

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

Since the beginning of 2026, specifically following the end of the hauliers' protest—which was organized due to the discriminatory position of professional drivers and hauliers from the Western Balkans compared to their EU counterparts regarding the limited days of stay in Schengen countries—the Serbian Association of International Road Hauliers-MT, Belgrade has worked intensively with competent institutions of the Republic of Serbia, as well as with colleagues from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. The goal was to find an optimal solution for professional drivers through Working Groups launched by the European Commission on this matter, pending the adoption of legal acts that will implement the EU Visa Strategy. However, six months later, no solution has been found for professional drivers and hauliers from the Western Balkans.

At the latest joint meeting of hauliers' associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, a joint stance was adopted stating that regional hauliers stand united and will persist in their fight for the right to work and a normal life for drivers. In response to the Joint Letter from the hauliers' associations, the EU Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) stated that professional drivers and hauliers must align their business operations with Schengen regulations. Based on this response, it can be concluded that the European Commission has no solution to resolve this burning issue in the coming period, leaving Western Balkan hauliers and their employed drivers to fend for themselves.

As the DG HOME response provided no indications of positive changes, hauliers stand by the agreement from the Joint Meeting. If no solution is reached, hauliers will meet again after August 10, 2026, to agree on the next steps they will be forced to take. The unified stance of all participants is that they do not want to relocate their companies to EU countries, that they will protect their workers and businesses operating for decades, and that they will not allow drivers to be classified into high-risk passenger groups while performing their work duties alongside cargo vehicles.

The problem of the limited stay of professional drivers in Schengen countries is not only a problem for drivers or hauliers; this is an issue for all economic sectors relying on international road transport. For this reason, we hereby call upon all business entities whose operations are closely related to international road transport to urgently inform their business partners, parent companies, embassies, chambers of commerce, and other competent institutions and organizations in EU member states that serious supply chain disruptions are expected as early as August. Western Balkan hauliers are not begging for support but expecting it, and it is highly necessary for all affected parties to actively involve themselves in demands directed toward the European Commission.

We expect all business professionals to engage in resolving this problem in the coming days, as it is anticipated that by August of this year, the majority of drivers will have already exceeded their allowed number of days in the Schengen area (more than 90 days), and that vehicles transporting goods in international road traffic will not have anyone to drive them.

***If a professional driver from the Western Balkans is safe for the EU for 90 days, why does he become a threat to the EU on the 91st day, getting arrested, deported, and banned from entering Schengen?
This is a question to which no one, not even the European Commission, has an answer.***

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Enclosure:

Response from the EU Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs – DG HOME



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

Director General

Brussels

Mr Neđo Mandić
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International Road Hauliers
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Dear Mr Mandić,

Thank you for the letters of the Serbian Association of International Road Hauliers and the common letter of transport associations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia addressed to Commissioner Brunner, on whose behalf I am pleased to reply.

You express dissatisfaction both about the Entry/Exit System's (EES) impact on professional drivers and the way the EU handles this matter, which in your view implies the risk of further organised blockades by drivers in August if no solution should be found by then.

For the EU, the full entry into operations of the EES on 10 April 2026 marked a significant milestone, representing an important shift towards a modern and digital external border management, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of security checks, including by systematically detecting overstays.

The Commission is very well aware of the significant impact of the enforcement of the rules on the sector, notably thanks to extensive contacts with the affected parties, including professional drivers' association. We have therefore considered various ideas, including the exception of professional drivers from registration in the EES. These are unfortunately not a viable short-term solution, given not only the time needed for the ordinary EU legislative procedure and the absence of general support from Member States for such an approach, but also the fact that a mere exemption from EES registration would not do away with the maximum duration of stay in the Schengen area of 90 in any 180 days.

As a medium-term option, the Commission is exploring with Member States pragmatic solutions to facilitate the operations of professionals who rely on high mobility within the Schengen area, such as professional drivers, as announced in the Visa Strategy published on 29 January. This requires legislation to be decided by the Council and the European Parliament and therefore will need time. Discussions with Member States have started and we will continue to explore solutions and avenues to address this issue that could take the form of an EU short-stay permit.

For the short-term the Commission has communicated to all stakeholders that the EES is being implemented as planned and there will be no regulatory changes at EU level on that matter in the next months. Therefore, it is important that professional drivers and the companies that employ them comply with the Schengen Borders Code and adapt to the fact of systematic registration in the EES as of 10 April, and to a limited duration of stay in the Schengen area. In the same way, economic operators within and outside the EU should adapt their relevant business processes to this new reality.

A solution that is already available to drivers and their companies, is for Member States to issue long-stay visa or residence permits to drivers. Holders of such permits would not be EES-registered. They have a right to stay in the Member State that issued the permit for its entire duration and may stay in other Schengen Member States for a period of 90 within any 180 days.

I would also like to underline that we are aware of cases of forced removals of drivers who overstayed and were given entry bans. I can inform you that we encourage Member States to carefully consider the specific circumstances of each case and give preference to voluntary compliance over forced return, where possible.

Let me conclude by saying that the Commission is closely following developments on the practical implications for supply chains and keeps the communication lines open to impacted stakeholders. We recognise the critical role of road transport, which accounts for around 80% of trade with the region. For the EU, maintaining stable and uninterrupted supply chains – particularly those operating on just-in-time productions models, such as in the automotive sector – is essential.

Yours sincerely,

Beate GMINDER