

# First European Conference of Taxi Associations

Cultural Center of the Municipality of Athens - December 2nd, 2022.

## **The necessity of the European Taxi Council. The role and purpose of a Taxi Association in Europe**

Dear friends,

first of all my sincere congratulations to the Greek colleagues and their associations for having organized this very important event.

In recent years, many of us have had meetings with the European institutions to make them understand the characteristics of the taxi service, in particular by comparing it with the offer of multinational platforms. I'll get straight to the point: the most profound injustice that current society is allowing is that the basic principle of the "same rules in the same market" is violated by the arrival of multinational companies in the passenger transport industry! The injustice is all the more gross if we consider that the small ones, i.e. the taxi drivers, are forced to comply with public service obligations for the right protection of the consumer, while the big ones, i.e. the multinational companies, are free from these obligations. "We're just fucking illegal!" the platform called itself in the "Uber files" scandal.

When I met with DGMove in 2017, I immediately recognized that there was no will to regulate platforms in Europe. This worried me a lot, because this would have meant letting the multinational companies free to be "fucking illegal"! Last May I met again with DGMove, to discuss with it the Communication of the European Commission of 2 February last. As I was able to tell the Director of DGMove Mr Kristian Schmidt, that communication, although not legally binding, expresses an address that fully incorporates the wishes of Move EU, the association between Uber, Freenow and Bolt.

So what did the multinational companies do? They have come together to make their lobbying capacity stronger. And if they did it, how can we think we shouldn't do it?

In fact, I believe that there may be many requests in common between all the representative associations of the taxi sector in Europe. I mention only those that I consider the main ones, through a framework regulatory intervention:

1. a regulation of the platforms which forbids increasing the administered rate of the taximeter to the detriment of customers, and take advantage of the PHV sector as if they were taxis: therefore the PHVs must have the obligation to park in the garage, because otherwise it will be very easy for them to be a second taxi fleet with rules in favor of them and the multinational companies, but against the taxi sector with administered fares to protect customers.
2. It is also necessary for the EU to oblige the Member States to respect the non-competition clauses established by economic organizations (cooperatives, consortia, taxi driver companies) in order to guarantee the survival of these, and therefore the existence of a plurality of subjects. Indeed, without the existence of this clause, these realities will be progressively "eaten" by multinational companies thanks to their financial strength which allows them to practice dumping.
3. Electronic payments must be commission-free for taxis (as is the case for gas stations in Italy) because, having an administered rate, taxis do not have the possibility of passing on the commission costs to the customer, as free-price activities do.
4. Finally, given the need for the Green New Deal, individual states must present important incentives both in terms of contributions and infrastructure, for the conversion of the car fleet from combustion cars to electric cars.

Without claiming to have been completely exhaustive, but indeed certain that there are other things to add, I want to conclude by leaving you with what for me has been a lesson, which in

Italy we have learned in many years of struggle: only through the unity of workers, organized through trade unions and representative associations, we will be able to defend the taxi sector, the concept of public service, work, and continue to ensure that European taxis are an efficient service with over 80% approval, and operators in the sector have decent and free working and economic conditions.

*Claudio Giudici*

*Uritaxi national chairman*