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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, 15 April 2020

Mrs Adina-Ioana Vălean
Commissioner for Transport
European Commission

Dear Commissioner,

Several developments have occurred since our last letter sent on the 1st of April, and I would like to share with you our views and requests for action.

Hereunder you will find specific points related to the transport modes. Moreover, we are aware that the Commission is planning to keep the deadline for presenting the new smart and sustainable transport strategy in the third quarter of 2020. If this is the case, we are very concerned that the current circumstances will not allow for a proper consultation of stakeholders and member states. We are convinced that this policy shall have the overarching priority of tackling the structural problems that affect the transport sector, and which have been even exacerbated by the ongoing crisis. If the necessary time for an inclusive and democratic consultation is not allotted, this could result in yet another unsustainable transport policy that would further worsen the problems that are affecting our workers as well the sector's transition towards the objectives of the European Green Deal.

Civil Aviation

Air traffic Management (ATM) as part of the wider aviation industry is facing the most significant crisis in its history. ATM staff continues to provide an essential service to ensure flights can continue to operate, with cargo and medical flights playing a particularly important role at the moment. Despite the vital importance of the industry, there are several crucial on-going issues. These are relevant to the continuing provision of ATM services now and, even more importantly, in the future, after we emerge from the current situation.

Two issues from our newly released [statement](#) relate to the work of the European Commission very closely:

- 1) The performance scheme which governs air navigation charges needs immediate emergency measures. The scheme was never designed to deal with a crisis such as this, and the State plans for Reference Period 3 will now bear no resemblance to reality. **We call upon the European Commission to urgently address this situation and set out what**



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it intends to do about the performance scheme. The Commission needs to provide clear information on how it intends to support ANSPs for the remainder of the Reference Period.

- 2) **We call upon the European Commission to delay its work on publishing its next reform of the Single European Sky.** Structural changes coming from an SES reform regulation during this time would be detached from reality and would cause unnecessary disturbance and distraction. There is a real danger a new regulation could hamper recovery, and not match the situation the European aviation market finds itself in.

Maritime transport

For the most part, we welcome the guidance on repatriating cruise ship passengers and protecting ship crews, published by the Commission on 8 April. However, specific important issues are absent from the guidance and need to be introduced as soon as possible to improve the working conditions of maritime transport workers.

Fishers and IWT crewmembers repatriation issues are not included even though they face similar issues in this area as seafarers. Concrete proposals are needed imminently, with regard to:

1) The designation of ports for crew disembarkation and crew changes

New designation of ports needs to be introduced, to facilitate fast-track crew changes and incorporate the set-up of special facilities where seafarers can safely switch between shifts. This arrangement would require special on-site visa processes for workers arriving at ports other than in their home country and would mean quarantine facilities should be in place in case of illness among arrivals.

For IWT crewmembers, in particular, these measures are needed:

- Keep terminals, ports and transshipment places open and accessible for safe crew changes.
- Provide a safe berth for freight vessels as the demand is falling and many are temporarily stopping with navigation. We request that this possibility is available for a more extended period, as needed. These vessels should not be refused as in many cases, crewmembers' workplaces are also their home.
- Exempt IWT barges from paying the local levies in ports and berthing locations in the case of prolonged lay-off period, at least for the duration of the national lockdown period.
- Guarantee safe passage by ensuring the servicing of locks.

For a more detailed overview of measures for inland waterways transport, please refer to our recent statement [here](#).



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2) EU seafarers, fishers or crewmembers stranded in third countries or on vessels that have been unable to obtain permission to dock.

We would also like to point out that cooperation and coordination between the different Commission services and with the relevant administrations need to be improved significantly. Improved cooperation would enhance and expedite the creation of measures for maritime transport workers.

Road Transport

In road transport, the COVID-19 crisis has laid bare all the cracks and failures of the business models that dominate the sector. For more than a decade, the sector has been ripped apart by letterbox companies and has been set up to access low-cost labour, to circumvent mandatory contribution to social security systems and to profit from the weak cross-border controls.

Once the pandemic kicked in, thousands of EU truck drivers found themselves without social security coverage and without the possibility to access unemployment and health care benefits. Many of these drivers had their social contribution deducted from their salary every month, but they soon realised that their social security registration was fictive. Now, they are being sent home without any source of income. The majority of these drivers have not been paid their salaries for their last full month of activity.

The ETF is currently raising this issue on social media networks and will develop the capacity to monitor and report illegal schemes and cases. Your measures to effectively address these structural social and labour problems of the sector are most welcome and will be brought to the attention of our members, and drivers at large. To this, one must add the even more tragic situation of non-EU truck drivers. Their massive exodus from the EU in the early days of the lockdown has made headlines. According to the EU statistics, 150.000 truck drivers working in the EU are third-country nationals. They have nowhere to live when working in the EU, are forced to work on even lower salaries and are more exposed to abuse.

This is what the sector has to offer today, and this paradoxically is a sector which provides services to some of the most business (retailers, etc.) in Europe. We see it as the role of the EU legislator to set things right in road transport, by making sure that the revival of the sector is based on sustainable economic and social models.

Railways and Urban Public Transport

We would like to draw your attention to the special role of railway workers in rail passenger services and urban public transport workers. In this time of crisis, they ensure public services that allow health care workers and other key workers to commute to their workplace. At the same time, they are frontline workers and are more exposed to the virus than others. They need recognition and respect from the European Commission.



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We are deeply concerned that the confinement measures of Member States have indeed resulted in a dramatic drop in rail passenger services and urban public transport services. In some countries long-distance rail services are reduced by up to 90%, regional public passenger services are reduced to a minimum. The same is happening in urban public transport. Rail and urban public transport workers are key workers and must not be exposed to unemployment and income losses.

Rail freight transport has proved its relevance during this pandemic as it allows for the transportation of a large number of goods with few staff members. However, rail freight transport is suffering from economic consequences due to COVID -19 lockdown and its impact on economy and trade.

We call on the Commission to also allocate financial recovery programs to railways companies and urban public transport operators. State aid rules must allow Member States to support railway companies and UPT operators. For public transport services by rail, bus, metro and tram covered by the PSO Regulation 1370/2007 competent authorities must be allowed to compensate all losses due to the COVID 19 confinement measures without changing contracts. We ask the Commission to actively inform about this possibility. Whereas, we reject practices where we see competent authorities unilaterally changing contracts by reducing ordered services and thus provoking the unemployment of public transport workers.

Finally, we ask the Commission to draw conclusions from the role of rail and urban public transport as key services during this pandemic crisis and to stop pursuing its liberalisation policy when drafting the new European transport strategy.

We are aware that you, your team and your services are working around the clock to manage the transport dimension of this crisis, as are our affiliated trade unions as well as transport workers. We nevertheless expect to receive concrete feedback on the points raised in this letter as well as in the previous ones.

Yours sincerely,



Livia Spera
ETF General Secretary



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