

EPF-Bulletin #15 – June 2014



CONTENT

Introduction	2
EPF Annual conference 2014.....	3
EPF launches European Passenger Declaration.....	3
Trams and trains in Northern England.....	4
Welcome to new EPF website.....	5
EPF in the magazines.....	5
EPF meets UITP to talk projects – and other matters.....	5
Energy efficiency in urban transport systems	6
University reviews passenger rights.....	6
Representing EPF in recent months.....	6
Salzburger Verkehrstage 2014	7
High speed rail versus low cost air – competing or complementary modes ?	8
The fourth railway package : what happens next ?	9
EPF to take part in SHIFT ² RAIL	9
Citizens' Rail – putting passengers first.....	10
Railfuture survey of Eurostar customers	10
Reactions to “the final mile”	11
Passenger issues raised with CER	11
Railfuture members visit three countries	11
Two EPF conferences planned	12
Bulgarian Friends of the Railways take action.....	12
Moves to re-establish a through train Austria – Slovenia - Italy	13
Rail-sea-rail between Great Britain and the Netherlands.....	13
Action to enforce air passengers'rights	13
Little liberalisation in Finland	14



INTRODUCTION

Bienvenu au quinzième numéro de notre bulletin d'activités, qui vous raconte ce que la Fédération européenne des Voyageurs (EPF) a fait au niveau européen et des actions de plusieurs de nos associations adhérentes qui sont aussi pertinentes pour d'autres pays et régions.

Bienvenue aussi à notre site web renouvelé www.epf.eu où vous trouverez, parmi beaucoup d'autres informations et opinions, les exposés de notre congrès de 2014 à Milan.

Dans ce numéro nous faisons mention d'un questionnaire pour les clients de l'Eurostar, une enquête concernant l'exécution des droits des passagers aériens en Pologne, la question du financement des trains en Bulgarie, du progrès actuel et possible des liaisons ferroviaires entre l'Autriche et l'Italie et les transports urbains à Bruxelles et Varsovie.

Il y a des nouveaux députés européens et bientôt une nouvelle Commission. Il faut leur présenter ce que nous jugeons les priorités pour les passagers pendant les 5 ans qui viennent - voilà pourquoi nous vous présentons aussi dans ce bulletin notre déclaration des passagers européens qui existe maintenant en 8 langues.

EINLEITUNG

Willkommen zur fünfzehnten Ausgabe unseres Bulletins. Es enthält die Aktivitäten des Europäische Fahrgastverbandes (EPF) auf europäischer Ebene ebenso wie Berichte zu Aktionen mehrerer unserer

Mitgliedsverbände, die auch für andere Länder und Regionen relevant sind.

Willkommen auch zu unserer erneuerten Webseite www.epf.eu, wo Sie unter vielen anderen Informationen und Meinungen auch die Präsentationen während unserer Tagung 2014 in Mailand finden werden.

In dieser Ausgabe berichten wir von einem Fragebogen für die Kund(inn)en von Eurostar; eine Untersuchung der Umsetzung von Fluggastrechten in Polen; die Frage der Finanzierung der Züge in Bulgarien; gegenwärtige und mögliche Entwicklung des Bahnangebots zwischen Österreich und Italien, Stadtverkehr in Brüssel und Warschau.

Es gibt neue Europaabgeordnete und bald eine neue Kommission. Wir werden Ihnen darlegen, was wir für Prioritäten der Fahrgäste in den kommenden fünf Jahren erwarten. Deshalb stellen wir Ihnen in diesem Bulletin unsere Erklärung der europäischen Fahrgäste vor – sie ist jetzt in 8 Sprachen verfügbar.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fifteenth issue of our bulletin of activities, which tells you what the European Passengers' Federation (EPF) has done at European level and actions of several of our member associations which are also relevant for other countries and regions.

Welcome also to our upgraded website www.epf.eu where you will find, among many items of information and opinions, the presentations at our 2014 conference in Milan.

In this issue we mention a questionnaire for customers of Eurostar; a survey of the implementation of air passengers' rights in Poland; the question of rail financing in Bulgaria; current and possible progress of rail services between Austria and Italy, and urban transport in Brussels and Warsaw.

