

buses and coaches in today's transport system



Factsheet

Buses and coaches are the backbone of a safe, environmentally-friendly, affordable, user-friendly and efficient public transport system. As such, they constitute an optimal response to current and future mobility and travel challenges. Placing buses and coaches at the centre of the political debate and facilitating their use is the smartest way to achieve sustainable mobility for all.

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New mobility patterns, combined with increasing environmental concerns at global level, have significantly raised political and public awareness about the urgent need to rethink our transport systems and change people's travel behaviour.

Tomorrow's transport policy will have to focus on efficient public transport systems that encourage a greater use of safe, green, energy-efficient, flexible yet affordable transport modes, to guarantee the sustainable mobility of everyone, everywhere in the world.

Buses and coaches encompass all these qualities and are amongst the best travel solutions, on short and long distances alike. This reality is well known among industry professionals: buses and coaches are identified as one of the most safe, environmentally-friendly, efficient, user-friendly, affordable and inclusive means of transport.

Used effectively, buses and coaches are an optimal response to a range of current and future mobility related challenges, such as CO₂ emissions, congestion, road safety, connectivity with other transport modes and social inclusion.

Regrettably, policy-makers, mass media and citizens are often unaware of this reality. On the contrary, buses and coaches are often wrongly associated with problems, such as pollution and congestion.

This misperception has led to a situation where buses and coaches are not only underperforming in terms of use and contribution to society, but also suffer from political negligence and often ill-informed, improper and even restrictive legislation, which prevents them from realising their full potential in the delivery of high-quality, flexible, efficient, green and safe transport services.

Examples of misguided legislation or policies hindering the optimal operation of buses and coaches and/or deterring people from using them include:

- Discriminatory entry taxes for touring coaches in many European tourist cities, that considerably increase car traffic and subsequent road congestion, pollution and accidents;
- Chaotic introduction of various environmental zones and restrictions in cities, which further segment the market and services offered to the public;
- Lack of public involvement in the establishment of bus/coach terminals and stations that would promote buses and coaches as genuine mobility interfaces with other transport modes;
- Increasingly intensive security-related controls of passengers' identity within the Schengen area. They are becoming frequent on regular bus and coach services, thus negating the principle of free movement of persons and entailing direct and indirect delays and losses for passengers and operators alike;
- Several EU Regulations and Directives that are too often based on rationales and impact assessments suitable for the road transport of goods (and not passenger). This "one-size fits all" approach can be extremely detrimental to entire segments of the passenger transport market, as was the case, for example, of the deletion of the 12-day Derogation rule;
- Fiscal discrimination between modes of passenger transport regarding VAT and excise duties (i.e. some modes enjoying a zero VAT rate or no excise duties on their fuel).