



OPINION

European Economic and Social Committee

New EU Urban Mobility Framework

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the
New EU Urban Mobility Framework
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TEN/766

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1. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- 1.1 The EESC welcomes the Commission communication on an EU urban mobility framework. The document has been published at the right time, given the challenges relating to the need for environmental care and those that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is changing the way we think about mobility and, more broadly, about urban life and work. It is necessary to strike the right balance between environmental protection and inclusiveness of urban mobility. The need to reduce emissions should not lead to reduced mobility and transport exclusion.
- 1.2 The Committee points out that the right to mobility should be recognised as a fundamental human right which is also included in the European Pillar of Social Rights. It therefore calls for ambitious EU action to make urban transport more inclusive. Mobility should be seen as a factor that can promote equality, especially equal opportunities.
- 1.3 The EESC calls on representatives of public authorities at different levels, with the involvement of civil society representatives and citizens, to work together to improve mobility, not only in cities, but in urban functional areas more broadly (including peri-urban and rural areas). Above all, it calls for the creation of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) and sustainable urban logistics plans (SULP) as well as spatial planning that extends beyond urban boundaries. This should be reflected in the work on the revision of TEN-T insofar as urban nodes are concerned. In the EESC's view, these hubs should be one-stop shops.
- 1.4 Furthermore, the EESC calls for a participatory approach to the planning process. In the Committee's view, only the involvement of all transport stakeholders in urban areas can lead to a change in the desired direction. It therefore welcomes the proposal to change the composition of the Expert Group on Urban Mobility and open it up to people outside the public administration. The EESC proposes broadening its membership to include representatives of different social groups and backgrounds, especially young people. It also expresses its desire to participate in the work of this body. At the same time, it believes that such an approach could favour the promotion of SUMP and SULP. The EESC would also like to underline the importance of raising passenger and business awareness of urban mobility and logistics options, particularly the optimisation of car usage. The role of education and broad cooperation between different institutions and organisations are extremely important.
- 1.5 It is of the utmost importance to ensure adequate long-term funding for mobility activities. EU Member States and local authorities are encouraged to commit their own resources, which, alongside the creation of SUMP and SULP, can demonstrate the political will to make change in this area. Consideration should be given to allocating specific resources to the development of transport infrastructure within the framework of EU funds.
- 1.6 The EESC stresses that steps should be taken to make employment in the area of urban mobility more attractive, especially in relation to public transport, where there is a lack of staff and an ageing workforce. Solutions need to be developed to improve employment conditions through social dialogue. This also applies to people working via digital platforms that offer mobility-related services. The EESC points out the Commission's proposal to improve the conditions of

work performed through online platforms. Effective implementation of the directive should be ensured.

- 1.7 The EESC recognises the particular role of public transport in improving urban and peri-urban mobility. This mode of transport should provide high-quality services and be accessible. Safety is not negligible in the current health situation. This is why the EESC is calling for ambitious action to boost public transport, especially as it has a particular impact on improving equal opportunities.
- 1.8 The development of digitalisation creates new opportunities and risks. The EESC recognises the potential of digital solutions and supports their development. However, it must be ensured that the emergence of new mobility tools does not restrict access to mobility for those who, for various reasons, cannot or are unable to use them. Improving digital skills and security in the digital environment are therefore of particular importance. In addition, we call for the principles of transparency and democratic governance to be respected with regard to data obtained through digital applications.
- 1.9 The EESC supports efforts to develop reliable and comparable mobility indicators. It is recommended that the indicators under UN SDG 11 be used first and foremost. It is important to be aware that collecting and compiling data entails a significant effort on the part of administrations. The Committee therefore encourages efforts to support administrations at different levels in this process.

2. **Background**

- 2.1 Statistics on urban mobility illustrate the scale of the challenge of changing mobility behaviour and choices¹. Residents of cities are attached to their cars. This comes with social, economic and environmental consequences. The scale of the challenge of moving towards sustainable mobility has also been highlighted by the European Court of Auditors, which, in its report, pointed out that "there is no clear trend towards more sustainable modes of transport"².
- 2.2 In the communication, the EC puts forward proposals for more decisive actions to change the approach to organising urban mobility. As the Commission points out, the aim is to move from an approach based on ensuring seamless flow of traffic towards moving people and goods more sustainably.
- 2.3 According to the Commission, this would mean strengthening the structure of collective transport, including public transport, better opportunities for active mobility and efficient, zero-emission urban logistics and last-mile delivery. Multimodality implemented through digital solutions should be key. It should enable better connection of urban and peri-urban areas and improve efficiency.

¹ <https://www.eiturbanmobility.eu/>
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Passenger_mobility_statistics#Distance_covered.

