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"The Year of Rail should be more than just marketing"

*Interview with Monika Heiming,
director EIM*

The European Year of Rail

Delphine Grandsart from EPF about why a passengers' perspective is essential for a shift to rail



PLUS

New European first's in High-Speed Rail



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Editor's Note



This year, it is exactly 40 years ago since the first high-speed train started its journey in Europe: the TGV. An important milestone, and fitting to celebrate in the year that has been designated the European Year of Rail, 2021. In this themed magazine, several interviews are combined, from the association of Infrastructure Managers director Monika Heiming about digitalisation and the investments that are needed, to Delphine Grandsart from the European Passenger Federation highlighting the importance of the reason railways exist: transporting passengers in a convenient and efficient way.

In light of the TGV anniversary, several new first in European high-speed rail are highlighted, with the Rail Baltica project and high-speed in Sweden, Greece and the Czech Republic. Enjoy reading this special RailTech issue, and I invite you to join us at RailTech Europe Live to dive deeper in the European Year of Rail, Digitalisation and Smart Infrastructure.

ESTHER GEERTS
Editor RailTech



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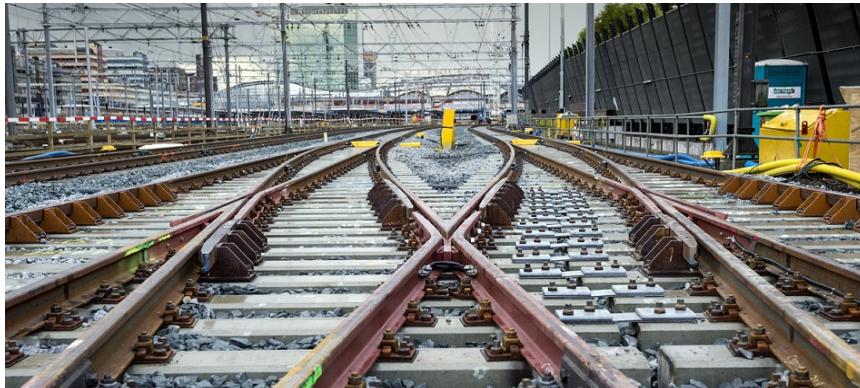
'Rail goals EU are achievable, but often promises were made that did not happen'

By Nick Augusteijn

The European Commission must do more to create a level playing field for the various forms of mobility, so that trains can better compete with air and road transport, says Maurizio Castelletti. He is responsible for the realisation and implementation of the Single European Railway Area (SERA) within the relevant directorate of the European Commission.



Photo: Eurocontrol



"We are still losing out to airplane and road transport", says Maurizio Castelletti firmly. "Rail is underperforming and we still do not have an unambiguous European network. We have to work on that", said the Italian working in Brussels. He talked about this in an interview with RailTech.

"We are still losing out to airplane and road transport"

The proclamation of 2021 as European Year of Rail should give the rail sector in Europe new energy. This year has a number of important milestones. For example, the European guideline for the development of the railways has been around for thirty years this year. In addition, it is 40 years ago that the first TGV was deployed and 30 years ago that the first high-speed line was opened in Germany.

ACHIEVABLE GOALS

Such things should not only remind people of the benefits of the train, such as the lower carbon footprint and safety, but also point out the unrealised potential of the rail as a way of traveling into the future. Castelletti therefore sees rail traffic as an important pillar of the European strategy for sustainable mobility. For example, the capacity of European high-speed lines must be tripled over the next twenty years, while freight transport must double, which is outlined in the new European Mobility Strategy.

"Are these goals achievable? Absolutely!"

"Are these goals achievable? Absolutely!", says Castelletti. "But we must be aware that reputation damage is lurking for the railway. How often have beautiful promises been made in the past that did not materialise, so that the train still lags behind the plane and the car? To change that, a culture shift must take place. We need to radically change course. We have to make it clear to everyone involved what needs to be done."

INCREASE CAPACITY

One of the pain points is the roll-out of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), which is behind schedule. By April 2020, the system was installed on only 78 percent of the routes for which delivery was scheduled for the end of 2019. The European implementation plan states that 15,682 kilometers of track should be ready by 2023. Only 38 percent of this has been realised at the moment. This became clear in January from market research by the European Commission.



