



Conference Report

April 8th/9th

Introduction

Over 80 representatives from 16 public transport users' associations in 11 European countries gathered in Berlin, on April 8th/9th for the 14th Annual Conference of the European Passengers' Federation.

In welcoming all colleagues, EPF President Trevor Garrod thanked the sponsors Talgo, S-Bahn Berlin, BVG and Abellio-NS for their support in the conference organization.



Friday

The afternoon was devoted to reports from EPF member associations.

JORG BRUCHERTSEIFER of PRO BAHN described the cross-border rail links between Germany and neighboring countries, pointing out good and not so good examples of services and also ticketing. For instance there were good ticketing arrangements for commuters between Germany and Switzerland and some attractive deals to the Polish cities of Szczecin and Gorzow Wielkopolski.

Ferries between Germany and Sweden also played an important role but public transport access to some ports, notably Sassnitz, was poor.

Szczecin was the nearest large city to Berlin and deserved better connections. Cross-border links to France had improved, but some onward connections still needed to be more convenient for international journeys.

MICHAEL ZIESAK of Verkehrsclub Deutschland spoke of the German Bundesverkehrswegeplan (Federal Transport Corridor Plan) setting out investment proposals for road and rail over the next 30-40 years, with 19 definite projects and some 50 others being investigated. It was important to deal with capacity bottlenecks.

On the international scene, German investment was proposed for the Fehmarn fixed link to Denmark, the Brenner Base Tunnel and upgrading of the line between Karlsruhe and Basle.

VCD consider that capacity improvements were also needed between big city hubs and a national even-interval train service (Deutschlandtakt), similar to that which existed in Switzerland.

MICHAEL CLEVE of Deutscher Bahnkunden Verband stressed the need to upgrade the east/west main line from Leipzig to Wroclaw and Krakow, and welcomed the recent co-

operation between German and Polish local authorities which had led to the resumption of regional train services across the River Neisse at Gorlitz.

However, there were also problems with the financing of regional train services within Germany, where heavily populated regions were favored over more rural areas such as eastern Saxony (the Oberlausitz or Upper Lusatia). This in turn made it more difficult to attract people and businesses to such areas.

MIROSLAV VYKA of SCVD (the Czech public transport passengers' association) gave a presentation on their recently published report on regional rail services in the Czech Republic. Rail usage had increased in recent years thanks to modernization and competition and the average journey length had gone up from 40 to 47 kilometers in the past five years.

Park-and-ride facilities could be provided more cheaply in rural areas, where people were willing to drive up to 10 km to a station. This brought benefits to the rural area by giving easier access to work opportunities, less wear and tear on roads and maintaining accessibility the continuation of rural train services.

Benefits for the cities included less road congestion, less pressure for new car parks and greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

ARRIEN KRUYT of ROVER (the Dutch public transport users' association) presented their work, in co-operation with PRO BAHN, in pressing for better cross-border services. The two associations had held a very well-supported symposium in Wesel, which brought together "all the right kind of people" - users, transport professionals and political decision-makers. A further such event would take place at Maastricht in the autumn.

Lessons learned included the need for a steady number of daily commuters on local cross-border services; and full integration of longer-distance trains (such as Amsterdam - Berlin) with domestic services.

To attract new passengers, frequency was also needed and he pointed out encouraging projects for regional trains on the Arnhem- Emmerich and Bielefeld - Bad Bentheim - Hengelo sections; on the on Venlo - Viersen route investment was needed to improve capacity on the German side.



ANJA SCHMOTZ of Kolejdepl (Bahn Deutschland Polen or Rail Germany - Poland) outlined how her citizens' initiative had been founded in response to deteriorating train services between Germany and Poland, affecting especially the cities of Dresden, Wroclaw, Karkow, Berlin and Poznan.

The initiative now had some 20 partners, including many Chambers of Commerce & Industry, as well as the existing public transport users' organizations in Germany. Recent positive signs included special weekend trains from Berlin to Wroclaw and some limited through services between Gorlitz and Jelenia Gora as well as from Berlin to Zielona Gora and to Krzysz via Gorzow Wielkopolski.

Kolejdepl was participating in consultations by the German government and hoped to take part in the proposed autumn rail summit. It was essential to improve the framework conditions, reducing discrimination against rail and targeting investment in the infrastructure.