There are new Members of the European Parliament and soon there will be a new

Commission. We must present to them what we consider to be the priorities for passengers in the coming five years. Therefore we present to you in this bulletin our European passenger declaration which is now available in 8 languages.

Trevor Garrod
Président – Vorsitzender - Chairman

EPF ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

Over 70 people from 13 countries gathered in Milan on March 14th/15th for the 12th EPF Annual Conference.

We heard interesting presentations from 8 guest speakers concerning the progress of urban transport in Milan and the city's congestion charge, regional rail services and other public transport developments in Lombardy; the challenge of high speed rail in Italy and other European countries; and the work of the European Commission in measuring passenger satisfaction.

Another important feature of our conference was the contribution made by our own colleagues, with presentations from Marco Gariboldi (AUTP), Dr. Karl Schambureck (Pro Bahn Österreich), Michael Bienick (Verkehrs Club Deutschland and Pro Bahn), Aljoscha Labeille (Verkehrs Club Deutschland), Kurt Hultgren (Resenärsforum), Pau Noy (PTP) and Miroslav Vyka (SCVD).

The proceedings were rounded off by the European report of our Vice-Chairman, Christopher Irwin (Passenger Focus). All the presentations can be viewed on our website (www.epf.eu) as can the official conference report - which is also available on paper from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Rd South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ (trevorgarrod@epf.eu).

Thanks are especially due to our Italian colleagues in AUTP for organising a programme which included visits by public transport on the Sunday; to the Region of Lombardy which hosted the conference; while the Friday and Saturday dinners were held in association with Amadeus and UNIFE respectively. Part of the conference was also attended by a reporter from Il Giornale, and a report appeared the next day.

EPF LAUNCHES EUROPEAN PASSENGER DECLARATION

EPF presented a 9-point European Passenger Declaration at its Milan Conference in March.



The declaration results from discussions at our Council meetings, which take place 3 times a year, and also reflects the concerns and campaigning of EPF at European level and the experiences of many of our member associations at national and regional level.

In summary our declaration says :

1. public transport must be accessible to all;
2. it must be easy to use;
3. it must overcome borders;
4. operators must maintain network benefits;
5. passenger satisfaction must be measured and published;
6. passenger rights must apply to all modes;
7. passenger organisations must be regularly consulted;
8. public transport must be user-friendly for visitors to a city or country;
9. public transport must be integrated with other types of sustainable transport.

The full declaration is on [our website](#). It has been translated into French, German, Italian and Swedish and is also being translated into other languages.

We hope that all associations will find it helpful in their dialogue with political and transport decision-makers during the next five years.

TRAMS AND TRAINS IN NORTHERN ENGLAND

Trams in British towns and cities disappeared between the 1930s and 1950s, leaving only the specialised Great Orme Tramway in Llandudno, North Wales, and the coast tram at Blackpool.

During the past two decades, however, there has been a modest revival, with trams again in Croydon (South London), Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester and Sheffield and a line nearing completion in Edinburgh.

In April a party of 14 members of Vlaamse Reizigersbond spent a week in Manchester, meeting some members of Railfuture and riding on five tram networks, starting with the expanding network of Manchester itself.

There was much that was positive about these networks, but there were also a few things that could be improved.

In Sheffield, the first stage of the 29-km Supertram network was opened in 1994 and it includes a line through the regeneration area of the Don Valley to Meadowhall and a well-engineered route climbing up the eastern side of the valley with fine views across the city and out into new suburbs to the southeast.



But, for the visitor arriving by train (unless they have a Plus Bus ticket) there was no information to be seen at the station concerning routes or ticketing. Signs pointed to a basic tram stop with a small shelter, no seating and no ticket machine.

Tickets were available on the crowded tram from a member of staff who sold paper tickets and found it difficult to reach all the passengers before they alighted. There was a dot matrix indicator on the tram, but no announcements were made and at the stops there was no real-time information.

Nottingham has a smaller network of 14 km opened in 2014; but two extensions are also being built and should be open by the end of the year.

The trams were clean and comfortable with clear announcements and, at the stops, real-time information. A conductor sold tickets but new ticket machines were being tested at all the stops and were due to come into operation in May. A helpful team of revenue protection officers were also boarding the vehicles.

