



VOYAGEURS EUROPEENS A STRASBOURG

Troisième Assemblée Générale et Congrès de la FEV

Samedi 12 mars 2005 - Centre CIARUS, 7 rue Finkmatt, Strasbourg, France

EUROPEAN PASSENGERS AT STRASBOURG

The third Annual General Meeting and Conference of EPF

Saturday March 12th 2005 - Centre CIARUS, 7 rue Finkmatt, Strasbourg, France

EUROPÄISCHE FAHRGÄSTE IN STRASSBURG

3. EPF Jahresversammlung und Konferenz

Samstag, 12.3. 2005 - Centre CIARUS, 7 rue Finkmatt, Strassburg, Frankreich

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Conference delegates:

John Barfield, Rufus Barnes, Simone Bigorgne, Marc Broeckaert, Stefano Cannata, Luc Couscheir, Cécile Daras-Wafflard, Rudy Deceuninck, Luc Desmedt, Jean Dreyer, Edwin Dutler, Massimo Ferrari, Stéphane Fontaine, Nikos Fotis, Jean Friedrich, Dorothy Gallagher, Trevor Garrod, Klaus Hasselberg, Pierre Havelange, Erik Heylen, Robert Huka, Christopher Irwin, Jean-Paul Jacquot, Holger Jansen, Hans Joachim Janssen, Trevor Jones, Jasper Knockaert, Albert Lambert, Jean Macheras, Max Mondon, Angiolo Rosselli, Fulvio Pellacani, Martin Schiefelbusch, Josef Schneider, Kees Smilde, Peter Staelens, Eddy Stock, Juerg Tschopp, Aivaras Urbonavicius, Rian van der Borgt, Colin Hall.

Apologies for absence:

Jean Sivardière, Raymond Lacharme, Jiri Franta, Peter Romen, André Humair, Martin Graf, Wolfgang Klapdor, Uwe Miertschischk, Michael Cleve, Karl-Heinz Huppert, John Davis, David Allard, Patrick O'Sullivan, David Brown, John & Susan Grimmett, Jette Friese, Anders Svensen and Susanne Fahlgren.

Report by Trevor Garrod with assistance from Administrative Council members.
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For information about EPF and its member organisations, visit our website: www.epf-eu.be/



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EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION
GENERAL MEETING & CONFERENCE
Centre CIARUS, Strasbourg, 12.3.2005

General Meeting:

The Chairman, Trevor Garrod, welcomed 45 members from 18 associations and organisations in 12 countries. The Greek Friends of the Railways were admitted as new members.

The Annual Report was accepted and is now posted on the EPF website <http://www.epf-eu.be/>. The financial report was discussed and a budget and work plan for the coming year agreed. Full minutes of the General Meeting are sent to each affiliated association.

Conference:

M. Max Mondon, President of ASTUS and Vice-President of FNAUT, welcomed colleagues from 12 European countries to Strasbourg, which he said has been traditionally "a city of Europe." It stood on three important international routes: the Rhine Valley and the London - Milan rail route from north to south which crossed the East / West route from Paris to Munich, Vienna and beyond.

The city had developed a successful tram system and most of its citizens wanted to see this extended. Many delegates used the trams during their visit. Strasbourg was also the capital of Alsace, an industrious region which was regenerating its rail network.

Mme Brigitte Ollier, Director of EuroTeam at the UITP: (Union International des Transports Publics), spoke of the work and aspirations of the association, which had been founded in Belgium in 1885.

It brought together operators of all modes of public transport, and focussed particularly on urban, local and regional services. Its 2500 members in 80 countries also included local authorities, the service and supply industries, consultants and academics. Its 60 staff worldwide included about ten in Europe and at EU level it represented the interests of public transport operators, produced position papers on questions and issues, monitored legislation and gave help and advice to its members. Research was also an important element of UITP work as was involvement in awareness campaigns.

70% of national government legislation now originated at EU level and so it was important to lobby in Brussels.

