

# **EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION**

## **JOURNEYS WITHOUT BORDERS**

**Ceļošana bez robežām  
Cestovania bez hraníc  
Cestování bez hranic  
Gränsfria resor  
Podróże bez granic  
Potovanja brez mej  
Пътувания без граници  
Reesen ouni Grenzen  
Reisen ohne Grenzen  
Reizen zonder grenzen  
Rejser uden Grænser  
Ταξίδια χωρίς Σύνορα  
Viaggi senza confini  
Viajes sin fronteras  
Viatges sense fronteres  
Voiajuri fără granițe  
Voyages sans frontières**

**A Report on some Successes and Problems**

**October 2010**

## **JOURNEYS WITHOUT BORDERS - SUCCESSES AND PROBLEMS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the Europe of the 21st century it is easy to cross land borders and even some water borders. Passport and customs controls have either disappeared or are usually swifter than they used to be. More than a dozen countries have the same currency. A tunnel links Great Britain to the Continent while tunnels and bridges link the large Danish islands and Sweden to the rest of the Continent.

It is therefore easier to live in one country and work, do business or spend one's leisure time in another. You can easily do it by car or plane. How is it, though, if you want to use the train or sometimes other surface public transport? What sort of competition does rail offer the private car?

Since the mid 1990s good progress has been made in reducing journey times and making travel easier for long distance international passengers. But this progress has not been consistent. There has indeed been no coherent plan other than the Trans European Networks, which cover freight and passengers along a limited number of corridors.

Some border areas have seen ticketing and service innovations, and improved infrastructure, to enable seamless travel, often also multimodal travel, to be introduced at local and regional level.

There have, however, also been disappointments, because of lack or slowness of progress and sometimes withdrawals of services or threats to curtail them.

On our website [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu) we survey cross-border links and, where no rail link exists, some bus and coach links. We have recently updated that list.

In an ideal world there would be no need for a change of vehicle or mode to cross a border. But in some cases this is inevitable. Then the change should be as easy as possible by integrated timetabling, information and ticketing. The work of the European Railway Agency, among others, has important potential here.

### **SUCCESS STORIES - AND SOME SIDE EFFECTS**

1. Fast seamless travel across frontiers by international train operating companies such as Eurostar and Thalys has enabled rail to increase its market share. This has been particularly at the expense of the airlines.

The key has been a fixed-formation train able to use the electrification and signalling systems of up to four countries, travelling on specially built high-speed infrastructure but also using classic tracks to reach major stations in the heart of cities such as London, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne.

There remain problems with long check-in times for Eurostar passengers, however, and the fact that Thalys' fare system often makes through ticketing impossible.

2. Sometimes close co-operation between national railway operators also provides an attractive long-distance service. For example, Ianrod Eireann and Northern Ireland Railways have developed the Enterprise trains, which run on both of their systems and link the city centres of Dublin and Belfast. These trains also usually serve a number of fairly important towns en route. The rolling stock is fully interoperable with some sets owned by IE and some by NIR.

3. A third option is for domestic high-speed trains to be allowed to cross borders to serve key centres in neighbouring countries. Thus German ICE trains now run to Liege, Brussels and Amsterdam; French TGVs to Berne and Zurich as well as to Brussels and Luxembourg; and Austrian Railjet trains to Zurich, Budapest and Munich. TGVs are also due to operate into Spain to Figueras in December 2010 with the ultimate aim of running Barcelona.

Railjet services have not been without their problems - for example when late arrivals at the border from Vienna have caused paths to be missed on the densely operated network of SBB even-interval trains. There have also been criticisms about comfort, catering and reliability, and suggestions that the rolling stock is suitable for trips of 2-3 hours but not for journeys of up to 8 hours.

4. Sometimes customer care and distribution have been less effective than the technical achievements of the new international trains. For example, it has been necessary to buy a series of tickets, reservations have not always been easy and there have been problems with connections.

It was partly to address such problems that RailTeam was formed in 2007 to bring together seven high-speed operators (DB, SNCF, SBB, SNCB/NMBS, Eurostar, NS Hispeed and ÖBB). A coherent user-friendly network of high-speed trains across eight countries should increase rail's share of the international passenger market.

