

To: EU Transport Ministers

Brussels, 2 June 2021

Ref. Transport Council Draft Conclusions on the Commission's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy from 25 May 2021

Dear Transport Ministers,

Ahead of the TTE Council taking place on June 3rd, we are writing to express our deep disappointment over the lack of ambition displayed in the Council conclusions on the SSMS.

The ETF, which represents over 5 million workers in all transport modes, has voiced its [view](#) over the Commission's text, raising concerns that the proposed approach is business as usual as far as workers are concerned.

Business as usual means that the SSMS does not aim to remove the factors that have led to a steep decline of working conditions in transport. Nowhere in the Commission's proposal is there to be found any concrete commitments and/or actions that would deter social dumping and establish fair transport.

The Commission pays only lip service to workers saying that "transport workers are the most valuable asset". If this was the fundamental belief of the Commission, why are no concrete commitments or actions towards workers contained within the Strategy. We find this very disrespectful for the millions of transport workers that have kept passengers, goods and the economy moving during the pandemic.

The European Commission's approach to transport is very well known to us, and we are under no illusion that it will change over the course of this mandate. But we expect and implore that you, the Transport Ministers of Europe, lead the debate for change. What is needed is political willingness to set the basis and shift the paradigm that has dominated transport policies over the last decades.

Transport policies have not yet delivered substantive policies for the workers, for the ecological transition or for the economic sustainability of the sector.

What is needed is a paradigm shift. Rethinking transport policies implies confronting competition policies and discussing price - price is a key element in ensuring the environmental and social performance of the sector. The logic of low cost is spreading to all transport modes. But the logic of low cost comes as a result of social dumping and dubious business practice which allows companies keep their costs artificially low. They, these economically and socially exploitative companies, are the obstacle in the way of ensuring the modal switch that the Commission aims to achieve.

We are very disappointed to see that there is only one sentence referring to transport workers in the Council Conclusions SSMS: "... EU transport policy should also continue to improve social conditions across all modes, including working conditions, improve reskilling opportunities and enhance job attractiveness in the sector..." (13).

We won't go far with this! It is time to stop this empty rhetoric and put forward a bold plan. Together with our members, we are asserting Europe's right to fair transport.

Work in transport is, more than ever, affected by social dumping practices and unregulated subcontracting, precarity, unregulated working conditions, and uncertainty over the future of work particularly in the context of the ecological and digital transitions. The growth of new business models based on the algorithmic management of labour is pushing all existing problems to the limit. Political debate and legislation are not advancing fast enough to address these changes.

We are extremely concerned that the draft Council conclusions ignore the social partners when discussing to stakeholders: "... *highlights* the need for effective public engagement and social dialogue in order to adequately reflect in transport and mobility policies the changing needs of people and stakeholders" (13: emphasis added). This ignores the specific role of the institutionalised European social dialogue. Social dialogue cannot simply be related to or assimilated by public engagement!

At the Transport Council meeting on 3rd June 2021 the Portuguese presidency plans for you to debate the following question: "*What other or additional actions or measures would deserve focus so as to achieve the objective of a more sustainable, smarter and more resilient transport and mobility system?*" "

Allow us to suggest a few key points for you to address within this debate, which would orientate discussion on building fair transport for Europe:

- The same level of ambition to achieve social sustainability as for environmental sustainability;
- A social transport policy agenda that ensures fair working conditions for all transport workers and deters unfair business models and social dumping practices;
- The establishment of a cross-DG-Commission Task Force to engage with all aspects related to fair transport;
- An initiative that includes fair labour costs in the notion of "fair pricing", following the concepts of 'internalization of external costs' and "polluter pays principle";
- Concrete policy actions to eliminate the existing obstacles for women to join and remain in the transport sector;
- Concrete measures to promote and enforce collective bargaining in the highly fragmented transport market as an important instrument to ensure fair working conditions, in line with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- Urgent measures to ensure that the ecological and digital transitions are just to workers.

Tomorrow, you have a concrete opportunity to step up for fair transport. Europe's transport workers do not want to be called heroes anymore, they want decent working conditions and they expect their Transport Ministers to act.

Yours sincerely,



Livia Spera
ETF General Secretary