

Mr. Thierry Breton  
European Commissioner for Internal Market  
Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
1049 Brussels  
BELGIUM



**By email**

BR1060179/RMA

Brussels, 25 janvier 2024

**Re: Urgent action needed to ensure the freedom of movement of goods in the European Union in view of the farmers protests**

Dear Commissioner Breton,

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 (EU), is strongly concerned about the ongoing protests in the agricultural sector taking place in several EU Member States. Recent developments in France increases the probability of negatively impacting the free movement of goods, one of the fundamental principles of the Union. At the same time, the current situation dangerously puts the security of drivers and their cargo at risk.

*We are calling for your prompt intervention to require the EU Members States affected by the protests to find proportionate ways to contain the protests so that vital trade corridors are kept open by ensuring the free movement of goods.*

**Context: Farmers protests spreading across the EU**

Since December 2023, protests have been taking place in Germany involving the agricultural sector, more specifically farmers, in reaction to the federal governments' decision to eliminate farming subsidies and benefits. Despite negotiations between the government and the farmers, resulting in the decision to gradually reduce the benefits, the situation continues to be uncertain, with potential disruptions expected.

Currently, in France, farmers are blocking motorways, including vital corridors in the southern part of the country that ensure transport of vital foodstuff from Spain to Northern Europe. The situation on the ground is deeply worrying, with drivers reporting being blocked for long periods of time without having access to adequate sanitary facilities. Given the significant lack of safe and secure truck parking areas in Europe, drivers simply do not know where to go. In addition, given the volatile situation, their security is at risk while trying to simply do their job and keep the EU economy running.

Any restriction on the freedom of movement must be eliminated as soon as possible between the Member States.

Blockages and disruptions on the road caused by the protests risk causing 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. At the same time,

professional drivers could lose valuable working time that could have been allocated to transporting goods to other EU citizens and businesses. In addition, the delays caused by the current situation are increasing costs for road goods transport companies and their customers, placing an enormous amount of pressure on daily business operations.

**Swiftly implement measures to facilitate the freedom of movement of goods**

IRU therefore calls on your support to:

- Urge the affected Member States to take instant preventive measures to facilitate the free movement of goods by allowing access to key trade routes.
- Safeguard the well-being of drivers by guaranteeing sufficient security and adequate facilities.
- Encourage Member States to provide transparent information on access to motorways.

We trust that we can count on your support to urgently implement measures in order to keep road goods transport flowing efficiently within the EU.

Yours sincerely,



Raluca Marian

Director EU Advocacy and General Delegate, IRU Permanent Delegation to the EU