



European Passengers' Federation

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Report of 12th Annual Conference

**MARCH 14TH/15TH 2014
PALAZZO PIRELLI, MILAN, ITALY**

INTRODUCTION

EPF Chairman Trevor Garrod welcomed over 70 members of public transport users' associations from 13 countries to this, the 12th EPF conference.

TRANSPORT ISSUES IN AND AROUND MILAN

Mrs Maria Berrini of Milan City Council gave an overview of the issues. She pointed out that 56% of trips within the urban area were made by public transport and 59% of the population owned a car. The challenge was how to respond to the demand for mobility in a sustainable way. The City had adopted a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan which included metro extensions, bike-sharing and car-sharing schemes, the creation of hubs and measures to make the tram and bus services faster and more attractive.

The congestion charge in the city had resulted in a traffic reduction of 28% and a 23.8% drop in accidents. It had generated 10 million euros of income which could be used to invest in sustainable mobility. In answer to questions, our speaker said that integration needed improving and that the congestion charge had been introduced after a local referendum in 2012. The quality of life in the city centre had improved and just as many people were working there as before the introduction of the congestion charge.

THE WORK OF ASSOUTENTI

Mr Marco Gariboldi presented the work of EPF-member association Associazione Utenti del Trasporto Pubblico, which included surveys, monitoring of services and analyses of public transport websites. They were also co-ordinating and training public transport users' representatives on the provincial transport authorities. The Milan area had the densest rail network in Italy and one of the ten largest tram networks in Europe. Over 50% of operating costs were covered by ticket revenue. Negative points included old infrastructure, lower average speeds, poor ticket inspection and customer care, lack of information on, for example, bus journey times and "stop-go" in planning and finance.

On the other hand, the Lombardy region had introduced new suburban train services, 105 new train sets and a new bus fleet. It was the only Italian region which had increased money for rail investment, introducing a new metro in Brescia and a tram line in Bergamo.

Following decentralisation in 1997/8, the municipalities, provinces and regions in Italy each had different transport responsibilities. AUTP had had to confront the question of cheap fares versus better services. They had accepted fare increases but could now see improvements in public transport. Increased speeds and frequencies had led to an increase in passengers over the past 12 months.

TRAIN SERVICES BETWEEN AUSTRIA AND ITALY

Dr Karl Schambureck of probahn Österreich gave a presentation on train services between Austria and how these could be improved. The Brenner route had a good long-distance service (although it was unfortunate that ÖBB and DB tickets were not accepted by Trenitalia) but differing electrification systems meant that on local trains it had been necessary to change at the border station. He welcomed the introduction of a new SAD through service between Innsbruck and Bolzano/Bozen

The Pontebbana was part of the through route from Venice to Vienna but for 4 years the line between Udine and Villach had only been used by night trains and buses were run in the daytime. Then the EU-funded MICOTRA project had reintroduced two daytime regional trains, which were well used and since December a day-time InterCity train had also run between Vienna and Venice. Dr Schambureck urged that daytime buses be replaced by even interval trains.

The Val Pusteria / Pustertal could be used by InterCity trains from Villach to Innsbruck via the Alto Adige / Sudtirol. Instead, InterCity buses were run 4 times a day between Lienz and Innsbruck and there was "no reasonable rail service" between Villach and Bolzano.

The Meridionale was the classic line from Vienna to Trieste but 4 years ago through services across the border between Italy and Slovenia had been withdrawn. This was a great disadvantage for the city of Trieste. Our speaker was in dialogue with OBB and considered the best option was for them to run a service from Vienna to Trieste via Ljubljana.

GAPS IN THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

Mr Michael Bienick (Pro Bahn and Verkehrsclub Deutschland) gave a presentation based on the university thesis which he had presented in 2013. After tracing attempts to improve international services since 1957 and EU measures since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, he identified 4 categories of gap: where a line was out of use or dismantled; where a small number of trains ran on poor quality infrastructure; where few trains ran even if the infrastructure was good; and where it was necessary to change trains at a border.

He had studied the services between Berlin and Copenhagen, Berlin and Krakow via Wroclaw; Villach and Udine and Brussels to Basel via Luxembourg and Strasbourg. Berlin - Copenhagen involved a sea journey and, if travelling via Rostock, also bus journeys; Berlin - Wroclaw necessitated two changes of locomotive; while most journeys between Brussels and Basel required changes of train. Indeed, this journey now took 30 minutes longer than it had done 30 years ago.

Sometimes there were technical, political or historic reasons for gaps; while EU funding for parallel highway schemes had made it more difficult for rail to compete. In some countries rail had an image problem. Our speaker called for "a political debate Europe-wide".