SIMON MAARFIELD of IGEB presented the results of his study on Eurocity trains, with particular reference to the route of the former Vindobona between Berlin, Prague and Vienna. It was important to establish the demand for such services, with the conventional wisdom being that rail was competitive for journeys of up to 4 hours 30 minutes. There had been an inconsistent approach to marketing in recent years but also encouraging news with the introduction of new services such as Marseilles - Milan.

Trains on the Vindobona route had to compete with a 4-hour end-to-end flight time between Berlin and Vienna (10 direct flights a day) whereas Dresden had no direct flights to the Austrian capital.

Mr Maarfield's survey results suggested that 6% of passengers were travelling the entire route between Berlin and Vienna while the rail alternative, via Fulda and Wurzburg, included tight connections and high fares. 54% of respondents to his survey said they used the Vindobona because it was a through train, while 68% said that convenient times and attractive prices played a role in their choice of mode. 23% would fly or drive if there was no through train.

IAN MCDONALD of Railfuture followed with an update on EPF's 2015 discussion paper on Eurocity trains, concentrating on some priority routes and especially on the image presented by the service. He cited Vienna - Venice as a route which some improvements had taken place and which had further potential.

The topic would be further considered by EPF's Working Party on Long-distance Travel on April 23rd, as would the continuing campaign on the future of night trains. A petition on the latter issue had now reached nearly 11,000 signatures and was shortly due to be presented to the German Transport Minister.

Nick Brookes (Captain Train) commented that there was a definite demand for more journeys between key intermediate towns and cities on the Vindobona route.

Marc Schram commented that potential for night trains existed on some routes, depending on convenient departure and arrival times.

MICHEL QUIDORT of FNAUT described EU rail legislation over the past 15 years and the aims of liberalization to achieve more and better trains.

In 2009 the European Parliament had asked for new legislation to open up services to competition and this had led to the drafting of the 4th Railway Package. It was however important to remember that 90% of passengers used contracted public services.

He described the technical pillar of the 4th Railway Package as "good news" for customers as it provided the basic technical conditions for a single European rail market; but the political pillar as "bad news" for passengers, since its directive on separation of infrastructure and operating activities had been watered down by the Council of Ministers in October 2015. Where there had already been competitive tendering for service and market opening - as in Great Britain, Sweden, the Netherlands and regional services in Germany, it had led to an increase in passengers travelling by train.

He concluded that there was a contradiction between the aims of the 2011 Transport White Paper and the present version of the fourth Package.

LARS WIJNB�AD of Passagerpulsen updated delegates on public transport issues in Denmark and the work of the organization.

On the positive side, the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of passengers who had been refused compensation after their flight had been delayed by a technical fault. On the other hand, there had been some cuts in train hours because of a shortage of finance for the Danish train operator DSB.

Passagerpulsen was undertaking a National Passenger Survey and developing a web-based Passenger Panel. An award for best customer service was being prepared as was follow-up work on their 2015 report on public transport fares in 12 European cities. They had surveyed passenger reaction to the rejsekort (travel card) and found 70% considered this made public transport easier to use. The next problem to be tackled, however, was what should be done when people forgot to check in or out.

Passagerpulsen had regular meetings with DSB and with MOVIA (the Copenhagen transport authority) and was involved in consultation over new trains and timetables.



On Saturday April 9th the conference received and discussed presentations from guest speakers.

PETER BUCHNER, CEO of S-Bahn Berlin, welcomed delegates to the city, explaining that the electric suburban train network had carried 414 million passengers in 2014 and operated a 327-km network with 166 stations.

Three types of train were in service, dating from 1988 to 2004. S-bahn Berlin had been awarded a concession to operate the busy inner ring line for 20 years from 2015.

In 2016, extensive engineering work was taking place on the network and Mr. Buchner described the measures for informing customers, including enhanced screens at stations, leaflets and social media. Where replacement bus services were laid on, adhesive footsteps at stations directed passengers to these.

"We are measured by customer satisfaction," said Mr. Buchner, who pointed out that both S-Bahn (operated by Deutsche Bahn) and the trams, buses and underground (operated by the city transport authority BVG) had increased their market share in recent years.



In answer to questions, our speaker said that there was a 29-person customer advisory panel which met four times a year; customers could also phone a call center and there as also dialogue with bus users.

Another delegate from Berlin stressed the need for better co-ordination between the two public transport operators at times of engineering work; and referred to the meetings of public transport users now organized every two years by the city council.

Asked about graffiti on trains, including scratching of windows, Mr. Buchner acknowledged the problem and explained measures to apprehend the perpetrators and restore the windows.

