

Pristina, 8 March 2023

4th SOCIAL FORUM

The Role of the Civil Society in Creating Sustainable, Smart and Inclusive Mobility

1. PREAMBLE

Article 5¹ of the Transport Community Treaty clearly calls: “The South East European Parties shall implement the relevant social *acquis* with regard to transport as set out in Annex I. The Transport Community shall reinforce and promote the social dialogue and the social dimension through the reference to the *acquis* in social matters, the workers’ fundamental rights and the involvement of the European Economic and Social Committee and the national and European social partners acting in the transport sector, at the appropriate level. “For **that purpose, in 2020 the Social Forum**² of the Transport Community has been established. It is a platform for a social dialogue between key transport social stakeholders of the European Union and South East European Parties.

On the **8 March 2023, the 4th Social Forum focused on the role of the civil society in creating sustainable, smart and inclusive mobility.**

Mobility in the Western Balkans needs to be affordable, reliable and accessible **for all, as well as attractive for current and future transport workers.**

Affordable mobility means consideration for those living on low disposable incomes. **Reliable mobility means** protection of passengers and their rights, in particular the rights of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility. **Accessible mobility for all** means available to persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility, as well as to the regions, especially the remote ones. **Attractive mobility means that the transport** sector offers good social conditions, reskilling opportunities, and provides attractive jobs.

In the Western Balkans, there is a lack of transposition and implementation of Annex I.2 and 3 of the Transport Community Treaty existing legislation in the field of social issues and passenger rights: working conditions, healthy and safe working environments, equal opportunities and accessibility and usability of transport services in the region for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility. To follow up on the Conclusions of the 3rd Social Forum, the Transport Community Permanent Secretariat has prepared the **Action plan for the Implementation of the EU Acquis in the area of Social Issues and Passenger Rights**. The Action Plan is a blend of the EU legislation deriving from ANNEX I of the Transport Community and non-legislative measures that are planned to be supported by TCT Secretariat.

The Action Plan calls for relevant authorities to make further efforts to improve the current conditions/situation to transpose and implement fully road and rail social *acquis* and passenger rights listed in the Annex I.2 and 3 of the Transport Community Treaty.

Civil society – non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or the third sector (charities, social enterprises, voluntary groups and think tanks), **will play an important role in monitoring and implementation** of the

key Transport Community Treaty documents; the new Action Plan on Social Issues and Passenger Rights, Annex I, Action Plan on Rail and Road and the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy for the Western Balkans. The Transport Community Permanent Secretariat is continuously engaged with the civil society in the transport related issues. They are here to guarantee to citizens the right to debate issues, to be heard and to challenge the policy makers.

For example, the civil society has been involved in the drafting of the **Report on passenger rights**, focused on accessibility of the main rail and bus station in the Western Balkan, and in the **workshop on sustainable mobility in urban areas in the Western Balkans**.

2. CONCLUSIONS

THE SOCIAL FORUM OF THE TRANSPORT COMMUNITY

Welcomes the keynote address delivered by Mr Liburn Aliu, Minister for Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure. The Minister emphasized that the transport sector faces several challenges when it comes to social rules and its application and highlighted the importance of the implementation of the Action Plan, which will require coordination among various institutions. In addition to that, he stated the importance and the role of civil society, as the implementation of the Action Plan will require their support as well as their expertise.

Calls the Regional Partners to further improve its social policy so that transport becomes seamless, safe, sustainable, inclusive, easily accessible and more attractive for youth, women and people with disabilities.

Welcomes the EU support for the Action Plan on Social Issues and Passenger Rights as an appropriate commitment and a good monitoring and reference tool for the implementation and enforcement of social and passenger rights in the region. The engagement and direct support from DG MOVE is a clear indication of the increased alignment of SEE6 policies and legislation with EU's.

Invites all Regional Participants to recognize the Action Plan for Social Issues and Passenger Rights as a crucial document for the region to improve social standards, job security, attractive and fair working conditions, and passenger rights.

Encourages the Regional Partners to implement the EU rail (working time/hours) and road social policy legislation (driving time and rest periods, tachograph, working time and enforcement of legislation) as prioritized in the Action Plan for Social Issues and Passenger Rights.

Reminds all Regional Partners to take into account that the support for the implementation of the Action Plan for Social Issues and Passenger Rights from Transport Community Permanent Secretariat will be envisaged through the budget dedicated to the technical assistance of the Transport Community, established structures (Social Forum, Workshops, Round Tables), TAIEX instrument, CONNECTA V2.0 and/or other financial or technical support through IPA instruments, as applicable and available.

Recognises that more needs to be done regarding road and rail passenger rights. **In that respect, we call all relevant authorities** to prioritise the transposition of rail and bus and coach passenger rights legislation that will lead to availability of travel information and offer adequate assistance to persons with reduced mobility and persons with disabilities.

Invites all Regional Partners to reflect on the *Report on Passenger Rights – Making Transport Accessible and Inclusive in the Western Balkans* and to implement relevant measures (short term, mid-term, and long term) to make the accessibility of transport services available for everyone.

Calls all Regional Participants (including existing networks that bring together relevant transport stakeholders from different sectors) to enhance regional cooperation in the transport sector by the regular exchange of information regarding experiences in social issues in rail and road transport.

Commits to reinforce and encourage social dialogue in the transport sector and **recognises the importance** of involvement of trade unions and civil society in the process of shaping the rail and road legislation related to the social dimension, including platform workers.

Calls all Regional Participants to actively involve NGOs in drafting phase of transport policy and on project preparation and to strive for accessible mobility as it is an enabler of the right to everyone to participate in social, cultural, and economic activities.

Calls all relevant authorities to include and consult the civil society and other relevant institutions/actors when planning and implementing sustainable, smart and inclusive mobility measures in the Western Balkans from the Transport Community Treaty Permanent Secretariat Strategy for Sustainable and Smart Mobility in the Western Balkans.

Recognises that more structured dialogue between authorities and civil society needs to be developed, and that more capacity building of civil society on the influence of transport is necessary. Appropriate and adapted mechanisms that allow meaningful engagement of CSO into policy-making cycle and project management cycle in the transport sector need to be developed and implemented.

Recognises importance of digitalisation for sustainability of transport and the need to make workforce skilful and prepared for green and digital transition in transport and **calls all** to enhance regional cooperation by the regular exchange of information regarding experiences on sustainable and smart mobility.

Calls all Regional Partners to support education training in line with the main common objective on achieving a sustainable, smart and 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.

Calls the Ministers in charge of transport of the Western Balkan region to confirm and commit at the next Ministerial Council in Montenegro the importance of implementation of the 4th Social Forum Conclusions.

Acknowledges the interventions of the delegations attending the 4th Social Forum concerning the state of play of social policy and passenger rights in rail and road transport.