



EUROPEAN
TRANSPORT
WORKERS'
FEDERATION

Towards a Europe
of Fair Transport

Towards a Europe of Fair Transport

Transport workers are, and will remain, the backbone of transport. As stated in the Commission's Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy, transport workers are transport's "most valuable asset", but it remains for the European Union to recognise them as such in its policy and legislation.

The COVID-19 pandemic exhibited the essential nature of transport workers. In the face of increased physical and psychosocial health risks, transport workers were key in transporting food, goods and medicine and transporting people and workers during lockdowns.

The pandemic has not only revealed the high vulnerability of our economy, but the deep and inherent contradictions within transport. It exhibited the precarious situation and lack of decent work, working conditions and rights for transport workers worldwide, despite this essential nature of their work. The COVID-19 crisis also came with a wave of forced restructurings, changes in employment terms and conditions, and increased proliferation of union-busting tactics in some cases.

The transnational nature and character of transport means that social dumping is possible and exists in all modes (land transport as well as aviation and maritime transport). The root cause of social dumping lies in "the race to the bottom" for wages, working conditions and working terms and the undermining of workers and trade union rights.

All companies must be held to account, ensure decent wages and conditions, and be held responsible in eliminating all forms of social dumping. The blame cannot be held to be at the fault of legislation alone. The constant race to the bottom as the primary means of cost-cutting and absence of effective monitoring or enforcement, albeit facilitated by lax

legislation and enforcement environment, has resulted in an unattractive sector due to a lack of decent pay, rights, and conditions for transport workers. Strengthening the legislative framework on conditions for workers, clarifying and enforcing applicable social rights is necessary. Creating socially sustainable transport cannot rely on passive policy measures alone (a level-playing field should be considered a pre-requisite). Compliance with legislation and rules must be substantiated through active policy consisting of proper oversight, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms and agencies (such as adequately sanctioned and funded labour inspectorates).

Land Transport

The Mobility Package needs to be supported by a series of concrete implementation and enforcement measures to ensure its uniform application across the EU, on aspects ranging from technical specifications for the new tachograph functionalities, to binding instructions on the exchange of information between Member States on posting of workers, etc. Clarification and guidance to all relevant stakeholders - transport operators, drivers and enforcements authorities – and dedicated funds and resources are needed for cross-border enforcement and to strengthen enforcement and control agencies. Stricter rules on posting and driving and rest time are essential to driver health and safety - 60% of truck drivers report being obliged to drive while fatigued on a regular basis, while 52% of truck drivers reported wanting to pull over and take a break when feeling tired, but being unable to. The comfort of drivers, when spending their rest at road side facilities also needs to be addressed - only 300,000 parking spaces of the necessary 400,000 are available, and only a fraction of these are equipped with basic service facilities or provide adequate security.

Maritime Transport

A genuine European Maritime Space needs to be created. This will prevent unfair competition within the sector and ensure that shipowners are operating according to EU standards and presents the ability to punished those that engaging in substandard practices. Maritime subsidy policies in Europe need to be re-oriented and harmonized, clearly linked to the achievement of goals such as job creation, recruitment and retention of European domiciled seafarers and training and life-long learning opportunities. Fairer and more robust supply chains need to be built. A wave of market consolidation has transformed the global container shipping industry, putting downward pressure on salaries and working conditions. The emergence of vertically integrated terminal operators, controlled by carriers, raise the question of possible market distortions on competition along the whole maritime transport chain, between operators that are subsidised and independent freight forwarders or terminal operators that are not subsidised.

Aviation

European Aviation needs a truly sustainable recovery. A targeted European Aviation Relief Programme (rescue plan) should be endorsed to support employment in aviation sector, with strict direction on the socially sustainable use of funds and state aid, including conditions on the employment. The post-covid recovery of the aviation industry should not benefit socially unsustainable practices. Financial or regulatory support to the sector must be dependent on the existence of collective agreements and the respect of information and consultation obligations in this process. The precarious nature of the work in aviation, particularly in ground handling, limits the ability for new and young workers to build a stable career. The role of ground handling staff is essential and cannot be replaced by automation. Decent work, working conditions, rates of pay and contracts (longer-term contracts) are the best method to attract new and younger workers to these roles and ensure a resilient and sustainable aviation sector. The upcoming revision of Regulation on common rules for the operation of air services (1008/2008) requires a clear definition for an “operating base” to set the basis for safety conditions and social sustainability. The lack of clarity around this definition has created loopholes that only serve to facilitate the exploitation of workers. Basic protections must be put in place to protect aviation workers and to stop social dumping. It is essential that European and national laws established to protect aviation workers are enforced at a Europe-wide level. The ELA provides a good platform for this, and its competencies and oversight must be extended to aviation. The EU and its member states must also enforce social and environmental standards in its agreements with third countries to avoid the undermining of labour rights, and fair competition in aviation.

Elaborating on the ambition of the Informal meeting of transport ministers, held in Le Bourget on 21-22 February 2022, the transport workers of Europe call for a response at a European scale for socially sustainable transport. The sustainability, and resilience, of transport rely on the social sustainability of transport, and worker-centered solutions are the only method to bring this about. Therefore, we ask the Commission to make proposals along the three following pillars:

Collective Agreements for Decent Work and Working Conditions

If working conditions are to be improved, the appropriate tool is collective bargaining. Sectoral collective bargaining coverage is too low in transport, and company-level agreements do not cover a majority of the workplaces. Collective agreements are the best method to ensure decent working conditions, adequate pay, safety and training. We call for the adoption of measures to foster, promote and enforce social dialogue and CBAs (collective bargaining agreements), both at national level and company level.

A Social and Just Green Transition

A Green Transition is only feasible if it overcomes social and political injustice. “Business as usual” is not an option, governance is key, and regulation, enforcement, oversight and intervention mechanisms are a necessity. We call for environmental policy to be well-resourced, and focus on jobs, working terms and conditions, and occupational health and safety (Please refer to “European Transport Workers for Sustainable Transport! *Principles for a Just Transition*” for more information).

Social Digitalisation and Automation

Digital technologies are being used to intensify work, increase surveillance and increase the subordination of the worker. Technology should not negatively affect workers’ rights or working conditions but should uphold and reinforce decent work, labour rights and democracy. The greatest benefit from digital technologies is achieved through negotiation with trade unions and workers. Human oversight and responsibility and transparency is best achieved through worker involvement, and negotiation and binding collective agreements with trade unions at the company and national level are the solution to ensure that we can achieve a fairer, social and the most beneficial digital future. We call for policy to guarantee trade union involvement, and binding collective agreements, at the outset and throughout the implementation and the application of technologies at the workplace.