

EPF-Bulletin 6 – December 2009

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DEAR READER,

Bienvenue au sixième numéro de notre bulletin d'activités. En automne nous avons participé aux discussions du développement et de mise en œuvre des droits des passagers européens par train, avion, bateau, autobus et autocar.

Il s'agit non seulement de la création d'un terrain de jeux égal pour les moyens de transports publics, mais aussi d'un système qui est facile pour les clients qui veulent se plaindre d'un voyage qui est souvent multimodale.

Nous nous intéressons aussi à la promotion des transports urbains durables; aux trains et bus transfrontaliers; aux spécifications techniques des trains de voyageurs, et

toujours à l'amélioration des informations et de la billetterie pour les voyages internationaux en train.

Nous aimons toujours recevoir les réactions de nos lectrices et lecteurs sur les articles et sur les rapports présentés dans ce bulletin. Envoyez-les aux rédacteurs.

Visitez aussi notre site web, ou vous trouverez notre manifeste maintenant en 21 langues. Merci aux collègues qui ont fait les traductions supplémentaires.

Trevor Garrod
Président

Herzlich Willkommen zur sechsten Ausgabe unseres Bulletins. Während der Herbstmonaten haben wir an der Debatte über die Entwicklung und

Ausführung von europäischen Fahrgastrechten teilgenommen - ob mit der Bahn, mit dem Flugzeug, mit der Fähre oder mit dem Bus.

Es geht nicht nur um die Schaffung gleicher Regeln für alle Verkehrsmittel, sondern auch eines Systems, das leicht und nicht zu kompliziert ist, für die Kunden, die sich beschweren wollen und deren Reisen oft multimodal sind.

Wir interessieren uns auch für die Förderung des nachhaltigen Stadtverkehrs; grenzüberschreitende Züge und Busse; technische Spezifikationen für Personenzüge und auch immer für die Verbesserung der Auskünfte und

Fahrausweise für internationale Bahnreisen.

Wir erhalten gerne die Reaktionen unserer Leser und Leserinnen auf Artikel und Berichte in diesem Bulletin. Schicken Sie diese an die Redaktion.

Besuchen Sie unsere Webseite, wo Sie unsere Grundsatzklärung jetzt in 21 Sprachen finden werden. Wir bedanken uns bei allen Kollegen und Kolleginnen, die Übersetzungen gemacht haben.

Trevor Garrod
Vorsitzender

Welcome to the sixth issue of our bulletin. During the autumn we have participated in the discussions about development and implementation of rights for European rail, air, maritime, bus and coach passengers.

It is a matter of creating not just a level playing field for the different modes of transport, but also a system which is easy and not too complex for the customers who want to complain and whose journeys are often multi-modal.

We are also interested in the promotion of sustainable urban transport, cross-border

trains and buses, technical specifications for passenger trains and also still for improvement in information and ticketing for international train journeys.

We like to receive reactions of our readers to articles and reports in this bulletin. Please send these to the editors.

Visit our website where you will find our manifesto now in 21 languages. We thank those colleagues who have done the translations.

Trevor Garrod
Chairman

FUTURE EUROPEAN TRANSPORT POLICY

In September the European Passengers' Federation responded to a consultation paper by EC Transport Commissioner Antonio Tajani entitled "A Sustainable Future for Transport: Towards an Integrated, Technology-led and User-Friendly System."

We called in our 8-page response for "greater emphasis on the potential role of public transport in assisting sustainable economic growth and mitigating the effect of transport on the environment and in promoting social cohesion."

If a step-change in the quality of public transport is to be delivered, then public intervention is needed. It is not enough just to open up the market and hope that services will then improve.

The European Commission has produced research which indicates that there is a lot of dissatisfaction among rail and bus/coach passengers in many European

states. Yet there are also many examples of good services. EPF urges the Commission to promote best practice by collecting and publishing comparative user satisfaction data.