² European Court of Auditors, special report No 06/2020, Sustainable Urban Mobility in the EU: No substantial improvement is possible without Member States' commitment.

2.4 The communication should be seen against the backdrop of the twin energy and digital transitions. In the context of transport, a strengthened approach to TEN-T urban nodes, including the promotion of multimodality in both passenger and freight transport, should contribute to their implementation. This also means making full use of the opportunities afforded by digitalisation.

3. **General comments**

3.1 The EESC shares the Commission's observations and recommendations. Cities and urban mobility need to evolve and adapt to new realities. Urban mobility is rightly seen as a broad concept that encompasses city life as a whole, which should enable economic, social and environmental objectives to be achieved. This is important given the difficulties the transport sector is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the EESC sees public transport as part of policies to reduce inequality, especially inequality of opportunity.

3.2 The EESC recognises mobility as a fundamental right. This follows from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to freedom of movement. It is also important to remember the European Pillar of Social Rights, according to which "everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including [...] transport [...]." Nevertheless, the EESC notes that the current urban mobility infrastructure is not equally accessible to all. Transport should be as inclusive as possible.

3.3 The EESC appreciates the role of the EC in improving urban mobility. However, it is aware that the main decision-making burden lies with local authorities and with the Member States. It therefore calls for active steps to develop mobility, including work to develop sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) and sustainable urban logistics plans (SULP). A lack of political will is one of the things preventing them from being established. The EESC stresses the need for administrations at different decision-making levels to work together, also by involving CSOs and citizens. At the same time, Member States are called upon to assign their own resources for the development and maintenance of urban mobility infrastructure. Consideration should be given to allocating specific resources to the development of transport infrastructure within the framework of EU funds.

3.4 The EESC shares the Commission's view on SUMP and SULP. Unfortunately, many cities in the EU still do not have such plans, which may indicate that the process of establishing them entails significant financial and organisational resources. The Commission's proposals are a step in the right direction. The EESC will also take measures to promote these instruments. Furthermore, the EESC encourages the promotion of these plans in relation to businesses. It is important for these plans to respond to current trends. If there is no significant improvement in the situation in the long term, consideration should be given to making creation of SUMP and SULP mandatory, while taking account of the subsidiarity principle.

3.5 The communication pays great attention to the problem of environmental protection in developing urban transport. It is necessary to strike the right balance here. The need to reduce emissions should not lead to reduced mobility and transport exclusion. The EESC proposes that

priority be given to solutions that encourage the use of low-emission vehicles and support for businesses, civil society organisations and consumers in purchasing such vehicles. At the same time, the full spectrum of possibilities for transportation that will fully or partially reduce the need for private cars should be presented.

- 3.6 Appropriate spatial planning is extremely important. Mobility trends should be monitored and adequate reserves of space created for goals relating to the development of new forms of mobility as well as to development of public transport networks. To ensure a good quality of life in areas remote from city centres, there needs to be adequate infrastructure for the people living in these areas. It is important that business models for new types of mobility are adapted to urban infrastructure. If there is insufficient potential in cities, partnerships should be supported to monitor urban mobility trends and their implementation in the EU and at global level. The EESC will support such activities.
- 3.7 It is recommended that cities, peri-urban and rural areas work together to create SUMP and SULPs for broad functional areas. The aim should be to push back against suburbanisation and spatial chaos.
- 3.8 The EESC agrees with the importance the communication places on strengthening TEN-T urban nodes for passengers and freight, and shares the view that these aspects should form part of the revision of the TEN-T regulation. In this context, the EESC would like to stress that cities cannot develop in isolation from their surrounding areas. It is therefore of the utmost importance that transport links exist between urban and peri-urban areas, including those in rural areas, that allow for convenient mobility and use of the full potential of different areas and their inhabitants. In the EESC's view, these hubs should be one-stop shops. They should serve not only to change the way people get around in the strict sense of the term, but to provide a comprehensive transport service, with information for passengers and services and products related to transport, including freight transport. In the EESC's view, railway stops may have a special role in this regard.
- 3.9 The EESC agrees with the need to decarbonise freight transport logistics, for example through the development of SULPs, with a focus on developing sustainable solutions and improving multimodality with an eye to zero-emission solutions, technologies and vehicles. The EESC stresses the importance of involving public and private stakeholders in this process and of adequately addressing transitional problems.
- 3.10 The challenge for the sector will be attracting staff. One of the problems identified is the advanced age of workers. At the same time, there is little interest in working in urban public transport. In relation to this, we can see staff shortages that have an impact on the quality of the services provided. On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown that workers in this sector play an important role and ensure that whole communities can continue to function. Therefore, work in this sector should be made more attractive by guaranteeing decent and fair working conditions. Moreover, it is very important for education on sustainable mobility to be included in school curricula and in youth work and to make educational programmes more attractive and interactive for young people, including through the Erasmus+ programme. Solutions should be developed through social dialogue mechanisms.