The new bridge to carry the tram line extension over Nottingham station was already in position, while at the northern terminus of Hucknall there was efficient interchange with trains on the line to Mansfield and Worksop.

The Belgian party also travelled on the reopened line between Worksop and Nottingham and, when using more rural services, were impressed by the work of Community Rail Partnerships in looking after unstaffed stations in Derbyshire and in promoting these services for leisure purposes.

A visit to Crich Tram Museum included a ride on a former Berlin tram and experience of two rural bus services.

Most members of the group also visited Blackpool to experience its modernised seafront trams and some took the train to Birmingham to ride the tram to Wolverhampton and see work in progress on extending this line through the city center.

Small groups visited the Beamish Open Air

Museum (which includes trams), historic York with its National Railway Museum and the scenic Derbyshire Dales. At no point did any need to use a motor car.

WELCOME TO NEW EPF WEBSITE

EPF has paid the company [Sommervogel](#) to re-design and upgrade the EPF website www.epf.eu. The refreshed website was launched in April.

It still contains information about EPF and its policies, presentations given and conferences held, together with useful links to its member associations in 19 countries. It also has photographs to illustrate our many concerns and interests - and the pictures all contain people.

An innovation in our new website is a facility which anyone can use to contact us; and a password protected section for members.

Thank you to Josef Schneider for working with the website design company throughout the winter.

EPF IN THE MAGAZINES

EPF Chairman Trevor Garrod recently had articles published in the magazines Europäische Bahnimpulse (on the European elections), Railway PRO (on liberalisation and how to encourage modal shift to public transport) and Regionale Schienen (about the London Oyster Card).

Articles in such publications help to convey EPF's message to an international audience. They also help to direct readers to our website - from which, of course, they can also find out, via the links, about public transport users' organisations in 19 European countries.

Indeed, it would be good to think that readers

in the countries where there is not yet a public transport users' organisation would be encouraged to form one!

EPF MEETS UITP TO TALK PROJECTS – AND OTHER MATTERS

EPF representatives have regular discussions with the [Union internationale des Transports publics](#), who mainly represent urban and regional public transport operators.

On March 24th we met Brigitte Ollier, Annika Stienen and 4 of their staff, and were given a detailed account of European Union projects on which they are working.

The NODES project on urban transport interchanges is now at its halfway stage and will be completed in October 2015. EPF is a partner in this study, which will ultimately produce an on-line toolbox on good practice. These examples will be tested in Osnabruck, Birmingham, Madrid and three cities in the Netherlands. To find out more, go to www.nodes-interchanges.eu.

The 3iBS project on buses is another in which EPF plays a role and which is due to conclude in March 2015. For details, go to www.3iBS.eu.

We were told about a new project ZEEUS (www.zeeus.eu) which is researching zero-emission bus systems. Demonstration vehicles will be tested between October 2014 and mid 2015 in Bonn, Barcelona, Glasgow, London, Münster, Plzeň, Stockholm and one Italian city to be decided. EPF member associations will be welcome at these demonstrations of electric buses.

Meanwhile, we expressed some concerns about the attempts of some bus operators to abolish cash payments, and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of various methods of payment.

At our previous meeting with UITP we had discussed the issue of flexispace in public transport vehicles. In an update, we were advised that from July 2014 there would be mandatory space for prams in articulated buses; but rigid buses, trams and trains would remain with their current spaces.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN URBAN TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Willy Smeulders represented EPF at a presentation in Brussels on March 3rd, to launch this new UITP project.

Mr. Jerzy Leyk of the Warsaw public transport authority explained how they had cut energy use on the metro by 8% from modernisation and energy-saving driving. New trams with regenerative function had also led to a 18-37% energy recovery and similar experiences had been found on Gdynia trolleybuses.

Mr. Jerome Pourbaix of UITP called for avoidance of shorter trips and improvements to technology, saying that urban trips within the EU were due to increase by 25% between 2005 and 2025. Public transport was 2.5 times more energy-efficient per passenger and kilometre than the private car. There was a need for better integration between urban planning, public transport, energy and IT.

Ms. Patricia Remacle of the Brussels public transport authority outlined the progress with renewables and photovoltaic panels to generate electricity, together with smart metering. Energy could also be recovered from braking. The transition from diesel buses to hybrid and electric vehicles was also having a big impact.

