

JUDĖJIMAS

„UŽ TROLEIBUSUS VILNIUJE“



MOVEMENT

“TROLLEYBUSES IN VILNIUS”

<http://www.troleibusas.lt>

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Mr. Matthias Ruete
Director-General for Mobility and Transport
European Commission
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Dear Mr. Matthias Ruete,

I am addressing you in order to find out the official position of the European Commission regarding to the policy on urban public transport – specifically trolleybuses. Is it really truth that an official position of European Commission is focused only on electric buses, also with recommending to completely abandon other types of completely electric public transport (which is not using internal combustion engines), such as a trolleybus?

Vilnius currently has a population of more than 0.5 million people. Few years ago it had one of the largest and most active trolleybus systems in Europe. There were 22 routes (with the total length of about 500 km), more than 300 trolleybuses – and a daily traffic volume of more than 300 thousand passengers. Unfortunately, the number of trolleybuses is being decreased in recent years (new vehicles are not being bought, and old vehicles are poorly maintained). In year 2013, four trolleybus routes were eliminated, frequency of trolleybuses in remaining routes was reduced, and decreasing number of trolleybuses is being compensated with increasing number of diesel or CNG powered buses. The current Vilnius city municipality makes their best efforts to destroy the whole trolleybus system in a few years completely and to replace it with buses. City municipality is also planning to build new high-cost tram system with just one or two routes instead of this big trolleybus system we currently have.

I would like to figure out the position of the European Commission: is it officially supporting buying of new trolleybuses as a green urban public transport mean, or maybe it is supporting only renewal of public transportation with purchase of CNG buses (instead of the trolleybuses)?

Only buses are being purchased in Vilnius in recent couple of years with the help of European funds. One public tender to buy new trolleybuses was cancelled and CNG powered buses were bought instead. Some people are trying to create an image that buses, which have internal combustion engines, are the same (or

maybe even more) “clean” as trolleybuses. There are no discussions about used batteries' disposal of such buses, about the pollution with various harmful particles and grease. In addition, they are claiming that financial support from EU structural funds is possible only for buying new buses. However, such claims sound doubtful as there are examples from other cities, where the fleet of trolleybuses is being renewed with the support of EU funds: for example, capital of Slovakia, Bratislava, has ordered 80 pcs. of new trolleybuses in various modifications, and the largest share of their price will be covered with the help of EU funds.

Does the Commission think it is reasonable and rational when a city is destroying an existing infrastructure of electric vehicles (trolleybuses in this case) and instead of this it is expanding transportation of passengers with diesel and CNG buses, motivating with the assumption that electric buses reliable enough will be invented in the future and by that time they will replace these buses? Vilnius as well as some other cities had performed tests of electric buses which have showed that this technology is still far from reliable, it is not competitive in operational costs (mainly due to the frequent need to buy new expensive batteries) and efficiency (trolleybus engine efficiency ratio is about 88%, electric bus – up to 58%). See WHITE PAPER “Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system”¹ where paragraph 19 says: “Future development must rely on a number of strands: Improving the energy efficiency performance of vehicles across all modes”. So advantage of trolleybus energy efficiency over other modes of transportation is obvious – but why then destruction of trolleybus system is tolerated?

Vilnius city municipality in one of the letters on the destruction of trolleybus system wrote: “The European Commission's White Paper estimated that by 2030, the local regular passenger transport services will have to be provided by electric buses, thus eliminating the cumbersome and costly overhead network of trolleybuses”.

Meanwhile the same WHITE PAPER section “Developing and deploying new and sustainable fuels and propulsion systems” says: “Halve the use of ‘conventionally-fuelled’ cars in urban transport by 2030; phase them out in cities by 2050; achieve essentially CO₂-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030”.

Don't you see any distortion of facts and false interpretation in such a response? Is it true according to White Paper and policy of EU that cities will have to use electric buses as the only possible electric transportation system, meaning the trolleybuses will no longer be allowed?

I am asking for your help in finding out the real position of European Commission and associated bodies on issues described above in this letter.

Sincerely yours,

Marius Markevicius

Coordinator of movement “Trolleybuses in Vilnius”

1 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0144:FIN:EN:PDF>