

## Women working in transport

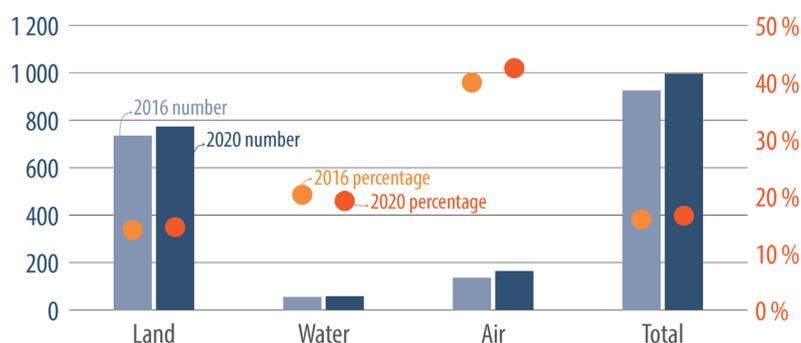
International Women's Day on 8 March 2022 marks an occasion to reflect on the position of women as workers in the EU transport sector. Women only represent on average around 16% (2020) of total employees in the different transport sectors and modes (land, water and air). In view of growing labour shortages in this important economic sector, worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, this share needs to increase, according to experts.

### Context

One of the barriers to greater participation of women as workers in the transport sector is gender stereotyping, i.e. a generalisation about what is considered typically male or female work, for instance truck driving. The transport sector is known for its overall low quality of work and contracts. Working patterns are often unsuited to women's needs as regards work-life balance and time flexibility. The sector is known for relatively low wages, poor career prospects, and limited training participation of women. Moreover, there is often a lack of appropriate workplace facilities in terms of safety and security, and of adequate tools and procedures to deal with sexual harassment. Women are under-represented in all parts of the transport sector (e.g. piloting, planning, designing, management, [research](#) and innovation). A 2021 [study](#) done for the European Parliament confirms that employment in the transport sector remains relatively unattractive for women, and recommends appropriate EU policy interventions, including funding, to tackle the problem. As the increasing labour shortages in the EU transport sector have been exacerbated by the pandemic, they call for particular attention. For instance, 2021 data from the International Road Transport Union ([IRU](#)) suggest that global driver shortages reached 17% for bus and coach drivers and 10% for truck drivers. Another 2021 [research](#) paper affirms that the EU lacks 400 000 truck drivers and is now reaching a critical point, whereby this could have an effect on the evolution of transport prices.

Figure 1 shows the differences in women's employment in the land, water and air sectors of EU transport. While most of the women, in absolute terms, work in land transport (over 770 000), they only account for a 14.6% share of the entire [workforce](#) in that subsector. In comparison, the share of female employment is much higher in air transport, where women represent 42.5% of the workforce. In water transport, 20% of workers are women, mainly on ferries and in cruises. In some of these sectors, changes in women's employment are under way, and one can detect a small increase in the 2020 figures, compared with 2016. Nevertheless, further attention is needed, in particular in land and water transport.

Figure 1: Number and share of women employed in transport out of total employment, by transport modality, in the EU-27



Data source: [Eurostat](#); graphic by Lucille Killmayer, EPRS.

### EU action

While policies in the area of employment are the [competence](#) of EU Member States, the European Commission can support and complement national action. One of the first initiatives the Commission launched to strengthen women's employment and equal opportunities in the transport sector was the 2017 'More women in transport – EU [platform](#) for change'. The platform serves as a forum to discuss and

exchange relevant measures and best practice, and promotes women in transport professions by raising awareness on equality issues. In parallel, the Commission proposed new rules on work-life balance and flexible working arrangements to encourage a better division of caring responsibilities between women and men; now adopted, [Directive 2019/1158/EU](#) will apply from August 2022 to all workers who are parents or carers. In its 2020 [gender equality strategy](#), the Commission affirmed that a gender equality perspective would have to be integrated into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes. Its [sustainable and smart mobility strategy](#) outlined the new opportunities linked to the transport sector's digital transformation, including an improved working environment and better-quality jobs that could become more attractive for women. The Commission also promised to issue recommendations for the transition to automation and digitalisation, to mitigate their impact on the entire transport workforce, apply equality mainstreaming to its future transport-related policy initiatives, and continue to support stakeholder cooperation and exchange of good practice. Reacting to repeated calls from the European Parliament and the Council, in March 2021 the Commission proposed a [directive](#) on equal pay for equal work and on pay transparency (building on [Directive 2006/54/EC](#)), still to be [negotiated](#) by Parliament and Council.

### European Parliament position

In a 2015 [resolution](#), the Parliament called on the Commission to revise the recast Directive 2006/54/EC in line with its recommendations on equal pay and representation of female workers. This was followed in subsequent years by frequent parliamentary questions from various political groups. In its 2019 [resolution](#) on women's rights and gender equality in the EU, the Parliament called inter alia for 'real action' to close the gender pay gap, and for targeted initiatives to address gender segregation and women's access to labour markets. In another 2019 [resolution](#), on the proposed directive on work-life balance for parents and carers, the Parliament insisted on requirements for equal treatment of men and women at work, which ensures guaranteed income and flexible working arrangements, and addressed the issue of stereotyping. More specific to the transport sector, during the negotiations leading up to the 2020 regulation on [driving and resting](#) periods, the Parliament [insisted](#) on the importance of having gender-friendly accommodation and better sanitary facilities at resting places. In 2020 and 2021, the Parliament also held the European Gender Equality [Week](#), which contributed to the goal of women's empowerment and gender equality. This has led to more visibility to and recognition of gender mainstreaming in *all* policy areas, including transport. Earlier in 2022, the Parliament's Committees on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and on Transport and Tourism (TRAN) held a joint [hearing](#) on 'Ensuring that European transportation works for women', debating the outcomes of the study on women and transport mentioned above. Labour market participation of women is among the topics explored by the study, which points to the current lack of gender-disaggregated data within Member States. It recommends improving the share of women working in the transport sector by promoting higher social standards at EU level and measures targeting a better work-life balance, as well as dedicated education and training. Furthermore, it suggests that EU funding be regularly monitored for gender achievements – something that is already done, for instance in connection with the European Social Fund ([ESF+](#)). A further Parliament-requested [study](#) from 2021, on relaunching transport and tourism after the pandemic, mentions, specifically in relation to transport workers, the possibility to attract more female truck drivers by promoting higher social standards, safe and secure truck parking places, better resting places, and improved work-life balance measures.

### Looking ahead

In recent years, there has been growing attention within the EU to the issue of gender equality, including as regards women in the transport sector. This trend has been reflected in EU strategies both of a sectoral and horizontal nature, and increasingly also in EU legislation. For its part, the European Parliament has contributed to keeping this topic high up on the EU political agenda.

The increased focus on gender issues in employment is starting to have an impact on the transport sector, which faces growing labour shortages and seeks ways to attract more younger workers as well as women to the workforce. Streamlining gender issues systematically – both in further EU action and funding – is expected to attract more women to work in this important economic sector.

