



**British Section**

**Newsletter**

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## **European Association of Railway Personnel**

**Association Européenne des Cheminots (AISBL)**

**International Association (A.R. 4.2.1985)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with advisory status to the  
Council of Europe (6.4.1977)**

**International Non-governmental Organisation with consultative status to  
the UN (decision E/ 2002/ of 22.07.2002) and member of the  
United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

**Registered address: A.E.C (AISBL). - 25 Square de Meeus 1000 Brussels, Belgium**

**AEC EUROPEAN BUREAU** – elected at the General Assembly at Poznan (PL), September 2017, and remaining in office provisionally until new elections can be held.

**European President:** Nicolae Dutu (RO)).

**Vice-President:** Dott. Giuseppe Cirillo (I)

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**Treasurer:** Karl Eder (A). **Asst Treasurer:** Walter Rohr (A)

#### **AEC BRITISH SECTION COMMITTEE**

The Annual General Meeting for 2020 had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak. The existing committee and officers will remain in place as caretakers until such time as a new AGM can safely be convened, as follows

#### **Honorary President:**

Colin Charman,  
formerly Operations Manager  
Eurostar Engineering Centre.

#### **Past Honorary President & Hon. Life Member:**

Theo Steel (formerly Project Director ONE Railway)

#### **President:**

Bob Clark  
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#### **Vice-president:**

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#### **Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Recruitment Officer:**

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#### **Checker of Accounts:**

Colin Charman,

The British Section Newsletter is produced by a small team headed by Philip Worsfold, who fulfils the non-committee role of Editor and Translator

**A.E.C. BRITISH SECTION NEWSLETTER, Vol. 25 No. 2  
December 2020**

The list of committee members is on page 2.

<b>Contents</b>	Editorial	Page 4
	Reminders	Page 5
	Recruitment	Page 5
	The President's Slot	Page 5
	People - John Batts	Page 6
	- John Hayward	Page 6
	- John Woods	Page 6
	Travel & Transport News	Page 6
	- European Parliament's measures to protect the Channel Tunnel	Page 6
	- For European Rail Travellers – proposals for new High-Speed services	Page 7
	- European loan for Naples Bari High Speed line	Page 8
	- Ceneri Base Tunnel	Page 9
	- Year of Rail 2021	Page 9
	- Rail Travel in Europe & the Pandemic	Page 9
	- Brussels-Vienna Night Trains	Page 10
	- Spain opens new High-Speed section	Page 11
	- Luxembourg as a Source of Inspiration	Page 12
	- Point of View by former President of French section	Page 13
	European Events	Page 15
	Dates of European Events	Page 15
	Items from the German section calendar	Page 15
	European Days in Sofia (BG) 2021	Page 15
	56th European Congress of FEANDC in Lugano (CH), June 2021	Page 17
	Just a Thought	Page 17
	Recent Events	Page 18
	....and Things to Come	
	Association Ties and Badges	Page 18
	CILT Railway Study Forum	Page 18
	Young Buffers Association	Page 19
	REPTA	Page 19
	FEANDC	Page 19
	And for the Future???	Page 19

**A membership Application Form / GDPR Declaration is attached to the e-mail edition of this Newsletter.**

**The European web page is at: <http://www.A-E-C.net>** (hosted by the German section)  
AEC Latvia is at [www.ldzb.lv/aec/lv/](http://www.ldzb.lv/aec/lv/)

The aecitalia website is not recognised as representing the official Italian section of AEC. Vito Visconti is no longer a member of AEC.

The **French section website** has been **re-established** at:  
<http://aec-france.pagesperso-orange.fr/>

The **British Section Website** is available at <http://www.aec-europe.co.uk>

The British Section Facebook page is closed.

The British Section Newsletter is also available on line at the European website and on the British section website.

## EDITORIAL

**We take this opportunity to wish all our readers the compliments of the festive season – Happy Christmas, Good New Year; Fröhliche Weihnacht; Bonnes Fêtes; Hogmanay - Bliadhna mhath ùr.**

Since our last edition there have been signs of life within at least two sections on the other side of the Channel. The German section's Hamburg region has actually managed to hold a face to face meeting to elect a committee – a cause of some jubilation on the part of their President. The other section was the Italian section and the news from there was not so good. Following the brave and successful attempt of Anna Gabriele in Sicily to raise sufficient support to reform a legal Italian section and to organise hugely successful European Days in Sicily; this early flowering seems to have foundered because of regional squabbling. At the end of the three-year term of office, no further general meeting was called by the then National Committee and a meeting was convened alternatively, which the Sicilian group boycotted. A new Committee was elected and represented the Italian section at the last European Days in Linz. The European President, Nicolae Dutu, instructed his deputy, Giuseppe Cirillo (conveniently an Italian), to try to bring the two opposing factions together, by convening a new meeting under his chairmanship, to try to sort things out. Sadly, this too was boycotted by the Sicilian group, despite the fact that they could no longer claim to represent the national section. So, animosity reigns still in Italy, albeit as a national concern, rather than one affecting the whole European organisation. I find it strange that in these two countries – and others to my knowledge – there seems to be a great desire to hold office, whereas we here in Britain always find great difficulty in finding someone willing to stand; and only then when they have had their arm twisted hard! Meanwhile, little has happened in AEC circles here in Britain; although we continue to remain in touch. It has not been safe for us of an older generation to meet together in an urban setting, and train services have been much reduced. As I write we are within a further four-week lockdown as the second wave of Covid-19 takes hold. We are promised an easing to a three-tier system of restrictions, similar to that which went before the lockdown to take us over the Christmas period. I may seem pessimistic, but I don't think the lockdowns will end there, despite the good news about the coming availability of vaccines.