Köln Station, Photo: Axel Hartmann / Deutsche Bahn AG

"After all, new projects do not only cost a lot of money, they also take a long time to realise"

Castelletti agrees and would like to see more investment in digital technology, traffic management and security systems. "ERTMS is essential here, because you can use it to increase the capacity of the track. After all, you make better use of the existing network.

After all, new projects do not only cost a lot of money, they also take a long time to realise." In addition, he would like to see more money flow to a Europe-wide train network with cross-border interoperability and direct connections between the European major cities in 2030.

THE POLLUTER PAYS

One of the ways in which this can be done is by directing at least some of the money from the tolls for trucks based on CO₂ emissions to the railways. One of the spearheads in the new Mobility Strategy of the European Union is the pricing of CO₂, also for transport."

"CO₂ tax revenues could be invested in railways"

In view of the emissions of trucks and the accidents that often occur with them, it is in my view not unreasonable to invest the proceeds of the CO₂ tax in the railways. In this way you apply the principle that the polluter pays", says Castelletti.

Encouraging investments from the private sector could also give the railway an extra push in the right direction, the Italian concludes.

KICK-OFF YEAR OF RAIL

The official kick-off of the European Year of Rail 2021 is on March 29 in Portugal. RailTech will broadcast the live stream. The first day of RailTech Europe on 30 March will also be devoted to the European Year of Rail.

Among many others, Florian Böhn, head of the rail department at the German Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, Elisabeth Werner, director Land Transport of the European Directorate for Transport (DG Move), and Diederik Samsom, Head of Cabinet team Frans Timmermans (Green Deal) from the European Commission will give a presentation.

European smart mobility strategy aims to triple high-speed rail traffic

By Sarah Chebaro

The European Commission aims to double high-speed rail traffic within ten years and to triple it by 2050. Rail freight traffic must also have doubled by that time. This is stated in the ‘Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy’ from the European Commission that was presented in December 2020. With the plan, the Commission gives substance to sustainable mobility in the European Green Deal.



“The long awaited action plan is supposed to guide the mobility sector to achieve a 90 percent cut in carbon emissions by 2050. The Commission placed the rail sector in an important role towards a smart, competitive, safe accessible and affordable mobility for the future.”

To reach our climate targets, emissions from the transport sector must get on a clear downward trend”, says Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal. “The strategy will shift the way people and goods move across Europe and make it easy to combine different modes of transport in a single journey.”

RAIL SECTOR MILESTONES

By 2030, the rail sector should double in high-speed rail traffic and a scheduled collective travel of under 500 kilometres should be carbon neutral within the EU. By 2050, rail freight traffic will have doubled and high-speed rail traffic will triple. Additionally, the multimodal Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) will be equipped for sustainability and smart transport with high-speed connectivity and will be operational for the comprehensive network.

“Transport matters to us all and digital technologies have the potential to revolutionise the way we move, making our mobility smarter, more efficient, and also greener,” explains Adina Vălean, Commissioner for Transport. “Through the implementation of this strategy, we will create a more efficient and resilient transport system, which is on a firm pathway to reduce emissions in line with our European Green Deal goals.”

“Digital technologies have the potential to revolutionise the way we move”

SUSTAINABILITY

According to the European Commission to achieve the 90 per cent carbon reduction by 2050 besides shifting transport to rail, the fossil fuels on rail vehicles must be replaced and decisive action must be taken to shift passengers to travel by rail and put more freight operating on rails.

Rail will also need to be further electrified, if this is not possible in certain locations, the use of hydrogen should be increased. The Commission states that to transform the transport sector into a multimodal system of sustainable services, there will be a need to build a high-quality transport network with high-speed rail services on short-haul distances.



CONNECTING TO THE EUROPEAN NETWORK

The strategy also explains how the rail industry should be increasingly driven by digitalisation and automation. The future of rail will be shaped through innovation and that will be more attractive to passengers. EU places the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) to be a priority that creates a smart rail transport system. This in return places consideration for the Commission to form partnerships with Shift2Rail for further development of rail automation.

The EU will also ensure digital infrastructure such as 5G to offer a wide range of services which in return will provide high levels of automation across different mobility applications. Additionally, having uninterrupted coverage across European corridors with 5G connectivity infrastructure will also need to be achieved. The EU states that the main key is having a functional digital single market.