INFORMATION AND TICKETING: MULTIMODAL AND EASY DR DIETER-LEBRECHT KOCH MEP, Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament's Transport & B Tourism Committee began his speech by stating that mobility should be a basic right for citizens and today's technology should be making it easier to plan and book a journey.

The next step should be multimodal ticketing, with the internet also giving citizens the opportunity to choose between the fastest, cheapest or most sustainable mode of travel.

The internet had the potential to provide real-time information when anything went wrong.

Dr. Koch's report on information and ticketing had been accepted by his parliamentary colleagues in July 2015. They also agreed to encourage operators in all modes to come together voluntarily; but if there was "no significant progress by 2020" then legal steps could be necessary.

The aim by 2024 should be to have developed multimodal cross-border ticketing as well.

Further demands of the MEPs on the Transport Committee included accessibility for all and the harmonization of passenger rights, while in this context the issue of "extraordinary

circumstances" must also be addressed. By the end of 2017, the European Commission would be asked to propose a common charter for passengers.

In discussion Dr. Koch expressed support for the technical pillar of the 4th Railway Package, but said that "transparency must be improved"; and also that there was a variety of methods for giving information to potential customers.

EUROPEAN PASSENGER RIGHTS

MRS RUTH LOPIAN of the European Commission was unfortunately unable to come to Berlin but had sent her power-point presentation which was given by Josef Schneider.

It was essential to have a legal framework to protect passengers and essential that passengers were aware of their rights.

Since 2004 the EC had introduced rights for airline, rail, ship and bus/coach passengers. However, although each EU citizen travelled on average over 12,000 km per year, only 31% were aware of their rights.

These rights governed non-discrimination in information; delays and cancellations; rerouting/rebooking; assistance; compensation; carrier liability; easy complaint handling and effective enforcement.

New information campaigns were planned to start in 2016, targeted especially at transport hubs and specific travel seasons. Work had been done on interpretative guidelines and future plans included a possible new initiative on passenger rights in multimodal transport.

SECURITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

CHRISTOPHER IRWIN (Transport Focus) reported on the work of the European Union LANDSec committee on which he and Willy Smeulders represented EPF.

Since the attack on a Thalys train between Brussels and Paris in August 2015, LANDSec had had useful and constructive meetings.

Mr. Irwin advised, "Let's be proportionate in our response" since such attacks were not new; there had been no major attacks for over ten years, rail deaths were low compared to road deaths and figures showed that every day someone was killed on a level crossing in the EU.

Surveys of passengers showed that concerns about anti-social behavior, lack of station staff and lack of information were greater than the fear of terrorism.

Measures that could be taken to reduce the problem, however, included encouraging passengers to report their suspicions, more effective use of video links, innovations in vehicle design and more pan-European information exchanging.

In discussion it was reported that the Association of German Railway Engineers had also considered this problem and were interested in dialogue with passenger organizations. Access to a help point on a station was important and staff must be trained to deal with specific situations. Delegates also suggested that too many recorded announcements on the lines of "If you see something suspicious" could be counter-productive.

Dr. Libor Lochman of the Community of European Railways, commented that operators and authorities should be encouraged to co-operate over ticketing; and that by 2020 global

distributors will have the opportunity to handle bookings through the Full Service Model. On "extraordinary circumstances" (or "force majeure") it was important to be proportionate, and not just accept rules for one mode. On security, the key issue was to start by making public spaces in general secure, rather than with a specific example such as a metro train. New problems could be caused if long queues of passengers themselves became a target or if passengers were deterred from using public transport. He concluded that CER was in favor of bomb-proof designs.



LONG DISTANCE COACHES

MRS SABINE FISCHER-VOLK of the Verbraucherzentrale (Consumer Centre) of Brandenburg spoke of the recent growth in long-distance coach services in Germany since liberalization in 2013 and gave the results of a survey of 440 passengers conducted by consumer centers throughout most of Germany for three months, July to September 2015. During 2014 some 16 million passengers were carried in such services, almost double the number of the previous year.

The message had got around that it was possible to travel flexibly and at a reasonable price, which attracted younger people, especially.

Many operators also offered their customers free internet plus snacks and/or drinks. There were extensive passenger rights but few people knew about them.

In order to ascertain what improvements were needed, the consumer centers conducted their research via an on line questionnaire on their own websites. The survey was carried out within the framework of the Economic Consumer Protection Project promoted by the Federal Ministry of Justice & Consumer Protection following a decision by the Federal Parliament.