For more information, go to www.uitp.org.

UNIVERSITY REVIEWS PASSENGER RIGHTS

EPF's Chairman was recently contacted by researchers at the University of Central Lancashire, who were assessing the effectiveness of EU passenger rights.

He gave them examples of good and bad practice in the rail sector, referred also to the air sector and suggested that in our experience advertising of passenger rights on international journeys by the different modes was variable.

The researchers asked whether the existence of passenger rights affected passenger choice. Mr. Garrod replied, "Speed, convenience and cost are more likely factors. However, if a passenger chooses a particular mode of transport for a particular journey for the first time, has a bad experience and no help or recompense, he or she may well not use that mode again."

He went on to say, "There is a possibility that operators will increase fares if it becomes costly for them to implement passenger rights. This may in future affect travel options. Hence the need for a level playing field and consistency in the implementation of passenger rights, which should be harmonised as far as possible."

REPRESENTING EPF IN RECENT MONTHS

Some events at which EPF members have represented us are reported elsewhere in this bulletin. Here is a list of others:

December 6th 2013 – Christopher Irwin to Europäische Rechtsakademie in Trier – speech on passengers' priorities in reform of Air Passengers' Rights acquis

January 9th 2014 - Trevor Garrod and Willy Smeulders spoke at a meeting organised by the Greens in the European Parliament on passenger rights and extraordinary circumstances.

January 23rd – Christopher Irwin chaired European Railway Agency finance, budget and human resources board sub-committee, Valenciennes

January 28th – Christopher Irwin and Willy Smeulders participated in a meeting of European Rail Research Advisory Council and Shift2Rail Strategic Board, Brussels; and both of them attended European Rail Awards, Brussels

January 29th – Christopher Irwin and Willy Smeulders participated in a meeting of European Rail Research Advisory Council Steering Group, Brussels.

February 7th - Nine EPF representatives from 6 member associations met officers a staff of UNIFE in Brussels. UNIFE is the body representing railway manufacturers.

February 11th – Willy Smeulders to Amadeus and Rail Forum Europe

February 20th – Christopher Irwin attended Rail Market Monitoring Study working group at European Commission, Brussels

February 20th and March 12-13th & 17th – Christopher Irwin represented the ERA board as observer in pre-selection panels for appointment of new ERA Executive Director, Brussels

February 21st – Willy Smeulders to Metal Theft and Graffiti EU meeting

February 24th /25th - Trevor Garrod spoke and took part in a panel discussion at the SMARTRAIL conference in Amsterdam

February 27th – Willy Smeulders to Sintroper Seamless PT

March 4th – Willy Smeulders to Energy Efficiency and Urban Transport Systems

March 6th – Willy Smeulders to ERRAC Steering Committee

March 7th – Willy Smeulders to ERRAC Evaluation Committee

March 9th – Willy Smeulders to Madrid - Amadeus

March 12th - Trevor Garrod spoke at the Future of European Rail conference in London.

March 19th – Christopher Irwin chaired ERA board meeting, Lille

March 24th – Meeting with UITP

March 25th – Willy Smeulders and Rian van der Borgt to TAP – FSM – CER

March 27th – Willy Smeulders to Fosterrail Workshop

April 1st – Willy Smeulders to EFRA meeting and dinner

April 2nd - Willy Smeulders and Rian van der Borgt took part in the twice-yearly Customer Liaison Group meeting of the Community of European Railways (CER) in Brussels. They presented EPF's reaction on Shift2Rail and other EU-projects.

April 7th - Kurt Hultgren participated in a round table in Copenhagen, Denmark, where the government is preparing rail investments and passenger cooperation. To-day there is no passenger NGO in Denmark, and experiences from Resenårsforum, Sweden and from EPF were sought.

April 9th - Kurt Hultgren participated in ERA working group on revision of PRM TSI, meeting in Lille.

April 10th – Christopher Irwin and Willy Smeulders participated in meeting of European Rail Research Advisory Council – Shift2Rail Strategic Board, Paris

April 11th – Christopher Irwin and Willy Smeulders participated in Plenary meeting of European Rail Research Advisory Council, Paris

April 16th – Christopher Irwin moderated plenary session on 'Rail as an Attractive & Sustainable Mode for the Future' at TRA 2014, Paris

May 7th - Trevor Garrod took part in a meeting of the Association of European Rail Agents in London.

