

National Report Serbia

(Annex VII)

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INTRODUCTION / PRESENTATION OF THE SITUATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

The transport sector in Serbia consists of road, rail, air and river transport. Serbia is at the crossroads of major European transport routes and it plays an important role as a transit country and according to the World Bank's 2020 report, it ranks 51st in the world for the quality of infrastructure in the transport sector.

Road transport dominates Serbia, with a large number of trucks transporting goods across the country and the region. However, there is also a problem with the overload of road networks and infrastructure, which leads to delays and increased costs.

Rail transport is the second most common means of transport in Serbia. However, there is a problem with outdated infrastructure, which is why there are often delays and interruptions in transport, but there is less and less of this and improvements are expected in the coming period due to large investments by the state.

Air transport is the quickest mode of transport, but it is not as prevalent as road and rail transport. Nikola Tesla Airport in Belgrade is the largest and most important airport in Serbia.

Water transport is also less prevalent in Serbia, since Serbia has no access to the sea. However, river transport by the Danube and the Sava plays an important role in the transport of goods.

Serbia is constantly investing in the modernisation of infrastructure in the transport sector, including the reconstruction of the road and rail networks, the construction of new airports and the improvement of access to river transport. These projects contribute to increasing



efficiency and safety in transport, as well as facilitating trade and connecting with other countries.

However, as in other parts of the world, the transport sector in Serbia was also significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to reduced and difficult operations and losses for many companies and procurement difficulties in most sectors of the economy. According to data from the International Road Union, the revenues of transport companies in the COVID years compared to 2019 were reduced by at least 50%. The losses of carriers in Serbia are estimated at around 200 million euros.

The transport sector in Serbia continued its further development and modernization in the post-COVID period with rapid steps. Construction of new highways, modernization of railway infrastructure and improvement of air traffic began. However, there are also problems in the sector, such as a lack of finance for all the necessary investments, a lack of manpower and problems with administrative procedures.

DATA PROCESSING

This section should include the data collected in the individual reports of each of the 3 sources used (survey, interview and focus group) within the data presentation.

A. Report on the conclusions of the "SURVEY": (see Annex III).

65 people were interviewed – workers and employers from the transport sector. All collected responses are summarized and presented graphically – each response has its own graphic representation and description. Workers and employers (managers, directors, and owners) are almost equally represented in the survey, the vast majority of respondents are in an active employment relationship in the company and the majority are male. Most of the surveyed



companies are medium-sized enterprises (25-250 employees) and belong to privately owned road transport (passengers, goods, and infrastructure). The respondents stated whether they were consulted and informed about various segments of the organization of work and about taking measures in the combat against the pandemic, as well as after it...

The general conclusion of the survey is that there was a good response from respondents in both the workers' and employers' world. A high degree of involvement of workers in consultation and information is shown, but the need for this process should be further developed and promoted. It is great that the relationship of mutual trust and respect in the collectives was developed at the beginning, during the pandemic, but also in the post COVID period. The awareness of employers has been increased that the consultation process is important and useful for the company – but it needs to be further improved in the most important segments (in the decision-making process – especially on the topic of salaries and working hours).

Neither employers nor employees received from the state, except for certain recommendations, clear guidelines for the involvement of workers in decision-making processes, nor an example of good and essential social dialogue.

The state adopted measures that applied to both companies and employees with insufficient use of the capacities of their social partners. There is a free space that the state should use to promote and improve social dialogue.

A clear need and satisfaction of members for employers' and trade union organisations has been demonstrated. Crisis times clearly reinforce the need for organization and association in both the labour and employer movements.



B. Report on the conclusions of the "INTERVIEW": (see Annex V)

Six in-depth interviews with transport company representatives were conducted. 4 employers in private transport companies, 1 director of a business association from the republic level and 1 representative of the Occupational Safety and Health Sector in a private transport company were interviewed. Each of their answers is summarized and presented graphically, and then a description of the summarized answers is given. All interviewees are male and full-time employees in the companies that are the subject of the interview. Emphasis in interviews is placed on creating and transferring good practices in transport companies during and after the COVID crisis - motivation, scenarios, time period, impacts of good practices, training of staff, retaining talents, key drivers of the introduction of good practices and factors influencing their transfer...

In the opinion of the respondents, the transfer of good business practice was most applied in the period of "new normality" (June 21, 2020 to April 20, 2022). Half of the respondents (and sometimes even more) are not aware of the importance of the need for the existence of a business strategy for the sustainability of future business, as well as the importance of preserving personnel (they do not have strategies for retaining talents and giving recognition), good mental health and healthy interpersonal relationships in the collective, but the majority are aware of the importance of personnel education.

In micro companies, the right to information, consultation and participation - workers are most often exercised through the director (because there is no complex organization of business), and consultation is mostly used in designing alternative solutions and for diagnosing the situation. Involvement of workers in crisis management in most cases has led to improved interpersonal relations. The participation of workers in informing the majority of



respondents does not require significant financial costs or a lot of time for realization, as there are no obstacles to this mechanism of cooperation in firms.

The opinion of the majority of respondents is extremely important that there was an improvement in the working climate in the company after the implementation of the right to information, consultation and participation of workers, as well as an improvement in the culture of prevention and the state of OSH in the collective, which indicates the justification and needs for this mechanism.

