

BARCELONA DECLARATION

ON THE OCCASION OF THE INFORMAL MEETING OF EU MINISTERS OF
TRANSPORT UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE SPANISH EU COUNCIL
PRESIDENCY

MOBILITY FOR PEOPLE: ADVANCING SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

Mobility plays a fundamental role in people's lives serving as a crucial gateway to job and business opportunities, public services, and leisure activities. Further, it is essential for the efficient distribution of goods, thus greatly contributing to the functioning of economies and people's well-being, consumer choice and overall quality of life.

In December 2019, the European Commission adopted the **European Green Deal** as a response to the pressing climate and environmental challenges. It states that achieving sustainable transport means that users come first and that they are provided with more affordable, accessible, healthy, and clean alternatives to their current mobility habits.

The **Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy** (SSMS), presented by the European Commission in December 2020, acknowledges the utmost importance of ensuring accessible, affordable and fair mobility for all individuals, as well as an efficient, sustainable and multimodal freight transport system. Inter alia, the SSMS highlights the need for improved connectivity in rural and remote regions, including outermost regions and islands, as well as inclusive transport options for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility. Additionally, the SSMS emphasises the significance of creating favourable conditions within the sector, which encompasses attractive job opportunities. Furthermore, it refers to the European Pillar of Social Rights as the European compass to ensure that the green and digital transition remains equitable and socially fair.

In the **2021 Long-Term Vision for Europe's Rural Areas**, the Commission calls on Member States and regions to develop sustainable rural mobility strategies, with the overall objective of "stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040". In the transport sector, this means *"maintaining or improving affordable public transport services, and infrastructure such as railways, inland waterways, roads, charging and refuelling stations to support e-mobility solutions, cycling paths, multimodal connections including to active means of transport, as well as short-sea shipping and air transport links."* The **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)** recognises social and territorial cohesion as one of its six pillars, with a distinct focus on prioritising people, particularly the most vulnerable.

In line with the above, the notion of mobility is viewed as a right of every citizen, acting as a catalyst for social and territorial cohesion, with the aim of fostering social equity across all territories, including both urban and rural areas.

Therefore, with this **Barcelona Declaration**, we, the EU Transport Ministers, acknowledge the crucial role that mobility plays in advancing social and territorial cohesion, while also mitigating inequalities. Consequently, **WE**:

1. EMPHASISE that establishing a comprehensive network of infrastructure, mobility and transport services that transcend national boundaries is a primary objective of the European Union's transport policy. The trans-European transport network (TEN-T) policy is a key instrument to reach this objective.
2. CALL for the adoption of the revised TEN-T framework, currently under negotiations.
3. UNDERLINE the imperative for public administrations to promote an integrated transport and mobility network that ensures accessibility across the entire territory. Additionally, it is crucial to tailor mobility solutions to the specific needs of each territory, with active participation from communities in the design and implementing processes. Further reflection should be devoted to areas experiencing population decline.
4. ACKNOWLEDGE that all modes of transport play a pivotal role in facilitating territorial and social cohesion and Europe's internal and external connectivity.

5. AGREE on the importance of recognizing sustainable rural mobility needs in the regional and national transport system plans.
6. STRONGLY EMPHASISE the need to promote and foster advancements in decarbonising all modes of transport, taking into account the diverse geographical conditions that necessitate different transport solutions.
7. RECALL that safety should be among the foremost priorities in any transport and mobility system. For this reason, we STRESS the importance of applying the safe system approach or other similar strategies in road safety, which require measures regarding road user behaviour as well as infrastructure investments, in particular to protect vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists.
8. RECALL that accessibility should also be among the foremost priorities in any transport and mobility system, with particular emphasis on people with disabilities and /or reduced mobility.
9. STRESS the importance of ensuring adequate protection of passenger rights.

