

Monthly barometer

# TRENDS IN ROAD FREIGHT PRICES IN FRANCE



January 2026 | 

**upply**

# FRANCE: ROAD TRANSPORT PRICES REMAINED ALMOST STABLE IN JANUARY

**Road freight transport prices fell by only 0.1% in January 2026, despite volatility in diesel in a sluggish economy. Regular transport services are staying on course with steady and solid growth.**

The French economy is expected to experience GDP growth of 1% in 2026, following increases of 0.9% in 2025 and 1.1% in 2024, according to [an INSEE economic outlook report from December 2025](#). Activity is expected to accelerate slightly in the first half of the year (+0.3% per quarter), boosted by a small increase in manufacturing output. Activity in the construction sector, on the other hand, is expected to register a moderate decline, due to a lull in local public investment following the upcoming municipal elections.

Domestic demand is expected to continue to drive growth in 2026. Household consumption, in particular, is expected to grow somewhat faster, as is business investment. In contrast, INSEE anticipates a negative contribution of foreign trade to growth in the first quarter of 2026 (-0.4 points after +0.5 points) due to the decline in aeronautical and naval exports after the exceptional performance of the second half of 2025.

The French economy is evolving in an uncertain international context and a tense political context. It was not until February 2nd that the country finally had a budget for 2026, an unprecedented situation that reflects the deep political divisions and the difficulties in finding a compromise in the National Assembly. The public deficit, although slightly down, remains high, at over 5% of GDP, a threshold considered critical by the Governor of the Bank of France. François Villeroy de Galhau warned of the risks involved if this trajectory is not corrected, stressing the need for a credible budget to reassure economic players.

## # A STABLE BUSINESS CLIMATE

Despite the uncertainties, the economy is proving to be quite resilient. In January 2026, the business climate reached its highest level since June 2024. At 99, it is almost at its long-term average, although with significant disparities. At 105, it thus rebounded sharply in industry, reaching its highest level since July 2022. On the other hand, the business climate is stable in services and construction, and deteriorated significantly in retail despite controlled inflation: in January 2026, the consumer price index showed a decline of 0.3% month-on-month and an increase of 0.3% year-on-year.

It must be said that the employment outlook tarnishes the overall picture: at 93, the employment climate lost 2 points compared to December 2025 and moved away from its long-term average. Furthermore, the gradual elimination of subsidies for hiring apprentices could lead to the disappearance of 64,000 jobs by mid-2026, further weakening the labour market.

## # A VERY SLIGHT DECREASE IN TRANSPORT PRICES

In this context, road transport prices in France fell by a very small 0.1% in January 2026 compared to December 2025. This development appears to reflect the persistent fragility of the French economy, characterised by moderate growth and lacklustre household consumption.

This slight decline can also be explained by the caution of businesses and households who, lacking confidence in the future, prefer to curb their spending, which weighed on the volumes of goods to be transported. This is a situation that has been observed for several months. According to the latest data published by the Ministry of Transport, which covers the third quarter of 2025, domestic road freight transport declined by 1.4% in France during this period, reaching 41.5 billion tonne-kilometres, its lowest point since the end of 2023. While transportation on behalf of others remained almost stable, own-account transportation recorded a sharp decline.

### UFI Road France Month-on-Month Evolution (%)



Source | [UFI Road France](#)

Variations in road transport costs are closely linked to fuel prices. After a marked drop of 5.5% in December 2025, the price of professional diesel rebounded by 3.4% in January 2026, illustrating persistent volatility in the market.

In January 2026, the average transport price per kilometre travelled in France was €1.630, one-tenth of a cent less than the previous month. Since August 2025, prices have fluctuated consistently between €1.620 and €1.640 per kilometre. In other words, they remain “flat”, in a gloomy and uncertain operational and economic context.

This increase in January will probably be reflected in road transport prices with a one-month lag, in accordance with the regularly observed delayed pass-through mechanism. In January, the decline in December, on the other hand, seems to have had only a slight impact. Because we could reasonably have expected a fall in freight rates of more than 1%.

