

newsletter



Debate at the conference on the last mile towards the fourth railway package, 24. 9. 2012
picture: European Commission

Editorial



Dear Sir/Madam,

INTER-Regio-Rail has now been active for three years and the project is coming to an end. During that time, we have worked with our partners on regional projects addressing infrastructure development, demographic change, the integration of cyclists, the development of transport associations, and the tendering of cross-border rail services. We have formed a network for the exchange of practical experience to help us find new ways to improve rail services. At the same time we have become involved in European discussions on certification, interoperability and competition.

At this stage it is important to ensure our cooperation endures. We need to maintain our presence at the European level in order to input into the legislative process, and we need to keep working with our partners in order to support the Europe-wide flow of ideas and experience to improve the railway system.

The conference in Bologna (see page 4) will be our opportunity to draw conclusions from this project and form an alliance of passenger rail authorities that will continue to cooperate going forward.

Join us in Bologna! We are looking forward to seeing you (again)!

Yours,
Dr. Thomas Geyer
President of the German Association of
Passenger Rail Authorities

INTER-Regio-Rail at the core of Europe

Passengers and authorities start to benefit from INTER-Regio-Rail

The last year has been a success for the passengers in several INTER-Regio-Rail partner regions: the Regione Emilia Romagna has offered extra trains for cycling tourists, thereby further exploring the potential of bicycle services, and the Stuttgart region has launched new assistance services for elderly passengers. The other partners have laid the groundwork for future improvements by conducting studies on specific aspects of passenger rail transport and drawing up action plans. Passengers along the German-Polish border, for instance, may look forward to more direct cross-border connections in future. Since the findings are transferrable, they will also enable the authorities and railway undertakings in other regions of Europe to improve their services.

This is not INTER-Regio-Rail's only field of action, however. In the last two years the lead partner, the German Association of Passenger Rail Authorities (BAG-SPNV), has been very actively lobbying for better framework conditions for passenger rail authorities in Brussels. INTER-Regio-Rail has monitored the legislative process, drafted and coordinated

passenger rail authorities' positions on various topics, and presented these to political decision-makers and the specialist public. The effects of our work are as follows:

- The European Commission and MEPs in Brussels are now familiar with the passenger rail authorities and their points of view. We are ever more frequently invited to submit our points of view as input to the legislative process.
- INTER-Regio-Rail has managed to influence a number of issues, improving some of the opportunities provided by the proposed legislation and averting threats to passenger rail authorities.
- We have established contacts to passenger rail authorities throughout Europe. This is a good starting point for the exchange of experience we started during our Strasbourg conference last year.

In this issue, you can read about these activities and the steps taken towards the creation of our future network of European passenger rail authorities!



The RegioJet in the Czech Republic is one of the pioneer projects of open access passenger rail transport in Europe
picture: RegioJet

Fourth Railway Package launched - INTER-Regio-Rail comments on impacts on authorities

On 30 January, the European Commission finally published its long-awaited proposal for the Fourth Railway Package, which has the potential to heavily influence the framework conditions governing European passenger rail authorities, regardless of their size and location. This new piece of legislation consists of no fewer than six specific proposals amending or complementing existing EU legislation. The most important ones for passenger rail authorities concern:

- Regulation 1370/2007, introducing the opening of the domestic passenger market and increasing competition,
- Directive 2012/34, on the governance of railway infrastructure,
- Regulation 881/2004, on the European Railway Agency (ERA) and
- Directive 2008/57 (the "Interoperability Directive").

INTER-Regio-Rail's analysis shows on the one hand that there are opportunities that should be supported by passenger rail authorities, but that on the other hand the proposals also contain missed opportunities and even threats to the work of the authorities, which the authorities should ask the European legislator to amend.

As regards the opportunities, the proposal introduces the **opening of domestic railway services** to open-access competition. Since the Commission also foresees a procedure to avoid the economics of existing public service contracts being compromised, we regard the new services that might thereby be offered as an opportunity to usefully complement existing national open-access and PSO services.

However, the proposal makes no provision for the mandatory separation of vertically-integ-

rated railway undertakings, which would solve the existing problems that regional passenger rail authorities encounter with infrastructure managers that are part of vertically-integrated undertakings. Instead, a number of safeguards are introduced intended to guarantee **the infrastructure managers' legal, organisational and decision-making independence**. It must be noted, however, that even the Commission doubts that these safeguards will remove all possibilities for discriminatory behaviour by incumbent operators. We therefore consider this proposal to be a missed opportunity to introduce a better solution.

The proposal also contains a number of threats that will lead to extra costs and administrative burdens for the authorities. For instance, it is to become mandatory for the competent authorities to establish **public transport plans** which define the structure, requirements, quality standards, tariff policy and operational requirements of the services to be run. The aim of the provision is to establish a formalised procedure for defining public service obligations, but for regional passenger rail authorities that do not have conflicts of interests concerning competition these rules may increase workload and costs and limit flexibility.

Furthermore, the application of the **Interoperability Directive** 2008/57 will mean disproportionate administrative, technical and legal burdens for regional railways operated on networks that are functionally separate from the rest of the railway network.

Finally, the requirement for passenger rail authorities to **make available all the information to railway undertakings for the preparation of an offer** under competitive tender procedure leads to an important risk especially

for regional authorities: Will they be liable for the information provided by the infrastructure manager and the current operator of the service to be tendered?

During the coming months, the European Council and Parliament will debate the Fourth Railway package. INTER-Regio-Rail will be following the discussions, and will ask the relevant MEPs and Member States' representations to propose amendments that will improve the framework governing the European Passenger Rail Authorities' work.