- 3.11 Under the system of urban transport public contracts, consideration should be given to a number of social and environmental criteria when selecting the best tender, taking into account the requirements laid down in regulation 1370/2007.
- 3.12 Public transport is crucial for the development of mobility. Its development should therefore be supported in such ways as setting targets for public transport for the coming years. We should also not forget about such elements as accessibility, affordability, safety, reliability and punctuality. At the same time, confidence in urban transport, as something that is safe in terms of health, needs to be strengthened, especially during health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also important that using this mode of transport is not associated with poverty. The role of public transport in equal opportunities, including gender equality, should also not be overlooked. The EESC calls for a long-term financial support framework for financing public transport infrastructure.
- 3.13 The communication highlights issues related to the use of mobility as a service (MaaS). This is a desirable area for development as it offers huge potential to produce a large amount of data. However, there are concerns as to whether the data processed by applications will be used in an unauthorised manner. An appropriate regulatory framework should be put in place to ensure that democratic principles of transparency are respected in the management of urban transport. Public scrutiny is necessary here. In addition, local and regional authorities need support for the development of artificial intelligence technologies. The EESC stresses that the development of modern digital mobility tools must not lead to the exclusion of those who cannot or are unable to use such solutions. There is a need to develop society's digital skills.
- 3.14 The EESC stresses the importance of awareness-raising and education on modern mobility. Residents should be shown the benefits of leaving private vehicles behind in favour of other methods of travel. Optimisation in terms of car use is particularly important. In addition to EU bodies and initiatives, civil society organisations and networks³ play an important role in this regard. A successful example is CIVITAS. The EESC also proposes promoting urban tourism that takes account of the use of sustainable modes of mobility.
- 3.15 The EESC would like to express its interest in participating in the work of the Expert Group on Urban Mobility. We agree that the composition and working methods of this group need to be revised. Opening it up to areas beyond administration is a step in the right direction. The Committee encourages diversifying the composition of this group so that different social groups and different backgrounds are represented. The above considerations can also be applied to other mobility bodies at different levels.

³ For example, EIT Urban Mobility or city associations.

3.16 Furthermore, the EESC supports the Commission's proposals to improve harmonised urban mobility indicators. It is worth noting here that the communication refers to SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030. It is important to stress that specific objectives can provide guidelines for EU policy in this area and for the design of indicators, which should be guaranteed to be comparable and up-to-date. The EESC therefore calls for support for services responsible for collecting data and producing statistics at various levels. The Committee encourages the use of SUMI⁴ as a basis for further work, and calls for the experience accompanying the work on this tool to be taken into account.

4. **Specific comments**

4.1 The EESC also points out that passenger information that is accessible to all passengers should be an integral part of the public transport service. Numerous fares, zones and the variety of tickets assigned to them make it difficult to travel smoothly. This is particularly true for those who come to cities for short stays. The EESC encourages the creation of simple and clear fare systems.

4.2 For many young people, a comprehensive change of perspective that focuses on healthy, climate-friendly and sustainable mobility is a priority⁵. The EESC therefore encourages efforts to develop more structured youth engagement on climate and sustainability in the EU policy-making and decision-making processes⁶, and to continue initiatives such as DiscoverEU.

4.3 In the communication, the Commission justifiably refers to work through digital platforms, including in the field of mobility. In recent years, a number of problems and challenges have been identified in relation to this, including employment conditions. The EESC points out the Commission's proposal to improve the conditions of work performed through online platforms. Effective implementation of the directive should be ensured.

4.4 The EESC draws attention to the retail trade sector, which can make a significant contribution to achieving urban mobility objectives, provided that the assumptions of the proximity model in retail trade are taken into account, especially for essential products. Local trade should promote greater use of sustainable solutions. New trends should also be followed, such as aerial mobility, which may represent a new quality of mobility services.

4 <https://civitas.eu/tool-inventory/sumi-sustainable-urban-mobility-indicators>.

5 Youth Position Paper, Vienna 2021 <https://www.klimaaktiv.at/service/publikationen/mobilitaet/the-pep.html>.

6 [OJ C 429, 11.12.2020, p. 44](#).

4.5 The communication mentions the role of inland waterway transport as something that can also play a part in greening both urban transport and last mile freight transport. Here, the EESC would like to refer to its opinion on NAIADES III⁷, which presented recommendations for solutions in this area. It mentions, among other things, that certain conditions should be put in place for the development of inland waterway transport in cities. These include the creation of appropriate infrastructure and the provision of the same preferential treatment for public water transport as for public land transport.

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⁷ [OJ C 194, 12.5.2022, p. 102.](#)