Appropriate financial instruments must be considered to support long-distance services which helped specific economies. Transport policy must also be linked with location policy. Rail transport should be made easier with a simpler fares system and clockface timetables every two hours.

Operators should not write off night trains; ÖBB showed what was possible. Finally, when a few infrastructure projects tied up capital, it could cause a lack of money for maintaining and improving the conventional rail network.

Mr Bienick was also working with Ian McDonald (Railfuture) on how these studies could be taken forward.

THE WORK OF EPF'S INTERNATIONAL LONG DISTANCE TRAVEL WORKING GROUP

Mr Aljoscha Labeille (Verkehrsclub Deutschland) updated the conference on other work that had been undertaken by the EPF Working Group on Long-distance Travel. In collaboration with colleagues in several EPF member associations it had produced a 6-page report "The Final Mile - and the Mile in the Middle", in English, French and German, which was now available on the EPF website.

Meetings had taken place with the operators Eurostar and Thalys and the consortium RailTeam. He reminded members of the RailTeam questionnaire on the EPF website for use by passengers on high-speed trains.

The Work Group had also produced an article on whether night trains had a future. This is available from EPF's Chairman, Trevor Garrod (trevor.garrod@railfuture.org.uk) in German, French or English.

The Group had also started work on a study of public funding sources for international trains (such as MICOTRA mentioned above), which involved study of EU legislation.

Mr Pierre Havelange (Association des Clients des Transport Publics), who is responsible for EPF liaison with Thalys, said that this company had recently, with EPF support, been awarded quality accreditation in France and was about to become a commercial enterprise. EPF was due to meet Thalys again in May.

Delegates enjoyed a traditional Italian evening meal at the Osteria del Gambiero Rosso, in association with Amadeus.

SATURDAY MARCH 15TH

WELCOMES

The Chairman welcomed all participants and thanked the Region of Lombardy for hosting the conference.

Delegates were welcomed by **Mr Roberto Lambicchi**, Executive responsible for Consumer Affairs for the Regional Council of Lombardy. He explained that the Region was the largest of its kind in Europe. They wanted to protect passenger rights and had set up a committee for this purpose. It was important that all people could use public transport services effectively. The authority sought to work with all stakeholders to design the best policies.

Delegates were also welcomed by **Mr Roberto Brunelli**, President of Associazione Utenti del Trasporto Pubblico for Lombardy. He referred to recent successes in establishing a new regional law to protect consumer interests with 5 agencies to co-ordinate transport and customer representation in these bodies. Progress was also being made in conciliation, to avoid legal disputes. Assouteni were also in discussion with the airports in the region and with Tren Nord.

CITY TRANSPORT IN MILAN

Mr Marco Pibi, of Azienda Trasporti Milanese, spoke on the theme "ATM - an Integrated Mobility System"

ATM had been formed in 1931 and carried 2.3 million passengers a day in a city of 2,400,000 inhabitants. Milan was the first Italian city to open a metro system. They also had 19 tram lines, 134 bus services and 3 trolleybus routes, well integrated with conventional rail; and were responsible for car parks, car sharing, bike sharing; and were now also managing the Underground in Copenhagen. ATM was also pioneering more flexible methods of public transport provision, such as a reservation system for evening and night mobility in some areas. They used 75% electric traction but were also experimenting with 3 hydrogen and 5 new hybrid buses.

Piazza Garibaldi station was being developed as "a real intermodal hub" and they were also preparing for the large numbers of visitors expected for the 2015 Expo in the city.

Mr Pibi stressed the importance of "infomobility", saying that customers now expected electronic displays at all urban stops. They had 28,000 follows on twitter and were experimenting with mobile phones; while an electronic ATM card had been introduced, also giving access to car parks and car-sharing. They had also operated a radio-bus service (similar to a taxi but at the bus fare), but that was not well used and had now been replaced by new neighbourhood buses.

Engineer Elena Foresti, from the Regional Council Transport Section, explained the new regional law 6/2012 which was integrating public transport. Next year there would be just 5 agencies, as opposed to 25 previously. There would be a service level agreement and already monthly meetings of stakeholders were implementing the reorganisation. Customer satisfaction surveys were a factor in determining if fares could rise.

Ms Foresti referred to the 9 points of the EPF Passenger Declaration (see below) and said, "We're working on them."

One delegate commented that commercial speed was a problem, as was punctuality. Mr Pibi said that this was partly due to the geography of the city and the fact that public transport was not generally segregated from private transport. The congestion charge had helped, however. They aimed to ensure that passengers did not have to wait more than 12 minutes for a service; and when this was achieved they would then put more resources into tackling the punctuality issue. Another delegate commented on the lack of public transport maps for visitors.

