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The EU Institutions are urged to give full priority to road safety when revising the EU driving and rest time rules

Any laxer regime for bus and coach will weaken safety of drivers, road users and passengers

Joint statement by the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims (FEVR) and the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC)

The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims (FEVR) and the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) call for the EU Institutions to reject any attempt for a laxer driving and rest time regime for bus and coach transport in Europe.

Our joint appeal is prompted by the fact that the revision of Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 - the EU legal act establishing maximum driving time limits and minimum rest periods for freight and passenger transport - has taken a worrying turn.

In its current form, Regulation (EU) No 561/2006 does not do enough for the safety and well-being of professional drivers, let alone that of cyclists, pedestrians, passengers and other car drivers. However, the European Commission proposal launched on the 31 May 2017 would make it possible for bus and coach drivers to drive for 20 days with only two days off in between. According to the current rules, they benefit from a minimum of 3 days off in any given period of two weeks.

Collisions involving heavy goods vehicles, buses and coaches, affecting other road users and drivers alike, are regrettably still all too common. Given their size and weight, collisions involving these larger vehicles often lead to higher numbers of deaths, particularly amongst cyclists, pedestrians and powered two wheelers. Likewise, a single collision involving a bus or coach can result in many more deaths given the number of passengers on board.

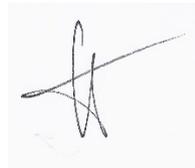
The EU has been struggling to continue the general reduction in road deaths. The road safety progress that has been made EU-wide has plateaued over the past few years, and even decreased. This means that we must do more to improve road safety, but we also need to make sure the problem is not compounded by having drivers distracted, fatigued, and overloaded; particularly not those that are driving buses, coaches and 20/30 tonne vehicles. A laxer driving and rest time regime for bus and coach will not improve driving and safety conditions in commercial passenger transport.

The overall increase in traffic, the exponential growth in volume of cross-border freight and passenger transport by road require a decrease in maximum limits for driving time and a new distribution of rest time to enable the driver to manage unbearable levels of fatigue. Overruling any further derogation for the bus and coach sector and adopting a total ban on the weekly rest periods spent in the vehicle, to also include the reduced weekly rest of 24 hours – these will be among the clear signs we wait for, from the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council to help improve safety on Europe's roads.

The four organisations signatory of the present joint statement remind the EU and national policy makers of the commitment made in Malta, in 2017, by 28 Member States, to actively engage in halving road deaths by 2020, and reducing serious injuries on European roads by 2030. We must look at every transport issue through the lens of road safety before we make decisions on it, and this is no exception. Policy choices that have safety of road users and drivers at their core are a key contributor to reaching this goal!



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