YEAR OF RAIL

Furthermore, the European Year of Rail 2021 offers excellent opportunities for Member States and the rail sector to boost trans-European connections, says the Commission. The implementation of the Fourth Railway Package and thus the opening up of the rail market means that rail operators can better respond to the wishes of the market. The harmonised Europe-wide certification of vehicles also provides cost savings for cross-border trains. In addition, the completion of the TEN-T network, including the high-speed lines, provide better connections on the main corridors.

Improving travelers' awareness of their rights and the non-discriminatory transmission of travel information, including the provision of tickets, will also make the train more attractive to travellers. In 2021, the Commission will propose an action plan to encourage long-distance and cross-border rail travel. This plan will focus on Member States' efforts to improve key connections between cities. This is to be achieved through shorter journey times, better capacity management, coordination of timetables, pools for rolling stock and infrastructural improvements for new train connections, including night trains.

In 2021, the Commission will propose an action plan to encourage long-distance and cross-border rail



FIFTEEN PILOT PROJECTS

Platforms or other organisational structures for this purpose should be open to all European member states. Pilots for new lines should be supported with all stakeholders and a combination of public and open access services should be tested in different models for new connections. The aim is to run fifteen pilots by 2030. Finally, buying and using cross-border train tickets must become easier. Therefore, in 2021, the Commission will launch a legislative proposal to enable innovative and flexible tickets for combined modalities.

For rail freight transport, the Green Deal states that 75 percent of the domestic freight transport that currently goes by road must be moved to rail and inland shipping. Until now, the share of rail in land freight transport has in fact decreased. Where this was 18.3 percent in 2011, the share of rail was 17.9 percent in 2018.

TEN-T

Among other things, the revision of the State aid rules for railways in order to be able to publicly finance multimodality should turn the tide. Furthermore, there are still many domestic regulations and technical barriers that still hinder performance, the Commission notes. "Rail freight should be seriously promoted through increased capacity, enhanced cross-border coordination and cooperation between rail operators, better overall management of the rail network and the roll-out of new technologies such as Digital Automatic Coupling and ATO."

The Commission itself will propose revising the rules for the rail freight corridors and the TEN-T core network. Integrate these corridors into European Transport Corridors, with an emphasis on 'quick wins' such as train length, loading gauge and improved operational rules. This should happen in addition to filling in the most important missing links and adapting the core network so that it is fully suitable for freight traffic. Furthermore, the Commission wants to improve the rules for the allocation of rail capacity to allow flexible train paths.

"Rail freight should be seriously promoted with technologies such as DAC and ATO"



A first generation TGV train. Photo: SNCF

EUROPE'S FIRST
**HIGH-
SPEED
RAIL**

By Esther Geerts

The EU has set the goal to double high-speed rail by 2030 and triple it by 2050. Many European countries already have high-speed rail, sometimes one connection, sometimes already a network. In this article, we highlight several countries, namely the Baltic states, Sweden, Czech Republic and Greece who are in the process of building or upgrading rail infrastructure for firsts in high-speed rail.

After the Japanese revealed the world's first high-speed rail line in 1964, the Tokaido Shinkansen, it took some time before this was achieved in Europe. Particularly France, Germany, Italy and the UK started developing new technologies to make their own high-speed rail a reality. Finally, the national French railway company set the ball rolling when they started the operation of the TGV, the first high-speed line between Paris to Lyons on 27 September 1981, at a maximum speed of 260 kilometres per hour. Opposed to the Shinkansen rail, the new European HSR was fully compatible with existing railways and this helped with the further development of the system in Europe.



Picture: RB Rail Estonia

The Rail Baltica project is developing a new railway infrastructure and economic corridor, with 1435 millimetre standard European gauge rail, linking Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into Poland and beyond. The goal is that first services start in 2026. On the new infrastructure, high-speed trains will run, but also night trains and freight. The link will go from Tallinn in Estonia, to Riga in Latvia, to Kaunas and Vilnius in Lithuania and to the Polish railway network. Travelling from Tallinn to Vilnius will take 3 hours and 38 minutes.

CONNECTING TO THE EUROPEAN NETWORK

With Rail Baltica, it will be the first time there will be a standard gauge railway in the Baltic region linked to the main European network. It will have a total length of 870 kilometres, and is co-financed by the Connecting Europe Facility of the European Union.