Key findings were that barely half of the respondents knew their rights; 60% experienced delays; and that there was particular room for improvements in luggage handling. Coach drivers gave information about refreshments and toilets but never about passenger rights.

MR MICHAEL SCHMITZ AND MS INA SCHOMAKER of the Eisenbahnbundesamt (Federal Rail Office) explained their role and findings. The EBA, as National Enforcement Body (NEB) for rail, bus and maritime passenger rights, handled complaints if the passenger had first complained to the carrier and not received a satisfactory response. The NEB also carried out inspections (including of bus stations) and supervised drivers.

Mr. Schmitz described travellers' expectations as wanting to reach the destination safely; the journey starting and finishing on time, and having the promised level of comfort and convenience on the journey.

To implement these rights there was a role for the police and traffic agencies; but the carrier was also expected to provide information in the event of delays and assistance in the event of a journey being disrupted. Assistance could be rerouting or continuing the journey by another vehicle, including the coach of another operator or even in some cases a train. Reimbursement of the passenger was a further option.

The NEB's role in enforcing the passenger rights included taking up complaints and exerting influence on those responsible; proactive supervision through on the spot controls; and in cases of non-compliance sanctioning through economic pressure which could include a fine of up to 30,000 euro.

The main causes of complaint so far were:

- late departure and lack of information
- missing connection because bus or coach services had been cancelled
- inadequate signage of buses and stops
- unavailability of an advertised service such as toilet or wlan
- safety or infringements of road traffic regulations
- loss of luggage.

Questions to the speakers included, "What was done to keep the correct journey-chain intact?" The answer: "We must do everything possible to ensure that the customer reaches his or her destination."

One delegate asked why coach passengers must in certain circumstances change into a different mode of transport. The answer - it was a question of how far one should go in implementing a regulation.

Others identified issues of what was a long-distance coach and what was a bus or coach station and said that there should be clear definitions.

It was also pointed out that, unlike in the rail industry, there were no rules governing the withdrawal of a coach service or the closure of a station.

One delegate urged that trains and buses should be combined in one timetable. The reply was given that this was a matter for the politicians to decide.

CROSS-BORDER TRAVEL: THE EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

The afternoon session began with a presentation by Mr. MICHAEL CRAMER MEP, Chairman of the European Parliament's Transport & Tourism Committee.

Referring to the recent Paris Summit on Climate Change, he said that transport was the only sector in which greenhouse gas emissions had risen rather than fallen since 1990. While CO₂ output had been reduced by 38% in industry and 18% in households, in transport it had increased by 22%. Because transport in the EU was responsible for a quarter of greenhouse gases - 72% of which resulted from road transport - climate change would not be halted without a modal shift in mobility.



The framework conditions of rail financing was unfair compared to that of other modes, leading to unfair competition.

There had been investment in rail in the EU over the past two decades, but much of it had been in grand projects, but many rail journeys were relatively short. Mr. Cramer said "I am not asking for more money, but for different spending priorities."

The Greens welcomed the EU's aims of a single railway area and shift of traffic on to rail, but said that most transport ministers and leaders of the rail industry concentrated on large projects and neglected the closing of gaps on the borders. The Greens therefore proposed three measures:

1. The filling of gaps caused in the war and immediate post-war period must receive top priority. Our project "The gap must go!" shows how for comparatively modest investment great added value can be created. There are 15 gap closures which promise great benefits, such as between Colmar and Freiburg-im-Breisgau or Nijmegen and Kleve. The European Commission and European Investment Bank are now showing great interest.

2. Each lorry has for a long time been able, with the permission of one Member State, to travel all over the EU. Yet locomotives still have to be authorized separately for each state. In summer 2015 the European Parliament and Member States agreed that in future the European Railway Agency should play a central role in the authorization process.

That decision must now be put into effect.

3. We must widen our vision and take into it intermodal competition. As long as the environmentally friendly rail network is obliged to make track access charges, but a toll is only levied on 0.9% of the road network of the EU, rail is at a disadvantage.

Finally, our speaker referred to the 660 meter gap in the network across the German - Czech border between Sebnitz and Dolni Poustevna. It took 25 years of pressure and discussion until this was finally filled in 2015. Clearly such modest projects must be treated with greater urgency.

MR ANDREAS NETZEL of TALGO GmbH, one of the sponsors of this EPF conference, gave a presentation on their newest products. These included high speed trains of the AVRIL, Talgo 350, Talgo 250 and Talgo 250 dual classes.