The European Commission's White Paper of 2001 identified problems of congestion, quality, the environment, safety and isolation. Although it was particularly concerned with international travel, local public transport was also affected by railway liberalization, road safety measures, intermodality, quality and cleanliness, new technology and the promotion of good practice.

Apart from the work of DGTREN, other Directorates' policies could also affect public transport in areas such as harmonisation of fuel taxes, public procurement directives, urban environment strategy and social issues.

UITP priorities for 2004/5 were regulation of the Public Service Requirement, vehicle specifications and social issues. They had also participated, via their member

associations, in lobbying for public transport alternatives to road building. In the coming years they would be studying legal and social changes such as working hours and how the competition rules would apply to the public transport market.

From 2008, new training requirements for bus drivers would have cost implications and possibly lead to shortages of trained bus drivers. Other EC measures could bring cost savings to the urban rail industry, affecting the cost of rolling stock and maintenance.

UITP's concerns could be summed up in the key words: flexibility, reliability, attractiveness, intermodality, information, security and covering costs.

In discussion, delegates said that they were impressed by the expertise of UITP and hoped that there would be potential for closer working between EPF and UITP.

Mme. Ollier said that her association recognised the regional dimension of international links - indeed, it had a specialist committee concerned with regional rail. It had also in recent years been studying and promoting the role of public transport in regenerating cities. It was important to improve security (and thereby attract more customers) through technical means and training of staff. "At European level", she concluded, "we have one great competitor, the motor car".

Herr Sven Andersen, formerly of Deutsche Bahn and now an author and consultant, gave a presentation on high speed trains with particular reference to the international role of TGV Est.

In 1992 the Franco-German La Rochelle Agreement to improve rail journeys between the two countries led to studies of two options: a Paris - Mannheim journey in 2 hours 52 minutes via Saarbrücken or 2 hours 48 minutes via Strasbourg. The Saarbrücken option depended on tilting trains which were unlikely to be built. The Strasbourg option would use the TGV-Est high speed line within France and significantly reduce journey times between Paris and Frankfurt and important South German destinations.

Trains à Grande Vitesse (high speed trains) should be running to Strasbourg in 2007; the question was how best to cross the Rhine for high speed international trains to Germany. The existing route via Kehl was not suitable for high speeds. A former SNCF President had therefore suggested a new Rhine Bridge north of Strasbourg. There had been environmental objections to this scheme, however, as it would cut through the sensitive Rheinauen (Rhine Meadows).

Herr Andersen therefore suggested a third option, which was to use a former railway bridge near Rastatt, which had been rebuilt for use by French military trains in 1948 but was currently only used by road traffic. Road traffic could be diverted to run across a dam now being built. International trains from Paris could then use the existing Strasbourg - Lauterbourg line as far as Rooschwoog and then cross the Rhine by the 1948 bridge and give a journey time of 2 hours 12 minutes to Karlsruhe, 2 hours 42 minutes to Stuttgart and 3 hours 1 minute to Frankfurt. Strasbourg itself would be served by hourly TGVs from Paris.

In discussion, Monsieur Daniel Pfister, Project Director TGV-Est for SNCF at Strasbourg, explained that SNCF were now working to improve the speed of international trains by upgrading the Kehl route. He said that there was likely to be a future role for the Wintersdorf Bridge (between Rooschwoog and Rastatt) as part of the "train-tram" project being advocated by the regional authorities in Alsace.

Herr Peter Faross, Head of Unit A5 at DGTREN, European Commission, explained the role of his section in matters of services of general interest and protection of passengers.

He also referred to the important EC document Strengthening Passenger Rights within the EU, Com(2005)46 issued on 16.2.05.

To put the matter into context, Hr. Faross pointed out that traffic within the countries making up the EU had more than doubled between 1970 and 2002: from 2.1 billion passenger kilometres per year to 4.9 billion. Looked at another way, the average citizen travelled 17km per day in 1970 and 35km per day in 2002. The abolition of border controls had been one factor in recent travel growth. However, there had been no parallel development in passengers' rights or protection. Last year, 5 million pieces of luggage had been lost, for instance. Therefore the Commission wanted to see minimum standards of passenger rights. For example, on an international coach from Brussels to Morocco, with a Spanish driver, what would be the passengers' rights if the vehicle were involved in an accident in France?