Andy Billington, Innovation and Sustainability Expert at Rail Baltica said to RailTech that there are quite some advantages to the fact that a complete new line is built. "We are in the position of a complete green field and have the opportunity to look at transport as a whole, so areas such as how do we integrate the new rail system with the airports and ferry services both for passengers and freight."

"We have the opportunity to look at transport as a whole, such as how to integrate the new rail system with airports"

"We can also look at forthcoming things like FRMCS: as we are looking at first services in 2026, we have a little more time until we make decisions.

Although the standards and what is included will be a primary driver, many of the services enabled or supported by FRMCS could be implemented."

DEFINING HIGH-SPEED

The EU defines high-speed rail as rail with a minimum speed of 250 kilometres per hour on lines specially built for high speed and of 200 kilometres on existing lines which have been specially upgraded. This has to apply to at least one section of the line. Rolling stock must be able to reach a speed of at least 200 kilometres per hour to be considered high speed.

SWEDEN

Neighbouring countries Finland and Denmark also have high-speed trains in operation, and Sweden is continuing with the preparing design and preparation of the construction of three entirely new railway lines for high-speed trains.



SJ 3000 High speed train with a speed of up to 200 km/h.
Photo: Stefan Nilsson / SJ

The new railway lines will connect Swedish metropolitan regions and free up capacity on the already existing Southern Main Line. Two sections are planned for trains running at 250 kilometres per hour: Ostlänken and Gothenburg - Borås. Due to the landscape and location of stations, there will not be many straight distances that can handle more speed. The planned construction start of main contracts for Ostlänken (Linköping-Järna) is in 2022, and the line is expected to be completed between 2033 and 2035. For the route Gothenburg - Borås, the location investigation started in the summer of 2019, and is expected to be completed by 2022. The construction starts between 2025 and 2027.

The new high-speed lines will free up capacity on the Southern Main Line.



The planned new main lines between the Swedish metropolitan regions, map: Trafikverket

DID YOU KNOW?

Spain is the country with the most high-speed rail in Europe, with 3330 kilometres in operation in February 2020

RAILWAY ON PILLARS?

Construction company Skanska said that a future Swedish high-speed railway built on bridges through the landscape is not expected to be cheaper to build, but can be completed twice as fast as rails on land. The company did a study on a railway on pillars. According to them, nine years of construction and three years of planning time may be enough, instead of about 20 years, which the Swedish Transport Administration has counted on, reported Swedish newspaper DN.



Concept of an elevated Swedish high-speed line. Photo: Skanska

CZECH REPUBLIC

In 2017, the Government of the Czech Republic approved its high-speed rail development programme. The planned network should connect Prague, Brno and Ostrava with Berlin, Vienna, Bratislava, Katowice and Bavaria and connect the Czech Republic to the European high-speed railway network. Existing infrastructure is upgraded, a small section between Beroun — Plzeň is already in operation, but does not reach official high-speed yet with a speed of 160 kilometres per hour.

Start of operation is planned for 2028-2029

TWO LINES

The high-speed line in the Elbe (VRT Polabí) will become the first section of two future high-speed lines, namely the national backbone connection Prague – Brno and the international connection Prague – Hradec Králové – Wrocław. The new line will be four-track, and the start of construction work is expected in 2025, the start of operation in 2028 – 2029. Completion of the design by a Czech-French-British consortium is expected in mid-2022.

GREECE

Development of a modern rail network for Greece has been a goal of the country since the 1990s. In 1996, construction of what is currently known as the Π.Α.Θ.Ε./Π., which stands for Patras-Athens-Thessaloniki-Idomeni/Promachonas was given the go-ahead. The country has been upgrading existing infrastructure to enable high-speed rail since, but has had many delays in the process. Now, with the arrival of the first high-speed train in January 2021, the first high-speed train journey comes closer.

On the tracks, trains which previously operated in Italy will run after being refurbished by Alstom. The first upgraded Alstom Avelia Pendolino ETR470 high-speed train arrived in Thessaloniki, Greece on January 16. The first of the five trains, also named 'white arrows', will run between Athens and Thessaloniki presumably at the end of March 2021.