Such a process already happens in Great Britain through the twice-yearly National Passenger Survey, which interviews more than 50,000 rail passengers every year. This exercise could be broadened to cover all modes and all countries.

The EPF submission also points out the amount of research and development investment being undertaken in the automotive and aeronautical industries. We urge encouragement of similar research and development in public transport, which would also stimulate European knowledge-based industries.

Examples would be work towards a universal smartcard for public transport and an easily accessible and affordable GPS-based public transport information source, so that individuals can find out about, plan and cost their journeys. Most

international journeys in the EU are multi-modal - few people live at airports, harbours or railway stations - and information technology must be developed to make these multi-modal journeys as seamless as possible.

The European Commission has initiated a study about the possibilities to introduce a compatible card valid in several cities and countries.

The full EPF submission is on the website www.epf.eu.

PASSENGER TRAIN CONSULTATION

During the summer, EPF was invited to comment on a consultation document on locomotives & passenger rolling stock TSI issued by the European Railway Agency. It concerned proposed technical specifications for passenger trains and we commented on several aspects.

A helpful reply was received on September 10th from M. Jean-Charles Pichant, Head of the Interoperability Unit. He made the following key points:

1. Passenger alarm - although there is an emergency brake for passengers, they would not be able to operate it in a long tunnel as the driver would retain control in such circumstances.

2. We argued that braking should be as gradual as possible, not with a jolt. M. Pichant replied that this particular specification does not cover how sharply the brake can be applied. This is "heavily dependent on the way the driver operates the train."

3. We raised the problem of heat in an air-conditioned train when it is stranded without power for a considerable period. M. Pichant advises that "all trains shall be capable of maintaining an acceptable level of air quality during at least 30 minutes after the power failure. This may be obtained through emergency

ventilation (on batteries) or by openable windows."

4. Train headlights will be provided with a "dimmed" intensity level, so that the driver coming in the opposite direction, or passengers on a platform, are not dazzled.

5. An obstacle deflector (or "cow catcher") is included in the specification, as a simple safeguard against derailling.

6. EPF made some recommendations about seat design but we have been advised that passenger comfort is beyond the scope of this particular TSI.

7. Some harmonisation of pictograms has taken place following a TSI for persons of reduced mobility and a TSI for infrastructure is now being developed.

We look forward to further European Railway Agency consultations on other issues of concern to passengers.

CIAO, CISALPINO

On December 13th, the international train service Cisalpino between Switzerland and Italy came to an end.



Cisalpino high speed train

The company, jointed owned by SBB and Trenitalia, has had a history of problems in recent years, with trains breaking down or delayed. The Swiss have criticised Italian maintenance while the

Italians have described Swiss timetabling as unrealistic. Earlier this year, the Swiss Federal Transport Office threatened the company with withdrawal of its concession.

The Neue Zürcher Zeitung has described the ending of Cisalpino as "Rückkehr zur Bahn des 20. Jahrhunderts" (a return to the railway of the 20th century), and this is indeed what happened in mid December. Since that date, SBB and Trenitalia each operate the trains on the north south routes between Zürich and Milano under their own licence, instead of via a joint operator.

Ironically, the new ETR610 trains ordered by Cisalpino will be ready for use in December. The existing ETR470 trains will be divided between the two national parent companies. Some commentators have also suggested that each company could operate on to the other's national network, and open access in 2010 could in any case open up new possibilities.

Meanwhile, international companies such as Thalys, Eurostar and Lyria continue to operate successfully across borders elsewhere, and so the concept of Cisalpino is hardly wrong in principle. It has been suggested that the company should have had its own dedicated operating and maintenance staff.

In two years time, things could well be different again. In the meantime, we shall be pleased to hear the experiences of members travelling on the north-south routes between Zürich and Milano.

EXCLUSION OF FOOT PASSENGERS AND CYCLISTS FROM SOME FERRIES – WHAT NEXT?

