

BULLETIN OF EUROPEAN RAIL TRAVEL nr 36

Welcome to the spring 2026 issue of the bulletin issued once a quarter by Trevor Garrod to pro-rail campaigners throughout Europe. We hope you will find it helpful.

CONTENTS of this issue: NEW SERVICES; “DESTINATION EUROPE”; EUROPEAN ENTRY SYSTEM; ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN RAIL AGENTS; EPF CONFERENCE AND MODAL SHIFT; DISRUPTION TO INTERNATIONAL TRAIN SERVICES; RAIL/SEA/RAIL; LAST BUT NOT LEAST.

NEW SERVICES

Holiday re-think? To quote a report in the Berliner Zeitung of March 4th – “Deventer instead of Dubai, Paris instead of Phuket. The war in the Middle East means that many people are re-thinking their holiday plans. New international rail connections from and to Berlin, which are already appearing, offer further options.”

For example, The European Sleeper has launched a new Paris – Berlin night service on March 26th replacing the train withdrawn last year by OeBB and SNCF. It calls at Aulnoye, Mons, Brussels and (from July 13th) Hamburg. By the end of March, 25,000 tickets had already been sold. The inaugural train carried 650 passengers.

A week earlier the new operator Go-Volta had started running between Amsterdam and Berlin – slower but cheaper than the DB service. It is stated that 35,000 tickets have already been sold.

Then, on 9th September, The European Sleeper is due to launch a Brussels to Milan overnight service, picking up also at Liege, Aachen and Cologne and afterwards calling at Zurich, Bellinzona, Lugano and Como.

Not all night train news is good. For example, the Basle- Malmö service, mentioned in our last issue, has been withdrawn. But the other items of news are encouraging.

Norway is also to have new roiling stock for domestic services. It is being built by Stadler and some consultation is taking place. This versatile stock is suitable for daytime and night time use, Members of Back-on-Track have been invited to a webinar on Wednesday April 29th (from one hour from 14.00 CEST) learn about it.

EUROPEAN ENTRY SYSTEM – FULL IMPLEMENTATION DEFERRED

It has been announced in the news media that full implementation of EES, due to be achieved by April 10th, has been deferred. Not all EU Memberstates have yet completed the new infrastructure for controls in and out of the Schengen area.

The Association of European Rail Agents has been monitoring how well, or not so well, the border controls have been functioning since EES was introduced in October, requiring fingerprints and eye checks between countries in the Schengen zone and those, like the UK, outside it.

AERA wrote to the EU Directors of transport and security urging a deferral till September. The letters can be seen on www.aera.co.uk A considerable number of other bodies have made similar representations including, most recently, ACI which represents airports and airlines.

NEW AERA WEBSITE

Meanwhile, at the end of January, AERA launched an updated website, on the occasion of its Annual General Meeting held this year in Brussels. The new website contains up-to-date links and information about all travel agents and tour operators specialising in European rail, who belong to AERA, as well as travel hints for the wider public.

AERA meets every two months, usually in London, and welcomes new members in the travel and tourism industry. Log on to www.aera.co.uk

“DESTINATION EUROPE”

A new leaflet from the European Rail Campaign (UK) will be available in the second half of April. It has been compiled by members of this independent voluntary association and includes a useful map showing Continental towns and cities which are just one change of train from London, such as Berlin, Geneva and Bordeaux.

It follows that for people in these important centres, London is only one change of train away! So the leaflet is not just aimed at a British clientele.

The fully illustrated quality leaflet will also be on the website www.eurorailcampaignuk.org and obtainable from Trevor Garrod, 15 Clapham Road South, Lowestoft, NR32 1RQ, UK. (tgarrod21@gmail.com).

Copies of ERC(UK)'s night train leaflet (reprinted in January 2025) are also still available from the same address.

In the currently evolving situation of international train services, the leaflets naturally include website details on which the most up-to-date information on times, fares and facilities can be obtained.

EUROPEAN PASSENGERS' FEDERATION

EPF will hold its Annual General meeting at the rail hub of Olten, Switzerland, on Saturday April 18th. As usual, delegates from all EPF-affiliated national and regional associations may attend – in person or by zoom.

This will be the opportunity to assess EPF's work and progress over the past year and discuss its future plans. There will also be some amendments to the federation's statutes to consider.