RailTeam brings together staff from all the seven operators. It has identified five hubs (Lille, Brussels, Cologne, Frankfurt and Stuttgart) where efforts are made to look after passengers changing from one high-speed train to another - for example on a journey from Amsterdam to Zurich or London to Berlin - and make it easier for them to take the next available train if a connection is missed. It is intended to develop the RailTeam brand so that it gives confidence to international customers that a certain level of service and care is guaranteed.

However, fares are still set by individual operators and only partial progress has been made with through ticketing. We in the European Passengers' Federation hope to work with RailTeam to give customer feedback and ideas to help progress towards what is clearly an excellent goal.

5. However, a side-effect of high-speed international services has been that shorter cross-border trips may become less easy and classic routes may be neglected. For example, there are not many possibilities to travel by train from towns in Kent to those in Pas de Calais and vice-versa.

It is understandable that if Eurostar can fill a London - Brussels train with passengers from the London area, it may be disinclined to call at Calais. But if that is not the case, it needs to consider stopping more of its services at Ashford International and Calais-Frethun. Of course there is a potential time penalty - but how long does a high-speed train need to stand at a station?

Instead of inserting extra stops in existing fast trains, operators could consider running additional semi-fast trains. Open access may help, as new regional operators could start up - but there needs to be market research on a regional level first. The research work of Regions of Connected Knowledge (RoCK) could be relevant here (see [www.rock-project.eu](http://www.rock-project.eu)).

On the classic route from Liege to Aachen there is only one train every two hours and these were only introduced after much lobbying. There were no plans for them initially. Belgian Railways have also admitted that they do not want to extend the domestic Inter-City Ostend - Eupen trains to Aachen, saying that to do so might endanger viability of the high speed services.

There is a similar issue between Roosendaal and Antwerp, where research has shown the demand for a fast service but only a local service is on offer.

Between Paris and Mons, short cross-border trips have also become impossible as operators seek to boost the viability of the high-speed trains.

6. Another side-effect of some high-speed services has been the decline in night trains. For example, Brussels no longer has any regular night services and the Zurich - Rome night train has been withdrawn. There are sometimes other reasons for the decline - but we believe that a Europe-wide study into the future role of night services would be worthwhile.

For the overnight traveller, speed is not necessarily the selling point. A reasonable departure time and arrival time - say, mid evening and at breakfast time - is more important. Traditional sleepers are expensive when they stand in sidings all day; but stock that can also be used on other, daytime services can be cost-effective. Research should also be done into the demand for overnight trains with seated accommodation.

7. A further source of concern has been the recent tendency of some train operators to charge a booking fee for international journeys. Since August 23rd, Belgian Railways (SNCB/NMBS) have charged a 7 Euro "personal assistance fee" for most international tickets bought at the ticket counter or via the telephone. The charge is not levied on persons of reduced mobility, however, or for certain destinations just across the border, such as Roosendaal, Maastricht, Lille, Aachen and Luxembourg.

One justification given for this charge was that Eurostar and SNCF were also planning to introduce booking fees in the near future.

Dutch Railways (NS) already charges a service fee of 3.50 Euro of 10 Euro when a reservation is required. Customers paying by credit card are charged 2.50 Euro.

Of course there are other ways of buying a ticket. The Internet is important and ticket machines can be used for quite long journeys. For example, a passenger arriving off the boat at Hoek van Holland can use the ticket machine, and their credit card, to buy a rail ticket to destinations as far away as Berlin. There is no charge for on line bookings in the Netherlands, but payments can only be made with certain banks.

It is sensible and fair to have a choice of ticket outlets. However, should customers who wish to speak to someone when deciding a ticket purchase be penalised for this reason?

## **REGIONAL AND LOCAL SERVICES**

There are many good examples that could give ideas to operators and political decision-makers elsewhere - but also some warnings of problems.

### **1. FRANCE / SWITZERLAND / GERMANY**

Basle's main station (SBB) was traditionally where the vast majority of passengers changed trains.

In the late 1990s, however, regional trains started to operate from Mulhouse in France to Frick and Laufenburg in Switzerland. The rolling stock was compatible with both French and Swiss systems and made many journey possibilities easier and quicker.

However, the introduction in 2009 of new French rolling stock that did not have permission to run on SBB meant that this service was curtailed.

The French trains now terminate in Basle SNCF station, which means several minutes' walk for passengers continuing into northwest Switzerland.

However, SBB has won the franchise to operate the Basel SBB - Weil - Lorrach - Zell line into Germany and has introduced a half-hourly service from SBB to Basel Badischer Bahnhof.

