

(English version)

**Priority question for written answer P-002139/24
to the Commission
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(17 October 2024)**

Subject: Shortage of bus drivers in Europe

The Draghi report acknowledges that the European transport sector faces a common challenge: a shortage of professional drivers. In 2023, 105 000 bus driver positions were unfilled in Europe, a figure which could double by 2028, according to the International Road Transport Union (IRU). The shortage could reduce the frequency of or disrupt public transport services, affecting both access to essential services and sectors such as tourism and undermining one of the EU's fundamental principles: territorial cohesion.

The Commission has already acknowledged the problem. In 2023, it included bus drivers in the EU talent pool initiative, which makes it easier to recruit third-country workers in professions with shortages. The lack of drivers is also recognised as a challenge to be addressed in the mission letter of the future Commissioner for Transport.

Against that backdrop:

1. Does the Commission share concerns about the shortage of bus drivers in the EU?
2. What steps, such as improving working conditions or promoting the inclusion of women, could be taken to make the profession more attractive?
3. Is this state of affairs affecting territorial connectivity in the EU?

Submitted: 17.10.2024

**Answer given by Mr Hoekstra on behalf of the European Commission
(26 November 2024)**

1. The Commission fully shares the concerns of the Honourable Member about the EU shortage of drivers ⁽¹⁾.
2. At EU level, the adoption and implementation of the Mobility Package ⁽²⁾ aims to address this issue supporting better working conditions and social conditions for bus drivers. The revision of the driving and rest times rules for occasional passenger transport was also adopted ⁽³⁾ to recognise the specificity of the work pattern of bus drivers. However, increasing the attractiveness of the profession also requires a basket of measures involving Member States and stakeholders. The Commission is assisting them through Erasmus+ ⁽⁴⁾, the European Social Fund+ ⁽⁵⁾, the reinforced Youth Guarantee ⁽⁶⁾ and InvestEU ⁽⁷⁾. The 'Women in Transport — EU Platform for Change' ⁽⁸⁾ initiative has also fostered many actions with women as drivers. Improving the perception of drivers by society, enhancing security and securing career perspectives, are examples of other measures which will contribute to bring more interest into this profession. Attracting bus drivers from third countries with the necessary skills, experience while ensuring equal treatment with EU nationals, can also be part of the solution and the EU is working on specific schemes for that purpose such as the EU talent pool initiative.
3. The Commission has not yet noted a noticeable impact of the bus driver shortage on territorial connectivity but is carefully monitoring the situation. The Commission proposal to amend Regulation (EC) No 1073/2009 ⁽⁹⁾ aims to address these shortcomings and to develop long-distance bus services, helping to reduce road congestion and transport emissions. It also intends to offer more affordable transport services to citizens, particularly those on lower incomes.

⁽¹⁾ Labour shortages of drivers, including bus drivers, in the EU are high on the Commission's agenda, as illustrated in particular by the recent 'Action Plan to address labour and skills shortages', COM(2024) 131 final.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2020/1054 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020, Regulation (EU) 2020/1055 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020 and Directive (EU) 2020/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 July 2020, all OJ L 249, 31.07.2020.

⁽³⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1258 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 amending Regulation (EC) No 561/2006 as regards minimum requirements on minimum breaks and daily and weekly rest periods in the occasional passenger transport sector and as regards Member States' power to impose penalties for infringements of Regulation (EU) No 165/2014 committed in another Member State or in a third country (OJ L, 2024/1258, 2.5.2024).

⁽⁴⁾ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

⁽⁵⁾ <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/en>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

⁽⁷⁾ https://europa.eu/investeu/home_en

⁽⁸⁾ https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/social-issues-equality-and-attractiveness-transport-sector/equality/women-transport-eu-platform-change_en

⁽⁹⁾ Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1073/2009 on common rules for access to the international market for coach and bus services (COM(2017) 647 final, 8.11.2017).