

International rail passengers platform

June 2nd 2020

Political statement for coalition of the willing development international rail passenger transport

Introduction

The European Commission presented its proposals for Green Deal 11 December 2019. Part of it includes reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the transport sector. International passenger rail transport is presently not performing to its potential within EU. Domestic rail markets are much further developed than international rail passenger market; at national level infrastructure and timetables / frequencies of services are planned at a higher standard than for international services. International rail has potential to increase its modal share for distances from 300-800km. There is an open market in the context of the 4th railway package for railway undertakings to offer rail services, however obstacles exist to live up to the potential. Other ongoing initiatives relevant for the development of international passenger rail include upcoming study commissioned by EC as requested by European Parliament, development of the TEN T network, Shift2Rail programming, development of rail passenger rights and market initiatives. The potential of international passenger railways was discussed at a high level meeting between Member States and third countries representatives and European Commission 15 November 2019.

The signatories want to express their will to work together to facilitate growth of international rail passenger market.

In the short term international passenger services by rail are severely reduced by COVID-19 measures and continues to fulfill critical functions for passenger transport. For the medium term the development of international passenger services is an opportunity to contribute to the Green Deal.

Considering

- The UN 2030 agenda for the sustainable development which is the global framework addressing i.a. the need of resilient infrastructures, sustainable cities and climate action;
- The EC Green Deal initiative from 11 December 2019, COM(2019)640 to transform European economy to become carbon neutral;
- The European Court of Auditors Special report n° 19/2018: A European high-speed rail network: not a reality but an ineffective patchwork highlighting shortcomings for international passenger railway services;
- The proposal from the European Commission from 4 March 2020, COM(2020)78 to designate 2021 as European Year of Rail;
- The Dutch position paper from 30 January 2020 on the need of a European agenda on international rail passenger transport;
- Initiatives from the market to develop international passenger services. E.g. Eurostar London to Amsterdam, High speed services Milan – Paris, domestic and international night services;
- Recognizing that the value of international passenger services increases with improved network connections;
- The support from European rail sector parties and European Passenger organizations to cooperate on a European agenda for international railway passenger services (tbc);
- The involvement of the users perspective is key in any improvement efforts in international rail passengers transport;
- Public and political calls to develop a wider international rail passengers network;
- The proposal from the European Commission to enhance Rail Passenger rights which is being discussed between EU Transport council and European Parliament;
- The need to develop better and accessible services to passengers based on a European innovation, e.g. the Shift2Rail agenda in the railway sector or the Payment Service Directive 2 in the financial sector;

The Ministers, signatories

- Express their commitment to support a European agenda for international passenger rail which builds upon the existing EU initiatives and should offer the legal and otherwise framework for attractive alternatives to make railway become an attractive alternative in distances in which it is not currently competitive and work together in this context with all EU Member States, European Commission, European Railway Agency, Shift2Rail and OTIF;
- Decide to establish a platform of Member States and third countries in close cooperation with European Commission with the aim of cooperation on improving international rail passenger services and including international rail passengers as part of the EC Green Deal initiative in a comprehensive way. The platform shall take due account of the work of other initiatives;
- Wish to assess, within the context of the aforementioned platform, the functioning of the relevant market for international rail passenger connections of capital cities as well as of other relevant ones. Existing corridors in the framework of the TEN-T network may be used. The assessment will include demand patterns, present service levels (transport times, frequencies, prices, etc.), public service obligations, infrastructure capacities, timetabling options and interoperability questions.
- The platform intends to cooperate closely with infrastructure managers, railway undertakings, competent authorities, other sector representatives and European passenger organizations;
- Invite railway sector and relevant 3rd parties innovation platforms at European level to establish a high level platform with strategic aim of improving the cross-corridor conditions for international rail passenger services. This will include initiatives of digital solution allowing to easily book and buy tickets and user-friendly and effective multimodal trips;
- Intend to establish a calendar for monitoring the progress on the aforementioned actions within one year.