PRAGUE - DRESDEN

The section across the Bohemian Central Mountains and further to Germany will also be used by freight trains,

thanks to which traffic in the narrow Elbe Valley will be relieved. Czech Republic's Ministry of Transport also approved the feasibility study of the connection to the German city of Dresden.

Prague Railway Station. Photograph: SŽDC

The first section leading from Prague to Litoměřice will be used purely for passenger transport with a maximum speed of up to 320 kilometres per hour. The planned railway line is part of the European TEN-T network and will connect the Czech Republic to the Western European high-speed railway. Preparation of the railway is carried out in cooperation with the German railway infrastructure manager, DB Netze AG.



The new trains will reduce current journey times on the main Athens-Thessaloniki axis from four hours to around three hours. They will be operated by TrainOSE. The new trains will travel up to 200 kilometres per hour, which makes them just hit the bar of being considered 'high-speed'. Alstom will deliver the four remaining units to Thessaloniki by autumn 2021.

"Starting high-speed in Greece is part of our strategy to offer an improved passenger experience, better quality services and reduced travel time on a very popular route" - Filippos Tsalidis, CEO of TrainOSE.

2021 has been announced as the year of the rail. The European Commission initiative will highlight the benefits of rail as a sustainable, smart and safe means of transport. RailTech Europe 2021 // LIVE focuses on the European Year of Rail on the first day of the event.

€8 million

The financial allocation for the European Year of Rail is estimated at €8 million.

90%

To achieve the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 transport emissions must go down by 90%.

95%

EU Transport is 95% dependent on oil and oil products

€500 million

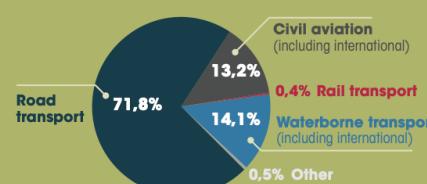
In the future trains and rolling stock should be built to a single standard and certified to run everywhere in Europe – saving rail companies €500 million in administrative costs by 2025.

75%

As part of the Green Deal, the European Commission has called for a substantial amount of the 75% of inland freight currently carried by road to be shifted onto rail and inland waterways.

RAIL IS SUSTAINABLE

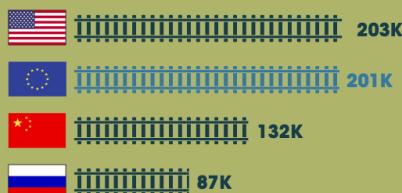
Greenhouse gas emissions from transport (EU-27, 2018)



SOURCE: EUROPA.EU/YEAR-OF-RAIL

RAIL CONNECTS PEOPLE

Length of railway lines in use in km



SOURCE: EUROPA.EU/YEAR-OF-RAIL

RAIL IS SAFE

Fatalities per billion passengers/km (2011-2015)

Powered two wheelers 38



SOURCE: EUROPA.EU/YEAR-OF-RAIL

Anniversaries 2021

- **20th anniversary** of the first EU Railway Package
- **175th anniversary** of the first ever rail link between two EU capitals (Paris-Brussels)
- **40 years** of TGV
- **30 years** of ICE

The full implementation of the Fourth Railway Package across the whole EU is key to boost rail transport.

Adina Valean
(European Commissioner for Mobility and Transport)

Rail is the answer to many important mobility issues, such as climate neutrality, energy efficiency, crisis resilience and safety. The Year of Rail should boost the industry.

Andreas Scheuer
(German Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure)

It is a great idea to declare 2021 as the European Year of Rail, the timing could not have been better. Let's make sure that it's more than just a floppy marketing campaign, it should also include appropriate investments in rail infrastructure.

Monika Heiming
(Director of the European association for rail infrastructure managers EIM Rail)

Some speakers at RailTech Europe 2021:

Elisabeth Werner
Director of Land Transport, European Commission



Bart van der Spiegel
Energy Management at Infrabel



Delphine Grandsart
Senior Researcher for European Passenger's Federation

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The European Year of Rail should be more than just marketing

By Paul van den Bogaard

Monika Heiming, director of the European association for rail infrastructure managers EIM Rail about the corona crisis, rail is indispensable, but also that work is needed to make it more resilient to future crises.



"It is a great idea to declare 2021 European Year of Rail, the timing could not have been better", says Monika Heiming, director of the European association for rail infrastructure managers EIM Rail. According to Heiming, the corona crisis showed that rail is indispensable, but also that work is needed to make it more resilient to future crises. "Let's make sure that its more than just a floppy marketing campaign, it should also include appropriate investments in rail infrastructure."

