EUROPEAN ETHICAL TRANSPORT CHARTER

Founding Charter v1.1

A constitutional framework for fair, ethical and sustainable transport and logistics.

Fairness follows control, prevention and mitigation capacity.
Protection follows exposure and the capacity to absorb consequences.

THE MOVETHICS ARCHITECTURE

CHARTER	MAT	SAFEGUARDS	STANDARD	FTT	IMPROVEMENT
Principles	Asymmetry	Protection	Practice	Assessment	Progress

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About this Charter

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Important status notice

The Charter states constitutional principles. It is voluntary and complementary to applicable law. It does not itself constitute certification, replace legislation, determine legal liability, or establish that a participant is ethical or unethical. Adherence to the Charter does not equal verification.

Purpose

The European Ethical Transport Charter (EETC) provides a common constitutional framework for fair and responsible commercial and operational relationships across transport and logistics. It is intended to help participants identify where control, exposure, dependency and the ability to absorb consequences are unevenly distributed, and to encourage proportionate safeguards before those differences become harmful.

Who it is for

The Charter is designed for cargo owners and shippers, carriers and transport operators, freight forwarders, 3PL and logistics providers, platforms, subcontractors, drivers and workers, associations, public bodies, researchers, legal and compliance professionals, and other actors whose decisions shape transport relationships.

Foundational propositions

Foundational proposition

Fairness follows control, prevention and mitigation capacity. Protection follows exposure and the capacity to absorb consequences.

Economic proposition

Efficiency obtained by transferring unpaid costs, risks, uncertainty or burdens to another participant is not true efficiency.

15 principles for fair transport relationships

1

Legality, dignity and fundamental rights

Transport relationships should respect applicable law, human dignity and fundamental rights. Commercial objectives do not justify practices that undermine safety, lawful work, rest, freedom from coercion or access to effective remedy.

2

Responsibility follows control, prevention and mitigation

Responsibility should be aligned with the party best able to control a cause, prevent a harm or mitigate its consequences. Risk should not be shifted merely because another participant has less negotiating power.

3

Protection against material asymmetry

Differences in size or bargaining power are not misconduct. Where a relevant power differential combines with exposure and limited realistic alternatives, safeguards should be proportionate to the consequences that the weaker party may be unable to absorb.

4

No abusive externalisation of cost, risk or work

No participant should systematically obtain efficiency by transferring avoidable costs, unpaid work, operational uncertainty, preventable waiting, exceptional operating costs, compliance burdens or disproportionate risk to another participant without fair allocation or protection. Waiting, cancellations and exceptional costs should be allocated with regard to causality, control, prevention and mitigation capacity.

5

Legitimate and non-discriminatory competition

MOVETHICS supports open and legitimate competition. Fairness must not be used to coordinate prices, exclude competitors, protect inefficient structures or discriminate on the basis of nationality, origin, business model or lawful market position.

6

Safety and real rest before commercial performance

Safety, legal driving and rest requirements, and real opportunities for recovery take precedence over delivery pressure, productivity targets, service-level metrics or commercial urgency.

7 Clear, proportionate and predictable contracting

Material obligations, allocation of risk, claims, penalties, deductions, cancellation rules, operational requirements and change mechanisms should be understandable, proportionate and reasonably foreseeable before commitment. Penalties and pass-through claims should consider causality, actual control, preventability and a genuine right of contradiction; they should not be automatically transferred down the chain merely because a smaller participant has less bargaining power.

8 Recognition of resources actually required

Where a service requires dedicated capacity, equipment, labour, availability, data, additional tasks or material operational commitments, those requirements should be transparent and treated as real resources rather than invisible assumptions.

9 Responsible payment and balanced financing

Payment practices should be lawful, transparent and reasonably predictable in real execution, not only on paper. Applicable legal and contractual deadlines should be monitored against actual payment. Documentary procedures, requests for originals, internal validation steps or minor administrative discrepancies should not be used as avoidable mechanisms to extend payment. Undisputed amounts should not be unnecessarily blocked by unrelated disputes or deductions.

10 Responsible planning and flexibility

Flexibility is part of transport, but recurring uncertainty should be managed by the party best placed to anticipate or mitigate it. Forecasting errors, urgent changes and volatility should not automatically become uncompensated exposure for another participant.

11 Traceable and responsible subcontracting

Subcontracting is legitimate, including through small carriers, owner-drivers and cooperatives. Where cascading subcontracting is permitted, the chain should remain sufficiently transparent to identify relevant intermediaries and the undertaking physically performing the transport. Responsibilities, payment practices, operational instructions, applicable labour and social requirements, safety expectations and material risks should remain traceable through the chain. Commercial intermediation should not make lawful and safe execution structurally unrealistic for the final executing undertaking.

12 Voice, representation and freedom from retaliation

Participants should be able to raise legitimate safety, contractual, operational or ethical concerns without disproportionate retaliation. Complaint and contradiction mechanisms should be accessible and procedurally fair.

13

Responsible use of data, platforms, algorithms and AI

Data collection, scoring, telematics, platforms and automated decisions should be proportionate, transparent where materially relevant, subject to appropriate human oversight, and not used to create unchallengeable or discriminatory commercial power.

