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

Brussels, 6 March 2020

Mrs Adina-Ioana Vălean

Commissioner for Transport
European Commission

Mr Nicolas Schmit

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights
European Commission

Dear Commissioner Vălean,
Dear Commissioner Schmit,

I would like to draw your attention to the impact of COVID-19 on transport workers.

Transport workers are on the frontline, at the forefront of the situation. They are the ones in direct contact with passengers and are putting themselves at risk of contracting the virus by carrying out their everyday duties. They are also the ones being impacted by the disastrous economic consequences of the virus. There is now a fear of travelling, which will not be quelled in the coming weeks, indeed, we fear it will grow even more, and it is hitting the transport industry and its workers – companies are going bankrupt, and something needs to be done to protect our workers.

A contingency plan covering the following points must urgently be put into place:

Social Dimension

All workers are equal in the face of this outbreak. **Precarious work can and will contribute to a sanitary emergency.** Indeed, in the case of **bogus self-employment** which has drastically increased due to the gig economy, **workers are not given paid medical leave.** These workers tend not to take time off to avoid losing income. **Governments need to extend social benefits to, in the short term, protect public health by making sure that every person who is not feeling well can afford to take sick leave, and, in the long term, protect the welfare of workers and the continuation of transport services. Where they do not already exist, social safety nets must be activated.**

Governments need to protect the employment of transport workers and support them during this emergency situation. This is not the first time governments have been faced with immediate but temporary changes and they need to resist the urge to act without considering the long-term developments and having a plan for the future.



President Frank Moreels

Acting General Secretary Livia Spera

Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
Ekaterina Yordanova



Economic Measures

We must also turn our attention to the long-term financial impact of this crisis which has already heavily hit aviation and will only continue. Financial support to enterprises affected by the crisis must be put into place: **Loans to businesses**, currently experiencing a severe blow to the amount of money they have access to, must be extended. **Extension of loans** can help ease the pressure of paying back the loans immediately. **Delayed payment of taxes**, duties and other charges that transport modes are obliged to pay.

Health and Safety – Rebuilding trust

The health and safety of transport workers should be a priority as they are the ones putting themselves at risk every day by carrying out their jobs, and for them, the option of working from home does not exist. **Protocols and recommendations have been put forward by world health organisations to manage COVID-19 cases, must become binding.** Employers must properly inform their workers, and provide them with the necessary protection in terms of equipment. If passengers are aware that the highest protection is being guaranteed by binding measures, confidence and trust in travel will be rebuilt.

Protecting Europe's transport workers must be at the core of any strategy. In civil aviation, companies are already going bankrupt and leaving workers without jobs, while those that remain have been facing deteriorating working conditions. Unions must be at the heart of the discussions about all changes that will affect workers.

Civil aviation has already been severely hit, and the blows will not cease. We released a statement yesterday ([attached](#)), where we outline our recommendations for the sector, and invite you to consult it. We cannot let the civil aviation industry continue to worsen. Other industries will follow in its steps, and soon, we will be faced with a much bigger crisis than expected. One that will be much harder to contain.

We call upon you to fulfil your roles as Commissioner for Transport, and as Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights. This situation can be salvaged. It is not too late. Europe must take the lead, and be an example to the rest of the world. We cannot idly stand by and watch Europe crash and burn. We must consider the long-term developments, and devise a plan for the future. ETF's 5 million transport workers, and many more are counting on you. Please, do not let them down.

Yours sincerely,



Livia Spera
ETF General Secretary



President Frank Moreels

Vice Presidents Alexander Kirchner
Ekaterina Yordanova

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