Several EPF members have expressed concern recently about the actions of certain ferry companies in excluding foot passengers and cyclists. Certain ferries

now only accept motor vehicles on some crossings.

This may be more profitable for them - but it is less inclusive and arguably discriminates against some European citizens. It also discourages use of environmentally friendly public transport to and from the ports.

Here are some examples reported to us:

1. P & O Irish Sea Ferry now only accept cars. Three other companies sailing across the Irish Sea - Stena, Irish Ferries and Brittany Ferries - continue to accept foot passengers.
2. The night ferry from Warnemünde to Trelleborg no longer accepts foot passengers or cyclists. In general, however, ferries between Nordic countries do welcome foot passengers.
3. Seafrance no longer accepts foot passengers. This is the former SNCF Ferry Company "Armement Naval" and it is operating on a "Union international des chemins de fer" route.
4. Norfolk Line has already banned foot passengers on its Dunkerque - Dover route, as has LD Lines (Dover - Boulogne) on its ferries "Norman Way" and "Côte d'Albatre".



P & O Ferry

5. P & O Ferries stopped taking foot passengers on its Calais - Dover crossings on October 1st, having

previously excluded them from night sailings.

We have raised our concerns with European Commission officials, who acknowledged the problem but said that this was not an area in which the Commission would be willing to legislate. However, if a ferry service received public service obligation payments, then it could be required to take non-motorised passengers.

Our member Verkehrsclub der Schweiz (VCS) would be willing to publish a list of ferries not accepting foot passengers and/or cyclists as a guide particularly to individuals planning to visit particular areas on holiday. If there are further examples that you can give, please send them to us for the next issue of this Bulletin; and also to Jürg Tschopp at VCS juerg.tschopp@verkehrsclub.ch.

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE AIR PASSENGERS' RIGHTS?

Airline journeys are not the primary concern of EPF - but many members of our affiliated associations also travel by air on occasion, as part of a multi-modal journey; and lessons can be learned from the EU airline passengers' rights regulation 261/2004.

EPF was recently approached by a firm of consultants researching the effectiveness or otherwise of Regulation 261/2004 and we sent them four pages of comments.

We pointed to the widespread perception, based on anecdotal evidence, that the provisions of 261/2004 are flouted by airlines in at least some member states.

However, there also appears to be growing consumer awareness of the existence of some sort of passenger rights protection and the effects of the European Court of Justice ruling in

Wallentin-Hermann vs Alitalia. By providing a very narrow definition of "extraordinary circumstances", this case reduced the scope of airlines to claim exemption from the obligation to pay compensation if a flight were cancelled.

We urge that National Enforcement Bodies are given sufficient powers to ensure compliance with the Regulation, to record all claims made by passengers and to produce public reports of these and the actions taken.

We also press, as we have done previously, for passenger rights legislation to be clear and consistent in all modes.

RAILFUTURE AIRPORT LINKS REPORT

For some journeys, the aeroplane is the most reasonable form of transport - in which case, it is important to provide good public transport links to the airport.

EPF Member organisation Railfuture has recently conducted a survey of 40 airports in Great Britain and Northern Ireland and classified them according to how easy it is to reach them by train or bus. We have also taken account of how well -or poorly- these links are advertised.

Comments from local members who have used these airports or know the area well have also influenced the report, which is available from Trevor Garrod: chairman@epf.eu.

Have associations in other countries done similar studies? If so, the editors would like to hear from them.

RAIL PASSENGERS' RIGHTS

On December 3rd, rights for European rail passengers are due to come into force. This will be a culmination of several years of consultation and debate, in which EPF has been closely involved.

We now hope to be involved in work to publicise these and other public transport users' rights during 2010.

Some European states have, however, indicated that they may seek exemptions from the European regulation for some or all of their train services - and they are allowed to do this.

During 2010 we shall therefore try to monitor the situation carefully, and shall be pleased to hear from colleagues in each country on how well - or how badly - the European rules are being applied.