### **2. FRANCE / SWITZERLAND**

The line from Boncourt to Belfort will be reopened for a regional service to connect the region of Porentruy and Delmont with Belfort and the new TGV services. This cross-border line is also important to connect Delle and Boncourt locally.

### **3. NETHERLANDS / GERMANY**

The reopened connection between Enschede and Gronau works very successfully and extension of the trains to Hengelo and possibly Zutphen is being considered.

However, the reintroduction of local trains between Emmerich and Zevenaar (Arnhem) was not successful, and they were withdrawn in 2006 after one year. The time was too short to attract enough new passengers, the intermediate stop at Elten was not reopened and connections at Emmerich were not good.

### **4. NETHERLANDS / BELGIUM / GERMANY (EUREGIO MAAS - RHINE)**

Improvements started with the reopening to passengers of the Heerlen - Herzogenrath freight line in 1992 and introduction of a service from Heerlen to Aachen under the name Euregio-Bahn, subsequently extended to other destinations.

Further enhancements have included common ticketing and information systems and better connections, including a Euregio Day Rover ticket for trains and buses and a call centre using French, Dutch and German.

In June 2008, Dutch, Belgian and German authorities signed a letter of intent for further improvements, including a light rail link between Hasselt and Maastricht.

The website [www.euregio-mr.org/emr](http://www.euregio-mr.org/emr) gives full information on this very good example of cross-border co-operation.

### **5. GERMANY / AUSTRIA**

The creation of the Salzburg S-bahn in 2004 has made it easier to travel from Saalfelden or Zell am See to Berchtesgaden through the city and its suburbs, linking a number of other small towns and villages on either side of the border. A number of new stations have opened as part of this project. It brings together the Salzburger Lokalbahn, ÖBB and Berchtesgadener Land Bahn and should be fully developed by 2014.

## 6. GERMANY / FRANCE

Since the late 1990s, Saarbrücken has been connected by tram with the French town of Sarreguemines, where the trams run into the SNCF station and it is possible to change to longer distance trains to Strasbourg. Meanwhile the Saarbahn network has been extended further into the northern suburbs of the city.

On Sundays a local service runs between Mulheim and Mulhouse on a previously freight-only line and there are plans to expand this service to operate all week.

## 7. SWITZERLAND / ITALY / AUSTRIA (RHAETIAN TRIANGLE)

The reopening of the Vinschgerbahn to Mals in South Tyrol/Alto Adige has led to improved public transport links for both local people and tourists. A network of buses now links the railheads of Scuol-Tarasp, Landeck and Mals, also serving Martina. These towns were never linked to each other by rail. Much of the initiative for creating this network came from provincial and cantonal authorities.

## 8. LUXEMBOURG / FRANCE / BELGIUM / GERMANY

During the past ten years, the CFL (Chemins de Fer Luxembourgeois) have reached agreements with neighbouring countries to run their trains, across the border. Thus CFL trains continue over the previously freight-only line to Audun-le-Tiche and over new track to Volmerange-les-Mines. CFL trains also operate into Germany as far as Schweich, 10 kilometres beyond Trier on the main line to Koblenz. An agreement has been reached for Belgian stock to operate from Rodange to Athus and then on to Arlon. This has been done in response to the very significant numbers of commuters from neighbouring countries working in the Grand Duchy.

The Government of Luxembourg also made a contribution towards the building of the French high-speed line and so Luxembourg now also has a TGV service to Paris.

The CFL runs a coach link to Saarbrücken from Luxembourg. The two cities have never been directly linked by rail, and this coach also serves as a feeder into German ICE trains.

## 9. GERMANY / POLAND

In September 2008 the Usedomer Bäderbahn was able to continue its service along newly relaid tracks across the border from Ahlbeck to Swinoujscie Centrum - a logical extension.

The border crossing at Görlitz/Zgorzelec was for many years poorly served by passenger trains; but in 2008 through trains were introduced between Dresden and Wrocław - two regional centres that are also rail hubs. Passenger numbers have subsequently increased by four times.

In 1992 passenger trains recommenced across the border to Kostrzyn, although it was not until the franchising of the route to the Niederbarnimer Eisenbahn that the present frequent service with modern diesel multiple units commenced.