Monika Heiming explained her ideas for the European Year of Rail in the SpoorProTV broadcast of the Dutch colleagues of RailTech. According to the EIM director, it will increase political awareness for rail and that was desperately needed. "It offers a huge opportunity, but it does require meat on the bones. So not just a, let's say, floppy marketing campaign with which we convince each other how great the track is. We have to reach out to ordinary citizens and show what we have done in recent years, where the added value lies and how great and convenient it is to put goods on rail and to travel by train."

GLASS HALF FULL

According to Heiming, the fact that corona will also have a major impact on the rail sector next year is no obstacle to the Year of Rail. "In my opinion, the glass is half full and not half empty. Corona has shown the need to keep the economy going. And that rail is very useful in this regard. It has also shown that there are still some gaps to fill in creating a central market. Liberalization is underway, but I think there is still a lot of streamlining to do. Covid shows exactly what still needs to be done to make the track fit for, I wouldn't say the next pandemic, but to increase resilience. And that is why the timing of the European Year of Railways is fantastic."

However, content and concrete actions still need to be added, says Heiming. The European Green Deal and in particular the recently presented mobility strategy of the European Commission are already a step in this direction. What can rail managers do themselves to get the most out of the European Year of Rail?

"We must also be aware that there is a multi-modal approach"

"Trains in motion may paint a sexier picture than the infrastructure, but trains can only run when the infrastructure is there. That is why it is very important for us to emphasize that we are ready for the modal shift to take place. That we are ready for more train traffic. But that we do need more capacity for that. Both physical and digital capacity. That is the most important message in our opinion. Good investments in physical assets and digital assets and we must also be aware that there is a more multimodal approach, which is why more connectivity is needed between the various links in the chain."

ERTMS is indispensable for this. "Without ERTMS we can forget about digitisation. It's the grandfather, the DNA and the first large-scale long-term digital project on rail and we need to make sure it continues. A few years ago, people said 'shouldn't we stop? It's so costly'. We said no, we have long since passed the point of no return and cannot go back. So we have to make it work. The role of the European railway agency ERA is exactly the right one to bring everything together and harmonize it. But what we need to do is speed up, reduce costs and make the whole system more compatible."

"We need to better connect the different economies and bring people to the different cities."

STRATEGIC ROLE

EIM itself will use the European Year of Rail to emphasise the added value for society of all the projects it is working on. "That goes further than just telling you what will be driving on which route. Together with a number of our members, we are looking at the further added value of the investments made in rail infrastructure."

" That it makes the modal shift possible, is faster than other modalities and increases competitiveness. But also that rail infrastructure plays a strategic role at EU level, it is also important geopolitically because work is not only being done here on the rail. They are also building new international connections outside Europe. We need to better connect the different economies and bring people to the different cities."

TEN-T AND ATO

Is the European Year of Rail going far enough? "No, of course not, a lot of marketing initiatives are planned and a lot of awareness is being created, but as I said before, it takes meat on the bones to realize all ambitions. A good European subsidy programme must ensure that, investment programs to accelerate the TEN-T corridors and rail freight routes, that's what we need.

"A dedicated digitalisation programme is extremely important."



Photograph by Georg Wagner / Deutsche Bahn AG

In addition, a dedicated digitalisation programme is also needed. That is extremely important, for Automatic Train Operation for example. But cybersecurity is also an important topic that will continue in the coming year. It is extremely important to protect the increasing data flow within the own

"Doubling investments in rail would be ideal."

organisation of infrastructure managers, but also among themselves and between customers and suppliers."

Doubling investments so far would be ideal, says Heiming. "600 million euros for research seems like a large amount, but it really takes more to properly cover all the subjects that deserve attention. Multimodal ticketing, financing, connectivity and passenger rights, for example, but we also need to become more assertive. The rail sector has been quite timid so far. But we need to promote that we are energy efficient, efficient in any case, competitive and proud of what we have achieved so far."

SHIFT TO RAIL

‘Adopting a passengers’ perspective is essential for the shift to rail’

“Railway operators should work together more. If we get people out of the car and into the train, everyone will benefit”, says Delphine Grandsart, researcher at the European Passenger Federation (EPF). In this interview, she talks about the needs of passengers, through-ticketing, and the importance of a user-centered approach for achieving a shift to rail.

