



SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN BUS AND COACH TRANSPORT IN EUROPE

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# Toolbox of Trade Union driven Good Practices for Bus and Coach Drivers



## **Social Conditions in Bus and Coach Transport in Europe**

### **Toolbox of good practices**

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# ABOUT THE TOOLBOX

This toolbox is accompanying the ETF project “Social Conditions in Bus and Coach Transport in Europe”. It contains examples of good practices that have been gathered in the context of field research (interviews with trade union representatives in 11 countries) and the participatory workshops that were organised in the context of the ETF project.

The toolbox includes an overall of about 50 different tools that:

- Illustrate and describe good practices in the bus and coach sector as they improve social and working conditions in the sector and mitigate negative impacts of market developments and crisis situations such as in the case of COVID-19;
- Consist of a variety of sources of good practice, including legislative provisions and action, provisions in collective bargaining agreements, other outcomes of social dialogue, activities, campaigns and initiatives of trade unions in the bus and coach sector and other practices at sectoral level that improve and promotes better social and working conditions of bus and coach drivers;
- May inspire sectoral trade unions in Europe for developing own action and practice.

We have clustered the identified tools and good practice examples in 10 thematic themes:

- 1. Mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic**
- 2. Providing help and advice for drivers**
- 3. Harmonisation and improving social and working conditions for drivers in the whole bus and coach sector**
- 4. Making a career in bus and coach more attractive**
- 5. Equal opportunities and supporting female drivers**
- 6. Better work-life balance and working time planning**
- 7. Demographic change and support for older drivers**
- 8. Benefits and compensation for work strains**
- 9. Bilateral funds as a tool for improving social security and employability**
- 10. Better accommodation and sanitary infrastructure.**

# 1. Mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

## Challenges and needs

A common feature of public responses to the COVID-19 crisis since the beginning of 2020 has been the focusing on measures that support business and companies rather than take into account the severe impacts on drivers. While in all countries analysed in our research economic support measures were put in place to cover the drop in turnover and/or provide tax reliefs as well as other business-oriented matters, the only measure to support workers not becoming redundant has been public short-time work schemes that exist in most EU Member States. However, in all countries involved in this study, short-time work may have contributed to job security but did not compensate for the significant loss of driver's income during the pandemic. Even if the net replacement rate of short-time work allowances was as high as 80-90% as in Austria, on average the drivers lost around 400 Euro net per month in income. As a result, many drivers left the sector during the crisis, worsening the sector's driver shortage. Therefore, it was only the trade unions via collective bargaining or tripartite agreements that made additional solutions and measures possible to provide additional financial and other support for drivers during the crisis as the following examples show:

### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **Denmark**, trade unions were able to negotiate with employers and the government new forms of relief for drivers and workers such as temporary wage compensation for losses and **work sharing schemes**.

In **Italy**, thanks to bilateral funds such as the **Bilateral Solidarity Fund** and the public wage guarantee fund (**Cassa Integrazione**) that are major and historical achievements of the trade unions and agreements with employers and the Italian Government the income of drivers was replaced to quite a high percentage of around 80%.

In **Spain**, trade unions together with the government and employer organisations were able to negotiate specific **short-time work and temporary work schemes** that at least took into account hardships of drivers and companies in heavily affected sub-sectors such as tourist bus transport. For further information see the chapter on Spain in the final study report.

In **Sweden**, trade unions in the bus and coach sectors negotiated flexible solutions with management at company level to enable drivers to **switch from occasional coach driving to services that were less affected by the crisis**, for example school transport or contracted regular public services.

Finally, not only financial compensation measures were initiated by unions: In the **Czech Republic**, trade unions developed a basic **hygiene and health security concept for drivers** in the bus and coach sector in order to compensate for the inadequate practice of the government. Based on this the government provided additional support for a sufficient number of masks and for cashless ticket paying.

## 2. Providing help and advice for drivers

### Challenges and needs

The nature of work as a bus and coach driver is very isolated. Also, drivers in coach services are away from home and colleagues for periods and alone. In this context, communication with colleagues, getting access to important information or the exchange of information with others has to be organized in a different way.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **Austria**, the **vida** trade union has highlighted a **comprehensive handbook** for drivers that provides them with compact information on legal and social regulation, e.g. rules on working, driving and rest time as well as all other relevant information.

