



Position Paper - The future of Transport

ACV-Transcom, a Belgian union representing workers in the following sectors:

Air traffic – Culture – Diamond – Postal services – Telecom – Railways – Road transport – Waterways, ports and fisheries

ACV-Transcom, one of the two major unions representing the interests of transport workers in Belgium, has read with great interest the report of the Focus Group “The future of transport”.

In the tripartite environment in which the social dialogue in Europe functions, we considered it our moral duty to focus on some accents that otherwise might get lost in the debate. Of course we fully subscribe to the comments made by ETF, the European Transport Workers’ Federation at which we are affiliated.

We are very pleased to read that transport workers are taken into account in this study. It is the first time that it is clearly stated that the approach has to keep the transport users and workers, with their needs and rights, at the centre of policy making.

However, we want to make some remarks.

- If we talk about environment, the major question is not how to improve the transport system, but how to lower the traffic volumes. One can make transport more expensive, so as to avoid useless traffic from one region to another, simply because the transport costs are less than the difference in labour cost in both regions. The ideal, however, is that working conditions in the poorer regions of Europe improve drastically, so that the envisaged competition on the market is about competing in quality and not about competing in wages and working conditions. Therefore social aspects have to be more emphasized, even prioritized to liberalization.
- The report accentuates the problem of ageing in the near future. It will indeed be a heavy burden on the social security systems in many countries, as there will be more retired people. Governments will certainly cut down on investments in infrastructure, but the major effect is that we will lose a lot of experienced workers. Training will therefore be extremely important if we want to meet the economic growth expectations.
We don’t underestimate the effect of elderly people travelling more, but as their percentage is limited compared with working people, we want to specify that the biggest problem will be the traffic concentration during rush hour.
- If we want to reach a level-playing field between the different modes of transport, we don’t think that only new technologies are the solution. Equilibrium between transport modes can only be reached if working conditions are improved.
- We would like to see more emphasis on the harmonization of certification, working conditions and training in the EU Member States.
- On long distances, alternatives for road should be advocated, otherwise congestion will continue growing.

- Urban areas will be densely populated by 2020. Transport modes have to be complementary instead of being in competition with each other. Connections between and with public transport possibilities deserve a lot of attention.
 - PPP-projects (public-private partnerships) are often not satisfactory or head on to privatization. A thorough evaluation of the existing projects should result in a clear and transparent framework. Governments should be able to use PPP to fasten the finalization of public infrastructure, without having to wait for the necessary budgets. The most important criterion to use PPP is the need of a win-win situation for the government, the private partner and the users, also on a long term. We want to stress as well that PPP cannot be on the origin of job losses in the public services, nor can it affect the employment in a negative way. Social dialogue should be guaranteed.
 - Concerning fossil fuels, we are in favour of the reinforcement of subsidies and support from Europe and national authorities. Citizens cannot be victimized by a European environmental policy.
 - The only problem with measures concerning transport users who will have to pay to use the infrastructure, is that the bill will be paid by the end-consumer
 - A solution to lower traffic volumes during rush hours is the encouragement of flexible working hours as to more spread the traffic.
 - Standardization in new technologies will be advantageous for consumers, because production costs will diminish. As competition between constructors will be enhanced, job losses should be overcome.
 - In the rail sector, working conditions of the incumbent companies should be the standard as they are the basis of safe transport. For the legislative framework of the working conditions, we would like to stress that we cannot accept a compromise in the highest common factor of incumbent and private companies.
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