



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Working Conditions and Social Dialogue
Social Dialogue

**SECTORAL DIALOGUE
COMMITTEE
ROAD TRANSPORT**

UPT Working Group

Minutes

Meeting of 26 September 2023 (in-person)

The meeting was chaired by Andreas Schackert (Ver.di Trade Union). The Chair presented the newly nominated Chairperson for the Employer's group and Vicechair of the Road SSD, working group on UPT and invited Julieta De Micheo, Director for Institutional Affairs and Corporate Social responsibility at EMT Madrid to present herself.

1. Adoption of draft agenda and draft minutes of the meeting 02 February 2023

Point 2 and 3 of the agenda were interchanged. With this modification, the agenda of the meeting was adopted.

The minutes of the meeting on 02 February were adopted.

2. Joint ETF/UITP statement on the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) & national implementation plans (NNRP) with regard to ongoing recovery investments in Urban Public Transport (UPT)

UITP provided a short overview of the RRF that is expected to provide around €72,2 billion in sustainable and green mobility investments (see slides). The execution of that facility is far from optimal with a low number of UPT projects implemented. In addition, the transparency in the allocation of funds is poor and has a low level of involvement from local stakeholders. The joint statement should therefore point to these shortcomings and call on the EU Commission and Member States to speed up implementation.

A first draft of the statement with bullet points was circulated amongst the membership of both organisations. The comments received have been integrated and the paper has been redrafted. This new version will be sent for adoption by ETF and UITP to their respective members. The joint statement should then be largely circulated with the European Institutions and Member states.

The ETF representative points to the importance of this facility that provides substantial funding. This money should be used to support modal shift and public transport. More investments into the sector will provide more quality jobs with good working conditions and salaries.

Representatives of ETF welcome this paper that shows that both sides of the industry can work together in a constructive way. A German ETF representative underlined the difficult current situation of public transport after the Covid and the energy crisis, the war in the Ukraine, the shortage of staff and the high expectations stemming from the Green Deal. The sector needs time to meet the high expectation from policy makers.

The Employer's side also welcomed this initiative. The Danish representative reported that severe cuts in public transport were implemented while, at the same time prices increased. This has led to a reduction in ridership. The Vice-chair underlined the contradiction between the needed time for the transformation towards sustainable mobility and the short time frames to access the available funds.

The Chair thanked everyone for this constructive exchange and concludes the discussions. Upon agreement of the final draft, both sides of industry will examine the text and launch the final adoption process.

3. Worker shortage in urban public transport, what is happening, what way forward?

After a short introduction, three presentations were made on this topic two from employer's side (UITP and IRU) and one from ETF (see slides). Both sides of industry underlined the structural problems in the economy that led to staff shortages and workplace issues. It is particularly worrying that companies in many parts of Europe are obliged to cut services due to staff shortages.

From Trade-Union side, a risk of getting into a vicious circle is real with a degradation of working conditions leading to low morale, high stress and higher absenteeism rates that in turn undermine the objectives of the Green Deal.

IRU mentioned the minimum age of bus drivers and the current discussions in the EP and calls on trade-union to support the proposals put forward.

From Employer's side, the Portuguese representative underlined that recruitment in Portuguese speaking third countries (mainly in Africa) was successfully ongoing to ease the situation of staff shortage. In public transport the question of language is a crucial one.

An ETF representative (DE) underlined the difficult situation in his country, where job cuts took place in the past and competition was introduced. This provided the opportunity for smaller private bus & coach companies (without inhouse training capacities) to find well trained staff, in particular drivers. In his view, this is over, and it becomes important for the smaller actors in the sector to join forces and build bigger groups that will be able to build inhouse training capacities.

In Spain, it seems that no major shortages are reported in the (public) companies having "good" collective agreements.

From the Belgian side, the Trade-Union representative underlined that good working conditions and salaries are crucial to overcome the shortage. He stated that in his country

a race to the bottom is taking place. In addition, it is important to address the problem of violence towards staff, in particular drivers.

From Employer's side, it is underlined that often the conditions (and collective agreements) between public and private companies are different. Attracting more women into driving jobs requires big efforts from all parties and should be a shared responsibility between employers and trade-unions.

The Chair closed this lively discussion and underlined that those discussions deserve to be further explored.

4. Clean Bus Europe Platform – Enabling the transition to clean busses

The Clean Bus Europe Platform is an EU initiative that aims to support the deployment of clean bus technologies across Europe. The project was coordinated by UITP.

WMP Consult presented the final results and the progress made on the Clean Bus Europe Platform (see slides) in particular as far as the report on “Social dialogue in the context of clean bus deployment” is concerned. The report looks at good practices and puts forward policy recommendations.

An ETF representative (DE) underlined the importance of that topic and the need to focus more on this in the future. The issue of financing is also mentioned and the need to be transparent.