The handbook is available at: [https://www.wko.at/branchen/t/transport-verkehr/autobus-luftfahrt-schiffahrtunternehmen/Handbuch\\_Lenk\\_Ruhezeiten\\_Sozialvorschriften\\_Bus-Endversion-1.pdf](https://www.wko.at/branchen/t/transport-verkehr/autobus-luftfahrt-schiffahrtunternehmen/Handbuch_Lenk_Ruhezeiten_Sozialvorschriften_Bus-Endversion-1.pdf)

To provide practical advice but also a platform for exchange of information and news, communication and advice, the trade union BTB ABVV in **Belgium** has established a **facebook group** that has proved to be very popular with more than 3,000 followers involved. The platform is also a good opportunity for the trade union to provide them with information and news that illustrate the added value of trade union membership and collective bargaining and keep direct contact to drivers.

In the **Netherlands**, the bilateral sectoral fund for the private bus and coach sector, **FSO** published twice a year a **newspaper for the sector**. Trade unions are allowed to fill two pages of this newspaper and usually use them to explain parts of the collective labor agreement. This allows drivers to be aware of their rights. The newspaper is sent on paper to all the companies in the sector (drivers can pick up a paper copy there) and it is also available digitally, facebook etc. For further details of the FSO see section 9 of this toolkit.

As a part of the **fair mobility project**, trade unions in **Germany**, including the confederation DGB and sectoral trade unions ver.di in the transport sector support workers from Central and Eastern Europe and other third countries in fighting for their rights and enforcing fair wages and working conditions.

Further information (in German, English, Polish, Romanian, Hungarian, Croatian)  
<http://www.faire-mobilitaet.de>

## 3. Harmonisation and improving social and working conditions for drivers in the whole bus and coach sector

### Challenges and needs

The liberalisation of the passenger transport market as well as the increase in transnational business development has led to an increase in national and international competition. As the share of personnel costs is high, new models and practices of lowering costs have emerged and social dumping in particular in the long-distance coach transport have been on the rise. Also, totally new business models of companies that do not have any own bus fleets but work with subcontracted self-employed drivers or micro companies have resulted in market change in many European countries.

In this context of increased diversification and fragmentation, key challenges are to promote minimum social and working conditions in the whole bus and coach sector as well as developing rules and provisions fighting problematic employment practices such as bogus self-employment, bus drivers engaged via platforms or other forms of highly flexible and highly insecure employment relationships.

Also in this context social partners via collective bargaining and other activities play an important role as the following examples show.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **Sweden**, one **single agreement for the whole private bus and coach sector**. The single agreement in the commercial sector has replaced five different collective agreements that existed before with larger companies. By this, differences in working conditions and terms of employment and work were eliminated. For further details see the chapter on Sweden in the final study report.

In **Italy**, the trade unions have succeeded to negotiate with **Flixbus** that all drivers in Italy (>25 % of the total market, 2016), as well as all bus drivers in current and future partner companies of Flixbus will apply the National Collective Labour Agreement (CCNL *Autoferrotranvieri – Internavigatori*). Flixbus, as the dominant player on the Italian market, only works with (or at least strongly prefers) other bus companies that follow the agreement. By applying the agreement Flixbus and its business partners are committed to employment protection and safeguarding of regulatory and safety conditions for bus drivers; respect the provision of the law collective bargaining with Trade Unions; adopt systems for monitoring and verifying the correct application of employment protection, health and safety regulations. Flixbus, TUs and signing partners agree to meet annually, to analyse issues covered by the agreement.

In **several countries**, trade unions in the bus and coach sectors have been able to include in collective labour agreements clauses that restrict or provide certain rules as regards seasonal work, part-time work, flexible or even zero-hour contracts in order to **mitigate the impact of highly flexible contractual arrangement** for drivers. Further details can be found in the country reports prepared in the context of the ETF project.

In **Denmark**, there is a legal provision **fighting illegal cabotage** activities. From January 2021, new rules apply to carrying out freight cabotage, bus cabotage and the road part of combined transport in Denmark. Bus and coach companies offering cabotage rides in Denmark must pay their drivers a fixed hourly rate on the basis of the nationwide collective agreements in the transport sector, that is at least Danish minimum wage. Cabotage is also limited to 7 consecutive days per month. Moreover, there are better monitoring mechanisms: companies have to register all (foreign) drivers, provide further information, e.g., working conditions, details on drivers and routes, and working time records. Non-complying companies face high fines.

Further information: <https://www.fstyr.dk/en/Cabotage-and-combined-transport/Cabotage-and-combined-transport>



## 4. Making a career in bus and coach more attractive

### Challenges and needs

Strenuous working conditions such as being away from home, unsocial working hours, changes in staff schedules, lack of social contacts and often working under extreme weather and temperature conditions make the job of a bus and coach drivers in particularly in occasional bus and coach transport less attractive. As a consequence, the sector suffers from a lack of drivers and significant recruitment problems. This situation has worsened during the COVID-19 crisis when many drivers left the sector.