In the airline sector, automated seat reservations introduced in the 1970s led to a voluntary policy of overbooking. Some passengers were then denied boardings. This prompted the EC to introduce air passenger protection legislation. In 2002 there were still 252 cases of denied boarding on European flights, and so compensation was increased. Delays and cancellations were now covered as well. The airlines were unhappy about this and both IATA and the Association of Low Cost Airlines had filed a case at the European Court in Luxembourg.

As far as the rail sector was concerned, the European Parliament and then the Council of Ministers were considering the proposals for passengers' rights and an announcement was expected in the summer.

Should protection apply to domestic as well as international rail journeys? Some MEPs considered that it should but most member states wanted only international services to be covered. Should passengers' rights be aligned to those prescribed by COTIF?

Another issue being discussed was whether there should be strong liability with few exemptions, or liability with a greater number of exemptions; for example for third party intervention or when the delay was the passenger's own fault. The inclination of the Commission was to have as few exemptions as possible.

Some rail operators offered vouchers as compensation but the Commission preferred financial compensation. However, said Herr Faross, at least the railways were in favour of compensation schemes in principle, and questions of detail would no doubt be solved in due course.

The EC also wanted to establish the principle that assistance should be given to passengers when there were problems, and this was widely accepted.

Persons of reduced mobility should have access to public transport - that principle was no longer questioned. Should it be the responsibility of the train operator or the station manager to make provisions for such customers? It is probably better to require the station manager to do it.

Herr Faross stressed that "the passenger is the weaker part of the contract chain". The European Commission therefore was asking each member state to designate an enforcement body, to which complaints should be addressed. The British approach (with the Rail Passengers' Council network and the London Transport Users' Committee) was worth copying elsewhere, and not just for rail but for all types of

public transport. The meeting of the Council of Ministers on 22.4.05 was due to consider this question. It would probably look at types of liability and the scope of future passenger rights on international journey - for example, whether the domestic leg should be included. Under the UK Presidency it would probably be possible to reach an agreement.

Our speaker pointed out that, for most national rail operators international journeys only represented about 10% of their business, and so there was less incentive to promote international passengers' rights. One other possible obstacle was that some national governments would be slower than others in implementing a package of rights.

Turning to other modes, our speaker said that maritime passengers had no protection at all when things went wrong. People needed to be reassured that when there was a problem something would be done on the spot. He would be interested to receive details of specific problems experienced by boat passengers.

There was also a specific urgency about the international coach sector, particularly as most passengers were on lower incomes but should be receiving rights.

Herr Faross emphasised the need for "quick resolution systems outside court". Many EU citizens, with such rights in prospect saw that "Brussels is a good thing for them." Technical breakdowns sometimes happened and passengers were willing to accept this, provided that they were told of the cause of the delay. Should every station, port and airport be required to provide an information point for when things went wrong? Should it not be possible to buy a simple integrated ticket by train from Edinburgh to Verona? There was scope for more comprehensive luggage check-in facilities. A good example at present was where a customer could check in their luggage at the main station in Cologne, catch a train to Paris, fly to New York and collect their luggage from the airport there.

Another issue being addressed was protection for passengers if an operator went bankrupt.

There had been instances of passengers being stranded far from home if an airline ceased trading. There should be obligations upon an airline to inform the passenger of the name of the carrier on a particular journey.

Jean-Paul Jacquot initiated a lively discussion, first by stating that EPF had supported the Commission's passenger rights proposals and had lobbied Members of the European Parliament. It was important to have equality of treatment not only for passengers but also for operators - "a level playing field." For example, why should passengers using one mode receive compensation for delays whereas passengers using another mode only received it for cancellations?