A Danish Employer representative underlined that in his country almost 40% of the fleet is electrified. If the whole lifecycle cost is taken into consideration (including cost of operation), e-busses are not more expensive than traditionally fuelled busses. It is however true that the needed upfront investments are high.

The Chairperson thanked the presenter for his excellent work and closed this discussion. The final report will be circulated amongst participants asap. Both sides of industry should then decide if a joint approach could provide added value in this process of deployment.

5. Information from DG MOVE on relevant activities in the field of sustainable urban passenger transport, Expert Group on Urban Mobility

MOVE B.3 provided an update on the implementation of the new EU Urban Mobility Framework and in particular progress of the Expert Group on Urban Mobility – EGUM (see slides). He briefly went through all different EGUM subgroups.

Furthermore, MOVE B.3 drew the attention to the Urban Mobility Days 2023 in Sevilla from 4-6 October. This event attracts many stakeholders in the urban mobility area, provides an opportunity to exchange ideas on all trends and latest developments in sustainable urban mobility.

All representatives agreed that these activities from DG MOVE should be successful. It is particularly important that EU policy makers support all initiatives to convince citizens that they can adapt their travel behaviors. Cities change but people must change too.

The Chairperson thanked the Commission representative and confirms the sector's support for these very important activities.

6. Representativeness study in Road Transport and Urban Public Transport, State of affairs, Eurofound

Eurofound provided an overview on the state of play and the next steps of the representativeness studies.

The data collection process is now finalized and individual meetings with the employer and trade union representative organizations are planned to check the collected information. They will then have 3 weeks to put forward their remarks.

Later this year, Eurofound will start drafting the report based on the verified data. By April 2024 a draft report should be sent to the representative organizations (with a 4 week deadline for responses). By mid-2024, the report should be finalized and transmitted for final formatting and layout to the editor. The report should be published on Eurofound webpages by the end of 2024.

The social partners thanked the Eurofound representative for their work.

A short discussion took place on what modes should be covered by the representativeness study in the road sector. In the field of urban mobility, all modes of passenger transport operated by the urban public transport companies will be covered, including urban rail and waterborne. This specificity of urban public transport is one of the reasons why this sector should benefit from their own Social Dialogue Committee.

7. Social Dialogue Initiative – Information on progress (DG EMPL)

DG EMPL briefly presented the situation of the Social Dialogue Initiative.

In the meantime, since the last meeting of this working group in February 2023, the Ministers adopted the Council Recommendation on the role of social dialogue at national level. Although these recommendations are not binding, they represent an important framework that can be used for example in future accession negotiations.

In addition, Social Dialogue coordinators have been nominated in all relevant EU Commission DGs. DG EMPL will communicate shortly the name of the relevant counterpart for DG MOVE.

Another element is the new approach for organising the meetings of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committees. 2024 will be a transition year where the Commission will continue to organise social dialogue committee meetings taking into account the recently adopted Communication on Greening (reduce GHG emission by 50% compared to 2019 figures). From 2025 onwards all Committee meetings will be organised with the help of an external service provider contracted by the Commission. An information meeting for all sectoral social partner organization is foreseen tomorrow (27 September).

A worker representative (DE) said that the European SSD has an important role to play in accompanying the current adaptations of the economy. With this reorganization, he expressed doubts about the willingness of the EU Institutions to really reinforce the role of Social Dialogue.

8. Take me home safely campaign, ETF

ETF presented this campaign initiative that is focused on the safety of people beginning or ending their work at unsocial hours (see slides).

A safe environment for people is an important element and should be included into all aspects of the workplace. As an example, An ETF representative (DE) proposes to investigate the “Women in Rail” initiative that was agreed upon between social partner organizations in the rail sector and identifies good practices.

9. Update on Public Service Obligations – EC interpretative guidelines

The Trade-Union side underlines that with these guidelines, the European Commission is further pushing for more competitive tendering in the public transport sector. This is not acceptable. It was proposed from Trade-Union side to send a joint message to the European Commission.

The Employer’s side underlined that the guidelines have been published and presented to the EP TRAN Committee. The legal staff of UITP has drafted an assessment of the final text that will be forwarded to the ETF secretariat for information.

10. AOB

The next Road Plenary Meeting takes place on 23 November 2023.

The proposed dates for 2024 for the SSD UPT working group meetings are:

Spring meeting - week 8: 20/2; 21/2; 22/2

Autumn meeting – week 45: 6/11; 7/11; 8/11

Currently there are 5 meeting in the Road SSD committee, two UPT working group meetings, two road working group meeting and one plenary.

With the proposed reform of the organisation of meetings, only one “in person meeting” will be organised for each SSD committee. It is up to each committee to decide which meeting should be “in person”.

For the Road SSD committee this means that 3 meetings (including the working group on urban public transport) will be online (max 4 hours) and one hybrid (max 4 hours).

The chair closed the meeting thanking for the constructive discussion and the excellent work of the interpreters.