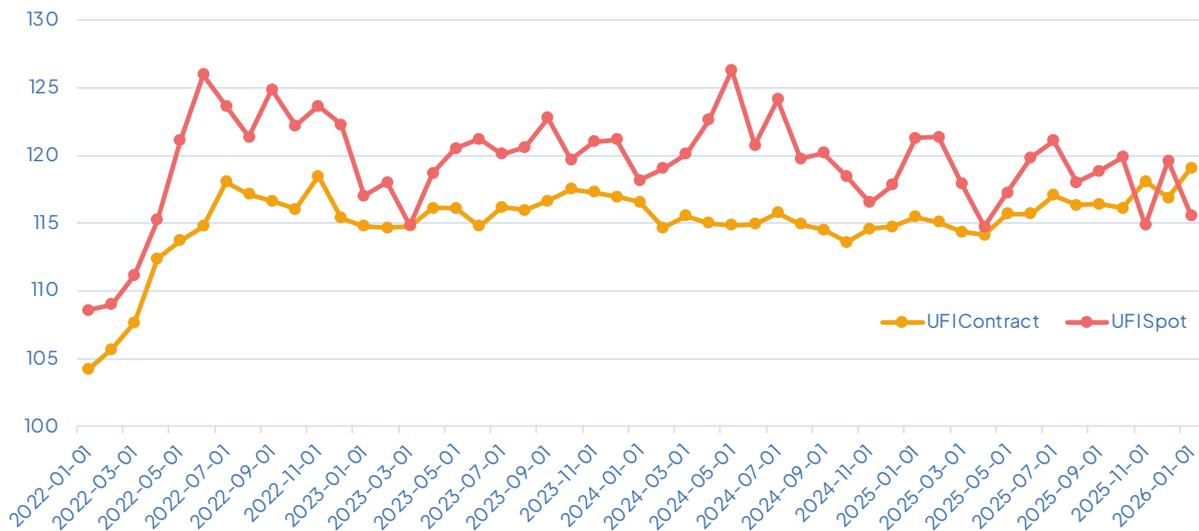
### UFI Road France €/km



Source | [UFI Road France](#)

# # THE CONTRACT MARKET IS HOLDING UP WELL

**UFI Contract and UFI Spot**  
Base 100: January 2019



Source | [Uply Freight Index](#) - Road France

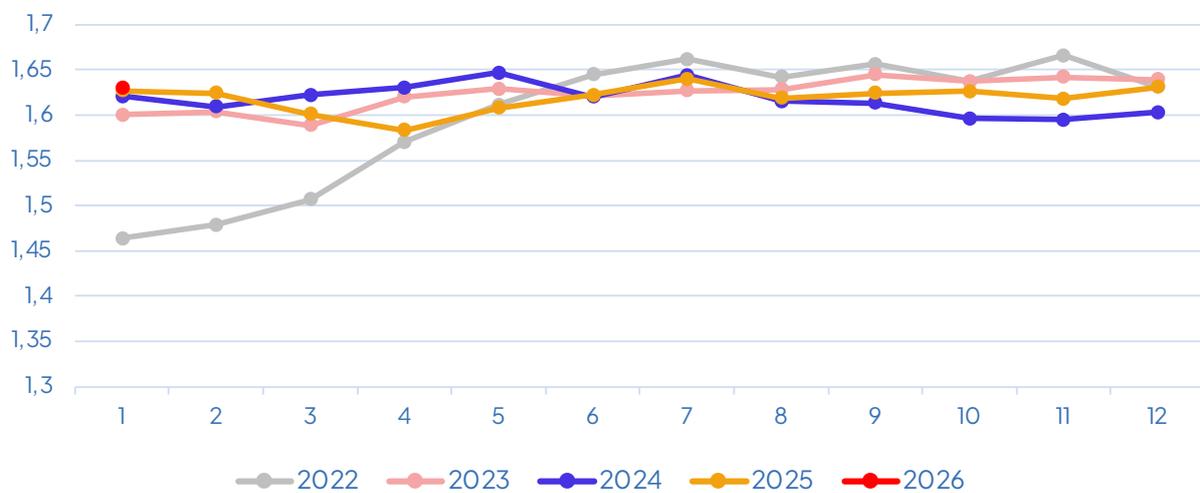
- The CONTRACT index, which measures contract prices between shippers and carriers on the French market, recorded an increase of 1.9% in January, after a decline of 1.1% in December. This progression indicates that the previously observed decline was temporary, with the indicator returning to a trend consistent with or even exceeding the rise in fuel costs. With a record level of 119, the index shows an increase of 2.4% compared to its 1-year average and 3.2% compared to January 2025. The 12-month moving average is steadily rising, demonstrating solid growth and refuting fears of a market reversal.
- The SPOT index represents the reference price index in France for non-regular transport. This fell by 3.4% in January. The drop in non-regular prices is generally a sign of transport supply exceeding demand, which is not surprising for a month of January. The volumes to be transported are generally lower during this period, and it is therefore very common for the index to plummet in January.

