



EUROPEAN
TRANSPORT
WORKERS'
FEDERATION

Protecting Drivers: ETF Manifesto for safer buses



A NEW DEAL FOR SAFE BUSES



Every bus driver deserves the right to a safe working environment - including protection from fatal or serious injury in preventable road collisions. Yet, evidence shows that current bus designs across Europe fail to meet even basic safety standards expected in other road vehicles. We demand an end to this double standard.

The Problem

- No mandatory crashworthiness standard exists specifically for buses.
- The United Nations (UN) R29.03 standard is designed for trucks and fails to reflect the unique geometry and operational use of buses.
- There were approximately 950 known cases across Europe in the past decade, bus drivers were killed or seriously injured in frontal collisions.
- Collisions even at low speeds (~30 km/h) have proven fatal for drivers due to inadequate structural protection.
- Front-end design flaws (e.g. low driver seat position, no crumple zones, lack of protective features like airbags or collapsible columns) place drivers in a position of extreme risk.

In the last ten years, 1459 bus drivers in Europe have been killed or severely injured in accidents. Around 2/3 of the bus accidents in Europe have been with frontal impact. Approximately 963 bus drivers have been killed or severely injured in accidents where improved collision protection systems might have significantly reduced the severity of the outcomes (TOI report, 2025).

The report "Crashworthiness of buses - Analysis of European data and suggestions for improvements" (2025) has presented a study showing that current structural designs of bus fronts provide inadequate collision protection for drivers, that the crashworthiness requirements in UN Regulation R29.03 are insufficient, and that there is a need for improved front-end design in buses.

Our Demands

1. Improve UN Mandatory Bus Crashworthiness Standards

Develop and enforce UN regulations for bus driver frontal impact protection.

Build upon and expand UN R29.03 with bus-specific adaptations that reflect the realities of bus operations, including small-overlap crash scenarios and low-speed, high-impact design tests.

2. Ensure Equal Safety Across Sectors

Bus drivers must be afforded the same level of structural and passive safety as car and truck drivers — no exceptions.

All new buses should include airbag-seatbelt integration, collapsible steering columns, and safety seat design as standard.

3. Adopt the Vision Zero & Safe System Principles in the Transport sector

Transport safety policies must prioritize injury elimination over cost-efficiency.

Mandate designs that absorb kinetic energy and protect all users, including drivers, passengers, and vulnerable road users.



There is no mandatory EU crashworthiness standard focusing on bus drivers. However, Norway has successfully implemented the R29.03 frontal crash test standard for buses as of 1 October 2023 (originally designed for trucks).

Call to Action

We, the undersigned trade unions and worker representatives, demand that:

- National governments support Norway at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to put this issue formally on the agenda and begin the process to improve driver frontal protection.
- Propose new or revised UNECE regulations on bus crash safety by the end of 2026.
- Manufacturers work with trade unions, social partners and regulators to urgently look at appropriate safety models to improve collision protection across all new buses.



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