BUS, COACH AND MARITIME PASSENGERS' RIGHTS

EPF's Chairman has written to the Members of the European Parliament who are rapporteurs in the discussions finalising these rights. We are pleased with the progress that has been made for ferry users, but still have concerns about the bus and coach industry's approach. We appreciate some of the problems, but urge that if necessary a solution is found whereby the rights are implemented in stages.

SIXTH EUROPEAN BUS AND COACH FORUM

Gavin Booth, Chairman of Bus Users UK, represented EPF at the Sixth European Bus and Coach Forum at Kortrijk on Friday 16 October. He spoke in an interactive panel session considering the EU rules on the rights of bus and coach passengers, broadly welcoming the EU proposal as it protected passengers on international coach services, but expressing concerns from a UK domestic point of view that were shared by other speakers.

In particular there are serious reservations about liability provisions, which would mean that buses and coaches would be out of step with other road vehicles, and there would be a

move away from the UK's well-established fault-based principles to determine liability for accidents. There would be an assumption that bus and coach operators are liable, and strict liability up to EUR 220.000 would increase insurance costs, which would be reflected in increased bus and coach fares, and could threaten the future of bus and coach routes and even operators.

It became clear that these concerns were recognised by Mr. Mattia Pellegrini, member of the cabinet of the Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Transport.



Green bus of Flemish operator De Lijn at Busworld (picture: Stefan Stynen)

Gavin Booth, summing up his presentation on the consumers' view of the EU rules on the rights of passengers, welcomed moves to harmonise legislation, but only where these provided a real benefit to the passenger and no threat to fares or to the future of bus and coach services in the UK.

JOURNEYS WITHOUT BORDERS – VOYAGES SANS FRONTIÈRES – REISEN OHNE GRENZEN – REIZEN ZONDER GRENZEN

The list and description of cross-border train services, and certain bus links, on our website is being updated. By the

time you receive this bulletin, it should be complete.

The EPF Council decided that the list should be supplemented by a short 8-page report which can be published during 2010.

For the report we are drawing on the work done earlier this year by the Flemish association TreinTramBus, which considers Belgian cross-border services and how these can be improved.

Their report has been translated into English by Kees Smilde with the title "Opportunities for Euregional Trains" and is available by email at chairman@epf.eu.



ICE in Paris East station

The Flemish report makes six key points of relevance to other European countries:

1. Cross-border services need not be as frequent as internal services, but they must still be frequent enough to offer a reasonable alternative to the private car.
2. If train services are subsidised, they must be subsidised at least to the border and ideally to the first station across the border.
3. Bilateral solutions should be considered for overlapping fares. Thus domestic fares on either side of the border could apply to the first major station or junction on the other side.

4. On electrified lines, differences in voltages are often said to pose a problem for cross-border working, but with modern electronics this problem can be solved.

5. Differences in safety systems can also be a problem. However, it is possible to obtain exemptions on certain stretches of line.

6. The homologation (or admission procedure) for foreign rolling stock is time-consuming, difficult and expensive. For short cross-border workings there should be a shorter and cheaper procedure.

The EPF report can also stress the role of regional authorities and show examples of where they co-operate together. In such cases, we can draw attention to the social and economic importance of cross-border traffic for work, study and leisure activity.

On longer-distance services we can refer to the success of international companies such as Eurostar and Thalys; effective co-operation between two state-owned railways ("Enterprise" trains between Dublin and Belfast) and instances where domestic high-speed trains cross borders (TGV Paris - Berne; ICE Frankfurt - Brussels; Railjet Vienna - Munich etc.), but also to new practices of DB and ÖBB of sometimes running coaches across borders instead of trains.

If you can help in any way with this important new EPF report, please contact Trevor Garrod (chairman@epf.eu) in the first instance.