“Rail has a lot of strengths that are relevant to the future of mobility. It can handle large volumes of people, it’s quite sustainable, energy-efficient and can be fast”, says Delphine Grandsart. However, rail has not lived up to its full potential. For this to happen, actions and a change of attitude is needed for more people to choose rail, she argues. The researcher has been working on mobility and public transport related projects for over 10 years, specialising in passenger rights, user behaviour and the needs of specific user groups, such as people with reduced mobility and elderly people.

COLLABORATION

Operators do not do enough, but it is also a matter of collaboration, says Grandsart. “Sometimes operators try to protect their own



customers, but we can all win if everyone works closer together.

If we can get people out of the car and into public transport, there would be a lot more passengers as a whole, which also benefits operators.”

“Some countries have boards of passengers that give input when there is a new timetable or new rolling stock is purchased”

A WAY OF THINKING

There are two things that should be at the focus of attention, says Delphine Grandsart. Firstly, a more user-centred attitude is needed, starting from the passengers’ perspective instead of from the industry’s perspective. “For one thing this is really a way of thinking, and the end-user’s engagement should be ensured at all levels.” There are a lot of ways to involve passengers, such as performing more passenger satisfaction surveys, involving them in the development of new services from the beginning, and including different target groups, lists Grandsart. “Some countries also have boards of passengers that give input when there is a new timetable or new rolling stock is being purchased.”

“It is important to look at the journey from door to door”

Secondly, rail is part of a complete system, part of a public transport network. It is important to see this as one whole, and not only look at one particular piece in it. “To enable seamless travel, it is important to look at the journey from door to door, so people can transfer between different transport modes smoothly. This also implies integrated information and ticketing possibilities.”

MAKE BOOKING EASIER

If we can get people out of the carOne of the main reasons, especially in long-distance travel, for people to not choose rail is that there is often no or little information available, says Grandsart. It is complicated to look it up and people need to go to different operators with separate websites, and piece together their own journey and calculate transfer times. “It would be a lot easier if this existed in one place where all the information is combined.” The second step would be to also have multi-modal ticketing, so people can directly book as well, and it is a one-stop shop.



Passengers board the SBB train with bicycles, Photo: SBB

"In urban areas we already see more integrated ticketing, but we need this on longer travels as well", says Grandsart. The prerequisite is that operators are willing to cooperate and share data and offer tickets through other sales channels. "With Mobility as a Service (MaaS), we see that everyone likes the idea, but there are not yet very well-developed business models to make it work, we will need more experience in it." Running such a platform also has costs, which would come on top of the already often high price, but by making booking easier, more passengers will be attracted which in turn can lower the price.

THROUGH-TICKETING

The European Passenger Federation is also in favour of the idea of through-ticketing. This means that when several entitlements for different parts of a (multi-modal) journey need to be bought, in the end together they would constitute a single contract.

"With through-ticketing, there is more protection for passengers to arrive at their destination"

"This guarantees more protection for passengers to arrive at their final destination", says Grandsart. When there is no single contract, in case someone misses the train because of delay of a previous leg of the trip they have to go through a complicated process of finding out which options there are for rerouting and rebooking.

This could include a guarantee that passengers are offered an alternative when part of their trip is cancelled or delayed.

LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

The pricing and value for money is also a major aspect influencing travel choice, emphasises Grandsart, and rail is often not attractively priced. This can partly be improved by more competition in rail, according to the researcher. Also investing in greater cost-efficiency and having a more level playing field between modes are important. "Right now, aviation or the car benefit from tax exemptions and special rules. This really works against achieving more sustainable travel."

"The price of transport should reflect its real cost"

The price of transport should reflect its real cost, and also include external costs such as impact on society, people's health, congestion, pollution and air quality, and the mobility in cities, argues Grandsart. "If these aspects were taken in account, the price of various transport modes would be very different from what it is now. This really is a policy issue. A lot of offers in rail and public transport in general are covered by public service obligations, in that sense it should be possible to change the rules and to create more incentives for people to choose rail over other modes."



Passengers at Ljubljana station, photo: Miško Kranjec via Slovenske železnice



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