Herr Faross replied that the Commission agreed that there should be comparable rights for passengers of all modes; but conditions in the different sectors were not identical. For example, airline delays were generally in boarding the aircraft rather than during the flight. "In an airport," he said, "when someone is assisting you, it is acceptable to stay in the building but standing on a cold wet station platform when the buffet is closed is a different matter..."

Herr Faross commented, "We have come a long way from the point where the railway companies started. They used to be fond of their trains; we want them to be fond of their customers."

Other questions raised concerned the practicalities of compensation and clarification of passenger obligations (such as checking in on time). Non-guaranteed connections

on rail/sea/rail journeys on the London - Paris route were also an issue. Concern was expressed that language problems would handicap some international passengers in knowing their rights and obligations.

Christopher Irwin thanked the European Commission for listening to EPF over the past two years, and said that this had helped member associations in their dialogue with their national governments.

Herr Faross stressed the importance of being able to book a through ticket from, say, a station in Portugal to a station in Estonia. He cited a complaint he had received from a lady in Lyon who needed at short notice to attend a funeral in Graz. It was impossible for her to buy such a ticket in Lyon and she had to pay an extra €17 for one to be sent to her from Germany. It was pointed out that the technology for such ticketing existed through the MERITS and PRIFIS databanks,

Our speaker said that the European Commission aimed for “a balanced solution. We must assist the passenger but not make great financial difficulties for the train operators... You have bought something from them and they are obliged to get you from A to B.” This obligation included keeping the customer informed when their train was delayed. An easily recognisable “orange eye” symbol, for instance, could indicate where all such information could be found.

The Commission wanted to cover as large a public as possible and so had to be careful about rules on check-in times.

The languages in which complaints should be made were still being considered with member states. It was likely that rail operators would have to offer a complaint mechanism “at least in English.”

Our speaker concluded by stating that the EC’s Official Journal would publish a call for bids from bodies to represent passengers and/or energy consumers in April.

Jean-Paul Jacquot gave a report of the meeting on March 3rd between five representatives of EPF and two cabinet members of the EU Transport Commissioner, Jacques Barrot. Issues covered had included rail passengers’ rights and the role of national governments in responding to the EC proposals. It was important for member associations to have dialogue with the relevant experts in their own transport ministries on such issues. This has already happened in Paris, London and Luxembourg.

Discussion also took place on ways in which rail travel could be made easier, and recent developments in the night train network.

EPF also stressed the need for a “level playing field” in international transport. This could apply in two ways: 1. To passengers, who had the same rights to information and redress in each mode of transport; 2. To operators, who should have similar conditions to each other in respect of, for example, fuel tax.

Monsieur Dominique Devin, Director of SNCF for regional railways in Alsace, gave a presentation on the development of the regional services since 1997.

Decentralisation in France, with the establishment of regional authorities, stemmed from laws passed in 1982. In 1997, experiments were set up in six regions, including Alsace, transferring powers for regional public transport to the Regional Councils. The Councils negotiated with SNCF the level of service which they considered necessary and level of financial support needed.

In the early 1990s, usage of local trains in Alsace had been falling by between 1% and 2% per year. Since 1997, however, it had increased to 50,000 passengers per day, a growth of 43%. Three quarters of passengers were regular travellers using some kind of season ticket, often a weekly ticket. The remainder were more occasional users.

Principles in the development of regional services were to increase frequencies to one train per hour off-peak and generally two trains per hour in the peak. On the important Strasbourg - Mulhouse route even-interval times were introduced. Stations had been renovated and new or refurbished rolling stock introduced. Innovations included the "Alsaplus" and "Pass Evasion" tickets.

The Region and SNCF had clearly defined roles. The Region defined and financed the network and specified to the operator objectives of quality and service. SNCF was responsible for the realisation and commercialisation of these services, managing and optimising the resources.