TRAINS ACROSS BORDERS – WHAT CAN BE DONE

When we go to Continental Europe, we can drive (or cycle or even walk) across the borders of the vast majority of

countries with no difficulty, thanks to the Schengen Agreement.

By train, some borders are easier to cross than others. The European Passengers' Federation is working hard to spread good practice and point to possible solutions to problems.

Already on the EPF website (www.epf.eu) there is a list of rail (and some bus) cross-border services, published in October 2007 and now being updated.

After spending all day on Saturday October 17th ensconced in their business meeting in Berlin, several EPF colleagues, joined by members of one of our German sister organisations, used the Sunday to make a cross-border trip to Poland.

We left Berlin-Lichtenberg station (used by suburban, regional and a few long-distance trains, also with Underground and bus access) in a modern low-floor diesel multiple unit of the Niederbarnimer Eisenbahn - the company which, since December 2006, has had a franchise to operate the route.

The NEB Managing Director joined us for part of the journey and explained the process of obtaining permission for their trains to operate on Polish tracks, albeit currently only for the 1.5 km from the border to Kostrzyn station. This enabled a much better service to operate than previously. Although the border crossing had long been used by freight trains, passenger workings were not reintroduced till 1992.

We were then joined by Karl-Heinz Boßan, Chief Executive of the Interessengemeinschaft Ostbahn Berlin - Gorzów, which is comparable to our Community Rail Partnerships, bringing together public authorities, companies and individuals to promote the line (www.igob.eu).

The hourly train service (including Sundays) brings daily and weekly commuters into Berlin and also gives city dwellers and visitors the chance of attractive and interesting day trips into the Mark of Brandenburg and into Poland.

The trains terminate at Kostrzyn, on the Polish bank of the River Oder, from where there are onward (but less frequent) connections by modern DMU to the important town of Gorzow. The line continues to other important Polish cities, including Gdansk and on to Kaliningrad in Russia. There is potential for longer distance services.

At Kostrzyn station we were met by Mr Jakubowski of PKP (Polish State Railways), who explained the history of the 131-year-old two-level station; and then walked to the Town Hall to meet the Mayor (Dr Andrzej Kunt) in the beautiful wedding room.



Chairman Trevor Garrod in Jakubowski (picture: Krzysztof Korycki)

Kostrzyn has a population of some 18,000 and, with some financial help from the European Union, is promoting its potential as an attractive town in which to live and run a business as well as to visit as a tourist.

Dr Kunt explained that, while a bypass road was being built for heavy lorries,

the council also encouraged full use of the existing rail infrastructure.

We came away with a lasting impression of a town which has not always had a happy history but now sees itself as European and is looking to the future. Kostrzyn is exploiting its potential now that it is more accessible from western Europe with the railway having an important role to play in its development.

For more information, log on to www.tourist-info-kostrzyn.pl.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY: THE ACTION PLAN

Two years ago the European Passengers' Federation took part in the international consultation exercise about the European Commission's Green paper on Sustainable Urban Mobility.

At our London conference in March 2008, the then Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot also spoke about the issue.

We are pleased that the Commission then adopted its promised Action Plan at the end of September 2009.

Key points are:

- 2009: Encouraging Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans by providing guidance, promoting practice exchanges identifying benchmarks and potentially developing incentives for local authorities.
- Improving travel information, including the development of national and regional multi-modal journey planners and ultimately the provision of an internet public transport portal at EU level.

- Optimising existing EU funding sources to give priority to urban mobility.
- Setting up an urban mobility observatory to share data and best practice.
- Information exchange on urban pricing, information issues and ITS tools.
- 2010: Strengthening passenger rights through dialogue with stakeholders, including users, to identify best practice and conditions for strengthening passenger rights in urban transport. The aim is for a voluntary agreement that complements the Commission's regulatory approach, including quality indicators, commonly agreed complaints procedures and reporting mechanisms.
- 2011: Sustainable urban mobility and regional policy, increasing the awareness of funding sources (including EU funds) and the link between mobility and the Trans European transport Networks.
- Better accessibility for Persons of Reduced Mobility with particular emphasis on infrastructure improvements, such as accessible subways.
- Study on the urban aspects of internalisation of external costs.
- 2012: ITS for urban mobility, including electronic ticketing and payment, information, demand management, interoperability of payment systems across services and modes, including the use of interoperable cards with a focus on major European destinations such as airports and stations.