The border town of Kostrzyn now enjoys an hourly service to Berlin- Lichtenberg and the Interessengemeinschaft Ostbahn Berlin - Gorzów is working hard to develop the route eastwards to Gorzów and Pila.

Most trains east of Kostrzyn are operated by PKP diesel multiple units and only run every two hours. They connect at Kostrzyn, where passengers have to use a subway, and there is an attractive "Grenzenlos" ticket that, however, is only sold on the train in Germany, but at staffed stations in Poland. A DB ticket bought at Lichtenberg station is considerably more expensive and the popular and flexible Berlin-Brandenburg-Ticket, whilst valid to Szczecin and Kostrzyn and three smaller Polish stations, does not extend as far east as Gorzów.

The IGOB has played an important role in securing improvements to the stations at Rehfelde and Müncheberg on this route and regards its further development as central to the regeneration of the regions on both sides of the border. The Interessengemeinschaft (which is not unlike a Community Rail Partnership in Great Britain) currently has plans to transform itself into a European Grouping for Territorial Co-operation to strengthen its regeneration work.

An enhanced through service ultimately between Berlin and Pila will make Kostrzyn and Gorzów more accessible both from the east and from the west.

For more information, visit [www.igob.eu](http://www.igob.eu) and [www.ostbahn.eu](http://www.ostbahn.eu)

#### 10. GERMANY / CZECH REPUBLIC

Trains from Zittau via the Mandaubahn to Seifhennersdorf and Elbau used to pass through Czech territory without stopping at the station in Varnsdorf - a town linked to the rest of the Czech network by another line.

Following negotiations between the interior ministries in Berlin and Prague, and the involvement of regional authorities, they have done so since the summer of 2008. There are obvious benefits for commuter and leisure traffic in two countries, which, like most in the EU, have signed the Schengen Agreement.

#### 11. DENMARK / SWEDEN

The opening of the Öresund Link was greatly improved the accessibility of Stockholm and Gothenburg to Copenhagen, with five Swedish X2000 high speed trains per day from each of these Swedish cities to the Danish capital.

In addition, the Link has enabled a new regional train, the Öresundtog, to run between the towns and cities on either side of the Sound every 20 minutes. Thus it is possible to travel by train from Helsingør (Elsinore) via Copenhagen and Kastrup Airport to Malmö and then up to Lund and Landskrona to Helsingborg. Frequent ferries also operate between Helsingborg and Helsingør every 15 minutes and taking 20 minutes for the journey, with easy interchange with other public transport.

In the Öresund Region a special tariff has been created in order to facilitate cross-border travel. That tariff is valid on trains, buses and ferries included in the public transport of the area. Thus train tickets from Malmö to Copenhagen are also valid on the local buses in Copenhagen and vice versa.

There is a common zone tariff system for this bi-national region and a ticket to the other side of the Öresund can always be bought in any station or bus.

It has to be mentioned, however, that local public transport in Denmark or in Sweden each has its local tariff system and the "smartcards" of the Danish and Swedish sides are not yet compatible.

#### 12. BALTIC COUNTRIES

Cross-border services between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania all use old-fashioned ex-Soviet rolling stock and are very infrequent.

During the past two decades, however, a variety of bus companies, using predominantly modern buses, have introduced quite a good frequency between Tallinn and Riga and between Riga and Vilnius.

The train services from these two capital cities are primarily regional and the bus station in Riga is 500 meters from the railway station while in Vilnius it is 300 meters.

### 13. ITALY / SLOVENIA

It is possible to go by train from Trieste to Koper, but the route is circuitous and it is more convenient to take an almost hourly bus service direct between the two cities. However, tourists and day-trippers should be aware that it only runs on working days. An hourly city bus also runs from Trieste to the border station of Villa Opicina

### 14. MORE EUREGIOS

Recent years have seen the development of websites and cross-border public transport tickets and zonal tickets or cards in several areas in addition to the Euregio Maas-Rhine mentioned above.

Notable is the Triregio (France/Switzerland/Germany) centring on Basle, whose services and facilities are explained in French and in German on the website [www.triregio.info](http://www.triregio.info). It covers part of Alsace, the Lorrach transport authority and the North West Switzerland Tariff Authority. Under the slogans "une nouvelle marque ombrelle pour les transports publics" and "alle Tarifangebote unter einem Dach", it offers the Ticket TriRegio for the leisure market and a series of cards and passes for commuters. There is also information on singles, supplements and group tickets, and on park-and-ride, cycle parking and other transport matters.