Conference in Maastricht

On June 5th-6th EPF will hold its conference, to which all passenger campaigners are invited, in Maastricht. Hosted by the Dutch passengers' association ROVER, the positive title of the event is "Advancing Sustainable Passenger Mobility Across Europe."

An impressive range of guest speakers has been assembled to address issues including modal shift, how to double international trains by 2035, addressing cross-border challenges and funding for sustainable mobility

There will also be opportunities for discussion and networking.

At the end of the conference, a Maastricht Manifesto will be launched, to be signed not only by EPF but also by BEUC (the long-established union of consumer bodies in Europe), the European Cyclists' Federation and the European Disabled Federation.

The charge for the conference will be 200 euro per individual; but 100 euro for those who are members of national or regional associations directly affiliated to EPF.

Full details and a registration form are to be found on www.epf.eu

RAIL/SEA/RAIL

There is an alternative to flying, driving or going by high-speed train from London to Paris, and that is to use the DFDS ferry between Newhaven and Dieppe. The company has, we understand, a 4-year contract to use these two ports. Nowadays the majority of their business is road-based, but there is spare capacity for foot passengers.

At Newhaven the Town station is an easy walk to the ferry terminal. A local train service runs twice an hour to and from Brighton which itself is the southern terminus of Thameslink – a very popular service northwards, through London and right out to Bedford or Cambridge.

On the French side, a comfortable bus, supported by the French local authority, takes you to Dieppe Ville station. A modern Alstom bimode train then takes you through the rolling hills of Upper Normandy to the historic city of Rouen – where nowadays you can catch an electric Intercity train to Paris. Is there any technical reason why that bimode train cannot provide a through service from Dieppe to Paris when there is a potential ferry connection?

Campaigners in Sussex have drawn attention to a study published by the Newhaven Enterprise Zone showing the economic benefits to the town of Newhaven thanks to the ferry passengers. Would there also be economic benefits to the eastern part of Kent if at least some of the ferries at Dover encouraged foot passengers.

Meanwhile, campaigners in Kent continue to make the case for a coach connection between, say, Ashford and Lille via the shuttle; while also urging Eurostar and their potential open access competitor(s) to keep the options open for some of their trains to call at at least one of the “International” stations on HS1.

The European Rail Campaign (UK) has also agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Transport putting the case for foot passengers to be allowed on at least some of the ferries across the Straits of Dover, thus giving more choice and flexibility for travellers between southern England and northern France.

DISRUPTION TO INTERNATIONAL TRAINS

This problem was first raised by the Association of European Rail Agents whose customers using the Brenner route between Austria and Italy were concerned about delays to their journeys and lack of information.

This very busy route is used by a considerable number of passenger and freight trains, and quite a number of different operators. That is not unusual in today’s Europe.

The need for a code of practice on information to passengers – whether on delayed trains or at stations awaiting their delayed trains – was discussed at the General Meeting of EPF in January and as a result a draft code of practice has been submitted to the Community of European Railways, which is the trade body for all legacy passenger operators, for the next meeting of their Customer Liaison Group.

It would also be useful if new entrants would subscribe to the code of practice as well.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST....

Wolfgang Klapdor

On March 17th our colleague Wolfgang Klapdor passed away at the age of 79 after a lengthy illness.

Wolfgang had been Vice-Chairman of Deutscher Bahnkundenverband (German Rail Passengers' Association) and one of the earliest board members of EPF.

Although he participated in few meetings in recent years, he remained active on his computer, e-mailing colleagues regularly with news and links on Europe-wide rail matters.

Condolences have been sent to his family.

European Rail Passenger Union

We mentioned in our last issue the founding by Jon Worth of this new body for international travellers, focussed especially on how cross-border services can be improved.

The association now has a website <https://erpu.eu> explaining its aims in seven languages and a form for interested people to fill in.

Further information about international rail travel, and advice, can be obtained from the European Rail Timetable which is published twice a year on paper and more frequently on line. Log on to www.europeanrailtimetable.eu . You can also subscribe free of charge to their Friday Flyer for really up-to-date information.

The man in seat 61 is also a mine of helpful information on international rail services, ticketing and facilities and his website is <https://www.seat61.com>

Trevor Garrod has made every effort to include up to date information in this bulletin and cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes.

He aims to produce the summer issue in the second half of June.

31/3/26