Ms Foresti said that with a lot of small local operators in the region, it was still difficult to keep up to date with comprehensive information; but that the new law did require each agency to publish a map.

REGIONAL RAIL SERVICES

Mr Paolo Bellingreri of TrenNord introduced his company, which was formed in 2011 by merging Trenitalia (Lombardy Region) and FNM Group (Le Nord) to optimise and streamline services. It had a 1920 km network with 10 suburban and 46 regional services, carrying 670,000 passengers a day.

The company believed in putting the customer first and employees were trained accordingly. They ensured that the necessary information was available and generated a relationship of trust with their customers. In the event of operating problems, the control room would inform the staff who would then inform the passengers. TrenNord also listened to commuter representatives and used twitter, while their base-camp software enabled customers to complain promptly about dirty trains, non-functioning toilets etc.

There were commercial agreements between TrenNord and the municipalities and it was important to inform people who did not always know where they could get to by train. Mr Bellingreri also mentioned the new electronic ticketing system being developed, with a simple ticket valid on all modes.

EUROPEAN PASSENGER DECLARATION

This conference was also the occasion for EPF to launch its European Passenger Declaration, which had resulted from discussion at its Council meetings and was available in English, Italian, French and German. The declaration is intended to set priorities for the coming 5 years as follows -"public transport must offer an attractive and sustainable alternative to the private car. We therefore call upon European decision-makers to support these 9 points:

1. PUBLIC TRANSPORT MUST BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL - with affordable prices, a choice of ticketing, booking and payment methods (including cash) and a choice of information channels, including physical access for children, elderly and disabled people and other persons of reduced mobility such as pregnant women or people with luggage.
2. PUBLIC TRANSPORT MUST BE EASY TO USE - Door-to-door journeys must be seamless with user-friendly hubs. High-speed train services must be properly integrated with conventional services. Vehicles should have adequate flexi-space and sufficient seating.
3. PUBLIC TRANSPORT MUST OVERCOME BORDERS - Train, bus, ferry and tram services across borders must be effective. We support technical and legal measures to improve them. A real European public transport network at various levels, conceived as a whole is needed.
4. NETWORK BENEFITS - train, bus and ferry operators must be required to maintain through ticketing, information and connections. Payment methods must not discourage passengers.
5. PASSENGER SATISFACTION must be regularly measured and published in all modes.
6. PASSENGER RIGHTS - These must apply to all modes and over all distances in a consistent manner, be kept simple and easily enforceable.
7. CONSULTATION - Passenger organisations must be regularly and systematically consulted by transport decision-makers and public transport operators.
8. EASY USE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN OTHER CITIES AND COUNTRIES. Personal mobility being one of the four basic pillars of the EU. Payment systems must be user-friendly.
9. INTEGRATION WITH OTHER SUSTAINABLE MEANS OF TRANSPORT. Public transport networks must be integrated and co-ordinated, particularly in urban areas, with other means of sustainable transport.

Colleagues from three EPF member associations gave presentations to illustrate aspects of the Declaration.

Mr Pau Noy (PTP) spoke on sustainability, saying that in Europe 50% of the population had no access to a car. Those who did not generally made their regular journeys by sustainable means, and used taxis or car-sharing schemes if necessary.

In Spain, motorists generally used their cars for journeys of up to 1000km and planes for journeys of over 1000km - a situation which was fairly typical for all Europe.

It was important to have good internet tools with which people could plan their route and discover the sustainable ways of making their journeys; and if motorists could be shown that public transport, walking and cycling had become more attractive, they could be persuaded to try it.

Ecomobility could also benefit the economy, create sustainable jobs and save money and energy, as well as reducing carbon emissions.

Mr Kurt Hultgren (Resenarsforum) stressed that public transport should be the first alternative and not (as it often was in practice) the second or third.

It was important to overcome borders between cities and regions, as well as between countries, with easy information for passengers who were not local; through ticketing and user-friendly payment methods. "For the first mile of your journey, you generally know the system," he said, "but the last mile is more difficult." Differing electronic systems everywhere were not helpful for visitors and so it should also be possible to pay in cash.

Some Swedish bus operators were proposing to abolish cash payments and Resenarsforum had referred the matter to the Consumers' Ombudsman.

Mr Hultgren concluded, "If a shop refuses your money, you can go elsewhere. But what if a public service refuses you?"

