

Respiratory doctors urge governments to ensure free movement of essential medical supplies

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The [European Respiratory Society](#) adds its voice to those raising the alarm bells regarding border controls and export bans, which have an enormous impact on the free movement of essential medical supplies around Europe. Each delay in the movement of supplies because of blocked borders puts our healthcare workers in danger and patients at higher risk. A unified European market should facilitate the joint European fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Borders should not be barriers to this fight.

President of the European Respiratory Society, Professor Thierry Troosters, said: "Border restrictions pose an unnecessary and dangerous burden on critical care systems that are already facing unprecedented challenges. The relentless efforts of our respiratory physicians and intensivists will fail to be effective if they cannot rely on the internal market principles, solidarity between member states and the cross-border supply chain of essential medical supplies."

The calls follow reports that exports of medical supplies, including masks and other [personal protective equipment](#), respirators, ventilators, testing kits and consumables, into EU member states are effectively being stopped because of intra EU export bans, which have been enforced by several EU member states. Despite the European wide export authorisation regime's introduction, some member states continue to uphold national export bans.

In addition, some member states have introduced border checks or have begun stopping trucks from passing at their borders, which further endangers the free flow of essential supplies and medicines. Such actions violate not only the principles of the internal market, but they also put the European population at risk, slow down the effective battle against the COVID-19 virus and importantly, impose unnecessary stress on healthcare workers.

"The impact of the [export](#) bans will be felt by healthcare systems across the world, as the global supply chains are all connected. This will put countless lives at unnecessary risk. EU institutions and national governments must act without delay by supporting free trade and transportation of goods, to enable free movement of medical supplies across the region," warned Professor Troosters.

The European Respiratory Society urges all member states to act in the best interest of European public health, by respecting the internal market principles at all times, in particular for supplies that save lives in other member states across all lines of health care.

Professor Troosters added: "We call on the European Commission to fully promote the recently adopted [border](#) guidelines, to ensure the smoothest and most free flow of essential medical supplies that is possible, and we applaud the very recent success in establishing corridors for shipment of medical supplies via the so-called Green Lanes. We hope countries respect the Green Lane guidelines and ensure these corridors remain intact in the ongoing pandemic."

Provided by European Lung Foundation

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