

Angela Merkel
Chancellor
Bundeskanzleramt
Willy-Brandt-Straße 1
10557 Berlin
GERMANY



By email

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Geneva, 19 February 2021

EUROPE NEEDS YOUR LEADERSHIP TO KEEP GOODS MOVING DURING THE PANDEMIC

Dear Chancellor Merkel,

Border restrictions imposed by your government are causing chaos to goods transport on Europe's roads, affecting major North-South and East-West trade routes.

Your refusal to exempt professional truck drivers from mandatory COVID-19 testing breaks your previous commitments on EU green lanes and the free movement of goods, and moreover does not help curb the virus. Your border restrictions are being copied by other countries and regions, including the Czech Republic and the Tyrol, who fear hosting thousands of blocked drivers on their own borders with Germany.

Aside from bringing misery to tens of thousands of truck drivers, a chain reaction is building across the continent that, as the days go by, will steadily bring European supply chains to a halt. This will not only affect supermarkets, hospitals and factories in Germany, but in all of your neighbouring countries. Without action, your citizens, and your neighbour's citizens, will see first-hand the impacts in a few days.

Our member associations in Germany are also extremely concerned, including AMÖ, AIST, BGL, BWVL and DSLV. Indeed BGL (Bundesverband Güterkraftverkehr Logistik und Entsorgung) wrote to you yesterday.

As the world road transport organisation, IRU appeals to you from beyond Germany's borders, from inside and outside the EU, where millions of people are being affected by your unilateral and uncoordinated decision.

A sensible approach

We understand the need for drastic measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. Every country has a duty to protect its citizens. The road transport sector has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to bring essential goods to those who need them. Drivers, companies and clients across European logistics chains have long put in place strict measures to stop the virus spreading. Drivers are not involved in loading or unloading of their vehicles to respect social distancing, and most of the time they work alone in their cabin.

As we saw in the UK in December, after France unilaterally imposed mandatory test measures, professional drivers are not a threat to the spread of the virus. In this case, over 30,000 drivers were

tested and practically none was found to be positive. The handful of drivers who tested positive however had mingled with thousands of other drivers, in chaotic queues in front of hastily erected test centres, without protection or proper order to manage physical distancing.

Your requirement to make truck drivers test every 48 hours whilst on the road is not only unnecessary, it is impractical for these highly mobile essential workers. It means that testing becomes necessary, on average, every 400 km and that supply chains cannot be maintained.

But most importantly, it is dangerous. Crowds of truck drivers queuing for tests in sub-zero temperatures, as we see today, will only increase the risk that the virus spreads. And there are no quarantine plans in place at the border areas for the few drivers who may test positive. Letting drivers do their job and continue across a border without mandatory testing is the safest solution.

Clearly, with 40-50km truck queues a routine sight this week on the Brenner Pass, Germany's new COVID-19 test requirement for truck drivers is already causing transport disruption. This will only get worse if the situation does not change, indeed much worse if new countries or regions are added to the list.

Sacrificing supply chains as a result of your government's measures is not only pointless in terms of the spread of the virus, but completely disproportionate, damaging an already weakened EU economy and harming millions of citizens already exhausted by the long pandemic.

Germany is a major goods transit country, so it is not only your supermarket shelves that will become empty in the coming days. The impact on your neighbours will be even more severe, especially in northern countries that rely heavily on imported fresh food at this time of year.

Keep your commitments

Germany supported the [European Council Recommendation on restrictions to free movement of 2 January](#). As such, you committed to exempt, in principle, transport workers and service providers from mandatory testing. Moreover, in the event that testing causes transport disruptions, you committed to lift or repeal testing requirements immediately in order to preserve open "Green Lanes" for goods.

We ask you to keep this commitment. Our biggest concern is that Germany will add more countries to the list and those countries in turn will impose more restrictions. Public statements by your minister of the interior are adding fuel to the flames. The real victims of these disproportionate and misguided decisions however are ordinary citizens.

We need your leadership

Germany has long been an anchor for free and fair trade across the single market of a united Europe, but the current chaos resulting from your government's measures is causing an exceptional crisis across the continent.

On behalf of the global road transport community, and with all who work tirelessly in logistics to keep Europe's citizens and businesses supplied with essential goods, we ask for your pragmatic and sensible leadership in this crisis.

We thus implore you to exempt truck drivers from mandatory testing requirements at your borders, so that essential goods can continue to move smoothly across Germany and across Europe.

We need you to put Germany back at the heart of a strong Europe that fights together against the pandemic.

Yours sincerely,



Umberto de Pretto
Secretary General