For neighbouring areas of France, Germany and Luxembourg there is a weekend offer for individual travellers or groups of up to five: the Euregio Ticket Saar/Lor/Lux. The Euregio Bodensee offers a series of zonal day tickets for ferries, trains and buses in the neighbouring areas of Germany, Switzerland and Austria plus Liechtenstein.

At the other end of Austria, a Euregio Ticket Slowakei can be used between Vienna and Bratislava and includes city transport.

### 15. HUNGARY / ROMANIA

Romania is due to join the Schengen area in 2011 but train and bus operators have so far been slow to make improvements to cross-border services.

Our affiliated association DERKE (Debreceni Regionális Közlekedési Egyesület) is engaged on a project to recommend how these can be improved.

### 16. A ROLE FOR FERRIES

Recent experience has shown that there is still a role for ferries in international travel. However, some ferry services no longer take foot passengers and many do not have attractive public transport links.

Seaports such as Dun Laoghaire, Holyhead, Harwich and Hoek van Holland still have easy rail access, as do Esbjerg, Hirtshals, Kristiansand, Frederikshavn, Kiel, Travemünde and Trelleborg.

Some attractive rail/sea/rail offers also exist but are not always well promoted.

In the Baltic Sea, Tallinn has a frequent fast ship connection with Helsinki and an overnight sailing to and from Stockholm. The Swedish capital also has an overnight sailing to Riga, from whose harbour a tram takes passengers to the rail and bus stations.

From Sweden to Finland the ferry is also very important, with four daily trips from Stockholm to Turku and a very convenient train service onward from the harbour station to Helsinki and Tampere. Two overnight ferries also link the capital cities of Stockholm and Helsinki.

The fastest surface crossing from Stockholm to Turku is by bus from Central Station to Kapellskar and then by ship to Turku.



EPF believes that such connections must be promoted and enhanced, as they remain an attractive alternative to air for some journeys between European countries.

Overall we believe that much can be learned from successful co-operation between operators and authorities at regional level, encouraged by national governments and the European Union.

## **CURRENT PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES, AND SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### **1. BUSES REPLACE TRAINS ACROSS THE BORDER**

Fewer trains now cross the Austrian / Italian border at Tarvisio, with most of the ÖBB services now provided by coach. Trenitalia has withdrawn from much of its co-operation with other train operators and we understand that there have also sometimes been pathing difficulties.

DB now operates a motorway coach service between Nuremberg and Prague, with compulsory reservations.

Unlike the Luxembourg - Saarbrücken coach service mentioned above, these coaches replace an existing service by the national operator.

It is not known whether ÖBB's introduction of coaches has affected passenger numbers between, for example, Klagenfurt and Venice; or indeed between Vienna and Venice, with an intermodal change at Villach.

DB's reason for replacing trains by coaches was that the rail line was slow, circuitous and non-electrified and they could provide a faster service by road once the new motorway was opened.

However, the private operator Arriva, which was awarded a franchise on the German side, has introduced its own service of two trains a day between Munich and Prague and two a day between Nuremberg and Prague. That suggests that there is a market for rail between these major cities and, indeed, the towns in between, even though the end-to-end journey by train is more than an hour longer than by coach.

The train serves the rail hubs of Plzen and Schwandorf while the coach calls at no intermediate places. The initial two-hourly coach service has been increased to hourly in the peak to reflect its popularity.

To what extent can bus, or coach, replace train?

The British experience has almost always been that when a train service is replaced by a bus link, as few as 20% of former train passengers use the buses. This was shown by studies undertaken by the predecessor organisation of Railfuture in 1977 and 1982.

German experience has been that at least 50% of former rail passengers will use a replacement bus if times and accessibility remain comparable.

A long-distance coach may, of course, attract more passengers than a bus designed for purely local journeys. A coach link between the centres of two cities, using motorways, with a fare that undercuts the normal train fare, may be more successful. Indeed, a direct coach service such as that between Nuremberg and Prague could be seen as increasing public transport's share of the market, by generating new business.

The issue merits further up-to-date research.

## 2. CISALPINO

Like Eurostar and Thalys, Cisalpino was intended as a state-of-the-art international train between major centres - in this case between Zurich and certain other Swiss cities and Milan, with some trains continuing to other Italian destinations such as Venice.

The Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) and Italian State Railways (now Trenitalia) formed Cisalpino as a joint company in 1993, with tilting trains to provide a faster service.

It ceased to operate in December 2009 after a long period of unreliability. Why did things go wrong?

The maintenance problems could have been partly due to the fact that the Cisalpino company did not have its own maintenance facilities or staff, but had to rely on those of its parent companies. Furthermore, the drivers were not employed by Cisalpino but by either SBB or Trenitalia.

Would things have been better if maintenance and operating staff had all been part of a dedicated Cisalpino team with clear lines of responsibility? Interestingly, Eurostar has been restructuring so that all of its staff come under the same management. Criticism was also made of the pathing of late-running trains when they reached the border, in both northbound and southbound directions.

The Cisalpino rolling stock has now been divided between SBB and Trenitalia whose trains can now, effectively, compete on the route. Open access in theory now allows SBB to run its own trains on Italian tracks and Trenitalia to do the same on Swiss tracks. Will this benefit the passengers? That remains to be seen.

SBB now operates the ETR610 trains, originally intended for Cisalpino, four times a day on the Basle - Berne - Loetschberg - Milan route; and runs the older Cisalpino ETR470 trains every two hours on the Zurich - Gottard - Milan route.

There could be a further competitor on part of the route, as TGV Lyria is also understood to be interested in running from Paris via Geneva and Lausanne to Milan.

## 3. FARES AND SUBSIDIES

For much short-distance and regional cross-border travel, cost and convenience are key factors for the would-be traveller. The fare must be attractive and ticketing should be easy.

From the city of Luxembourg, for example, the fare to the final destination before the Belgian border - Kleinbettingen - may be reasonable, but it rises steeply for the journey onward to the rather important town of Arlon, just across the border in Belgium. In this latter case, the fare is based on an unsubsidised international tariff rather than a domestic one.

It would make sense to subsidise the fare to the border itself or, ideally, to the first station on the other side of the border.

In Belgium before 1991 trains were indeed subsidised to the border point; but since then the contract between the Federal State and the national train operator specifies that the subsidy should only go to the last station in Belgium. In March 2001 there was a proposal to revert to the pre-1991 position but it did not succeed in becoming law.

In the Netherlands it is not legal to subsidise a service, or set a franchise, beyond the last station before the border. However, if a provincial authority pays, exceptions can be made.

The State provides funds to the provincial authorities to run domestic regional train services. However, international regional services were deliberately left out of this arrangement when it was set up.

The authorities can subsidise such cross-border services, but they then have to finance that themselves, which often means that they have to cut spending elsewhere. This explains why Dutch regional authorities are not always very eager to invest in regional cross-border train services.

Then there are cases where two countries jointly subsidise a service but one later withdraws its subsidy, perhaps as part of general cuts in public spending. This happened between Harrachov (Czech Republic) and Szklarska Poreba (Poland) where a service was restored but the Polish authorities then withdrew their subsidy.

On the Czech - German border there is an instance of "so near and yet so far!" The line from Rumburk to Dolni Poustevna has been partly modernised and track laid onwards to the German border. Track work had been completed at the German station of Sebnitz while the connection to the border remains to be completed. The operators and authorities on either side of the border need to reach an agreement on service levels, destinations and likely subsidies, based on the benefits to each side.

It is indeed vital to establish the benefits to either side of a new cross-border service. These can be economic, social and cultural - and can also include reduction in road congestion and the advantages of using existing (rail) infrastructure rather than building new road infrastructure.

A study of fares between Kortrijk and Lille has shown a considerable discrepancy: a ticket for the 31km costs 7.40 Euro of which 3.80 Euro is for the Belgian part (16km) and 3.60 Euro for the French part (15 km). A 31 km journey within Belgium would only cost 4.80 Euro.

At the eastern end of Belgium, a report in 2009 by TreinTramBus suggested that an overlap could be negotiated between SNCB/NMBS and AVV under which the Belgian fares system would be valid for journeys to Aachen and the German fares would apply for journeys from Aachen to Welkenraedt and Eupen in Belgium.

We understand that the Belgian fares system will be made valid to Roosendaal, Maastricht and Aachen in 2011; and that solutions are still being sought for journeys from Belgian stations to Lille and Luxembourg.

It should be possible to negotiate such bilateral solutions for comparable regions elsewhere in Europe.