14

Due diligence, remedy and just transition

Organisations should identify and mitigate material adverse impacts within their sphere of control and influence, provide proportionate remedy where appropriate, and manage technological, environmental and organisational transitions without simply exporting their costs to more exposed participants.

15

Evidence, proportionality and continuous improvement

Assessments and allegations should be evidence-based, proportionate and open to contradiction. The aim of the Charter is not moral labelling but better systems, better safeguards and measurable improvement over time.

INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION

How the Charter should be used

1. Voluntary and complementary nature

The Charter is a voluntary framework. It complements rather than replaces legislation, collective agreements, contractual rights, regulatory supervision, judicial remedies or sector-specific obligations.

2. Substance over form

Interpretation should focus on the real commercial and operational relationship, not only the wording of contracts or the formal legal status of the parties.

3. International application

The constitutional principles are intended to be internationally applicable. Regional, national and sectoral annexes may specify regulatory context without altering the constitutional core.

4. Proportionality and causality

Findings should distinguish correlation from causation and should consider the degree of control, foreseeability, exposure, mitigation and actual alternatives available to the parties.

5. Non-discrimination

The framework must not privilege or disadvantage participants because of nationality, fleet size, corporate form, lawful subcontracting model or other irrelevant characteristics.

6. Evidence and right of contradiction

Material assessments should rely on proportionate evidence and allow affected parties a meaningful opportunity to provide context, contradictory evidence or remediation.

7. No price-setting function

MOVETHICS does not set, recommend, coordinate or publish minimum transport prices, tariffs, margins or commercial rates. The Charter addresses fairness of relationships and allocation of obligations, not collective price formation.

8. Separation of functions

Membership, sponsorship, consultancy, standard-setting, assessment and verification should be appropriately separated so that financial participation does not purchase methodological influence or verification outcomes.

9. Adherence is not verification

A Charter Signatory publicly commits to the principles. This status does not mean the organisation has been audited, certified, assessed as compliant, or declared ethical.

10. Scope-specific verification

If a future MOVETHICS verification framework is launched, any verified claim should identify the exact legal entity, scope, methodology version, date and validity period. Verification should concern defined practices or systems, not a blanket claim that an entire organisation is ethical.

11. Payment, penalties and documentary barriers

Assessment of fair practice may consider real average payment time, compliance with applicable deadlines, documentary conditions that delay payment, treatment of undisputed amounts, penalties, deductions, pass-through claims and whether exceptional costs are allocated according to causality and control.

12. Economic sustainability without price-setting

MOVETHICS may examine whether the combined conditions of a relationship - including price, waiting, penalties, empty running, dedicated capacity, imposed tasks and legal compliance obligations - appear capable of lawful and safe execution. This does not authorise MOVETHICS to set, recommend or coordinate transport prices or margins.

13. Labour and subcontracting safeguards

Where relevant, participants should apply proportionate due diligence concerning legally applicable remuneration, working conditions, posting requirements, social obligations and safety through subcontracting chains. The Charter does not create a universal sector wage or require a particular commercial margin; it asks whether the conditions imposed are compatible with applicable law and responsible execution.

METHODOLOGICAL ARCHITECTURE

From principle to evidence

01	**EETC**	Constitutional principles
02	**MAT**	Relational asymmetry
03	**SMA**	Safeguard effectiveness
04	**Fair Transport Standard**	Assessable organisational practices
05	**FTT**	Operational assessment
06	**Verification**	Independent decision, if and when launched

MAT boundary

The Material Asymmetry Test identifies relational asymmetry. It does not determine misconduct, abuse, illegality, liability, certification or non-compliance.

ADHERENCE

Charter Signatories

Organisations may publicly adhere to the Charter by making a formal commitment to its principles and accepting the MOVETHICS rules governing use of the Signatory designation and logo. Subject to consent, MOVETHICS may publish the organisation's name, logo, country, stakeholder category and date of adherence in the public Signatory Directory.

Meaning of the Signatory mark

"EETC SIGNATORY" means that an organisation has formally adhered to the Charter. It is not a certification mark and must never be presented as proof of audit, compliance or verification.

Future verification mark

MOVETHICS may later establish a separate evidence-based verification system. Any "MOVETHICS VERIFIED" mark would be governed by independent rules, defined scope, validity period, public verification record and appropriate separation from membership and funding. No such mark should be issued before the methodology and governance are formally approved.

CLOSING PRINCIPLE

What the Charter ultimately protects

EETC does not seek to determine who must win a negotiation. It seeks to prevent any participant from winning solely because another participant lacks a realistic ability to say no.

MOVETHICS invites shippers, carriers, logistics providers, workers, associations, researchers and institutions to contribute evidence, test the framework and help build transport relationships in which efficiency, resilience and fairness reinforce rather than undermine one another.

VERSION HISTORY

Public document record

Version	Date	Status	Notes
v1.1	1 Sep 2026	Current founding Charter	Strengthened payment, documentary barriers, penalties, waiting, exceptional costs, subcontracting-chain traceability and labour safeguards.
v1.0	1 Sep 2026	Superseded founding edition	First public constitutional version published by MOVETHICS.

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