

Fighting against disruptions in public transport essential to achieve modal shift says European Passengers' Federation

To achieve modal shift – a key aim of the EU Transport White Paper – public transport must be attractive in terms of speed, regularity, price and convenience. Disruptions to public transport in general and train services in particular have a negative impact on the image and on the use of transport systems. The causes of delays and cancellations must be addressed by both transport operators and competent authorities.

1/ Public passenger transport is the first lever of economic development and ecological transition. It is essential to access work, education, culture, social life. It is destined to play an increasing role in growing conurbations and urban regions, as well as in intercity relations. Reliable, safe and highly adaptable, it is a key tool for both individual freedom and territorial development.

2/ However, service disruptions are inherent to public transport systems and should therefore be systematically addressed by stakeholders: They should as much as possible be kept to a minimum and deserve special attention from operating companies and transit authorities. There must be robust measures to deal with delays and cancellations, with clear and real time passenger information before, during and after the journey, and with help and /or compensation if the passenger cannot reach his or her destination in comparable time and comfort.

3/ Events to be addressed such as delays, disruptions, train cancellations, strikes and other industrial actions, engineering works,... should be clearly specified from the beginning by the competent transit authority and, if appropriate, associated with a bonus penalty system. Related statistics and data should be regularly published and communicated to other stakeholders and passenger representatives. A reasonable benchmark is key to measure progress or problems encountered by public transport system and to deliver a regular barometer on service quality and reliability.

4/ Measures to be taken (public and passenger information, compensations, discounts, accommodation, catering, transport substitutes etc.) should be clearly listed and specified in contractual documents to be signed and endorsed by the competent authority (national, regional or local) and the operator(s).

5/ Strikes and other industrial actions are legitimate. However, they should be kept to a minimum and be a last resort. National legislation should therefore foresee a process to ensure that a minimum level of transport services will be established and operated in case of social conflicts. Information to the public at large prior to such events should be compulsory to allow people to organize or find other solutions if they have to travel.

6/ Rail industry deserves special attention: Its inherent reliability due to its own right of way and the associated trust and confidence it is still benefiting among the population should be protected. Apart measures listed above, it should be established that:

- Whatever the structure of the rail sector – integrated company or separation between Infrastructure Manager and Operator(s) – relationships between both parties should never affect passengers and occurring disputes should be solved on a fair and transparent way providing a “one stop shop” for the customer.
- Implementation of a “performance regime” between Infrastructure Managers and rail undertakings, recommended by the European Institutions, has therefore to be ensured on rail systems. Among other benefits, it will ensure a clear treatment of problems and provide safe, transparent and useful information to customers.
- Rail infrastructure maintenance and development plans should be specified by the competent authority, and first of all by the National Government, with measurable results based on a precise timing. Rail infrastructure quality is indeed essential to providing a safe and high level service quality and to avoid disruptions and delays ruining rail dependability and reliability.

7/ To achieve these aims, there must be **regular passenger involvement** through consultations and effective representations in national, regional and local competent bodies.

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