Do you have any questions about European policy that are of relevance to passenger rail authorities? Do not hesitate to contact us!

Passenger rail authorities need to join the discussion

The example of the Fourth Railway Package shows that many of the relevant framework conditions pertaining to passenger rail authorities' work are now the product of European legislation: amongst these conditions, those governing competition, infrastructure management and development, rolling stock, ticketing and passenger rights are the most important.

Many of these topics are closely correlated with an increase in costs and the administrative burden, most of which has to be covered by the authorities. Why then leave the field to the other stakeholder associations and allow them to dominate the discussions?

Help us to draft and disseminate our joint positions! **The framework conditions governing your work tomorrow will depend on your input today!**



pictures: EURAC; VBB / Verena Brandt; KORID

Pilot Projects

Making the most of scarce budgets

Developing a tool to increase passenger satisfaction

How can passenger rail authorities measure their customers' satisfaction and tailor the service descriptions of future public service contracts to their needs?

The European Academy of Bolzano has developed a survey tool to analyse the needs of different customer (and potential customer) groups. The trick of the analysis is both to measure the perceived quality of transport service components, and to rank them. As a result, it is possible to develop different measures, put price tags on these, and set up an implementation plan according to priorities and the available budget. This approach guarantees maximum increases in passenger satisfaction for minimum outlay.

In South Tyrol, commuters, tourists and non-users have been chosen as the relevant target groups, and more than 4,000 interviews were conducted from 2011 to 2012.

New responses to demographic change

Cooperating to improve services for the elderly

Changing demographics throughout Europe are resulting in increasing numbers of elderly people. Passenger rail authorities are aware of this, and have already begun developing ways to improve the services they offer this target group. Being responsible for rail transport in the greater Stuttgart region, the Verband Region Stuttgart has tested a personalised service for the elderly at one of its suburban railway stations, and has surveyed the needs of both potential and actual elderly rail users. The goal was to offer customers individual and flexible service at the station. Highly visible in their

bright yellow vests, these public transport assistants helped passengers use ticket machines and carry heavy luggage up stairs, or gave directions to the platforms and places near the station. Passengers could also request help in advance by telephone and meet the personal assistant at the station.

The results of the trial service show that support for the elderly and people with disabilities holds great potential for synergies with parallel efforts to improve service quality for other passengers. The majority of requests the assistants received regarded the surrounding area, timetables, and ticket machines – information which all passengers could find useful. All in all, the service was much appreciated and will thus be continued in cooperation with the "Bahnhofsmission", an organisation offering assistance to travellers throughout Germany. Since service personnel cannot offset problems such as missing ramps or large steps, which sometimes make entering trains impossible for wheelchair users, the project also showed that infrastructure has to be adapted to accommodate these demographic changes.

Passenger Rail Authorities and infrastructure development

Developing regional infrastructure

Infrastructure is an important asset using which passenger rail authorities can improve services. Yet their influence on the development and quality of infrastructure is often unsatisfactory.

This problem partly arises from the competing interests of infrastructure managers and passenger rail authorities. On the one hand, passenger rail authorities have a local view of infrastructure and are interested in developing local projects; on the other hand, national inf-

rastructure managers and politics tend to focus on projects of national relevance. Furthermore, national infrastructure managers are often unaware of the needs of regional rail transport. KORID, the public transport authority in the Liberec Region of the Czech Republic, has set up its own infrastructure development plan to support its negotiations with national policymakers and the infrastructure manager on the funding and implementation of future projects. The plan consists of a list of concrete measures to be implemented in order to improve regional services and also takes into account the necessary links to local (bus) and national (interregional) connections. Using the new concept, KORID has gained important know-how and considerably improved its position vis-à-vis the relevant stakeholders in negotiations on future infrastructure projects.

Find a summary of all projects and their most important results on www.interregiorail.eu!

IMPRINT

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EDITORIAL OFFICE / CONTACT:
German Association of Rail Passenger Authorities (BAG-SPNV)
Ludger Sippel
Hardenbergplatz 2
10623 Berlin, Germany
phone: +49 30 81 61 60 99 3
e-mail: sippel@bag-spnv.de

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The track ahead

The INTER-Regio-Rail project is coming to an end - it is time to launch the permanent network of passenger rail authorities in Europe

Learn from the experience of your counterparts abroad

See the results of the INTER-Regio-Rail pilot projects

Bring home new ideas on how to improve passenger rail transport on a tight budget

Become an expert on European legislation

Jointly lobby the EU for better framework conditions for your work at home

Join the future network of European passenger rail transport authorities!

Join us!

On 14-15 May 2013 in Bologna, IT

Find the programme and register at www.interregiorail.eu

"European Cooperation is essential for our success. We have to improve our network both on the political level and in our daily work, to ensure high-quality regional rail transport in a framework of regulated competition."

Alfredo Peri

President of federMobilità, the Italian Association of Administrations Responsible for Mobility Management

Italy

"The European Passenger Rail Authorities have to develop joint positions on the European level to be heard in the political debates of the future."

Roland Ries

President of GART, the French Association of Transport Authorities

France

"Cooperation between passenger rail authorities within the framework of INTER-Regio-Rail shows how much is at stake at the European level, and what gains can be made."

Aleš Stejskal

President of CAOVD, the Czech Association of Public Transport Authorities

Czech Republic

"We need to maintain our presence at the European level in order to input into the legislative process, and we need to keep working with our partners in order to support the Europe-wide flow of ideas and experience to improve the railway system."

Dr. Thomas Geyer

President of BAG-SPNV, the German Association of Passenger Rail Authorities

Germany