



## 2<sup>nd</sup> SOCIAL FORUM OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY

### SOCIAL ISSUES IN RAIL TRANSPORT

Videoconference, 25 February 2021

#### 1. PREAMBLE

**The Social Forum** of the Transport Community is a **platform for a dialogue** between key transport stakeholders of the European Union and Western Balkans Regional Partners. **The role of the Forum is to promote a dialogue** and the social dimension through reference to the acquis in social matters, workers' fundamental rights. The Forum will involve, as far as possible, the Regional Partner's and European social partners acting in the transport sector and the European Economic and Social Committee.

On 25 February 2021 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Forum focused **on social issues in rail transport**.

The Social Forum was moderated by Mr Matej Zakonjšek, Director of the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community. The Social Forum approved the agenda of the meeting.

**2021 is the European Year of Rail**. The initiative, proposed by the European Commission in March 2020 and adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2020, is part of the EU's efforts under the European Green Deal and the EU's plan to make its economy more sustainable by achieving climate neutrality by 2050. This means shining a light on one of the most sustainable, innovative and safest transport modes we have. During the European Year of Rail (and onwards till the mission is accomplished), it is important to stress that in the **Western Balkans we need to make travel by rail possible and attractive again for citizens and business**. We should also invest in rail systems and support multimodal solutions in the region. We need to shift as much cargo as possible from roads to rail as well as to better make better use of inland waterway transport on the Tisa, Sava and Danube Rivers, and maritime transport in Albania and Montenegro.



**We can aim to achieve the above with the introduction and implementation** of various adequate policies that will further improve the quality of services offered in the rail sector, such as:

- (i) the application of appropriate ICT-systems and the adoption of an integrated supply chain approach;
- (ii) further deregulation of rail to achieve customer-orientated services;
- (iii) urgent need to implement Rail Freight Corridors (RFCs);
- (iv) the providing a continuity of reforms through transposing and implementation of 4<sup>th</sup> Railway Package that eventually will make the rail freight and passenger services fit to meet the needs of operators and customers<sup>1</sup>.

Employees in the rail sector need **fair working conditions, reskilling opportunities, attractive jobs and employability**. This means providing higher social standards, improving staff safety, attracting new staff, managing the ageing work force, and recruiting young people.

**At the same time, the trust of passenger and customers in the railways must be strengthened.** This includes improving passenger rights.

**The importance of social issues in rail** will be further highlighted as part of the Western Balkans Rail Summit in July 2021 in Belgrade.

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/2338 amending Regulation (EU) 1370/2007, which deals with the award of public service contracts for domestic passenger transport services by rail ('PSO Regulation').  
Directive 2016/2370/EU amending Directive 2012/34/EU, which deals with the opening of the market of domestic passenger transport services by rail and the governance of the railway infrastructure ('Governance Directive').



## 1. CONCLUSIONS

### THE SOCIAL FORUM OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY,

**1. Welcomes the message** of the European Commissioner for Transport, Ms. Adina-Ioana Vălean reconfirming the importance of the Social Agenda in the transport sector. The EU's recently adopted Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy stresses that the European Commission will consider measures across the different modes of transport to strengthen the legislative framework on working conditions.

**2. Commits to implement the agreed** conclusions from the 1<sup>st</sup> Social Forum that took place on 26 October 2020.

**3. Notes that the Western Balkan** region needs to further improve its policies so that transport becomes, safe and secure, user friendly, easily accessible, and more attractive.

**4. Invites all Regional Participants** to start with the implementation of the EU social policy legislation listed in the Transport Community Treaty, which is the key pillar of a fair, inclusive, and thriving transport sector. Moreover, fully transpose and implement Directive 2003/88/EC<sup>2</sup> concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, also applicable to persons working in railway transport.

**5. Recognises that little progress has** been made regarding rail passenger rights. **In that respect, we call on all relevant authorities** to make further efforts to improve the current conditions/situation to transpose and fully implement Regulation (EC) No 1371/2007<sup>3</sup> on rail passengers' rights and obligations.

**6. Commits to reinforce and promote a dialogue** for the social dimension in the rail transport through reference to the EU acquis in social matters listed in the Transport Community Treaty.

**7. Stresses the importance of focusing** its attention on the following social issues in the rail transport:

- workers' fundamental rights;
- a healthy and safe working environment;
- equal opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32003L0088>

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32007R1371>



**8. Furthermore, acknowledges that digitalisation and modernisation will bring challenges**, therefore soon, a credible path is needed for the fair transition for transport workers. **Therefore, it calls on the Regional Partners** to start tackling the challenges in the rail sector:

- transition to a market with competing service providers;
- ageing workforce;
- staff shortage;
- competition with other modes.

**9. Calls on the Regional Partners** to support education and training in line with the main common objective on achieving a sustainable, greener transport system, by making the best use of opportunities offered by technological innovation that could help identifying ways to attract young people and women to the transport sector. In this respect, the STAFFER project, funded through the ERASMUS+ programme, aims at developing training and education paths for the current railway workforce, as well as curricula for students based on current and future skills and competence needs for the rail sector.

**10. Recognises the importance** of more engagement from trade unions and civil society in creation of rail legislation related to the social dimension.

**11. Calls on all Regional Participants** to enhance regional cooperation through regular exchanges of information on good practices in social issues in rail transport.

**12. Acknowledges and expresses its gratitude** for the invaluable work of transport workers in rail sector who continue working to deliver essential goods during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

**13. Calls on the Transport Ministers** of the Western Balkan region to confirm and commit to the importance of implementing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Forum Conclusions, at the next Transport Community Ministerial Council on 21 June 2021.

**14. Takes note of the interventions** of the delegations attending the 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Forum concerning the state of play of social issues in rail transport.

**15. Agrees to meet again** next year to discuss social issues in the road sector.