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From: General Secretariat of the Council
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Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy
Council on 5 December 2024
Preventing and addressing transport poverty: the role of the Social Climate
Plans
– Information from the Commission

Regulation (EU) 2023/955¹ establishing a Social Climate Fund (SCF) defines transport poverty as “a household’s inability or difficulty to meet the costs of private or public transport, or their lack of or limited access to transport needed for their access to essential socioeconomic services and activities, taking into account the national and spatial context”. The Social Climate Fund (SCF) is established to provide EU Member States with dedicated funding to contribute to a socially fair transition towards climate neutrality by addressing the social impacts of the inclusion of greenhouse gas emissions from buildings and road transport within the scope of Directive 2003/87/EC (ETS2). The specific objective of the SCF is to support the most affected vulnerable groups, in particular households in energy poverty or households in transport poverty.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2023/955 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 establishing a Social Climate Fund and amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, OJ L 130, 16.5.2023

Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights establishes that everyone has the right to access essential services, including transport, and that support for access to such services should be available for those in need. Transport poverty can jeopardise access to employment, education and healthcare. In this context, transport poverty is increasingly a concern, in particular for vulnerable groups. According to the recent European Commission report on the access to essential services², 2.4% of all people in the EU, and 5.8% of those at risk of poverty, could not afford regular use of public transport in 2014 (the latest year for which this data is available). In addition to cost, access to transport depends on other factors, including the availability, quality and frequency of services, the state of the infrastructure and accessibility (both digital and physical). The territorial dimension also strongly affects the availability of transport. The Commission study indicates that transport unavailability is particularly high in rural areas.

To finance measures and investments in support of the most vulnerable groups, the SCF will pool revenues from the auctioning of allowances from the new emissions trading system named ETS2 for CO₂ emissions from fuel combustion in buildings, road transport and additional sectors, as well as 50 million allowances from the existing EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). Together with a mandatory 25% contribution of the Member States to their Social Climate Plans, the SCF should mobilise at least EUR 86.7 billion over the 2026-2032 period. The funding will be provided based on national Social Climate Plans prepared by Member States and to be submitted to the European Commission by the end of June 2025. The Commission will assess the plans and disburse payments to the Member States only if the milestones and targets set in the plans are achieved.

Member States may use the SCF to support structural measures and investments in energy efficiency and renovation of buildings, clean heating and cooling and integration of renewable energy, as well as in zero- and low-emission mobility solutions. Eligible measures and investments for transport include measures that incentivise the use of affordable and accessible public transport as well as access to zero- and low-emission vehicles and bicycles. Moreover, Member States will have the option of spending part of the resources on temporary direct income support under certain conditions.

² European Commission, Report on access to essential services in the EU, Commission staff working document, 2023. [Access to essential services: key challenges for the most vulnerable – report - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission](#)

The Commission facilitated the exchange of good practices among Member States, *inter alia* through the publication of a note on good practices³ and a recently published study on “Transport poverty: definitions, indicators, determinants, and mitigation strategies”⁴. The Commission is also preparing two guidance related to the implementation of the SCF (on ‘Do No Significant Harm’ principle and on drafting the Social Climate Plans). Ten Member States (Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Finland, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia) are receiving support in drawing up their Plans through the Technical Support Instrument over the 2024-2025 period. The Commission stands ready to assist any other interested Member State.

In addition, the Commission is working on a Recommendation on transport poverty to highlight the importance of this topic for the transport sector, especially in the context of the preparation of the Social Climate Plans. In her political guidelines, President von der Leyen committed to putting forward “a first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy”. It will be aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty, as well as helping people to access the essential protections and services they need.

³ https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/social-climate-fund/good-practices-social-climate-plans_en

⁴ European Commission, [Transport poverty: definitions, indicators, determinants, and mitigation strategies](#), Final Report, October 2024