

Greening Travel by Doubling the Use of Buses and Coaches

European transport and travel political and business leaders discuss best policies and operational practices to further green the travel and tourism chain, highlighting that buses and coaches offer the best transport solution for ensuring the sustainable mobility of European citizens.



The 7th European Bus and Coach Forum, jointly organised by the International Road Transport Union (IRU), the Belgian Federation of Bus and Coach operators (FBAA), the European Travel Agents' and tour operators' Associations (ECTAA) and the European Tour Operators' Association (ETOA), took place on Oct 20 in Busworld Kortrijk, bringing together some 200 travel business leaders and EU officials.

The Forum focused on how policies can help achieve a legal and administrative framework that promotes and rewards tourists' and travelers' green mobility choices, as well as the travel industry's contribution and best practices.

Isabelle Durant, Vice President of the European Parliament, insisted on the very positive contributions made by the bus and coach industry towards greener and more fuel-efficient travel, but also towards job creation in this and other sectors as well as towards affordable travel:

“The Union as well as Member States could and should do more to put an end to the discriminatory fiscal practices that unfairly disadvantage buses and coaches against other, more polluting, transport modes on the travel market. This is obviously not a time for lower fuel levies, as this would send out the wrong signal to transporters and travelers alike, at a time when finite oil resources should be used more sparsely than ever, but it is time to recognize that the preferential tax regimes granted to competing transport modes hurt this vital industry and should be gradually phased out.”



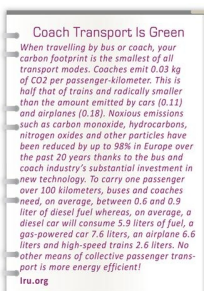
“Besides economic incentives, more should be done to promote and support the advantages and merits of bus and coach travel over private cars and airplanes in terms of sustainable mobility and this kind of Forum is certainly a good place to start,” she added.

Forum participants concluded that government action should follow, or in many cases precede, the necessary change in the mindset and perception of buses and coaches in society. This includes rules and regulations such as sector-specific driving and rest time rules, fair VAT regime, appropriate weights and dimensions of vehicles, industry-friendly low-emission zones, incentives and sufficient public funding for collective passenger transport services by bus and coach, to name but a few.



Graham Smith, Vice President of the IRU, concluded, “Since 90% of all European citizens’ mobility and travel needs are realized below a 100 km distance, the most credible policy and customer transport solution is undoubtedly the bus and the coach. Only by placing buses and coaches at the heart of policy making and by setting a clear political strategy and business target to double their use can policy-makers at EU, national, regional and local level create a legislative, market and operational environment conducive to produce a shift in the behavior of customers and tourists. In short, only bus and coach transport offers the possibility to achieve inclusive, efficient, affordable and sustainable mobility for European citizens and visitors, at the lowest cost to society.”

Forum participants also enjoyed a guided “green tour” of Busworld exhibitors, as a special green path in the exhibition halls guides visitors to products and concepts with special relevance to sustainability, reductions in emissions and noise, fuel economy, recyclability, weight reduction, thus showcasing the latest technologies developed by vehicle manufacturers and suppliers to further green mobility, travel and tourism.



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