TALGO had been established in Spain in 1942 and since 1968 their trains had been crossing into France using gauge-changing systems. They believed in exploiting the fact that less weight, meant less energy and therefore lower cost.

Talgo had also pioneered low-floor vehicles, introducing these as early as 1950. The reduction in journey time between Madrid and Barcelona had increased rail's market share.

On night trains, Mr. Netzel said that some national operators were "not really interested", sometimes citing the construction of high speed lines as a reason for withdrawing these; but both the Austrian and Russian Railways still saw a future for them.



Mr. JAN VAVRA, of the international section of Ceske Drahy (Czech Railways) explained the importance from them of international travel to and from Germany. Within the Czech Republic, CD also faced competition from open access operators Regiojet and LeoRail on the important east/west route from Prague to Ostrava, near the Polish border. Czech customers usually chose their means of transport according to price; German customers often had wider criteria.

CD worked closely with German operators, its key partner being DB Fernverkehr on the line Prague - Dresden - Berlin - Hamburg, on the base of long-term co-operation. A new contract had just been signed. Both CD and DB faced similar challenges in a competitive world.

An interesting example of co-operation in regional services is a long-term contract with DB Regio and VVO (Verkehrsverbund Oberelbe - Transport Authority for the Upper Elbe) on the route Decin - Bad Schandau - Sebnitz - Rumburk (which starts and finishes in the Czech Republic and passes through Germany, with services provided by DB Regio).

Mr Vavra also described the co-operation with DB Oberfranken between Western Bohemia and Nuremberg. CD also co-operated with other German regional operators such as ALEX between Prague and Munich; Vogtlandbahn between Cheb and Plauen and the recently reopened line Marktredwitz - Cheb - As Hof (Oberpfalzbahn).

Hungarian Railways (MAV) also ran a service to Prague and CD was still in discussion the OeBB (Austrian Railways) about future night trains.

Lively discussion took place, including on the involvement of the European investment Bank (discussions reported to be ongoing) and the lack of services on certain lines crossing the Hungarian - Slovak border. The potential of Interrail tickets was highlighted, but also the problems if operators either did not recognize them or required a supplement on certain trains.

The need for co-operation between local or regional authorities on both sides of a border was stressed. It must be demonstrated to them that this is in their interest.

Reference was made to studies on high-speeds and the effects on usage; but it was also pointed out that accessibility to a station also influences whether potential travelers will use them to catch a high-speed train.

The need for intermodal competition to be fair was again emphasized by several speakers.

REPORT ON EPF WORK

Evelien Marlier gave a report on her work of that of her colleagues Stijn Lewyllie and Daphne Grandsart, of Bond van Trein Tram en Busgebruikers in Ghent, Belgium, who provide administrative support for EPF and also undertake EU project work. They were currently engaged on two projects, CIPTEC and IT2RAIL and also preparing for the second EPF Summit Conference in Brussels on May 26th. Bids had also been submitted for six other EU projects.



Josef Schneider introduced the seven members of the EPF Management Board who each gave a report on their particular areas of involvement during the past year.



These reports, together with the presentations of our guest speakers, can be read in full on EPF's website www.epf.eu

EPF President Trevor Garrod thanked all colleagues and guests for their presentations and input; and especially the team Josef Schneider, Peter Cornelius, Matthias Kurzeck and Frank Boehncke who had, with himself, organized this year's conference.

It was announced that EPF's 2017 conference is due to take place on March 18th in the Netherlands.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The EPF Annual General Meeting took place after the conference and was attended by representatives of our affiliated member associations. The meeting received and accepted the Annual Report for 2015 (now available in English, French and German on the EPF website) and the Financial Report and Budget. It also approved the Work Programme for the coming year. The Belgian association Navetteurs.be was accepted as a new full member. Three members were elected or re-elected to the Management Board: Willy Smeulders, Michel Quidort and Arrien Kruyt; and Trevor Garrod was re-elected as President. Trevor Garrod also paid tribute to Christopher Irwin, who was not seeking re-election to the Board, but who will still be a member of the General Meeting, and who had played, and would continue to play, a key role in EPF's work at European level.

SUNDAY VISITS

Many delegates took part in one of two visits organized for Sunday April 10th. A tour of Berlin using public transport was led by Wanja Borchert of Verkehrsclub Deutschland. A visit by train to Kostrzyn and/or Gorzow Wielkopolski was led by Trevor Garrod, and thanks are also due to Krzysztof Korycki for ensuring the success of this visit.

