



PRESS RELEASE

EUROPEAN TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

FEDERATION EUROPEENNE DES TRAVAILLEURS DES TRANSPORTS

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GERMAN GOVERNMENT PAVES THE WAY FOR SOCIAL DUMPING IN RIVER CRUISE SECTOR

Controversial decision by German Foreign Ministry allows cheap labour on Swiss vessels

Today, Monday 30 January 2017, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) has learnt about the decision of the German Foreign Ministry to restart issuing Schengen visas to non-EU citizens for employment on Swiss river cruise vessels. ETF is very much alarmed by this development. Nick Bramley, ETF President of the Inland Waterways Section comments: *"The German Foreign Ministry is opening doors to social dumping practices."*

The European river cruise sector is a rapidly growing industry. Unfortunately, the social aspects in the sector are not improving and give reason for grave concerns; e.g. low pay, cramped accommodation, long working hours, and unclear regulation on the applicable social security legislation.

The issuing of visas for employment on Swiss vessels, with over 100 vessels the largest river cruise fleet in Europe, enables employers to circumvent Swiss national legislation. While the crew is in reality not being employed in Switzerland and with the vessels regularly crossing international borders the principle of *lex loci laboris*, the application of the law of the country in which a worker is employed, is difficult if not impossible to enforce.

The now abandoned policy of not issuing visas from Germany forced the Swiss authorities to consider issuing visas only under certain conditions relating to employment and social security legislation. The decision of the German government to resume issuing visas to non-EU citizens on Swiss river cruise vessels opens the labour market to cheap labour from outside the EU.

"ETF will now address the German Foreign Ministry and urge them to reconsider their position. We will push for reversing the decision and for positively contributing to the improvement of working conditions in the river cruise industry," **Nick Bramley** concludes.

ETF continues its campaign to obtain fair transport in Europe and to fight practices of unfair competition and social dumping. Read more about ETF's vision for the future of European transport and its concrete proposals on how to resolve the challenges in the sector and in particular on how to tackle social dumping practices, download the ETF publication [here](#).

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The ETF represents more than 3.5 million transport workers from more than 230 transport unions and 41 European countries, in the following sectors: railways, road transport and logistics, maritime transport, inland waterways, civil aviation, ports & docks, tourism and fisheries.