

Brussels, 25 May 2021

Roadmap for the EU Urban Mobility Framework

Feedback from European Transport Workers' Federation

In this feedback paper the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) is commenting on the scope and objectives of the planned new EU urban mobility framework, as presented in the roadmap document.

Problems that initiative aims to tackle

The European Commission has rightly identified in the Roadmap that urban transport in its current shape has a negative impact on climate, air quality and consequently health of millions of EU citizens.

The roadmap also correctly points to the changes in the urban mobility landscape since the publication of EU Urban Mobility Package in 2013: development on new mobility services, massive growth of e-commerce and Covid-19 impact.

It is also clear that the European policies up to date have not managed to address this issue in a satisfactory manner. Lack of indicators, binding targets and reporting requirements can be indeed considered as an obstacle to more effective EU urban mobility policy. ETF therefore agrees that a more coordinated EU approach is the right way forward.

We would also like to point out to the worrying employment demographic situation in urban public transport: the average age of staff is high, while the female employment is low. This state of affairs is directly linked to the job attractiveness. Working patterns of an average public transport worker is unfavourable for work-life balance. Furthermore, with an increasing number of services being tendered to private companies with price being the deciding factor, the workers experience a downward pressure on their salaries and workload in order to maximise profits.

The job attractiveness has been further affected by covid-19 impact, as workers on one hand have been more exposed to potential infections and on the other, have been subject to aggressive behaviour.

Objectives and actions

The ETF welcomes the objective to increase the share of sustainable transport modes. In this respect, we would like to stress the role of public transport in limiting congestion while improving social cohesion. It is therefore superior to simple electrification of private cars that does not address these issues. EU Member States should be therefore encouraged to boost funding for public transport for both network development and operations. We recommend introducing binding targets at EU, national, regional and local level to double the use of collective transport by 2025. As for mobility innovations, any financial support from EU funds should be focused on solutions that put people (users and workers) first.

One objective listed in the roadmap mentions ‘ensuring smooth functioning of the internal market in (...) passenger transport’. This point raises concerns as to the rationale and means that the Commission envisages in order to reach this goal. ETF would like to highlight that public transport should be treated as a public good, therefore not be treated as any other service that can be simply privatised.

Similarly, regarding the integration of new mobility services, social considerations must be taken into account, e.g. obligatory collective bargaining agreement in place as a condition to be included in the integrated mobility offer. Lack of such provisions risks creating an unfair competition between providers who base the attractiveness of their services on social dumping and public transport companies that usually provide better working conditions.

ETF therefore calls the EU Commission to provide a clear policy framework stating that only service providers that respect social conditions can be included in the intermodal urban transport systems. Similarly, Mobility-as-a-Service platforms should be controlled by public authorities and not outsourced to tech service providers. The EU urban mobility framework should include activities aimed at increasing local authorities’ capacities in this respect.

With regard to Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs), ETF is in favour of obligatory plans, with compulsory consultation of trade unions and civil society. In the plans it is essential to foster the principle of ‘collective transport first’, in order to avoid situations where public transport is replaced by ride-sharing or ride-hailing services.