

Mr. Thierry Breton
Commissioner for Internal Market
of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels
BELGIUM

February 19, 2024

Subject: New temporary Austrian traffic ban for heavy goods vehicles on the Tauern motorway

Dear Mr. Breton,

In recent years, the Alpine Transit Group and several national road goods transport associations have repeatedly pointed out the difficult transit situation in Tyrol for road freight transport companies and called on the European Commission to act against Austria's transit restrictions that violate EU law.

On 25 January 2024 the Austrian federal government issued a new truck driving ban on the A10 Tauern motorway. A large part of the road freight transport between Central Europe and Southeastern Europe, including Germany, the Czech Republic, Italy and Slovenia is carried via this route. No longer just the Brenner route is affected by discriminatory measures! Vehicles destined for Austria or Austrian internal traffic are exempted. This amounts negative discrimination and incompatible with the EU principles of the free movement of goods. The ban discriminates against non-Austrian transport companies in particular. The official reason for the additional driving bans is the high volume of traffic due to travel to the ski areas on these days.

We ask the European Commission to intervene to ensure free movement of goods and non-discrimination based on the nationality of the road goods transport company. The ban is supposed to be temporary until 29 March 2024 and was introduced at very short notice. Heavy goods road transport transit with vehicles of a gross vehicle weight above 7.5 tonnes on the Tauern motorway is affected in both directions, from Friday afternoon, 13:00 to 19:00. In addition, the start of the weekend driving ban on the Tauern Autobahn is brought forward from 15:00 to 07:00 on Saturdays during this period.

HGV transit bans on the Tauern motorway - Social impact on the EU road transport industry

The EU road transport industry is extremely concerned about this driving ban for the following reasons. Firstly, vehicles return home on Fridays to allow the drivers to spend the weekend with their families, a common practice now jeopardised by this ban. The affected drivers will be forced to spend the weekend in the vehicle cabin or at another location. This is fully against the spirit behind the Mobility Package to improve the working conditions of drivers.

Secondly, this measure will discourage drivers to work on this route and could deepen the already extremely serious driver shortage challenges even further. Social aspects urgently need more attention.

An unwanted precedent which could be repeated

A steady unhindered expansion of transit driving bans through Austria can be noted. This can become an unwanted precedent for other Member States to do the same if they know the European Commission will not act.



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LA MOBILITÉ EST EN NOUS



Uniunea Națională
a Transportatorilor Rutieri din România

There is also a serious concern that Austria will from now on regularly impose such transit bans on the Tauern motorway when traffic volumes are high.

Short-term announcement of driving bans

It is also noteworthy that the regulation was published in the Federal Law Gazette on 25 January 2024 and came into force the following day, on 26 January 2024! Publishing truck driving bans at short notice has become common practice in Austria for many years without any reason for urgency. The publication of the annual driving ban calendar is a good example. Drivers and companies, especially in international transport, have no opportunity to adjust their route planning accordingly or to consider alternative intermodal or combined transport options.

We would like to point to an official European Commission letter (KF/bk (2013) 223107 dated 20 February 2013) to the Alpine Transit Working Group confirming that Austria regularly violates the so-called "Strawberry Regulation" (EC) No 2679/ 98 because it does not comply with its information obligations regarding driving bans that are introduced at short notice. At that time, the European Commission contacted the Austrian authorities and reminded them of the obligations resulting from the "Strawberry Regulation". Unfortunately, we cannot see any improvement in the situation. Driving bans in Austria are still announced at very short notice.

It is high time for the European Commission to take responsibility and act against Austria to ensure its compliance with EU rules and with the principles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union when it considers introducing truck or other traffic bans.

We are also sending a copy of this letter to Commissioner Adina Valean.

Yours sincerely,

IRU (the world's road transport organisation representing nearly one million transport companies in the EU)

International Road Transport Union, Geneva



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AEBTRI (Bulgaria)

The Association of the Bulgarian Enterprises for International Transport, Sofia



Secretary General Plamen Tzalkov

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