Brussels, 18 November 2025

Note for the attention of Ms Blanchet, Secretary-General

Subject: Public transport expenses

Dear Ms Blanchet,

We wish to bring to your attention the need to amend the current system for reimbursing public transport costs.

In January 2022, after the negotiations on a reform of the system[1] ended in disagreement, the Administration imposed a new system that entailed a flat-rate contribution of EUR 350 (payable in 2 instalments per 6-month period) to colleagues who gave up the right to use the GSC car parks. For GFI contract staff, this contribution was increased to EUR 700 in 2022 and EUR 800 in 2023.

From the outset, the new system automatically penalised those on the lowest salaries (i.e. the lower AST and AST/SC grades, GFII contract agents and a number of colleagues on short-term contracts). The discrimination has become more acute as the contribution has not been adjusted to take into account the sharp increases in STIB[2] and SNCB[3] fares / seasons tickets since 2022. Many of those colleagues cannot afford to live in Brussels, have to commute from afar and face increasing financial strain with some having to pay for annual passes costing up to EUR 2,500.

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[1] Previously the GSC's financial contribution to the cost of annual public transport passes amounted, per calendar year, to 70% of the actual cost of annual passes, and 100% of the actual cost of public bicycle passes, capped at €820.00 for staff.

[2] Since January 2022, the price of STIB standard annual and monthly passes has increased by between 10% to 11%, implemented in two stages in late 2024 and early 2025.

[3] SNCB ticket prices increased by an average of 8.73% in February 2023 and 2.91% in February 2025. Commuter passes saw a larger increase of up to 9.73% in 2023. A standard second-class ticket on an SNCB train cost nearly 3% more from 1 February 2025. Other types of tickets were also affected.

The incentive to use public transport decreases on average, by 35 % (in extreme cases by 60 %) for colleagues living in Flanders or Wallonia. Many of these colleagues need to work on-site 5 days a week and are now more likely to switch to using a car as the current, frozen and flat-rate system gives them little incentive to use public transport.

Union Syndicale recognises the new system has led to a welcome simplification in the reimbursement procedure. It also supports the Administration's policy of making a financial contribution to the travel costs of colleagues who come to work on foot or by bicycle. However, the current system is socially and environmentally damaging: the negative feedback on Domus and the feedback we receive from colleagues confirms this. It undermines the GSC's laudable objective of drastically cutting CO2 emissions (a 33% reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030). This results in increased road traffic, which in turn generates more air and noise pollution, greater congestion and increased danger on the roads.

An even more pressing concern for our union is the precarious situation faced by colleagues in lower grades. Many of them are in positions with very limited teleworking opportunities, requiring them to be on-site most days of the week. However, owing to the high cost of accommodation in Brussels, they cannot afford to live in the city itself. As a result, they are forced to live outside the capital, leading to longer and more expensive commutes. In Belgium, the employer's contribution to transport costs has risen to 71.8% of the cost of home-to-work annual public transport passes. Public sector employers often cover a higher percentage (88% or 100% for some entities). We therefore urge the Administration to:

- bring the flat-rate contribution into line with the increasing public transport prices and
- expand the eligibility for the maximum amount to include GF II, AST/SC grades 1 and 2, as well as AST 1.

Yours sincerely,

Bernd LOESCHER

Union Syndicale Council