

## **We need to stop “social dumping” on European roads**

Freight transport is commonly facing an issue of "social dumping", a term often misused in a discriminatory way, to define cheaper labor leading to unfair competition. This issue is actually exploitation of workers and violation of their rights.

When the EU has to negotiate a new mobility package and a road transport package over the next few years, we need to step up workers protection, namely strengthen the rules, improve control and harden sanctions in the European road freight transport sector. Far too many Eastern European lorry drivers are exploited by employers and are working under conditions far below the high-quality standards that should be applied and enforced throughout the countries where exploited lorry drivers are active, which is contributing towards unfair competition and social dumping.

The Danish Labour union 3F and the employer's association DTL have conducted a survey among foreign workers in the transport sector in Denmark. The results show a serious weakness in EU legislation concerning level of payment, cabotage, working conditions and living standards.

The pattern is clear: Eastern European wage laborers are being exploited in order to undercut the transportation industry in north west Europe. And there are clear signals that social dumping and unfair competition constitute a serious threat to the transport sector and the labour market in Europe.

In the end, this development will harm all the workers of the transport sector across Europe, if the EU does not take action. There is a need to act fast. In recent years Denmark, France, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium have taken a number of different national measures aimed at counteracting social dumping in the transport sector. This trend will continue unless common solutions are found.

How can we instill change?

We suggest that both the EU and national authorities should be encouraged to conduct similar surveys to reveal conditions in the transport sector and use the data collected as a basis for recommendations concerning national and EU legislation that needs to be adjusted or fundamentally changed.

We need more than a simple service check on the Combined Transport Directive, the cabotage rules and the rules on the posting of workers. All the existing sets of rules have glaring weaknesses because controls or sanctions are too weak. This is true both at the national level and at the European level. We need to fight letterbox companies and fraud to make it harder for fraudulent companies to bypass the rules. This needs to be combined with measures that structurally improve the working conditions of all workers to ensure high quality employment in the sector.

The EU have to deliver more rigid and more clearly defined rules so we can improve the possibilities for control and sanctions that can have a deterrent effect on businesses that circumvent the rules. Solutions should be discussed and devised at both national and EU level.

At times of the greatest climate challenges that humanity shall overcome, our stand against social dumping and unfair competition in the road transport industry shall occur simultaneously with support for incentives for a greener freight sector.

In that perspective, combating social dumping is also a way to encourage cleaner modes of freight.