



Galerie Agora,
Rue du Marché aux Herbes 105, Bte 11
B-1000 Brussels
Telephone +32 2 285 46 60
Fax +32 2 280 08 17
Email: etf@etf-europe.org
www.etf-europe.org

European Transport Workers' Federation
Fédération Européenne des Travailleurs des Transports
Europäische Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Federación Europea de los Trabajadores del Transporte

Ms Adina-Ioana Vălean
Commissioner for Transport
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 19 March 2020

Dear Commissioner,

COVID-19: Reiteration of meeting request and follow up on yesterday's meeting of Council of Transport Ministers

It is with apprehension that we waited for the results of the extraordinary meeting of Transport Ministers which took place, as we were all expecting concrete measures to protect our transport workers.

However, the outcome as described in the joint press release was unfortunately quite vague and we would like to request more detailed information on the decisions that were taken.

From what we read, the discussion focused on the importance of ensuring free movement of goods and people in the context where this is heavily restricted by some Member States;

There was a mention of a plan to create "green corridors"; however it is unclear to us what this means exactly for transport workers, and how trade unions can be involved in the process. Also, we take note of the establishment of national contact points, and we request for the representative transport trade unions to be involved in the work of those contact points.

Much emphasis was put on saving the sector, but saving the sector is nothing without safeguarding its –already scarce – workforce.

Similarly to workers in health care, transport workers have a crucial role to play in this crisis: delivering essential goods and ensuring the mobility of passengers when strictly needed. Transport workers keep moving across Europe, and, if they are not protected, their safety is jeopardised along with the efforts to contain the spread of the virus.

Indeed, it is regrettable that we do not see any clear measure for better protecting transport workers in this crisis. We have kept you informed of the reality of our workers and we have sent



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you and your services several proposals for action, but it seems that none of this was acknowledged.

At present, the situation on European roads is dramatic. We have detailed our analysis and priorities for action in the attached [statement](#).

Similarly, we are also concerned about the developments in European Inland Waterways. This morning, European Barge Union (EBU) released a statement, calling for the free movement of vessels and crew members, as well as flexibility in the application of the working time directive crewing regulations. On top of that, they propose the elimination of penalties in cases where these regulations are not respected. While the ETF supports the call to guarantee the free movement of crew members in Europe as it allows crewmembers to reach home or their vessels, we cannot allow for the working time directive and crewing regulations to not be enforced. In response, we sent a [letter](#) to employers' organisations, emphasising the importance of social dialogue in these extraordinary times. At the same time, we call upon EU Member States to:

- a. Guarantee – in line with the guidelines of the European Commission – an unhampered safe movement of transport workers including the European IWT crewmembers;
- b. Alleviate all local taxes/levies for inland vessels such as waste collection, sailing dues, etc. to support this sustainable transport mode in these extraordinary times.

There are many practical issues that have to be urgently solved at EU level.

In the press release, there was a slight reference to the health and safety of transport workers, but there were no specifications on what this refers to. We want to know which measures the Commission intend to roll out to ensure safety for transport workers. We are still getting reports from our members about employers that are not respecting basic safety rules to adequately protect workers from the virus. Regrettably, deliveries of non-essential goods continue.

Transport workers are continuously treated as second class citizens. This is becoming more and more evident as this health crisis develops, and it is time to think about what will be left of the transport industry's workforce once it subsides.

No matter the number of initiatives that were undertaken so far to make the transport sector attractive: the EU's current approach goes against the goal to make transport more attractive and is completely counter-productive.

The EU must be strategic, and start building the future of the industry now. We cannot go back to the "normal" situation once this is over, that "normal" situation was already less than ideal. No. We must now move forward, and build on this experience.

A task force with the full participation of the representative social partners must be swiftly implemented to prepare the transport industry for the post-pandemic economic recovery.



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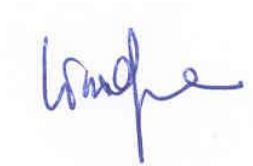


Currently, qualified transport workers leave the industry either due to temporary lay-offs or they are simply driven out by the risks they face. The crucial challenge will be to build a structure that is meant to last, that is to say that will allow workers to stay in the industry. This will require a complete revamping of the transport sectors which will have to offer better jobs and working conditions. For this to be successful, EU policies for transport must completely change which will allow for the reconstruction of the sector along with climate, social, and economic sustainability.

Citizens are watching the EU! The choices that the Commission will make during this ongoing crisis will either rebuild trust in the Union, or lead to an ever-growing scepticism towards the European project. Our citizens must not lose faith in the EU who, as a global actor, must take the lead.

It is in this vein that we reiterate our request for a conference call with you in order to discuss our concerns and have them addressed by the EU and national policy makers.

Yours Sincerely,



Livia Spera
Acting General Secretary



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