

Ursula von der Leyen
President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels



By email and post

BR1062485/HTU

Geneva, 22 October 2026

Growing unrest in road transport – our commitment to dialogue and request for your support

Dear President von der Leyen,

In the context of increasing unrest across the EU, including occasional protests and spontaneous blockades by road transport operators, we would like to reassure you that IRU and our national member federations are making every effort to encourage dialogue, find peaceful resolutions and prevent disruptions to logistics chains and passenger mobility.

IRU and its members have not supported any of the recent disruptions and remain firmly committed to constructive cooperation with governments and all relevant stakeholders to ensure the uninterrupted movement of goods and people across Europe.

At the same time, we are acutely aware of the growing discontent among road transport operators, primarily driven by ever-increasing diesel prices resulting from the Middle East crisis. We are therefore reaching out to seek your personal support for concrete measures at EU level that can help stabilise the sector and address the underlying causes of this discontent, while fully recognising that a substantial part of the immediate support needed rests with national governments.

Scale of the exposure and damage

The continuous increase in fuel prices is placing enormous strain on a sector with very narrow operating margins, limited ability to pass additional costs on to customers, and virtually non-existent financial reserves.

The scale of the sector's exposure is considerable. Across the EU, trucks, buses and coaches consume approximately 6.8 billion litres of diesel every month. Despite ongoing efforts to decarbonise and progressively transition towards non-fossil energy sources, road transport remains overwhelmingly dependent on diesel for its daily operations. This structural dependence cannot be overcome overnight, leaving both freight and passenger transport particularly exposed to fluctuations in global oil markets.

Fuel accounts for approximately 30% of road freight's operating costs, and most operators are SMEs and microenterprises, working with margins of just 1–3%.

Their financial vulnerability is further aggravated by chronic late payments from customers (delays of 90 to 180 days are not uncommon), coupled with the typical inability to pass

sudden increases in operating costs on to their customers. In practice, transport operators are frequently required to act as creditors to larger economic actors.

This combination leaves operators particularly exposed to economic shocks. The consequences can extend well beyond individual businesses to the continuity of logistics chains, essential supplies and passenger mobility.

Support sought

There are two concrete measures through which your support and the Commission's action could make an important difference, both in responding to the current situation and in addressing the structural vulnerabilities of the sector.

1. Extension of the Middle East Crisis Temporary State Aid Framework

We welcomed the Commission's adoption of the Middle East Crisis Temporary State Aid Framework, which allows Member States to provide targeted support to road transport operators affected by exceptional increases in fuel prices.

We also very much welcome your recent announcement of the Commission's intention to extend the framework beyond its current expiry date of 31 December 2026.

In this context, our principal request would be for a one-year extension, until 31 December 2027, maintaining the existing provisions applicable to road transport, including the possibility for Member States to compensate up to 70% of additional fuel costs.

This would provide the necessary continuity for Member States wishing to support their operators. We would also encourage the Commission to promote the timely and effective use of the framework, including advance payments where appropriate.

2. A dedicated EU regulation on late payments in road transport

The current crisis also highlights the need to address the structural financial fragility of road transport businesses. Chronic late payments force small operators to finance their often much larger customers, undermining their cash flow and leaving them particularly exposed to sudden cost increases.

We therefore seek your support for the Commission to propose a dedicated EU regulation on late payments in commercial road transport, complementing the existing horizontal directive and establishing a strict maximum payment period of 30 days, backed by effective enforcement.

This could help create the conditions for transport businesses to remain financially healthy, which would not only strengthen the sector's resilience to future crises, but also provide operators with additional resources needed to invest in the green and digital transitions and in their employees.

You can count on IRU and our national member federations as constructive partners. We count on your support and stand ready to cooperate closely with the Commission services in taking these proposals forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Turki", enclosed within an oval-shaped scribble.

Habib Turki
Secretary General