

Belgrade, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026

**Subject: Urgent coordination required “Safeguarding EU–Western Balkans supply chains”**

Dear Ambassadors,

I am writing on behalf of the Council of European Business Associations and Chambers (CEBAC) - representing the European business community operating in Serbia- to underline the imminent risk posed by the announced border blockages as of January 26<sup>th</sup> and to **call on your political and institutional support to ensure that this issue is addressed as a priority within the appropriate EU and bilateral dialogue frameworks.**

This situation arises at a critical juncture for the Western Balkans’ economies, which are intimately integrated into European value and supply chains across key sectors such as automotive, manufacturing, agri-food, and logistics.

Serbia’s trade relationship with the EU is of strategic importance: the EU accounts for around 58–60% of Serbia’s total trade, with bilateral trade flows worth tens of billions of euros annually. Moreover, the EU is the largest foreign direct investor in Serbia, with cumulative investments of approximately €20.9 billion, supporting thousands of jobs and anchoring EU industrial value chains in the country.

**Trade and investment ties of this magnitude are not abstract figures: they underpin thousands of jobs, stable supply and demand relationships, and ongoing value-chain participation between Serbian producers and EU customers.** Any disruption to road freight flows will therefore have immediate consequences for EU-linked supply chains, especially for companies operating under just-in-time regimes and bound by strict contractual delivery obligations.

The member companies of the fifteen associations and bilateral chambers composing CEBAC, report that even short interruptions will result in production stoppages, contractual penalties, force majeure claims and daily financial losses reaching several million euros, with particularly severe consequences for SMEs, the backbone of the regional economy. Our conservative estimate is that **the overall economic damage could easily exceed €100 million per day** during the duration of the blockades.

The announced actions stem from the current application of the 90/180-day rule and the recently introduced identity and biometric checks (EES). While such procedures may be manageable for occasional travel, they are not viable for the transport of goods involving frequent and predictable cross-border movements. This situation is difficult to reconcile with the goal of economic integration of the Western Balkans with the European Union.

The transport associations of the Western Balkans are now forming a working group to develop concrete, technical and legally sound proposals to address the situation. However, to date, they have not been granted a structured channel for dialogue with the relevant political and institutional stakeholders. This lack of engagement is, according to the sector, the main reason why they have decided to proceed with the announced blockades.

In this context, our main request is that an immediate and coordinated dialogue be launched with the transport associations of the Western Balkans, involving the European institutions and the relevant national authorities. The sector would be ready to suspend the announced actions should such a dialogue be formally initiated, alleviating the impact on the business community overall.

CEBAC remains fully available to facilitate exchanges and contribute constructively to a coordinated and timely solution.

With kind regards,

  
Silvija Rakić,  
Secretary General, CEBAC