The Romanian section is now being asked to consider whether the postponed European Days in Bulgaria can take place in 2021; but for the moment have extended the booking deadline until the New Year. I have my doubts; and being committed to rail travel, there seems to be little likelihood of British citizens being able to cross Europe by train without the hindrance of having to self isolate for several days every time they cross a national frontier. I have asked those who have shown previous interest to let me have their views. If the event takes place, Britain will by then be fully out of the European Union – whatever the deal or lack of it. The country seems generally unprepared for what will descend upon it on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. It seems there are already delays at ports, with containers being stockpiled and ships turning away to ports in other countries after more than three weeks of delay. I foresee frightening events such as we have not experienced for 150 years, as people find prices rising, a scarcity of food and medication; all at a time when demand will be at its greatest. The North of England is already suffering unexpected consequences of our Government's laissez-faire attitudes; but, with Brexit done as promised, I suppose the Prime Minister could say goodbye and leave someone else to sort out the mess – and take the blame! I was writing these words as the great and the good assemble in Westminster Abbey to commemorate the centenary of the ceremony of the interment of the Unknown Soldier after World War 1 – the war to end all wars! Let us hope that our leaders reflect on their failures in the hope of better understanding and compassion for those

less fortunate than ourselves. Eighty-two years ago, when I was a small child, this country was more open to those in need; happy to offer succour to refugees from a Europe about to enter war. More were received after that war. Many of those who stayed went on to become beacons of 'British' achievement. But having legislated to welcome immigration, the attitude changed when some of those who were attracted turned out to be persons of colour. Hopefully recent events are beginning to change our attitude, at least to those who are already here – and their British born descendants. Would that we could be more welcoming to all those in need.

After the winning of the US Presidential election by the Democratic party, we still await the formal conceding of defeat by the incumbent – something he has vowed not to do, claiming cheating by the other side. If ever there was a cheat, it is him. His vaulting ambition and megalomania have caused untold harm to the (so called) United States and to the rest of the world; and has encouraged other would be dictators. Let us hope that Joe Biden can help his country to reconcile its two halves. I don't think it is possible to bring them together. Democracy stands on a knife edge and we all need to be vigilant to protect it and with it the values of friendship and co-operation that are at the heart of AEC.

Philip Worsfold. November 2020

*(The views expressed are personal and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association.)*

### **Reminders.**

**Again, a reminder that the British section website is now up and running at [www.aec-europe.co.uk](http://www.aec-europe.co.uk). It will be a source of up to date information, so please use it regularly. Jenny Worsfold is the webmaster and material for insertion should be sent to her as an e-mail attachment.**

### **Recruitment**

Nigel Hyde has been elected as Treasurer and membership Secretary as well as Recruitment Officer. Any ideas you have should be channelled through him. All enquiries about membership should be addressed to **Nigel Hyde**. **Please note telephone number and e-mail addresses on page 2.**

### **THE PRESIDENT'S SLOT**

**Bob Clark**

#### **The Titanic escape from freedom's frontier**

As we enter the darkness of 2021 and bearing in mind the disastrous 2020, I would have hoped that next year would be better for us all. But as the clock rolls on to midnight on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, we enter an even more uncertain future. Our freedoms vanish into the ether and we are thrown to the wolves. Let it be known to you all our European family that we shall never be forced into the isolation some in these islands demand. Our destiny has, and always will be, to be open minded, civilized and to remain a part of our great European family. As Christmas approaches, we will have to do things differently for this year so wherever you live we will be thinking of you all. Finally, I hope that you stay safe and obey your country's rules, keep social distancing and remember 'hands... face...space... Together we shall defeat this virus, as for the future? Who knows..... Enjoy life now; be who you want to be; do what you want to do (sorry cancelled until further notice!) .