#### 4. RISKS AND EXPERIMENTS

If no agreement can be reached on a subsidy for a service that crosses a border, and it is only subsidised in one of the countries, then the operator must take a risk.

Will the extra revenue generated by continuing the service across the border cover the extra operating cost and indeed any start-up cost?

If the train continues to a significant town across the border, that risk is more likely to be worth taking.

In that case, an experimental extension of the domestic service may be made across the border. The extended service may be less frequent than the domestic service, but it must be frequent enough to be useful to passengers.

Such an extension must be properly promoted in both countries and should run for a long enough period to encourage people to change their travel habits. British experience - for example between Norwich and Cambridge - suggests that an experimental period for a new service should be at least two years. Experience from elsewhere indicates that at least three years is the guideline for a service aimed more at the tourist market.

Whatever the case, a wide range of stakeholders need to be involved in the experiment - not only operator and infrastructure company, but also local authorities, companies, chambers of commerce, the tourist industry, educational establishments and voluntary bodies.

Surveys need to be undertaken, to identify how many people would use a new service, to what extent their journeys would be new ones or shifts from private to public transport and what price potential passengers would be prepared to pay.

Methods of payment - such as smartcards or stored value cards - could also encourage usage. Intermodal zonal ticketing on the model of the Berlin - Brandenburg-Ticket could also play an important role in promoting such a service.

Another way forward is for a franchise bid to be invited for a cross-border line. This has happened with the Mandaubahn, which crosses from Seifhennersdorf (Germany) into the Czech Republic at Varnsdorf and then back into Germany. As a result, the service is now operated by the Vogtlandbahn, which already has experience of cross-border services elsewhere, and a Czech daughter company. It is planned to amalgamate existing short services into a through service from Seifhennersdorf via Varnsdorf and Zittau to Liberec.

However the new or improved service is operated, the experiences of Community Rail Partnerships or Line Committees in a number of European countries can be valuable in supporting it.

## 5. TECHNICAL ISSUES

When market research and political interests support a new or improved cross-border service, technical challenges may still have to be overcome.

On electrified lines, difference in overhead voltages is often cited as a problem. However, with modern electronics this problem can be solved.

A bigger problem is the difference in safety systems. It is however possible to obtain exemptions on certain short stretches of line - as Belgian Railways did to enable their trains to run into Roosendaal and Maastricht in the Netherlands.

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

There are encouraging signs here. On December 22nd 2008, representatives of the Belgian, French, Dutch and Luxembourg authorities signed a protocol for the mutual recognition of admissions for rolling stock.

On January 19th 2010, the German Eisenbahn Bundesamt (Federal Rail Office) concluded a cross-acceptance agreement with its Belgian and Luxembourg counterparts to make it simpler for locomotives and rolling stock to use each other's networks. The Eisenbahn Bundesamt already has such agreements with the Netherlands, France, Austria, Switzerland and Italy and is now negotiating a similar arrangement with Poland.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this report we, as users, have tried to highlight success stories. We have also pointed out problems and ways in which some of these may be tackled. It is our hope that this report will stimulate and assist debate and development.

All stakeholders have a part to play in achieving better international and cross-border rail and other public transport services throughout Europe - the European Commission, the European Parliament, national and regional governments, operators, infrastructure companies and - last but not least - passenger organisations.

Trevor Garrod, October 2010

## **EDITORIAL NOTE**

The European Passengers' Federation comprises over 30 public transport users' organisations in 19 European countries. More information - including our manifesto in 15 languages - can be found on our website [www.epf.eu](http://www.epf.eu) which also contains links to the websites of our member organisations.

EPF is an international non-profit association constituted under Belgian law. Its secretariat is at H. Frère-Orbanlaan 570, 9000 Gent, Belgium.

As Chairman of EPF, I have compiled this report from the research and experiences of a large number of our members and discussions between us.

As the report is in English I have generally used the English form of place names, or the form most commonly used by English speakers, for example "Prague" for "Praha" and "Cologne" for "Köln".

Trevor Garrod

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks are due to many individual members of the associations which belong to the European Passengers' Federation, for their help in providing and checking information for this report.

We have done our best to make it up-to-date and accurate but cannot be held responsible for any errors or out-of-date information.

We also acknowledge the research undertaken in 2009 by the Flemish association TreinTramBus and contained in their report "Kansen voor Euregionale treinen."

October 1st 2010