May 7th – Christopher Irwin acted as a keynote opening speaker at EU Railway Conference, Lille

May 19th – Josef Schneider discussed principals of air passengers rights at the EALA, 9th Munich Liability seminar

SALZBURGER VERKEHRSTAGE 2014

Die 12. internationalen Salzburger Verkehrstage finden vom 13. bis 15. Oktober im Best Western Tagungshotel Brunauer, Salzburg, statt.

Diese Tagung gehört zu den wichtigsten im deutschen Sprachgebiet, die politische Entscheidungsträger, Verkehrsbetreiber, Experten und Fahrgäste unter einem Dach versammelt. Ein interessantes Kultur- und Besuchsprogramm ist auch damit verbunden.

12. INTERNATIONALE SALZBURGER VERKEHRSTAGE



Salzburger Verkehrstage - www.salzburger-verkehrstage.org. The title is "Vielfalt mobil" and there will be 4 sections.

Die Themenschwerpunkte sind "Mobilität zwischen Freiheit und Frust", "Neue Angebote und Dienstleistungen", "Mobilität der Generationen" und "Köche der nouvelle cuisine des Verkehrrs" (z.B. attraktive Wegekettten von Tür zu Tür, Kriterien und Prioritäten für Verkehrsprojekte sowie deren Finanzierung und Wirksamkeit."

HIGH SPEED RAIL VERSUS LOW COST AIR – COMPETING OR COMPLEMENTARY MODES ?

Trevor Garrod tells:

I spent an interesting and stimulating day at the Florence School of Regulation on March 3rd, taking part in a workshop on this topic. About 30 transport professionals and academics took part, together with representatives of the European Commission and, for the passengers, Marco Gariboldi and myself.

We partly answered the question, but also examined related and wider issues - pointing the way, hopefully, to further studies into the respective roles of trains and planes and their financing.

In my own presentation I concentrated on good practice in the integration of rail and air, irrespective of the type of train and airline. I also made the point that high speed lines needed to be well integrated with the rest of the rail network - thus some TGVs from Paris head down the high speed route as far as Lyon St-Exupéry but then continue on classic routes to key centres in the French Alps.

A full report of the workshop is on the website www.florence-school.eu

Here are just some key points that emerged from the presentation and discussions:

- The Paris - London market is now 81% rail and 19% air; Brussels - Paris is now 95% high speed rail. This has freed up slots for flagship carriers to use on long-haul flights.
- The growth in low-cost airlines has been mainly from regional airports rather than major hubs. Low-cost airlines are more interested in point-to-point than in hub-and-spoke.
- The introduction of low-cost flights from London to the Mediterranean meant that forecasts 20 years ago for HS1 (the high speed line from London to the Channel tunnel) were not met.
- Over 400 pairs of cities in Europe are now linked by low-cost airlines with generally bypass hubs.
- If rail wants to compete with air, it must be high-speed; and in fact rail's chief competitor for most markets is road.
- Long-haul airlines are mainly interested in working with high-speed rail. For example, Air France sells a ticket from New York to Bordeaux which comprises a flight to Paris Charles de Gaulle and then TGV to Bordeaux.

- In Germany, 20% of passengers access the airport by some type of train (not necessarily ICE) and DB now offers "Rail & Fly" tickets with 75 airlines. At Frankfurt, the figures is as high as 37% by train.
- The European average is 16% while at Stockholm Airport 52% arrive by public transport and at Zurich 63%.
- Information about public transport links is usually found on airport websites but is almost non-existent on airline booking sites.
- Open access on the high speed line in Italy has led to a reduction in train fares, a growth of 14% in usage and a reduction in air traffic between Rome and Milan.

Finally: I travelled between London and Florence (Firenze) by a series of 3 high speed trains. The TGV does not run at top speed between Lyon and Turin (Torino) of course, as this is the classic route - but it is also the most scenic part of the journey. On the other hand, I saw little of the Apennines since most of the modern route between Bologna and the outskirts of Florence is in tunnels - but one cannot have everything...