C. Report on the conclusions of the "FOCUS GROUP": (see Annex VI)

The focus group was held on April 21, online via the Zoom application, with the technical support of the project leader. The session was led by a national expert, and attended by 10 participants – representatives of companies operating in the transport sector, business associations of road transport, trade unions in the Public City Transport Company Novi Sad, the Association of Independent Trade Unions of Vojvodina for Transport and Communications and representative of the Union of Employers of Vojvodina, which is a partner in this project. The session lasted 90 minutes. At the beginning, the project was presented to the participants, and then the goals of the focus group – the exchange of experience on work in transport companies at the beginning, during and in the post-COVID period. Each of the participants talked about the experiences from their company: how they faced the onset of the crisis, what they did, what were the requirements and behaviour of workers, clients, passengers, state assistance, and adaptation to the crisis, overcoming the crisis, and the situation after the crisis. All with a special emphasis on working together with their employees.



In particular, the important role played by drivers and public transport employees was highlighted because they could not work from home and had to be engaged in maintaining the normal functioning of public transport in larger cities. This proved to be one of the key factors in the functioning of a city. It had to be ensured that the distance between the driver and the passenger was maintained, as well as between the passengers (every other seat is empty, the entrance is only to the front door, the exit to the rear), daily disinfection of the vehicle. They also had to look for solutions when it happened that a large number of drivers and employees were on sick leave at the same time...

The overall conclusion of the focus group is that the employees of transport companies carried a huge burden and made a significant contribution to the fulfilment of all the necessary conditions for the safety and health of citizens.

Joint activities were agreed through social dialogue to further improve the transport sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING WORKER PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

It is necessary to indicate the recommendations of the researcher in relation to the information he has collected.

A. Recommendations for EMPLOYERS:

Employers were able to feel the benefits of communion with their employees in times of crisis and it is accordingly a recommendation to continue the development of this mechanism at all times. It is extremely important to talk to workers even in the most difficult situations – and when difficult decisions need to be made. Firms thrive in the long run only with the satisfaction of their employees.

B. Recommendations for WORKERS:



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In any participation and consultation of employees in the collective, look for a win-win situation for both the company and the collective, as well as for each individual in the collective. The employee representative should have excellent communication skills and understanding of the process, a broader interest and good relationship to other employees which is extremely important for the development of this mechanism.

Recommendations for the sector regarding the participation of workers in decision-making, in relation to SUSTAINABILITY and RESPONSIBLE ENERGY CONSUMPTION in accordance with the United Nations 2030 Agenda:

In the transport sector, continue to adapt to sustainable and responsible energy consumption, whereby employees are an integral part of this process. Informing employers, educating both the management team and all employees on this topic and finding the means to invest in this area – are the goals of all actors.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCHER'S CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary to state the conclusions of the researcher, as follows:

A. Conclusions regarding the transfer of good practice in terms of employee participation and consultation when it comes to managing other types of crises from the perspective of trade unions and business organizations

The transfer of good practice is extremely important, especially in times of crisis. The mechanism for the realization of this activity was exclusively located in associations – both employers' and trade unions' organizations, and during the crisis period these organizations fulfilled their main function of protecting their members (but also the



wider population) through support, counselling, connecting, informing, proposing measures...

B. Conclusions on the progress of social dialogue in the management of the COVID 19 crisis when it comes to the transport sector

The lowest percentage of respondents' satisfaction was precisely on the occasion of the social dialogue taking place during the crisis and this was mainly related to the tripartite dialogue. The recommendation remains for the competent state authorities at the national and local levels to improve their relationship with social partners and to respect the views of their social partners more.

C. Conclusions regarding the importance of different types of support to the sector by the government at the central level

In general, everyone is of the opinion that the transport sector would not have survived without various types of support from the government at the central level. There were opinions that some measures were delayed and could have been implemented differently, but there is also some dissatisfaction with the support of this sector in the current, post-COVID time...

D. Conclusions on good practices implemented by employers and employees to promote employee participation and consultation in the management of the COVID-19 crisis in the transport sector

Implementing examples of good practice has been a great help in solving new (never before experienced) challenges. Here, creativity, resourcefulness, solidarity among



actors, “raising” each other and selfless help came to the fore. The involvement and consultation of workers has strengthened the relationship of mutual trust and commitment to solving problems.

SUMMARY OF THE FINAL REPORT

All issues included in the national report should be summarized so that it can be included in the final comparative report of this project. (They should be written on a maximum of 1 page).

The CORONA crisis, although severe and at times hopeless for companies and employees in the transport sector, has affected the significant closer connection and cooperation of workers and employers in this sector. The measures of the state, although initially extremely rigorous (first the ban, then the restrictions on regular transport), were respected, but also quickly relaxed, and financial assistance was significant. The traffic of goods has not suffered significant losses, but the transport of passengers has not yet been returned to the period before the CORONA crisis.

Significant progress in digitalization and emphasis on employee education has seen a boom and a huge jump in the post-COVID period. With the focus of workers and employers on each other and the improvement of their cooperation – this is one of the positive effects of the COVID crisis in the transport sector.

The dialogue was conducted through the activities of this project because the participants and the social partners agreed on the common needs and the way of further representing these interests through the organization of employers and the organization of workers (initiatives to change the laws important for the functioning and improvement of the state of road



transport, solving the constant problem of the grey economy and unfair competition and retaining personnel in the country).



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