In 2004, said M. Devin, 90% of regional trains had been on time or within 2 minutes. The task now was to prepare for the arrival of the TGV-Est so that all the people of Alsace would benefit from it. In particular, it would be important to have good connections between regional trains and the TGV for the three key centres: Strasbourg, Colmar and Mulhouse.

Other future developments planned were the "tram-train" in 2008/9 on two local branches, and "transformation of stations" with enhanced facilities such as secure shelters for bicycles.

"Regionalisation," said M. Devin, "has been undeniably a success." Progress had been slightly slowed down by reform of access charges and the future would depend on how decentralisation in general developed in France.

Dr. Albert Lambert reported on the work of the EPF working group on international passenger long-distance trains, and introduced its bulletin "Initiative Fernverkehr". This aims to spread information about international services, where to obtain information and tickets, accommodation near stations and helpful travel agencies. It is currently available from Dr Lambert albert.lambert@rail.lu in French and German.

Martin Schiefelbusch (NEXUS, Berlin) spoke of their current project on how transport users represent themselves and express their views in the various European countries and hoped to organise a conference on this topic in Berlin in the autumn.

The Chairman, Trevor Garrod thanked everyone for their contributions for all colleagues who had worked to make this a smooth-running and interesting day.

SOMMAIRE FRANÇAIS

45 membres de 18 organismes d'usagers des chemins de fer se sont rassemblés à Strasbourg le 12 mars 2005 pour l'Assemblée Générale annuelle et le Congrès de la Fédération Européenne des Voyageurs.

L'Assemblée Générale a approuvé le Rapport Annuel, discuté le bilan financier et accepté le plan de travail pour 2005/06.

Le Congrès a été ouvert par Max Mondon, qui a souhaité aux délégués la bienvenue à Strasbourg, « ville de l'Europe ».

Brigitte Ollier (Union Internationale des Transports Publics) a exposé les actions de recherche et de lobbying de la branche européenne de son association, qui regroupe uniquement des exploitants de transport public. Les membres de la FEV ont grandement apprécié les compétences de l'UITP ainsi décrites et ils ont discerné de réelles possibilités de coopération entre les deux associations.

Sven Andersen (consultant) a fait valoir le potentiel du TGV Est amené par la réduction du temps de parcours entre Paris et Francfort et vers les destinations importantes de l'Allemagne du sud ; il a exploré les diverses options qui se présentent pour la traversée du Rhin.

Peter Faross (Commission Européenne) a mentionné que les voyages des citoyens des pays européens avaient plus que doublé au cours des 35 dernières années, sans que cela se soit accompagné d'un développement des droits des passagers. Après avoir fait voter un règlement en faveur des passagers aériens, la Commission a introduit une proposition similaire pour les voyageurs ferroviaires internationaux ; elle a en préparation de semblables propositions pour les secteurs maritimes et routiers. Dans le secteur aérien, chaque Etat-Membre doit désigner un organisme chargé de la prise en charge des réclamations des voyageurs. La Commission Européenne recherche des systèmes assurant l'équilibre entre une aide efficace aux passagers et la protection de l'équilibre financier des exploitants.

Jean-Paul Jacquot (FEV) a rendu compte de la récente réunion entre la FEV et des membres du cabinet du Commissaire Européen pour les Transports.

Dominique Devin (SNCF) a décrit la régénération de l'offre ferroviaire en Alsace depuis 1997, réalisée grâce à la décentralisation et à la collaboration entre la SNCF et le Conseil Régional ; elle a abouti à une croissance de 43% du nombre des passagers. Le but actuellement, poursuivi est d'assurer que l'arrivée du TGV Est apporte des avantages à tous les habitants de la Région.

Finalement a pris place une discussion sur les trains internationaux à longue distance et la représentation des voyageurs.

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

45 Mitglieder aus 18 Fahrgastverbänden und sonstigen Organisationen aus 12 europäischen Staaten trafen sich am 12. März 2005 in Strassburg zur Jahreshauptversammlung und Tagung des Europäischen Fahrgastverbandes.

Die Generalversammlung erhielt den Jahresbericht, besprach den Finanzbericht und nahm den Arbeitsplan für das kommende Jahr an.