THE FOURTH RAILWAY PACKAGE : WHAT HAPPENS NEXT ?

Interoperability on the railways came a step closer when the Transport & Tourism Committee of the outgoing European Parliament approved the technical pillar of the 4th railway Package. This means that costs can be reduced and it becomes a little easier to introduce new cross-border services.



The new European Parliament will need to

vote on the recommendation of the outgoing Transport Committee, probably in September; and the Council of Ministers will then need to approve it. Therefore EPF and its member associations in EU countries will need to urge newly-elected MEPs and national Transport Ministers for their support.

Agreement has not yet been reached on the other aspects of the 4th Railway Package, concerning liberalisation, and so we can expect further debates and consultation after the European Elections and the appointment of a new European Transport Commissioner.

EPF TO TAKE PART IN SHIFT²RAIL



In recent months EPF has been in discussion with UNIFE (the association of European rail manufacturers) over our participation in the SHIFT²RAIL project. As a result we and at least some of our member associations expect to be involved in this work from January 2015.

The 3-year research project aims to tackle three particular challenges facing the rail industry - capacity, reliability and life-cycle costs. Subject to a final decision on June 6th, it will be funded 50% by the European Commission and 50% by the industry.

SHIFT²RAIL will consist of five Innovation Programmes, each of which will contain a number of Technical Demonstrators.

The programmes of most relevance to passengers concern the next generation of rolling stock and multimodal information, ticketing and real-time travel planning.

Other programmes will cover freight; track and capacity, procurement and testing issues.

All of them could help bring down costs (and potentially fares) and possibly make it more viable to build new lines.

We shall keep member associations informed as the plans for the project develop over the coming months.

CITIZENS' RAIL – PUTTING PASSENGERS FIRST



“Our train, our station, our citizens!” is the slogan of the EU Citizens’ Rail project, which includes a series of interesting station improvement schemes in the UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands. All are committed to gathering passenger feedback at the earliest possible stage, so that improvements can be tailored to meet user needs.

In Pays de la Loire, a competition was held among local design students to generate radical plans to improve the image of the isolated and potentially intimidating Penhoët station in Saint-Nazaire. Nine designs were created and showcased at a public exhibition. Nearly 200 people attended, eager to help shape the future of their station. The chosen design – featuring an illuminated pipe stretching across the footbridge to increase the visibility of the station – will be implemented in 2015.

Meanwhile in the German city of Aachen, a survey found that eight out of 10 residents wanted to be involved in the planning of a new station for their suburb, Richterich. More than 80 people went on to attend a community workshop to give their views on two potential designs for the new station.

And on the Riviera Line in Devon, community volunteers have been rolling up their sleeves to help Dawlish station to bounce back from major storm damage incurred over winter.

Working with TV gardener Toby Buckland, the Friends of Dawlish Station gave platforms a “green makeover” with 10 new planters installed – providing a more pleasant station environment for passengers, and attracting national media attention in the process.

Find out more about these and other projects at www.citizensrail.org. Citizens’ Rail is part of the EU Interreg IVB programme. Its lead partner is the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership. (Mike Parker-Bray Citizens' Rail Communications Officer)

RAILFUTURE SURVEY OF EUROSTAR CUSTOMERS

EPF member association Railfuture is conducting a year-long survey of Eurostar customers, starting on July 1st 2014.

If and when you make a journey by Eurostar during that period, go to www.railfuture.org.uk and answer the questions about your train journeys between Great Britain and the Continent.

Railfuture has previously conducted two surveys of Eurostar journeys in specific periods and published reports in 2008 and 2011. The new survey is on-line, but proper questionnaires will also be available from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ, UK. A report will be issued in the autumn of 2015.

By holding a 12-month survey, Railfuture intends to obtain a balanced picture of the experiences of business and leisure users; to identify problems that need to be addressed while also establishing why people choose Eurostar and how effective the service is as part of a longer journey chain - such as Manchester to Lyon or Antwerp to Norwich.

REACTIONS TO “THE FINAL MILE”

Thank you to colleagues in France and in Germany who have made useful comments on this EPF report; as it is on line, it could easily be updated and expanded at a future date;

For instance: "There are numerous examples of good practice in Great Britain which could be imitated elsewhere."