# # A SITUATION THAT REMAINS DIFFICULT FOR CARRIERS

Observation of transport prices over the last 5 years shows that after a sharp rise during a period of high inflation, prices tend to stabilise. The year 2026 therefore started on a basis quite similar to 2025. The drop in fuel prices partly explains the lull.

Moderate inflation also contributed to mitigating the increase in drivers' pay. However, other cost items are still subject to inflationary pressures, which are weighing on carriers' margins.

**Year-on-Year comparison**  
€/km



Source | [Uapply Freight Index](#) - Road France

In 2025, the failures of road transport companies decreased by 9.7% compared to the previous year, according to data from the firm Altares. They remain, however, at a high level.

**Business insolvencies in road haulage in France**  
(2021-2025)



Source | [Altares](#)

# # DECARBONISATION REMAINS AT THE HEART OF THE ISSUES

Low margins in road transport are nothing new. However, it becomes crucial at a time when public policies insist on a necessary acceleration of the decarbonisation of the economy, and in particular in transport since this sector constitutes an important source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The Third Multi-Year Energy Program (PPE), presented on February 13th by the French government for the period 2026–2035, sets a target for decarbonised electricity production of between 650 and 693 TWh per year in 2035, closely linked to the growth of electrification of uses. The objective is to move from an energy mix consisting of approximately 60% imported fossil fuels in 2023 to an energy mix consisting of approximately 60% low-carbon energy in 2030. The draft of the 3rd National Low Carbon Strategy (SNBC3), currently under consultation following its publication in December 2025, notably plans to reach the threshold of 50% of electric heavy goods vehicles in new vehicle sales by 2030 (i.e. 10% of the fleet).

There is still a long way to go. In 2025, the share of electric vehicles in new heavy goods vehicle registrations reached 3.7% in France, according to ACEA statistics. The proportion is slightly higher at the European Union level (4.2%). The draft framework bill relating to the development of transport, presented by the Ministry of Transport on February 11th therefore seeks to stimulate investment by creating a more binding system for shippers: “in order to meet the national objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector, clients of services

subject to a road freight transport contract originating in metropolitan France are subject, until December 31, 2035, to a minimum obligation to use zero-emission heavy commercial vehicles”, states article 18. This obligation is expressed annually as a share of paid road transport services invoices, according to the following trajectory:

2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
0.5%	1%	2%	4%	6%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%

It should be noted that this is still a draft bill, and the difficult political context in France does not allow us to say with certitude that the bill will be adopted quickly.

In the strategy for decarbonising road transport, electrification is therefore the preferred method, while biofuels are reserved for sectors without alternatives (air, maritime, agricultural). The State also plans to activate other levers, starting with modal shift towards rail and river transport. An ambition that has been expressed for several decades without much success. Finally, demand management (short supply chains, limiting free/fast deliveries) and optimised logistics are also on the agenda. A revolution for the sector, but with major implementation challenges.

## KEY INDICATORS

Sources | INSEE (base 100 = long-term average), CNR (base 100: December 2000)

INDICATORS	January 2026	December 2025	Evolution M / M-1	January 2025	Evolution over 12 months
Insee Business climate Index	99.0	98.8	+0.2%	95.4	+3.8%
CNR Commercial Diesel Index	187.66	181.52	+3.4%	196.46	-4.5%
CNR's Long Haul semi trailer truck Index	165.06	163.09	+1.2%	165.13	-0.04%



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## THE TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS PLATFORM THAT BOOSTS SUPPLY CHAIN ACTORS' EFFICIENCY

**Uply**, the Tech Platform serving freight transport professionals, **designs and develops digital solutions** to assist supply chain professionals in leveraging the full potential of digitalization for their business.

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