Max Mondon eröffnete die Tagung indem er den Delegierten willkommen hieß und Strassburg "eine Stadt von Europa" nannte.

Brigitte Ollier (UITP) beschrieb die europäische Lobby- und Forschungsarbeit des internationalen Verbandes der Betreiber öffentlicher Verkehrsmittel. Die anwesenden EPF-Mitglieder waren von den tiefgreifenden Sachkenntnissen der UITP beeindruckt und sahen zahlreiche Möglichkeit zur Zusammenarbeit zwischen ihm und dem EPF.

Sven Andersen beschrieb das Potential des TGV-Est (Hochgeschwindigkeitsstrecke nach Osten), die Reisezeit von Paris nach Frankfurt und wichtigen suddeutschen Zielen zu verkürzen und diskutierte die verschiedenen Optionen, den Rhein zu überqueren.

Peter Faross (Europäische Kommission) sagte, dass die Bürger der EU-Staaten jetzt mehr als doppelt so weit reisten als vor 35 Jahren, Fahrgastrechte sich aber in derselben Zeit nicht weiterentwickelt hatten. Nach Einführung entsprechender Rechte für Fluggäste, ist die Kommission jetzt damit befasst, diese auch für Bahnreisende zu entwickeln. Ähnliche Pläne für Schiffs- und Reisebuspassagiere werden diskutiert.

Jeder Mitgliedsstaat soll eine Organisation schaffen, die Beschwerden behandelt. Die Europäische Kommission suche ein System, das Gleichgewicht haben wurde: dies sollte den Fahrgästen helfen ohne übergroße finanzielle Lasten für die Betreiber zu machen.

Jean-Paul Jacquot berichtete über das Treffen eine Woche vorher zwischen EPF und Kabinettsmitgliedern des europäischen Verkehrskommissars.

Dominique Devin (SNCF) beschrieb die Erneuerung des elsässischen Bahnnetzes seit 1997, mit 43% Steigerung der Fahrgäste, dank der Dezentralisierung und Zusammenarbeit zwischen SNCF und dem Regionalrat. Das Ziel bestehe jetzt darin, sicher zu stellen, dass die Realisierung des TGV-Est Vorteile für alle Elsässer bringen wird.

Es fanden weitere Diskussionen zur Arbeit des EPF in den Bereichen internationale Fernreisen und Fahrgastvertretung statt.

SOMMARIO ITALIANO

45 membri di 18 organizzazioni di utenti del trasporto ferroviario provenienti da 12 Paesi si sono riuniti a Strasburgo il 12 marzo scorso per l'Assemblea generale annuale e la Conferenza della Federazione dei Passeggeri Europei (EPF). L'Assemblea Generale ha accettato il Rapporto annuale, ha discusso il rapporto economico ed ha predisposto un piano di lavoro per il corrente anno.

Max Mondon ha aperto la conferenza dando il benvenuto a Strasburgo "una città europea" ai delegati.

Brigitte Ollier (UITP) ha descritto il lavoro di ricerca e di "lobbying" dell'associazione internazionale degli operatori del trasporto pubblico, in particolare a livello europeo. I soci di EPF sono rimasti impressionati dalla esperienza della UITP ed hanno intravisto possibilità per i due organismi di lavorare insieme.

Sven Andersen ha descritto le potenzialità della rete TGV Est per ridurre il tempo di viaggio da Parigi a Francoforte e le importanti destinazioni della Germania meridionale ed ha illustrato le varie ipotesi di tracciato per il superamento del fiume Reno.