Though the principal task to increase the attractiveness of working in the sector certainly rests on the employers' side by offering more attractive remuneration, providing better work-life balance and by other supportive measures, trade unions have negotiated provisions in collective agreements that have brought improvements for both existing staff as well as workers entering the sector.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In several countries, for example **Denmark, Sweden** and the **UK**, trade unions successfully negotiated provisions that guarantee reimbursement and/or the coverage of costs for **obtaining the drivers licence** or occurring in regular **further training** and medical examinations. For further information see the respective national chapters in the final research report.

In **Italy** and **France** trade unions are directly engage in **drivers training** through specialised training centres.

Trade unions in **Sweden** have negotiated provisions on the **right to training** and **lifelong learning** in their collective agreement for the whole sector.

In the **Netherlands**, in order to make the driver job more attractive for young people, trade unions have negotiated provisions in the collective labour agreement that foresee **additional holidays for young drivers**: Drivers aged 20 and under are granted an extra day off (24 days), because as the CBA explains, the nature of the work, such as irregularity, night work and heavy labour within the sector make it necessary for older and younger employees to have additional days off.

Also targeting the severe driver shortage, the Unite trade union in the **UK** has initiated a campaign "**Drivers recruiting Drivers**" that encourages bus and coach drivers to actively recruit friends and acquaintances for the drivers' job.

## 5. Equal opportunities and supporting female drivers

### Challenges and needs

Female drivers are underrepresented in the bus and coach sector due to several reasons. Not only the general framework conditions play a role but also unequal treatment in terms of remuneration and wage levels, discriminatory practices as well as lack of infrastructure such as sanitary facilities or rest rooms for women. Trade unions at national as well as international level actively are involved in project and measure to promote and support female drivers in the sector as the following good practice examples show.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **Spain**, the transport trade unions, including FESMC UGT are actively involved in projects and measures to promote female drivers by **negotiating equality plans** in accordance to the national legal provisions on gender equality. The objective is to improve the conditions for female drivers in the Spanish transport sector, provide equal conditions, and double the number of female drivers from 15 to at least 30 %. Measures at company level focus on eliminating discriminatory treatment in hiring, promoting, and wage levels of female workers.

For further information, please contact FESMC UGT (<https://www.fesmcutg.org>)

The **International Transport Workers' Federation**, ITF has developed an own policy of **promoting female drivers** in the bus and coach sector. For this purpose, the ITF has produced a good practice that is based on trade union input from all continents.

Further information: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/women-bus-workers-driving-equality>

## 6. Better work-life balance and working time planning

### Challenges and needs

Bus and coach drivers generally have little scope for decision-making, e.g., regarding organising duty rosters or influencing timetables. Another problem is receiving short notice of shifts. The short notice of shifts is usually the result of the operators wanting to be as flexible as possible, to avoid additional costs when employees are called on days off, and because of pressure to accept hurried tours from customers. It is quite common in the bus and coach sector that drivers are only informed about their next assignment the afternoon of the previous day. This does not allow the drivers to do any planning and negatively affects their work-life-balance. In addition, the above-mentioned seasonal work negatively affects the work-life balance of bus and coach drivers.

Trade unions have been a key actor of providing answers to these challenges and needs by collective agreement provisions at sectoral and company level.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **Denmark** and **Spain** for example, unions in the bus and coach sector have succeeded in negotiation agreements on **paid leave** for special situations and free days for drivers in case of child sickness:

In **Denmark**, the sectoral collective agreement foresees paid days off when an employee has to take care of a sick child (after at least 9 months of uninterrupted employment in the same company, children under the age of 14, maximal two days a year and second day to be paid by the special saving account) or if a child is hospitalized (full pay for one week, once in a 12-month period).

The sectoral agreement in **Spain** foresees additional free days in situations such as marriage, birth or adoption of a child and in case of care duties, death of relatives, change of residence or need of medical consultation of relatives. Drivers have also rights of days off in case of renewing ID cards, the driving licence or in case of social security medical checks.

In several countries (for example **Germany** and **Sweden**) trade unions have negotiated **additional holidays** and a **guaranteed number of free weekends**. For instance, the bus and coach agreement in the German region of North Rhine-Westphalia requires that at least two weekly rest periods, and nine weekly rest periods per quarter outside the season (November to April), must be given at the worker's place of residence and at least twelve Sundays per year must be work-free.