9bis. RECALL the existing labour shortages in the transport sectors in Europe and the need to enhance the attractiveness of these professions in order to maintain connectivity, mobility and flows.
10. EMPHASISE that transport policies have the potential to reduce territorial and social disparities. Therefore, affordable public transport and mobility solutions that address daily mobility needs should be prioritised.
11. RECOGNISE the importance of increasing active mobility options such as walking and cycling, as well as shared mobility solutions, along with investments in safe urban and rural road infrastructure and public transport systems, to cultivate a comprehensive and efficient mobility ecosystem.
12. HIGHLIGHT that the gender and equality perspective SHOULD be incorporated into the design of transport and mobility policies, starting with the collection of statistics that provide sufficiently disaggregated data.

13. SHOULD PROMOTE data-driven approaches that allow for evidence-based policy-making, resource allocation, and tracking of implementation, ensuring that transport solutions effectively cater to the needs of all individuals, especially those who may encounter barriers to access and affordability.
14. SHOULD STRONGLY ENCOURAGE progress in technology and digital transformation, such as smart transport systems, real-time data analytics, data sharing environment and mobile applications that can enhance the efficiency, reliability, and resilience of mobility and transport services and thereby the user experience of transport services.
15. RECOGNISE that all modes of transport are vital for the carriage of goods, both within the Internal Market and globally contributing to the economic prosperity of the European Union and of its partners and allies. Recognise the importance of Europe's transport network in dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, of the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine and potential future crises.
16. ENCOURAGE competition, multimodality, and resilience of the transport network, both in relation to passengers and goods.
17. MAKE EFFECTIVE USE of the funding made available under the Social Climate Fund in order to improve rural connectivity, thus also contributing to a socially fair transition towards climate neutrality.

Therefore, the transport Ministers call upon the Commission to CONSIDER:

18. CONTINUING its role as a facilitator for the implementation of policies that consider the social and territorial cohesion aspects of transport and mobility, in line with the goals of the SSMS on sustainability, affordability, and equality.
19. PROPOSING a 'non-paper' that outlines strategies for leveraging transport and mobility to enhance social and territorial cohesion. This document should encompass several aspects, such as addressing the challenges faced by urban nodes and rural, insular, peripheral, and mountainous regions, as well as sparsely populated areas. The document should also focus on supporting development of cross-border public transport services, implementing tools to actively engage communities, and understanding their needs and concerns, while

ensuring their participation in the decision-making and implementation processes.

20. SUPPORT pilot projects and plans to (1) test innovative mobility concepts in sparsely populated areas that can better respond to people's needs, with efficient use of public resources, and (2) to enhance the development of cross-border rail passenger infrastructure and services throughout the Union.

21. PROVIDING comprehensive and coherent data to evaluate the extent of disparities in transport and mitigate instances of poverty in mobility (referred to as "transport poverty or exclusion"). It is recognised that such information will largely depend on data input from Member States.

21bis. CONTINUING efforts to make it easier for all European citizens to make journeys across Europe, by facilitating the combination of mobility services, possibly with different modes of transport, and improving the user experience, with a view to further opening up territories in Europe.

22. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the territorial and social cohesion dimension as a factor in the methodology for cost-benefit analysis of infrastructure projects.

23. Consequently, the Transport Ministers SUPPORT the Commission on the points above.

The transport Ministers call upon the local and, if appropriate, regional administrations to:

24. RECALL that our goal as public decision makers is to work together to provide citizens with accessible, affordable, safe, and environmentally friendly mobility options, ensuring their needs are met while optimising the utilisation of public resources.

25. ACKNOWLEDGE the significance of intergovernmental cooperation in aligning policies, coordinating investments, including those related to cross-border projects, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

26. ENHANCE the participation of communities in the design and implementation of transport services and mobility solutions tailored to their specific territories.

The transport Ministers invite the private sector, in cooperation with civil society in the sector, to:

27. FOSTER partnerships between the public and private sector to design and implement new mobility solutions that better align with the needs of different user groups in different territories.

28. ENABLE sustainable mobility of their employees, encompassing commuting and travel during working hours.

In conclusion, the transport Ministers emphasise the paramount significance of considering these challenges and directing mobility policies towards delivering effective solutions to ensure safe, accessible, affordable, and fair mobility for all individuals and goods.

Barcelona, 22 September 2023

Agence Europe