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

Bundesminister für Verkehr und digitale Infrastruktur
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Brussels, 21 April 2020

Dear Mr Scheuer

I am writing to you with regard to the upcoming German Presidency in the Council of the European Union and priorities for the transport sector. The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) is the voice of more than 5 million transport workers and unites 240 trade unions from 40 European countries. Together with our German affiliates ver.di and EVG, we are looking forward to cooperating with you in view of your Presidency.

There are numerous issues in the transport sector, concerning millions of workers, that require the European Union's attention. However, in this letter, I would like at first to flag up some issues that are currently of utmost urgency in the context of the COVID-19 crisis and also outline our priorities for the future EU transport policy.

Civil aviation

Since it is a truly European industry and transport branch, the effects of COVID-19 crisis on aviation require a united answer at EU and global level. As we have outlined in our initial [statement](#), we believe that those measures should focus on health & safety in the short term and the protection of salaries and jobs in the medium term, in line with the general EU support for short-term work schemes. Moreover, we need to make sure that the aviation infrastructure, including workers, remains in place until the moment where operations restart after the crisis. To this end, the ETF has called upon the EU institutions to put in place a [rescue plan](#) specific to aviation, consisting of direct support for workers as well as conditional financial aid to aviation-sector companies. In this plan, any assistance to companies would be conditional upon adequate protection of their workforce.

We also believe that the COVID-19 crisis has proved that air traffic management services are a critical part of the aviation infrastructure. As such, they cannot be operated on a 'market-based



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for-profit model', as they will unlikely be able to withstand crises such as these without state intervention. Due to the approximate 90% drop in air traffic, ANSPs are also facing a severe cashflow problem. While we support the Eurocontrol initiative to advance some of the air navigation service charges, we are concerned that this is not enough as those loans will need to be reimbursed in the future. At the same time, we need emergency measures with regards to the performance scheme that governs navigation charges because it was never designed to deal with a crisis such as this.

At the same time, we believe that the Commission's intention to move forward with the work on the Single European Sky (SES) would be ill-advised due to the current crisis. As the changes that it might bring will have a significant impact on the future of the sector at large, we believe that proper consultations are needed to shape the SES. At the moment, neither institutional actors nor stakeholders have the capacity to deal with such a complex file properly, and we are therefore calling for the postponement of the discussion until after the crisis

Maritime Transport

Along the lines of the 8 April 2020 guidance on repatriating cruise ship passengers and protecting ship crews, we request that a concrete proposal is put forth to the Transport Council for political agreement regarding the designation of ports for safe and fast-track crew disembarkation and crew changes. A proposal is needed to ensure that maritime transport workers (including seafarers, fishers and inland waterways crewmembers) can be relieved and repatriated. Solutions need to be identified soon to keep the supply chain of essential goods moving and to ensure the safety and wellbeing of maritime transport workers in Europe

Road Transport

It is essential to adopt as soon as possible the reached agreement on the Mobility Package. The new rules will allow thousands of lorry drivers to see their families more often and will help restrain unfair competition that brings social dumping. The COVID-19 crisis has further exposed the flaws of the road transport sector in Europe; it exposed its unsustainable economic models and its social failures. The Mobility Package is meant to redress both the business and the employment patterns. Many drivers, employed via letterbox companies in one country and performing services in another, are left in the dark regarding applicable rules to their employment status. This is fairly addressed by the package.

Additionally, the present pandemic has also confirmed the need to improve the working conditions in the sector. Thousands of drivers have been forced for years to rest, cook and shower in parking lots, which is not only degrading but can also pose a health risk. Scrapping the Mobility Package would, therefore, be a big step backwards, and will not improve the resilience of the sector.

During the German Presidency of the EU, the Commission will present the new sustainable and smart mobility strategy. While we are awaiting a decision from the Commission on whether the schedule for this policy will be kept as planned for the third quarter of 2020, we believe that the



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main concern at this stage should be to allow the necessary time for a thorough consultation of stakeholders and the Member States.

As the COVID-19 crisis is showing, there are deep cracks in the foundations of the transport sector, and the new EU transport strategy should be able to repair them.

One of them is the fact that transport policies over the last decades have pushed for a constant decrease in the price of transport. Maintaining transport costs at an artificially low level made the sector unsustainable, which has also been exposed by the current crisis. The ETF has been advocating for years the need for fairer transport that internalises both environmental and social costs. Acting to establish a fair price for transport is a key element to deter social dumping practices, to set a level playing field between transport modes, and possibly a move towards increased environmental sustainability.

We believe that acting on pricing in transport and focussing on the social dimension rather than pushing for increased competition should be the founding pillars of the new EU transport policy, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis.

We believe that, in this respect, a robust strategy to boost railways and public transport will be more important than ever. The implications that social distancing policies may have on these sectors must be addressed also at this stage. We have already expressed our appreciation for the Commission's proposal to make 2021 the European year of rail, which will hopefully be adopted by the Council and the Parliament. Workers and working conditions will have to be at the heart of this initiative, and we are looking forward to exchanging further with you ahead of and during the German presidency.

We are ready to discuss these topics with you further and provide more information if needed. I would also like to stress our interest again to have an exchange with you on other topics that are of concern for different transport sectors in the EU.

I would like to take the opportunity to express our appreciation for having emphasised, in your letter to Commissioner Vălean, that the safety of workers in logistics needs to be ensured. As we have been pointing out since the beginning of the crisis, workers in the sector are heavily exposed to health risks, and we get frequent reports of companies that are not complying with their duty to ensure workers' safety.

Yours sincerely,



Livia Spera
ETF Acting General Secretary



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