Addressing the problem of **short-time notice as regards the work schedules**, the 3F trade union in **Denmark** have negotiated in the sectoral collective agreement the provision that days for the weekly rest must be announced in advance – until the end of the working day two days before the rest period/ the driver must be notified on the said day off at the latest at the end of working hours 2 days before, so as to understand that if, for example, the driver's day off is to be taken on a Thursday, notice must be given to him no later than Tuesday at the end of working hours. However, a deviation from this can be agreed locally.

Unite in the UK has negotiated an agreement on flexible hours. The agreement applies to public service drivers employed by First in Bradford. It is in addition to existing collective agreements and defines and regulates flexible hours working. The agreement is intended to provide greater flexibility for the company while at the same time providing the opportunity for flexible hours working to existing employees or ex-employees in order that they may continue to work when circumstances (e.g., family commitments, impending retirement) impact upon their lives. Furthermore, the agreement provides for the progressive improvement of all other duties, in particular the reduction of split duties. Finally the agreement provides for alternative employment opportunities for prospective new staff.

## 7. Demographic change and support for older drivers

### Challenges and needs

Demographic change is a huge challenge in the bus and coach sector: The average age of drivers is quite high already today and due to the recruitment problems and driver shortages, there is a strong pressure on drivers to stay as long as possible in full-time work, even this is not good for the own health situation. Against this trade unions have been engaged in provisions that ease the situation of older drivers as regards a better work-life balance, working time and more gradual transition into retirement.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **France**, trade unions have negotiated an end-of-activity leave **-scheme** for the bus and coach sector that is funded by contributions of employers and employees as well as by additional funds provided by the French state. According to the scheme, employees who are at least 57 years of age and who have driven a bus or a coach in the sector for more than 30 years may apply for a leave. The person receives 70% to 80% of their last gross wage until they reach the age of retirement. The scheme is managed by a bipartite organisation (AGEC-FA-Voyageurs) that was set up by a sectoral agreement in 1998 already.

In several countries (for example **Belgium** and **Sweden**) trade unions have negotiated additional occupational pension schemes, i.e. a second pension pillar in addition to the general national pension schemes.

In **Denmark**, the collective agreement covering the bus and coach sector foresees **additional holidays for older drivers**. Employees can choose to take part in a senior scheme (the decision has to be made at least five years before the state pension age of this employee). The senior scheme allows for up to 32 days of seniority holidays (compared to 25 days according to the Danish holiday act). Days off are paid by the **special saving account** that is financed by employer contributions (2% of the wage paid to each employee).

## 8. Benefits and compensation for work strains

### Challenges and needs

Drivers have to work under strenuous physical and psycho-social working conditions. In addition, work and services often are interrupted or influenced by unplanned changes. Furthermore, as regards infrastructure and facilities bus and coach drivers often have to pay for sanitary facilities or meals in quite expansive resting places.

As it is far from normal that the employer would cover such costs or provide additional allowances for strenuous work and unplanned additional duties, collective bargaining is a key tool for improvements in this context.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

In **Belgium**, trade unions have negotiated that coach drivers in case of (at least 20) passengers will have a meal rest in certain restaurants, the driver has the right for a **free meal and additional benefits**.

According to the collective agreement in **Slovakia**, the employer shall provide meals including a suitable drink to the employees during their work shift. If the shift lasts more than 11 hours, the employer needs to provide an **additional meal**. If the employee is on a business trip, the employer shall cover 55-75% (depending on the length of the trip) of the costs of meals.

**Slovakia** – allowances in case of working in **high temperature**: There is also a compensation for working under high temperatures. Drivers are entitled to a supplement of €0.166 for each hour of driving in conditions where the air temperature reaches 26°C or more.

**Belgium** – allowances for **unforeseen services** have been negotiated by the trade unions

In **Denmark**, after 3 months of employment, if a driver that is not equipped with **work cloth**, the driver will receive a compensation of DKK 12.00 per working day. If no local agreement has been made on the replacement of uniform items after a points system, the uniform is changed every 15 months.

**Renewal of driving licence and other costs related to driving**: Various costs related to work have to be covered by the employer according to sectoral collective agreements for example in **Belgium, Denmark** (driving licence renewal, identity card, visa or **Sweden** (digital tachograph card).

## 9. Bilateral social funds in the bus and coach sector: Improving social security and supporting employability

### Challenges and needs

Social funds that have been established by trade unions and employer organisations in the bus and coach sector in a number of countries have played a key role in supporting workers by additional benefits as regards social security, health and medical support, employability and by other measures and benefits, for example support in case of losing the driving licence due to medical reasons.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

The **Social Fund Bus and Coach** in **Belgium** provides a number of benefits for drivers in the sector in areas such as social and health protection benefits and support such as death and accident compensation, severance payment when a driver retires, reimbursement of costs in the context of obtaining a driving licence, including medical costs, eye examination, hospital insurance, additional pension scheme, end of year bonus, outplacement support and advice as well as reimbursement of parts of the membership fees of trade union members (union bonus payment).

