

## **JOINT PRESS RELEASE of BAG-SPNV (Germany), GART (France), FEDERMOBILITA (Italy) and CAOVD (Czech Republic)**

### **English version**

### **Passenger rail authorities encourage European legislator to facilitate a high quality of service for passengers**

Strasbourg, 25 May 2012

Representatives of passenger rail authorities from 12 Member states of the European Union met on 24 and 25 May in Strasbourg to discuss the problems affecting rail transport in Europe and set out further steps for cooperation.

The conference has revealed that there are certain differences in terms of responsibility and organisation of passenger rail authorities. Some passenger rail authorities organise rail transport on national level while others work on regional level. Some of them are only responsible for rail services while others are also in charge of bus services. Some own the incumbent railway undertakings, others do not.

Despite of these differences, European passenger rail authorities need a united front in order to interact effectively with European institutions which have gained a key role in defining rail policy. Cooperation among passenger rail authorities is possible as there are a number of common dominant issues: For instance, European passenger rail authorities depend heavily on public finances that need to be stable in order to guarantee a reliable offer to passengers.

In many European countries, car drivers use the road infrastructure free of charge whereas railway undertakings have to pay track and station access charges for the use of railway infrastructure. Passenger rail transport therefore needs a level playing field between the different modes of transport.

It should be coupled with the efficient application of passenger rights and intramodal optimization to make rail transport more attractive to passengers.

Passenger rail authorities therefore request concrete actions from the European institutions to improve the framework conditions for organising and financing rail services. The "user pays" and "polluter pays" principle should soon fully be applied for instance by the implementation of road pricing. The existing legislation on public service obligations and passenger rights should be clarified, non-discriminatory award of public service contracts become the standard procedure.

Roland Ries, president of the French Public Transport Authorities' Association (GART) said: "This conference is the first step that we are doing with our German, Italian, Czech and Polish partners, despite of our different points of view, in order to promote common concrete goals as fixing the bad issues of the financial crisis that is a menace for rail transport financing or influence the European Union policy promoting a fair and undistorted competition between road and rail transport." President Ries also stated that "it is important to promote all the measures that could improve the quality of service for passengers."

Ales Stejskal, president of the Czech Association of Passenger Rail Authorities (CAOVD) said: „Our experience with competitive tendering of railway services is very good. We have, for example, cooperated with our German neighbors for the award of the Trilex network. The winning bidder of the tender not only increased comfort and quality of service, but also raised the number of passengers by 40 percent.“

Bernhard Wewers, president of the German Association of Passenger Rail Authorities (BAG-SPNV) said: "In the last years, fewer railway undertakings have been taking part in calls for tenders for railway services. It is urgent for us to improve the framework conditions for competition in the railway sector. Otherwise, an oligopoly of expensive and inefficient incumbent railway undertakings will dominate the market in a few years."

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196 passenger rail authorities are currently organising and financing passenger rail services of common interest that in general could not be operated without subsidies. Their task is to make the most of scarce public money and set the framework conditions for the best possible rail transport for passengers in their region.

Each year, European passengers travel around 202 billion kilometers on a rail network of 226.000 kilometers. Rail transport in Europe saves annually more than 25 Mio. tons of carbon dioxide compared to travelling by car. Access roads to cities would be congested if these passengers were not using public rail transport. Europe cannot survive without rail transport.

The associations of passenger rail authorities from France (Gart), Italy (Federmobilita), Czech Republic (CAOVD) and Germany (BAG-SPNV) are closely cooperating to exchange their experiences and comment on European politics.