Peter Faross della Commissione Europea ha esposto che i viaggi effettuati dai cittadini dei paesi dell'Unione Europea sono più che raddoppiati rispetto al 1970 ma i diritti del passeggero non sono stati sviluppati allo stesso modo. Dopo l'introduzione di alcuni diritti per i passeggeri aerei, la Commissione si sta ora dedicando allo sviluppo dei viaggiatori ferroviari ed ha intenzione di fare ugualmente nel settore del trasporto marittimo e degli autobus. A tal riguardo ogni stato membro dovrebbe designare un organismo per la gestione dei reclami. La CEE ha ipotizzato un sistema equilibrato che aiuterebbe i passeggeri ma non creerebbe difficoltà significative per gli operatori. Jean-Paul Jascquot ha parlato del recente incontro avvenuto tra rappresentanti di EPF e il Commissario Europeo dei Trasporti Jacques Barrot.

Dominique Devin (SNCF) ha descritto come la rete ferroviaria dell'Alsazia sia stata potenziata ed aggiornata dal 1997, con un incremento del 43% di passeggeri, grazie alla decentralizzazione in Francia ed alla cooperazione tra le ferrovie francesi (SNCF) ed il Consiglio Regionale. L'obiettivo è adesso quello di assicurare che l'arrivo del TGV Est possa portare beneficio a tutta la popolazione della regione. Ulteriori discussioni hanno toccato l'attività di EPF nei confronti dei passeggeri e del traffico ferroviario internazionale a lunga distanza.

NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

45 leden van 18 reizigersorganisaties uit 12 landen vergaderden op 12 maart 2005 in Straatsburg. Op die dag hield de Europese Reizigersfederatie, namelijk haar jaarlijkse Algemene Vergadering en Conferentie. De Algemene Vergadering kreeg een verslag van de jaarwerking over 2004, bediscussieerde het financieel verslag en ging akkoord met een werkplan voor 2005.

Max Mondon opende de Conferentie met een welkomstwoord voor alle afgevaardigden die naar de "Europese stad" Straatsburg afgezakt waren. Brigitte Ollier (UITP) gaf een toelichting bij het lobbywerk en de onderzoeksactiviteiten van deze internationale vereniging van openbaarvervoerbedrijven, met bijzondere aandacht voor de aanpak op Europees niveau. De EPF-leden waren onder de indruk van de deskundigheid van de UITP en bespeurden mogelijkheden voor samenwerking tussen EPF en UITP. Sven Andersen beschreef de mogelijkheden van de TGV Est (hogesnelheidslijn naar het oosten) om de reistijd tussen Parijs en Frankfurt en andere belangrijke Zuid-Duitse bestemmingen te verminderen; hij gaf ook een overzicht van de verschillende mogelijkheden om met de hogesnelheidslijn de Rijn te overschrijden. Peter Faross (Europese Commissie) benadrukte dat het aantal verplaatsingen van de burgers uit de EU-landen meer dan verdubbeld is sinds 1970, maar dat ondertussen geen werk gemaakt werd van de bescherming van de reizigersrechten. Nadat dergelijke rechten opgesteld werden voor de luchtvaartpassagiers, is de Commissie nu bezig met deze rechten uit te werken voor treinreizigers, en is men van zin om hetzelfde te doen voor de maritieme en de autocarsector. Elke lidstaat moet over een instantie beschikken waar de reizigers met hun klachten terecht kunnen. De Europese Commissie streeft naar een evenwichtige aanpak waarmee de reizigers daadwerkelijk geholpen worden zonder dat daardoor de operatoren in financiële problemen zouden geraken. Jean-Paul Jacquot bracht verslag uit over de recente ontmoeting tussen EPF-vertegenwoordigers en Europees Transportcommissaris Jacques Barrot. Dominique Devin (SNCF) vertelde hoe het spoorwegennetwerk van de Elzas nieuw leven ingeblazen werd sedert 1997, met een reizigerstoename van 43 %, dank zij de decentralisatie in Frankrijk en de samenwerking tussen de SNCF en de Regionale Raad van de Elzas. Het is nu de bedoeling ervoor te zorgen dat de TGV Est zal functioneren ten voordele van alle inwoners van de regio. Er werd ook verder gediscussieerd over de EPF-werkzaamheden rond internationale langeafstandstreinen en de vertegenwoordiging van de reizigers.