**Netherlands:** The Foundation **FSO** (*Education and Development Fund for the Private Bus Transport*) is the social fund for the private bus transport industry and aims at financing and subsidizing activities that promote good working conditions. This includes job evaluation systems, promotion of training and measures for compliance with the CBA. The FSO is financed by annual employer and employee contributions.

In **Italy**, there are **four bilateral funds in the road passenger sector**. All four bilateral funds were set up by the trade unions and employers' associations and are financed by contributions paid by employers and workers. For further details see country chapter on Italy in the study report.

**Denmark:** The social partners have set up a **Development and cooperation fund for the transport and storage**. The fund is financed by employers paying a compulsory amount annually for all employees. Activities of the fund aim at maintaining and developing qualifications and competencies of professional drivers, and at increasing continuing and further education of unskilled employees and efforts to attract more employees, e.g. via internships. Employers can get reimbursed for the cost of training courses for employees by the fund.

**France:** Employees in bus and coach transport are covered by the general national health insurance system. In addition, in a sectoral agreement concluded in 1980, the social partners established an institution called IPRIAC (*Institution de Prévoyance d'Inaptitude a la Conduite*), that compensates drivers if they **lose their driving licence due to medical reasons**. Depending on seniority, employees who are no longer able to drive are eligible for an extra pension between 1/12 and 35% of their gross salary.

In **Belgium** and **Sweden**, trade unions have negotiated in collective agreements **additional health insurance and hospital insurance**: For further details see the respective chapters in the research report.

In **Belgium**, the **sectoral social fund also provides support for drivers** in order to recover from **traumatic events or accidents**. See the respective chapter in the research report.

The trade union UNITE in the **United Kingdom** has established a fund called **Driver Care** that supports drivers whose livelihood is affected by the permanent loss of their professional licence as a result of illness or injury. For a small weekly contribution the scheme provides financial benefits following the permanent loss of Licence up to age 60 (after 60, members can continue to profit from the scheme by a supplementary scheme).

For more information see: <http://www.unitedrivercare.org.uk/>

## 10. Better accommodation and sanitary infrastructures

### Challenges and needs

The lack and often restrictive or costly access to infrastructure such as sanitary facilities, restaurants, accommodation often is a challenge and problem for bus and coach drivers, in particular for longer trips involving overnight stays.

Trade unions in different countries have been able negotiated minimum requirements, allowances as well as provisions that provide drivers with the same quality of food or accommodation as passenger have.

#### GOOD PRACTICES AND TOOLS

**Infrastructure and sanitary facilities:** The ITF, the International Transport Workers' Federation, has published several information brochures for sanitary facilities and toilets in the transport sector, including a compilation of legal requirements, conventions and guidelines. Moreover, ITF provides an employer's checklist that lists 39 requirements for decent sanitary facilities for transport workers, regarding the topics of "construction and design", "management" and "general" remarks. This list can be a reference point for unions, employers, and individual workers about what the employer should provide.

Further information on the ITF website: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/itf-sanitation-charter>

**Netherlands:** At transfer points, the employer must ensure that the accommodation at a changeover point meets the following conditions: Well ventilated area, requirements for canteen facilities, own space with the opportunity for the consumption of food and drinks, room with good sanitary facilities that are cleaned at least daily.

In **Sweden**, the trade union Kommunal has been able to include certain provisions regarding overnight stays in the collective agreement on bus and coach transport, including on minimum requirements as regards space and the **right of a driver to have an own room** in case of overnight stays

**Minimum requirements as regards accommodation** have also been negotiated by trade unions in Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands: **Denmark:** For trips where accommodation takes place, as well as during posting, the driver gets board and lodging paid at the expense of the employer, unless the employer provides for this. The driver (s) must, as far as possible, have a separate room. There can, however be dispensed from here for overnight stays on ships and trains. During posting, the driver must have his own room of reasonable standard that ensures him the necessary rest as well as the possibility of bathing. **Austria:** According to the sectoral agreement, drivers should have the same standard of quality as the travel group has in case of overnight stays and costs should be covered accordingly. The driver has also the right for an own room including shower facility if possible. **Netherlands:** Accommodations are paid for separately. According to the collective agreement the driver is entitled to a single hotel room with a toilet and shower in the room. There are also demands on the quality regarding transfer spots, e. g. where drivers take breaks.



## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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The ETF represents over 5 million transport workers  
from transport unions across Europe in 38 countries.