

For a world
in motion



Driving a safe, prosperous and sustainable Europe

Manifesto 2024–2029
for EU commercial road transport



About IRU

IRU, the world transport organisation represents, via its 176+ members, more than 3.5 million companies operating mobility and logistics services, including over 1 million in the EU alone.

Together with our members, including bus, coach, taxi and truck associations and operators, we strive to shape industry policies in a realistic way that allows our sector to thrive in the interest of communities and economies worldwide.

Our Brussels office, which was founded over 50 years ago on 1 July 1973, focuses on policymaking at the EU level, ensuring that the voice of transport companies is heard loud and clear.

Our EU advocacy work centres around mobility, road safety, access to the market and fair competition, sustainability and environmental issues.

iru.org

Driving the EU

As the voice of the EU commercial road transport industry, and globally, IRU's vision is to connect societies with safe, efficient and green mobility and logistics.

Commercial road transport is the backbone of the EU's economy and society. It drives prosperity with strong and robust supply chains and ensures social inclusion by connecting all types of people, communities and regions across the EU.

In times of crisis, be it war on its doorstep, health crises, and natural and climate-induced disasters, road transport networks have proven to also be crucial for security.

Commercial road transport, by its nature, is flexible, adaptable and resilient. Europe's trucks, buses, coaches and taxis were, for example, on the front line in Ukraine at the outbreak of the war, rapidly switching from regular services to helping refugees escape, delivering humanitarian aid, and transporting valuable exports out of the country.

This manifesto lays out the sector's core priorities for the 2024-2029 EU parliamentary term. It ensures strong commercial road transport services in the EU that will support growth, resilience and security.

Our priorities are clearly defined around three focus areas: people, environment and prosperity.

People: Our manifesto outlines support the sector needs to improve working conditions, increase talent recruitment and retention, boost diversity and inclusion, and reinforce training and certification.

Environment: Our manifesto calls for supporting the sector's commitment to reduce its carbon footprint with realistic vehicle standards, investment in green infrastructure, and harmonised urban access rules.

Prosperity: Our manifesto calls for more digital infrastructure and processes to reduce bureaucracy and increase efficiency, clearer in-vehicle data rules, and vehicle standards that encourage modal cooperation.

01

People

People are at the heart of the commercial road transport industry: our drivers, our workers, and all who use our services and our roads.

Safety is always our first priority. We work to improve working conditions, attract more people to our sector, and reinforce training and certification.

5.1 million road transport workers across the EU

Our sector employs 5.1 million workers across the EU: 3.4 million in freight operations, 1.1 million in bus and coach operations, and 585,000 in taxi operations¹

0.5 million professional drivers missing

There are currently 2.7 million professional drivers in the EU. Over 500,000 professional driver jobs are unfilled. The driver shortage is forecast to grow by 17% over the next five years without action²

5% of drivers below 25 years old

Only 2.7% of bus drivers and 5% of truck drivers are under 25 years old. One third of professional drivers are 55 or older. The average driver age for trucks is 47 and 50 for buses. Women represent 16% of bus drivers and 4% of truck drivers. Non-EU nationals account for 5% of bus drivers and 9% of truck drivers³

0.57% share of EU road accidents

Commercial road transport is safe. Buses are involved in 0.57% of EU road accidents, trucks are involved in 1.08%⁴



TRUCKS

TAXI

BUS & COACH

Ease access to the driver profession and enhance training

Europe is facing the most acute shortage of drivers in decades. The lack of drivers poses a real threat to EU mobility networks and supply chains. The shortage could more than double in the coming years due to an ageing driver population, with the rate of newcomers being significantly lower than the rate of drivers retiring every year.

Call for action

- Close the school-to-wheel gap through the Driving Licence Directive to ensure that fully trained young graduates have access to the profession
- Create an EU mechanism for the harmonised recognition and exchange of third-country driving licences and training for the Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) through the Driving Licence Directive and implementation actions
- Update EU legislation on professional driver training (CPC) to meet current and future needs

TRUCKS

Improve driver resting conditions

Europe is facing a widespread shortage of parking areas, especially safe and secure truck parking areas (SSTPAs). Increasing their number is critical to the profession's ability to retain and attract drivers.

Call for action

- Establish an EU strategy and plan for building safe and secure parking areas to complete the core EU network of SSTPAs by the end of the legislative term
- Make EU funds available for building and upgrading parking areas with a simplified application eligibility criteria process, and extend the scope to cover more types of roads

02

Environment

The industry is committed to be carbon neutral by 2050 in the EU, as globally, while continuing to meet the passenger and goods transport needs of all communities and businesses who depend on our services.

We promote the shift from private to collective mobility to reduce CO₂ emissions and call for authorities to financially support and promote bus, coach and taxi services as the cleanest and most efficient way for people to move.

115.1% increase in hybrid-electric buses

New electric bus registrations increased by 39.1% to 5,166 units in 2023, claiming a 15.9 market share. New bus registrations grew by 19.4% to 32,595 units⁶

234.1% increase in new electric trucks

The number of new electric trucks registered in 2023 was 234.1% higher than in 2022 reaching 5,279 units. New truck registrations grew by 16.3% to 346,986 units⁷

TRUCKS BUS & COACH

Re-set realistic CO₂ standards for heavy-duty vehicles

The CO₂ standards regulation for heavy-duty vehicles includes a review clause set for 2027. The review, which could lead to a change in the regulation, will assess whether the enabling conditions for achieving emission-reduction targets are met. It will also investigate the role of carbon-neutral fuels in decarbonising heavy-duty fleets.