- We shall follow with interest the progress of the Action Plan, which includes many topics which EPF has said need to be tackled.

MEETING PEOPLE

Several EPF members have been participating in international meetings and conferences or will be doing so shortly.

On October 8th, Josef Schneider and Rian van der Borgt took part in the Community of European Railways meeting for customers in Brussels.

October 13th saw Christopher Irwin in Brussels to speak at a conference of the European Infrastructure Managers.

Gavin Booth was at Kortrijk, Belgium, on October 16th to take part in a conference and exhibition on buses organised by the International Road Transport Union.

On November 24th, EPF has been invited to take part in a seminar in Brussels, organised by Kent County Council. Willy Smeulders took part in the "high speed regions" seminar, looking at regions served by high speed trains in England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain. In France only two out of ten intermediate stations attract customers, because there is no infrastructure except a car parking. In Spain on the other hand these stations are very successful, because they have full intermodal infrastructure, including offices, shops and public transport to the nearby towns.

Kurt Hultgren participated in the LINK expert meeting in Bucharest 4-6 November and gave a presentation. LINK is the European Forum on Intermodal Passenger Travel.

Christopher Irwin spoke at the "First Annual Conference on European

Transport Law" organised by the Europäische Rechtsakademie (ERA) in Trier, November 30th and December 1st.

On the 2nd of December Willy Smeulders attended the meeting "Collective bus and coach transport in the EU in the next decade". The meeting was organised by IRU and EPTO and was followed in the evening by "Smart Move: European Inauguration" in the European Parliament.

The 7th of December, Willy Smeulders attended the "Move Together Day" in Brussels organised by the European Economic and Social Committee. Move Together is a movement towards a new culture for Urban Mobility in Cities with more than 10000 Citizens. It has members in 27 European countries and the project is funded under the EU 7th Framework Programme. The goal is to get more mobility freedom, better health, better environment, and one of the credos is "My car is no longer my freedom".

Trevor Garrod is due to lead a session on what customers expect at Eurorail 2010 in Berlin on February 22nd/24th.

SALZBURGER VERKEHRSTAGE 2010

On October 11th - 13th the Salzburger Verkehrstage will be organised again. The theme will be: over-winning borders – with rail and bus to the neighbouring country (Grenzen überwinden – Mit Bahn und Bus ins Nachbarland).

For more information:

http://www.regionale-schiene.at/3_Verkehrstage.asp

MEMBERS' MEETING IN ATHENS?

It has been suggested that active members of the 30 associations and organisations which make up EPF may like to have a meeting to discuss their

work and get to know each other, and each others' countries, better.

Our colleagues in Epivatis would be interested in organising such a meeting, perhaps in Athens in September 2010.

At this early stage, we should be interested to receive members' views. You can send these to our secretariat in Gent and to Nassos Kokkinos at nas@vkc.gr.

FERROWORLD 2011 AND 2013

EPF's Chairman has been in correspondence with M Alain Primatesta of Geneva, who is planning a forum in 2011 and a large-scale event in 2013, to promote rail development. EPF looks forward to involvement in some form in this project.

VISITING ANTWERP

Report from Trevor Garrod

I had passed through or changed trains at Antwerp (Antwerpen, Anvers) on a number of occasion, but November 7th was the first time that I actually visited this major Belgian city.

