

Ministerial declaration

ROTTERDAM DECLARATION Cross border passenger railway services

TEN-T conference, Rotterdam, 21st June 2016

Political declaration of the responsible ministers of Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, June 21th, 2016.

Preamble

This declaration focuses on cross border passenger railway services between Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands.

Considering...

...the importance of cross border/international passenger rail connections and services, because:

- the cities and regions of Belgium, (Northwestern) Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands are economically interwoven;
- mobility and easy travel in the EU is a crucial condition for social and economic growth and the role of railways for an integrated transport system is important;
- travelling by rail is a sustainable travel mode.

...that we have well developed and dense railway networks in Europe in general and in our countries in particular, and a strong railway sector with a lot of potential:

- Due to its density and quality, the European railway network is unique in the world;
- It is intensely used, both for passenger rail and freight transport;
- Most of the intra-European distances are suitable for rail transport;
- Commuting over short distances by train is a daily activity for many European citizens.

...that European transport policy has already developed a considerable legal framework to enhance international rail transport and the interoperability of train services in Europe:

- Through the various Railway Packages the EU is working towards a Single European Railway Area (SERA);
- The EU framework provides for open access for international rail passenger services whereas Member States may contract additional services by way of PSO contracts;
- Actions described in this declaration build upon this EU legal framework.

...that the potential of growth possibilities for cross border passenger rail transport in our countries is however still underused:

- The market share of domestic rail passenger transport is in many cases far larger for cross-border traffic, even where there are rail connections in operation;
- The growth of cross-border passenger rail transport significantly lags behind the overall growth of international mobility (despite the fact that cross-border social economic activities are growing).

...important reasons for the current suboptimal level of cross border passenger rail services are the lack of interoperability and suboptimal travel information, although progress is being made (such as through standardization e.g. TSI TAP, TSI PRM and the ERTMS program). Examples for the current constraints for international passengers are:

- Timetables and ticket systems are still often applied in (national) isolated form and innovation on apps and online ticketing lag behind compared to for example the aviation sector;
- Travel information (both timetable data and real time train running information) and ticketing services are sometimes suboptimal for cross border trips;
- The standardized approach for exchange of data, as described in the TSI TAP, is not yet implemented.

Acknowledging...

...that there is an urgent need to enhance international rail passenger services and to complete the Single European Railway Area (SERA), among others by implementing:

- The 4th Railway Package, as regards further opening the passenger rail markets, technical harmonisation and improving passenger services;
- ERTMS/ ETCS for facilitating interoperable cross-border operations of trains, in line with the upcoming revised European Development Plan.

...thereby acknowledging that within the EU framework the passenger rail transport in our countries is organized differently, from liberalized open markets to awarded public service contracts at national or regional level. Organisation of cross border rail passenger transport must be adapted to this context. This is notwithstanding the competences of the relevant responsible authorities.

Statement

The ministers of Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands with responsibility for Mobility and/or Transport:

1. See the future of cross border passenger rail as a high quality integrated system including ticketing and passenger information with the objective that international passengers should experience a borderless journey from these perspectives.
2. Are motivated to improve and promote the use of the existing rail connections and will strive for a more integrated rail passenger services system for domestic and cross border services.
3. Are willing to work together with the responsible authorities, railway undertakings and where appropriate infrastructure managers by taking significant steps to enhance the quality of services offered to passengers such as international travel information and facilitation and increased availability of international tickets for international rail passengers.
4. Are convinced that the improvement of cross border passenger rail services is only reached by putting the passenger in a central position and by making a better connection between the different national systems in place.
5. Take note that the Netherlands will set up a cooperation platform with all the competent (national and/or regional) authorities responsible for cross border rail services in the Benelux-Germany region in 2016 - 2018 period on developing effective cooperation and common methods in the advantage of the passengers, taking into account existing institutional frameworks. When appropriate, the platform will invite railway undertakings and infrastructure managers to participate. The platform should inform on its results by 2018.

Such platform may consider to study:

- The market potential of cross border passenger rail transport;
 - The opportunities and constraints regarding cross border passenger rail transport;
 - The possibilities to overcome barriers for appropriate connections and services;
 - The practical actions that could be carried out to enhance international passenger rail transport.
6. Call for action:
 - Address the rail sector to take joint action on supporting innovation on (linking) passenger information and booking platforms and further technical harmonisation in the cross border passenger railway sector which improves rail service;
 - Acknowledging and welcoming the considerations and initiatives on which the responsible authorities have already taken the first steps:

- The German Land of Nordrhein-Westfalen and the Dutch provinces of Limburg, Noord-Brabant, Overijssel and Gelderland are considering projects to strengthen cross border passenger rail connections and services (a position paper is being drafted);
- The German Land of Niedersachsen and the Dutch provinces of Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe and Overijssel are considering projects to strengthen cross border passenger rail connections and services (a position paper is being drafted);
- Belgium and The Netherlands agree on strengthening cross border passenger rail connections and services (a bilateral agreement will be signed);
- The German Laender of Rheinland-Pfalz and Saarland have successfully cooperated on working on a cross border mobility concept with Luxembourg;
- Luxembourg took the initiative to set up a cross border mobility concept with the Walloon Region in Belgium.

7. Follow up:

The ministers;

- Are intending to come together again to share the results of the agreed actions;
- Invite the European Commission to work with all parties to overcome bottlenecks for cross border passenger rail transport and to check whether this model of cooperation can be used on European level.

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