Mr Miroslav Vyka (SCVD) drew a contrast between long-distance train journeys in western and eastern Europe. From Paris to the port of Marseille (658 km) took 3.5 hours by train; from Prague to the port of Split took 21 hours for a broadly comparable 747 km.

43.1% of Czechs had private cars and urban public transport was well-used. Indeed, Prague had seen a 60% increase in usage 2003-13. The number of train passengers in the Czech Republic increased by 8.1% in 2011-12, mainly because of the open access operator Regiojet.

The city of Liberec had invested in new vehicles and seen a 30% increase in passengers.

An app had been developed to enable Czechs to buy an urban transport ticket and work was now in progress on a similar mobile app for tourists.

He stressed that not all passengers were the same and different solutions were needed for different groups.

In discussion it was pointed out that payment by credit card could be very practicable and could be linked to reductions, after a certain time, but ways would need to be found of attributing the income.

What was an "affordable price?" The fare must represent value for users and so regular checks on customer satisfaction were vital. However, no one should be prevented from travelling by public transport because the fares were too expensive. Sometimes money could be saved by booking in advance, but catering for spontaneous travel was also important.

Issues covered by the Passenger Declaration should also be raised with candidates in the forthcoming European elections.

THE CHALLENGE OF HIGH SPEED RAIL

We welcomed three guest speakers on this topic for the afternoon session.

Dr Libor Lochman, CEO of the Community of European Railways, stated that the European Union was very dependent on oil imports, and that "rail needs to be part of the solution." When train operators had public service contracts with Governments, these contracts must be fully compensated.

High speed services had improved rail's market share (for example, Paris - Brussels and Madrid - Seville) and had been a catalyst for regeneration, such as around Lille Europe.

Experience had shown that high speed rail had the potential to take over the majority of medium-distance passenger traffic. The economic and environmental benefit for society was clear when comparing external costs generated by various transport modes.

Besides, new high-speed lines had the potential for creating much-needed capacity for passenger and freight trains using the conventional network.

The potential of high speed had been recognised by politicians and the EU had sent ambitious targets: tripling the length of the network by 2030, completing the high-speed network by 2050 and ensuring that the majority of medium-distance passengers was transported by rail but that date.

Our speaker said that a number of factors needed to be taken into account, such as the cost of the infrastructure and its integration within the transport network. New lines needed to be built to reach high speeds and a strong integrated approach to the rail system was the key to reducing travel time and attracting more passengers.

While the TEN-T regulation and European co-funding instrument (CEF) would be very useful to facilitate the building of new lines, national funding remained crucial. Appropriate

framework conditions on infrastructure charges and external costs would also have a significant impact on the competitiveness of railways and high speed trains particularly.

On top of this, customer-friendly access to the train services would also play a key role for the future of high-speed rail.

Dr Lochman also paid tribute to EPF which had co-operated with CER on the issues of National Enforcement Bodies, Alternative Dispute Resolution, fair competition and comparable obligations of train operators, for example concerning "force majeure."

Mr Paolo Locatelli of Trenitalia described the development of 1250km of high speed route in Italy in recent decades, stretching from Turin to Salerno.

New stations had been designed to create a pleasant environment and where the high-speed line ran parallel to a motorway, car drivers could see the Frecciarossa high speed train flying past them at 320 kph.

13 years ago, Trenitalia had also introduced electronic ticketing - the first of this type in Europe.

In the design of the new Frecciarossa they had recognised that different customers had different needs, and had varied coaches and layouts accordingly, and introduced 4 levels of service.

Trenitalia also took care of pre- and after-journey facilities such as car-parking and car rental.

Our speaker said that high speed rail had also affected commuter travel in Italy, with thousands now using these trains on a daily basis to commute longer distances to work.

The next stage in their progress would be to reduce the Milan - Rome journey to 2 hours 20 minutes in 2015.

Mr Giuseppe Bonollo of the open access operator Nuovo Trasporto Viaggiatori said that Italy was unique in having two operators competing on a high speed line. NTV's "italo" trains carried 6.2 million passengers in 2013, accounting for 23% of the high speed market share.

For trips over 150km, it was estimated that high speed rail's market share had grown 7.9% to 9.7%, although no official figures were available.

Surveys showed the greatest customer satisfaction was with high-speed trains, then domestic airlines, then buses and then local trains.

NTV had dropped the word "class" in favour of "ambience" and provided three categories - Club, Prima and Smart - the last of these being described as "no frills". They employed young staff fully trained by the company and information en route including news, weather

and information about cities at which the train called. Door-to-door services included luggage, restaurant booking, assistance for children travelling alone, hotel and event bookings and discounts on tourist buses, airport shuttles and ferry boats.