The websites www.dbfrance.fr and www.nahverkehr.info are highly recommended - and ought to be included in rail publicity.

Visitors to Italy need to know that "it is mostly not possible to buy a bus ticket from the driver". The exception is in the Alto Adige / Südtirol.

A visitor to Sweden found it difficult to buy a local bus ticket at a ferry port; while using his mobile was only possible if he had a contract with a Swedish network provider.

At the very least, it is suggested that bus, tram and local train stops must have clear information on ticketing - and if you are planning your journey on the internet, the information should be there as well.

PASSENGER ISSUES RAISED WITH CER

EPF participates regularly in the Customer Liaison Group meetings of the Community of European Railways, which represents train operators and infrastructure providers. At the April meeting our representatives were Willy Smeulders and Rian van der Borgt.

The meeting considered the EPF Passenger Declaration and it was agreed to work together to raise decision-makers' awareness

of the importance of infrastructure funding and Public Service Obligation payments.

Two other matters raised by EPF concerned disruption caused by engineering work and the need for operators to provide paper as well as digital timetables. Feedback from this discussion will be passed to the next session of the CER Passenger Working Group in July.

We also expressed concern at the recent and unexpected UIC (Union international des chemins de fer) decision to reduce the validity of international tickets from one month to 15 days. It was agreed to strengthen the link with UIC to ensure better liaison on future discussions on proposed changes.

Carriage of bicycles on trains was also discussed and good practice identified. Finally the factsheet "Railways and Passengers - one goal, same concerns" published jointly by CER, EPF and the European Disability Forum is to be reviewed.

The Customer Liaison Group will meet again on October 22nd.

RAILFUTURE MEMBERS VISIT THREE COUNTRIES

A party of 22 members of Railfuture, one of EPF's British member associations, spent a week at Mulhouse at the end of April and met members of FNAUT, Pro Bahn and Verkehrsclub der Schweiz.



The British visitors were able to ride the train/tram and met the Vice-Chairman of the Communities of the valley of the Thur : learning of the industrial heritage of the region, its regeneration and the important role of the railway.

They were also able to use cross-border tickets that enabled them to visit the Waldenburg narrow-gauge railway and the long-distance tram from Basel city centre to Rodersdorf, as well as have an insight into the city's transport services in general.

The ticket for a cross-border rail journey to Freiburg-im-Breisgau also enabled them to use the city's tram network and enjoy a scenic train journey to Schluchsee, high in the Black Forest.

Many examples of good practice were thus experienced, while a few instances were also seen where customer information could have been improved. Railfuture members were also told by a French colleague how the service along the Thur valley to Kruth could be changed to make it more attractive for commuters - some of whom travel as far as Basel to work.

Thank you to Jürg Tschopp, Michel Foudrat and Josef Schneider for their help in organising the local excursions.

TWO EPF CONFERENCES PLANNED

BRUSSELS: Early December we are planning a conference, aimed principally at decision-makers, transport professionals and MeP's to set major targets for next year's transport politics.

Provisional title is "The end of end Journey" and the topics are likely to cover cross-modal passenger rights and telematics, accessibility and seamless journeys. Spatial planning and integration should also be featured.

BUDAPEST: Our annual conference aimed at all individual members of our affiliated organisations and including the Annual General Meeting will be held in Budapest on March 20th - 21st. Optional visits to places of transport and other interest will be included in the programme, as will a day trip to Debrecen in eastern Hungary.



Both events will be publicised on our website as more details are decided.

BULGARIAN FRIENDS OF THE RAILWAYS TAKE ACTION

EPF member association Railway Transport Friends Association has started legal action on the question of the transparency of the BDZ (Bulgarian state railway) public service obligation contract and the public reports of the rail regulator and the Ministry of Transport.

The action was successful at the first level court.

RTFA's analysis had indicated that reductions in passenger train services were taking place even though subsidies remained the same. The Bulgarian Ministry of Transport and Bulgarian state railway regulator (Executive Agency of Railway Administration) has been accused of not providing all public information to taxpayers about the Public Service Obligation contract and how public finances are being spent during the last few years.

MOVES TO RE-ESTABLISH A THROUGH TRAIN AUSTRIA – SLOVENIA - ITALY

Dr Karl Schambureck of Pro Bahn Österreich has had discussions with ÖBB and colleagues in Trieste, as a result of which a round table meeting will take place in the Italian city in July.



