

EPF Conference 2024: Shaping the Future of Passenger Mobility in Europe

This year the Ibis Warszawa Stare Miasto in Warsaw, Poland, hosted the EPF annual Conference on 21-22 June, 2024. This event brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders from across Europe, providing a platform for insightful discussions on passenger mobility and public transport innovations. A total of 54 participants attended the conference, engaging in a series of panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities.

The conference opened with a keynote by Elisabeth Kotthaus from the European Commission (DG MOVE) who set a collaborative tone for the event. Kotthaus highlighted the ongoing partnership between the Commission and EPF, emphasizing the importance of digital mobility services and initiatives to connect urban mobility with long-distance travel. She also discussed about the Social-Climate Fund's role in addressing transport poverty.

The first session, "Long distance coach and passenger rights?", moderated by Prof. Stefan Akira Jarecki, included panelists Aurélien Gandois (BlablaCar), Iwona Budyach (Transport Exclusion Association), Dr. Malte Wienker (Flixbus), and Elisabeth Kotthaus. The session explored the impact of competition on passenger services, regulatory challenges, the role of digital platforms in improving access to multimodal transport, and the need to integrate public transport connections for seamless travel. Key points included addressing local service disruptions and enhancing passenger rights awareness.

In the session on "Competition, good for passengers?", panelists Sophie Buyse (Deutsche Bahn), Nick Brooks (AllRail), Christophe Philippe (UITP), and Prof. Stefan Akira Jarecki discussed balancing competitive tendering with direct public contract awards to enhance service quality, accessibility, and sustainability. The discussion highlighted the necessity of developing integrated ticketing systems and ensuring that new entrants in the market have fair access to infrastructure. The importance of night trains and cross-border rail services was also highlighted as a means to reduce car travel and promote sustainable transport.

A dedicated session on Multimodal Digital Mobility Services (MDMS) featured Delphine Grandsart (EPF), Alberto Mazzola (CER), Kuba Czajkowski (KOLEO), and Emmanuel Mounier (EU travel tech), moderated by Jakop Dalunde. This session underscored the necessity of providing seamless travel options across different transport modes. It was emphasized that multimodal journeys are often the most time-efficient and environmentally friendly. However, these options are usually invisible to passengers due to a lack of integrated information systems. The session highlighted successful examples and the need for international standards to make MDMS more effective and widely adopted.

On the first day, after the panel sessions, a workshop on the Sign-Air project was led by Delphine Grandsart from EPF. This workshop delved into air-rail multimodal

connectivity, emphasizing the need for better integration between different modes of transport to enhance passenger experience and reduce carbon footprints.

Friday evening featured a delightful dinner where participants enjoyed amazing Polish cuisine, offering a chance for informal networking.

On the second day of the conference, we had an interesting keynote from Gilles Mugnier (Secretary General, CIT). Mugnier presented the CIT Agreement on Journey Continuation (AJC), which aims to ensure that passengers with multiple transport tickets have guarantees in case of missed connections. The initiative focuses on providing clear information, offering reasonable alternative connections, and retaining the original tickets for continued travel. The AJC aims to expand its membership and improve communication and digitalization efforts to better support passengers during disruptions.

Thereafter, we had a thought-provoking session on "What can passengers expect from the EU Parliament and Commission?". The session featured panelists Jakub Majewski (Prokolej Fundacja), Elisabeth Kotthaus (European Commission, DG MOVE), Jakop Dalunde (Resenaererna and former MEP), and Karol Klosowski (Office of Rail Transport), moderated by Christopher Irwin. This session discussed the future initiatives of the EU Parliament and Commission, emphasizing continued support for MDMS, passenger rights, and sustainable transport.

Following this session, the EU Rail project workshop was conducted by Delphine Grandsart, focusing on passenger information provision within the context of rail transformation and emphasizing the passengers' perspectives.

The conference concluded with Josef Schneider (Chairman, EPF) announcing next year's conference in Swindon, UK. After the official closing on 22 June, attendees enjoyed a tour of Warsaw's main points of interest led by a local guide, followed by a special tour on 23 June, organized by Prokolej, to explore key public transport sites in the city.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all participants and speakers for their valuable contributions, making the EPF Conference 2024 a success. Special thanks to our hosts, Prokolej, and the EPF organizers for organising this insightful and engaging event. Presentations and pictures from the conference will be available on our website.