The Central Station, built in the early 20th century, was always magnificent. It is now even more impressive, since work on the north/south tunnel was completed. Trains from Amsterdam to Brussels and Paris now use through platforms below the terminus, and there is a third level for regional trains which terminate here. Journey time to and from the Netherlands is therefore shortened. The staff on the international train inform you in Dutch, French and English that you are about to arrive.

Putting 5 of the 12 tram routes into tunnel in the city centre has improved tram journey times and enabled more pedestrianisation to take place. There is a small tourist information office in the

central station and it is a pleasant walk through the shopping centre into the historic heart of the city.

But what if I want to travel beyond the city centre? Some surface trams use the square to the north of the station but for the underground, or pre-metro, trams, there is a rather anonymous building at the far end of the square, similar to the building leading to an underground car park. Buses leave from another square two streets away.



Antwerp Central station

It takes time for the visitor to discover this - time which had been saved by the improved rail infrastructure is then lost.

It would be good to have this information available on the train before you reach your destination; together with the price of local public transport tickets and how to pay. Indeed, as in some British and German cities, why not include the price of the local tram or bus trip in the Inter-City train fare?

Simple internationally-recognised pictograms when you arrive at the station and by the entrance to the underground and pointing to bus stops would also be useful. It all helps make the end-to-end public transport journey as easy one!

Readers: If you are visiting a town or city for the first time, tell us how easy, or otherwise, you found it.

MALMÖ IN MARCH 2010

The start of spring means that it is time for the Annual General Meeting and Conference of the European Passengers' Federation.

In 2010 the event will take place in the Concert Hall at Malmö in Sweden on Saturday March 20th; followed by optional visits in the area on Sunday March 21st.

Malmö is capital of the Skåne area of southern Sweden, opposite Copenhagen and much more accessible from the rest of Europe since the opening of the Öresund Bridge, with high frequency regional trains across the Oresund. Apart from reaching the city by train, or train and boat, you can also fly to Copenhagen's Kastrup Airport, where the trains Copenhagen - Malmö make a stop.

Our conference will be addressed by leading speakers from Sweden and Denmark and the European Commission have also been invited to give a presentation.



Malmö Annual Conference announcement

Sunday morning will give the opportunity to visit the City Tunnel exhibition and the stations of Malmö C, Triangeln and

Hyllie. We will also visit Kastrup station at the airport, where half the number of passengers comes from Sweden. There will also be an alternative opportunity to make a rail trip up the Swedish coast to Landskrona and Helsingborg.

More details on programme and how to register for the conference can be found on the EPF website www.epf.eu.

We are grateful to our Swedish colleagues in Resenärsforum for arranging what promises to be a memorable and informative weekend in an interesting part of Europe.

SOME THOUGHTS: IS THERE STILL A ROLE FOR THE NIGHT TRAIN

In certain circumstances, yes.

If one wants to travel from one European capital to another or to a large business centre, and wants to save on hotel costs or long waiting times at airports, quite apart from protecting the environment, then the night train has a part to play.

It should however depart at a favourable time (at best between 21.00 and 23.00) and arrive at a favourable time (at best between 07.00 and 09.00). Speed on the way is not so important. Sleeping carriages can be added or detached on the way.

We should not expect all night trains which ran 50 years ago to be re-introduced. Sometimes (for example between London and Edinburgh or Glasgow) the demand is now less, because the daytime trains travel faster than they used to.

But a night train eastwards, and one southwards, from Brussels could still play a role, especially if these connected out of the last Eurostar of the evening from London - and the reverse in the morning.

Should the EU subsidise such trains, at least for a limited period, if these represent a commercial risk for the operators? That is worth considering.

At certain times of the year there is also a role for night trains to particular holiday regions, such as to the Alps in summer and winter seasons, and to the coast in summer - provided that there is enough room for luggage.

What do our readers think about this?

Colophon

Contributors to this bulletin include:

Marc Broeckaert, Trevor Garrod, Gavin Booth, Nassos Kokkinos, Jürg Tschopp, Bram Van den Bulcke and others.

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