Those involved will include the autonomous region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, the province of Trieste, the City of Trieste, the Udine - Cividale Railway (FUC), Austrian Federal Railways and Slovenian Railways.

The aim is to extend the existing train IC 151 from Wien to Ljubljana as far as Trieste - which will not only benefit the city of Trieste but also enable passengers from Austria and Slovenia to change there for other destinations in Italy.

RAIL-SEA-RAIL BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE NETHERLANDS

Members of Railfuture and the Association of European Rail Agents have been in discussion with colleagues in Rover and with managers of the train operator Abellio Greater Anglia on the future of the rail link from Hoek van Holland and through ticketing.

This is an ideal rail-sea-rail link with convenient access between trains and ferries at both Harwich and Hoek van Holland and,

for British customers, easy through ticketing between stations in eastern England and all Dutch stations. It is also used by passengers making longer journeys, such as with Interrail.

From 2017 the line to Hoek van Holland will be incorporated into the Rotterdam metro system operated by RET. There is logic behind this move insofar as the great majority of users on the line are commuters into Rotterdam. However, it also remains a key link on a multimodal journey for international travellers.

It is especially important that RET recognises this and in future there will still be add-on tickets for ferry passengers to travel from or to Dutch stations.

In the shorter term, the extension of the OV Chipcard on Dutch trains and the erection of barriers at stations is also a matter of concern but we understand that arrangements will be made for international travellers.

ACTION TO ENFORCE AIR PASSENGERS' RIGHTS

Jaroslaw Nowicki writes:

Our association "Friendly Flying" has started monitoring the enforcement of air passenger rights in Poland.

The year-long project is aimed at airline passengers, especially people who rarely travel, and mostly for private reasons, with their families and with low awareness of their rights.



We plan to examine the situation in enforcement of passenger rights by government bodies and institutions, via a survey; facilitate communication between key stakeholders via the internet; develop alternative dispute resolution in practice and increase overall awareness in society of consumer rights.

The activities are being implemented as part of a project for non-government organisations, Citizens for Democracy, financed by a grant from the European Economic Area.

At the end of the project, in the second half of January 2015, we plan to organise a conference in Warsaw to announce the results and findings of the monitoring. More information will follow, on the EPF website and in our next bulletin. Meanwhile, you may go to www.friendlyflying.org

LITTLE LIBERALISATION IN FINLAND

Finland has generally been a supportive member of the European Union, contributing to the development and implementation of policies. It has a strong tradition of competition.

Why therefore has the Finnish Government been less than enthusiastic in applying EU competition rules concerning rail?

The Finnish Railway Passengers' Association has written to the European Commission about what it sees as the Government's disregard of competition rules and would like to see the Commission take legal action.

In 2009 the government in Helsinki decided to give VR, the state railway operator, the sole right to operate passenger trains on the mainline network; and only open some secondary lines to competition. This contract was later extended to 2024.

The secondary lines are mostly fragmented and do not form a coherent network. Indeed the then Transport Minister called them "economically hopeless". The only exception is the Helsinki suburban network which will be put out to tender.

The Government gave as their reason "a major rolling stock investment project" by VR.

Certainly the question of what to do with rolling stock if the owner is running fewer trains is a relevant one. However, some countries such as Great Britain and Germany have coped with the issue in various ways.

Furthermore, the new carriages mentioned only amounted to a small proportion of the total investment project. To make matters worse, older carriages are being scrapped, not because they were obsolete but in order to prevent a potential competitor from using them. The Government is taking no action to stop this scrapping.

The signal being given is that the Government preferred to have a rail monopoly. Rail passengers were not to be given a choice. Indeed, even the Parliament was given no opportunity to debate the matter.

Meanwhile, how is the situation on the buses? A form of regulated competition based on operating licenses was introduced in Finland over 50 years ago and has worked very well. For example, each town or city has a common bus terminal which is used by all companies. In regional traffic a common ticketing system is being developed. This is a more encouraging situation than in the deregulated bus services of Great Britain.

For more information on the situation in Finland, please email the Finnish Rail Passengers' Association
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COLOPHON

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