To

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Belgrad/Sarajevo/Skopje, 31st August 2026

Urgent Request for Immediate EU-Level Intervention – Critical Disruption Risk Resulting from the Application of the 90/180-Day Schengen Rule to Professional Drivers from the Western Balkans

Dear Vice President Executive Séjourné,
dear Commissioner Brunner,
dear Commissioner Tzitzikostas,
dear Commissioner Kos,

The German-Serbian Chamber of Commerce represents a large community of German companies that have invested substantially in the region and have integrated their local operations into European value chains. We are therefore compelled to draw your attention to a matter that is increasingly jeopardising the efficient functioning of these cross-border production and logistics networks.

On behalf of our member companies, whose manufacturing activities in the Western Balkans depend on the timely movement of goods to and from the European Union, we wish to express our grave concern regarding the immediate and escalating consequences of the strict application of the 90-days-in-180-days Schengen

Gefördert durch:
Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie
aufgrund eines Beschlusses des Deutschen Bundestages

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stay limitation to professional road freight drivers from the Western Balkans. The resulting shortage of drivers threatens the continuity of supply chains on which many German and European industrial enterprises rely.

This issue has now moved beyond a question of regulatory interpretation and is creating substantial operational challenges for both transport operators and their EU-based customers across the European market.

As of the end of August 2026, an increasing number of professional drivers engaged in international freight transport operations has approached or exceeded the permitted 90-day threshold.

Once this occurs, they are legally prevented from continuing transport operations within the Schengen area. In practical terms, this means that a large number of planned transport movements cannot be initiated at all.

The sector currently lacks a sufficient number of qualified replacement drivers who could be deployed at short notice to compensate for the loss of workforce capacity resulting from the Schengen stay limitation. This will lead to high financial losses not only for businesses in Western Balkan countries, but also for their customers throughout the European Union.

The consequences are neither theoretical nor long-term, they are immediate, measurable, and economically damaging:

- a sudden and severe reduction in available road freight capacity;
- immediate disruption of established supply chains across multiple Member States;
- delays in production cycles dependent on just-in-time deliveries;
- escalation of transport costs due to reduced market capacity;
- contractual breaches and financial exposure for EU-based companies;
- increased inflationary pressure across supply-dependent sectors.

The issue is particularly acute because road freight transport remains the dominant mode of trade between the European Union and the Western Balkans, with limited short-term alternatives capable of replacing the affected transport capacity.

At a time when the European Union is seeking to strengthen the competitiveness, resilience, and strategic autonomy of its economy, a sudden reduction in available road freight transport capacity and reliable supply chains involving the Western Balkans would directly undermine these objectives.

Over many years, EU companies have integrated companies from the Western Balkans into their supply chains and logistics networks. These companies have become an essential component of supply chain flows connecting the EU with regional and international markets. Many of these companies are affiliates of EU companies.

The current situation therefore does not represent a matter of migration policy alone; it has evolved into a structural risk to the stability of the EU internal market and the resilience of European supply chains.

During the Technical Working Group meeting held in February 2026 with participation from DG HOME, DG

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MOVE and DG ENEST representatives the possibility of issuing specific long-stay visas for professional drivers was identified as a potential interim solution.

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However, the absence of harmonized, operational, and accelerated procedures across Member States until now renders this option insufficient to address the urgency of the crisis.

Given the rapidly approaching depletion of available transport capacity, we respectfully urge the Commission to:

1. Facilitate a coordinated and harmonised approach among Member States regarding the treatment of professional drivers performing international freight transport;
2. Promote accelerated and operationally workable visa or permit procedures for affected drivers;
3. Consider interim measures capable of ensuring continuity of essential freight transport services while longer-term solutions are being developed.

Without timely and coordinated intervention, the gradual loss of available transport capacity is likely to intensify in the coming weeks and months, generating cascading effects across manufacturing, retail, energy and other supply-dependent sectors. The resulting disruptions would affect not only Western Balkan companies, but also thousands of EU businesses that rely on uninterrupted supply chain flows.

We respectfully submit that this matter calls for urgent consideration at European level. Timely and coordinated action is necessary not for the benefit of transport operators alone, but in order to safeguard supply chain continuity, the functioning of the internal market, and the competitiveness of European industry. Any practical and harmonised solution capable of preserving the continuity of international freight transport services would provide significant support to the resilience and economic stability of the European Union.

We remain at your disposal to provide additional data regarding transport volumes, capacity constraints and sector-specific impacts, and we would welcome the opportunity to contribute constructively to any discussion aimed at identifying workable solutions.

Best regards

Filip Simović

President

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