NTV also worked with Cathay Pacific and Hahn Air to provide seamless travel for visitors to Italy, and their code 5W was available to 91,000 travel agents.

Answering questions, Dr Lochman said that in some parts of Europe, depending on demand, line upgrades might be more cost-effective than totally new high-speed lines; but the aim by 2040/50 should be to link all major capitals with high speed trains.

Concern was expressed that regional train services on the Milan - Venice line had deteriorated while the fast Frecciabianca now cost twice as much. The operators said that this was partly attributable to regionalisation, but also partly due to the policies of the infrastructure provider.

Many Italian airports had been built without rail stations. If an airport line was built, it was operationally and commercially preferable for it to be a through route, not a branch. Trenitalia was working with 15 airlines to offer interline services including discounts.

EUROPEANS' SATISFACTION WITH RAIL SERVICES

Mr Olivier Coppens, Policy Officer, Single European Rail Area at DGMOVE in Brussels, explained the European Commission's methodology for measuring customer satisfaction.

Interviews were conducted with 26,034 people (approximately 1000 per member state) as part of the Eurobarometer scheme. It was found that 6-8% of EU citizens used trains at least once a week, with usage highest in the countries in the centre of Europe; yet 83% lived within 30 minutes of a station or halt. 67% were satisfied with the ease of buying tickets but in five member states there was a high level of dissatisfaction with station cleanliness - which gave the railways a bad image.

Mr Coppens said that 77% of British train passengers were satisfied with their journeys, with similar high levels of satisfaction expressed in Finland, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

70% of passengers overall were satisfied with staff availability but satisfaction with complaint-handling procedures was less good. In 2011 it had only stood at 30% but had now improved to 41%

Other issues covered by the survey included punctuality and information provision. There was also concern that 19% of EU citizens who wanted to take the train were not doing so because of accessibility problems.

Every two years Mr Coppens' department submitted a report to the European Parliament and Council and this could affect decisions on EU investment.

In response to questions, Mr Coppens said that the survey results took into account age, gender, social demography and reason for travel. It was also accepted that people in some countries might be more prone to complaining than in others. Overall, however, rail was only 27th out of 32 services where the European Commission measured customer satisfaction.

POLICY SPEECH

The main conference concluded with a speech by **EPF Vice-Chairman Mr Christopher Irwin**, reflecting the work which he continued to do at a very high level in European institutions.

He said that EPF now had an influential role in European transport policy, being represented on 8 bodies at EU level and enjoying regular dialogue with many others.

EPF had worked with MEPs and others to ensure that air passenger rights remained user-friendly. If those rights had been weakened, it would have set a precedent for other modes.

Transport operators must not use "force majeure" (or "extraordinary circumstances") as an excuse for poor service and refusal of compensation - but "force majeure" should be clearly defined, as the European Parliament now recommends.

Customer satisfaction among rail travellers needed to be improved, which meant focussing more on the personal needs of each traveller, with accessible, seamless services. EPF had used, and was using, its participation in EU projects to emphasise this point.

We wanted to see rail playing a greater role in cross-border mobility. More standardisation and better co-ordination were needed to achieve this aim. It was not enough to reply on voluntary bilateral arrangements,

EPF had therefore supported the aims of the 4th Railway Package, and that debate was continuing. A 5th Package might be required, and in that case we should again need to put forward our concerns.

EPF was in a good position to do that, and by working with Amadeus and UNIFE, with whom we had been having discussions, we could be in a stronger position to influence the agenda.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions, our Administrator in Belgium and our colleagues in Assoutenti for the local organisation and the Regione Lombardia for hosting the conference.

Mr Lajos Dorner of VEKE invited all colleagues to come to Budapest on March 20th/21st 2015 for the 2015 EPF Conference.

After the conference, the Annual General Meeting of EPF was held, to receive reports, agree the budget and work programme and appoint the Administrative Council, which then elected as follows:

Chairman - Trevor Garrod, Vice-Chairman - Christopher Irwin, Secretary - Josef Schneider, Treasurer- Rian van der Borgt, Assistant Secretary - Willy Smeulders, Assistant Treasurer - Maurice Losch.

The evening meal in association with UNIFE was enjoyed at the Ristorante Xier.

On Sunday, most delegates took part in a tour of Milan by public transport; or a tour by train to Saronno, with a visit to the TrenNord control centre, and the recently reopened line to Seregno.

For more information about EPF and its 35 member associations, and for the full presentations of the conference speakers, please log on to www.epf.eu

Report compiled by Trevor Garrod with assistance from Trevor Jones.

April 6th 2014