Call for action

- Set realistic decarbonisation targets and exempt high-capacity vehicles, such as vehicles that are heavier or longer than standard combinations, from the targets
- Introduce a carbon correction factor in the calculation of emission reduction targets to support carbon-neutral fuels as viable decarbonisation options alongside electricity and hydrogen
- Support vehicle fleet renewal with subsidies and revenue from taxation and charges

TRUCKS TAXI BUS & COACH

Enact an EU grid regulation for decarbonisation

The EU has a framework for the deployment of alternative fuels charging infrastructure along its main transport corridors. However, Member State-led initiatives and private efforts to build infrastructure for electric charging will be increasingly confronted by a failing and insufficient grid. This will not allow the EU to be prepared for a massive uptake of battery-electric commercial vehicles, especially heavy-duty vehicles.

Call for action

- Conduct an EU-coordinated country-by-country gap analysis to evaluate grid upgrades needed to support the huge additional power demand required for industrial transformation, including for commercial road transport
- Enact an EU harmonised framework binding Member States and electricity providers to upgrade the grid to necessary levels
- Monitor Member State commitments to deploy alternative fuels infrastructure regulation and provide additional obligations where necessary

TRUCKS TAXI BUS & COACH

Harmonise key elements of urban vehicle access regulations

European cities are unilaterally introducing urban vehicle access restrictions (UVARs) in the form of congestion charges or traffic circulation restrictions, including so-called “diesel bans”. Road passenger and goods transport companies are increasingly finding it difficult to understand these highly divergent unilateral measures.

Call for action

- Harmonise the registration, recognition and use of signs to recognise a vehicle and its environmental performance class
- Standardise the steps to establish and modify UVARs, such as impact assessment and stakeholder consultations, including local commercial road passenger and freight transport operators
- Apply the principle of proportionality when setting UVARs, such as corridors for diesel vehicles if the enabling conditions for zero-emission vehicles are not met, or exemptions for taxi or coach services for less mobile passengers
- Establish a digital single window access point, free of charge, to access information on all UVARs

03

Prosperity

Commercial road transport underpins economic and social prosperity in all countries.

We call for well targeted, as opposed to additional, regulation that supports road transport and does not burden operators. We call for the free movement of people and goods, for the sector's enhanced digitalisation, and support to maintain supply chain continuity in times of crisis.

77.8% of EU inland freight transport is by road

Commercial road transport moves 77.8% of inland goods transport (road, rail, inland waterways and pipelines) by tonne-kilometre⁸

50.4% of EU inland collective passenger transport is by road

Collective road passenger transport by bus and coach services represents 50.4% of all inland collective passenger transport (road, rail and inland waterways) by passenger-kilometre⁹

TRUCKS BUS & COACH

Digitalise transport documents

The road transport industry incurs huge administrative costs. For both passenger and goods transport, document digitalisation is a prerequisite to successfully enforce road transport rules. Digitalising transport documents is a necessary basic step to avoid redundancy, move closer to a data-driven economy and achieve overall transport digitalisation and efficiency.

Call for action

- Ensure a smooth adoption of all legislative proposals related to the implementation of the electronic freight transport information regulation (eFTI), enabling the digitalisation of many control documents
- Support and insert the digitalisation of documents in any legislative proposal that serves this purpose, such as the roadworthiness package
- Back the development of an electronic journey form for passenger transport, which is necessary for the enforcement of specific driving and rest time rules for coach drivers
- Support and add the interoperability obligation to any legislative proposal bringing about transport digitalisation

TRUCKS

Support transport efficiency by setting pragmatic weights and dimensions and stimulating combined transport

There are many efficiency and clean technology blockages in the current weights and dimensions rules that are unjustifiable. For example, transport is blocked at borders due to EU rules banning the cross-border movement of vehicles exceeding 40 tonnes, even if both countries allow heavier vehicles. As with other modes, road transport must become more sustainable, including via bigger vehicles and encouraging cooperation among different modes of transport.

Call for action

- Modify the weights and dimensions proposal to facilitate the use of larger trucks in cross-border trade, and add an incentive to offset the loss of weight capacity due to heavier zero-emission vehicles
- Enact a combined transport law that offers a simple, attractive and easy way to access incentives for multimodal transport

TRUCKS TAXI BUS & COACH

Set out EU rules on in-vehicle data

Modern vehicles generate a large amount of data. The trend to collect, store, share and use/reuse this data will continue to increase. However, operators lack control over commercially sensitive data created by their vehicles and operations, which could be used for commercial purposes by others, or against them by other companies or governmental bodies. Vehicle users are concerned that manufacturers and other data collectors will deny them access to data generated by their vehicles based on the pretext of “serious damage”.

Call for action

- Enact specific legislation on access to in-vehicle data

Commercial road transport in the EU: At a glance

1.03 million road transport companies in the EU

There are 1.03 million commercial road transport companies operating in the EU: 600,000 are truck companies, 357,000 are taxi companies, 60,000 are coach companies and 13,300 are bus companies¹⁰

89% of truck operators have less than 10 employees

The vast majority of road transport operators are small- and medium-sized firms: 89% of truck, 82% of bus and coach and 99% of taxi operators have less than 10 employees¹¹

1.4% of EU's gross domestic product

The commercial road transport sector directly accounts for 1.4% of the EU's gross domestic product. This varies across EU Member States, with highest contributions reported 6.6% for Lithuania, 3% for Poland and Romania¹³

Sources:

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