working hours that could have been used to transport additional goods for EU citizens and businesses. Border delays cause knock on delays in the delivery of goods to customers, affecting supply chains for manufacturing, as well as the availability of food, medicine and other essentials.

Excessive border waiting times also create considerable stress for professional drivers and add unnecessary pressure on compliance with working time and EU driving and rest time rules. This has a negative impact on the image of the profession. Unattractive working conditions make it difficult to attract younger talent to the profession. Without action to make the driver profession more accessible and attractive, Europe could be missing over two million drivers by 2026.

Ultimately, these delays increase costs for road goods transport companies and their customers and creates trade backlogs and higher costs for the EU's imports and exports. Indeed, the European Parliament Resolution adopted in July 2023 emphasises that trade costs for the entire Schengen Area caused by identity checks alone totals between EUR 6.5 and 13 billion per year<sup>1</sup>.

### **Facilitate goods transport at external road border crossings**

IRU therefore calls on your support to:

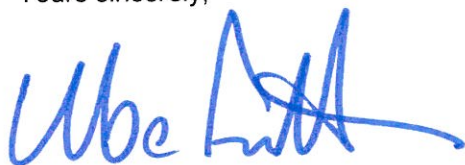
- Encourage relevant Member States, especially Bulgaria, to increase inspection capacity at their external EU land borders to minimise waiting times for identity checks of professional drivers.
- Insist that relevant Member States respect the rules and procedures of the TIR Convention, which provides that goods carried under the TIR procedure in sealed road vehicles shall not, as a general rule, be subjected to inspection at Customs offices en route.
- Encourage Member States to provide transparent information on expected waiting times at external borders.

---

<sup>1</sup> European Parliament resolution on the accession to the Schengen area (2023/2668(RSP), July 2023.

We trust that we can count on your support to enact these recommendations urgently, in order to keep road goods transport flowing efficiently within the EU, and between the EU and its trading partners.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ube Pretto', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Umberto de Pretto  
Secretary General