**I would like to wish all of you a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**

*[Bob has been going through a rather traumatic time during the past few weeks. He has had to cope with the deaths of a neighbour and of a close colleague – both on the same day. And his computer has crashed. So I was pleased to receive this contribution, composed on his I-pad; and hope that he has found his way to some peace and solace at this difficult time - Ed..]*

## PEOPLE

### John Batts.

John Batts and I have had a couple of lengthy telephone conversations, exchanging news and views; although if the pandemic continues to inhibit our activities much longer, I fear that even we shall run out of things to talk about! John has further expanded his photographic collection and all his pictures on film, are now available to view on line at [www.transporttreasury.com](http://www.transporttreasury.com) . There remain his digital images to transfer. He continues in reasonable health – bearing in mind that none of us are getting any younger!

### John Hayward.

John H continues to correspond by e-mail to ensure that I do not miss news of importance on a wide range of topics, not all concerning this publication – for which I offer my thanks. Like his namesake above, he is as well as we can expect.

### John Woods.

John has decided to give up his membership of the Association. His family has been taking up much of his time and also the Mid Norfolk Railway has problems with several of its bridges, which are going to need expensive attention. The sorting out viable solutions which will avoid bankrupting the railway is also in the forefront of his activities. This leaves no time for AEC, which, in a way explains why we have not seen him recently – even before the advent of Covid-19. Also, he feels AEC has diverged from what it was. It was John who recruited me to the association, when he was Secretary and was later elected as a life member. I am sure we shall all miss him. He has, however expressed a desire to remain in touch with me and other members. Philip Worsfold.

## TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL

### EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES MEASURES TO PROTECT CHANNEL TUNNEL POST- BREXIT

by David Burroughs (Rail Journal)

Oct 19, 2020

MEMBERS of the European Parliament (MEPs) have endorsed two proposals aimed at maintaining the same set of rules for the Channel Tunnel following Britain's exit from the European Union.

The legislation will enable France to negotiate a new international agreement with Britain and maintain the Intergovernmental Commission as the main safety authority for the tunnel. The arrangements will also allow negotiations between France and Britain over regulations covering safety and interoperability arrangements to begin immediately.

The amendments adopted by the European Parliament correspond to the European Council's position, which will now have to formally adopt its first reading position. The regulation will enter into force the day after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU.

If an agreement between France and Britain is not reached by January 1 2021, the national safety authorities in each country would have authority over their own half of the tunnel, with EU regulations not applying to Britain's section of the tunnel.

Getlink

The agreement comes as Channel Tunnel operator Getlink announced a 17% drop in revenue for the third quarter, down from €304.6m in 2019 to €252.1m in 2020. Overall revenue for the first nine months of the year dropped 25% from €827.8m in 2019 to €621.6m in 2020.

Revenue from the Channel Tunnel was €219.8m in the third quarter of 2020, down 19% from €272.8m during the same period last year. Revenues for the quarter declined to a lesser extent than in the first half of the year thanks to the relatively good performance of the group's Shuttle services, which was down only 2% at €181.2m.

This was a result of the bounce back observed following the temporary lifting of quarantine measures in Britain during Le Shuttle's peak summer season, the resilience of the Truck Shuttle's traffic and the positive effects of the group's yield management strategy. Network revenue dropped by 57%, due to lower Eurostar passenger numbers; and a reduction in the number of cross-Channel freight trains.

The Europorte division's revenue increased by 3% for the third quarter of 2020 - to €32.2m.

During the third quarter, Getlink separated the roles of CEO and chairman of the board, with Mr Yann Leriche taking over as CEO while Mr Jacques Gounon remains as chairman. Mr Géraldine Périchon was appointed as chief financial officer on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Getlink has launched an action plan in response to the economic uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, with an immediate focus on cost reduction and strict cash management, including furlough and reduced activity for its Eurotunnel teams. The group held of solid cash position of €596m at the end of September.

Following the introduction of new travel and quarantine restrictions in response to the second wave of Covid-19 across Europe, Getlink has withdrawn its guidance of a consolidated Ebitda target of €350m for 2020.

### **For European Rail Travellers.**

EUROPE: - September 2020. A network of international long-distance high-speed passenger services spanning much of Western Europe could be launched by 2025 if proposals announced by Germany's Federal Minister for Transport Andreas Scheuer at a virtual conference of Europe's transport ministers on September 21 are taken forward.

The proposals are seen as an important contribution to climate change mitigation and 'an opportunity for a new message from railways. Branded TEE2.0 and envisaged as a symbol of European co-operation, the plans echo the Trans-Europ-Express network launched by seven national railways in 1957 at the instigation of former Netherlands Railways President Dr den Hollander.

As with the original TEE trains, TEE2.0 services would operate only during the day, but Scheuer's plans envisage that they would be matched by an expanded network of TEEN overnight links, reflecting the resurgence of interest in night trains that has built on the 'flight shame' movement in Scandinavia.

Scheuer sees TEE2.0 as a headline move for Europe's railways 'in the context of a bigger Europe that has grown together' and which is working to combat climate change.

The concept arose last year out of work on Germany's Deutschland takt, he said, and he now aims to convince other EU member states of the value of the proposals with a view to having a formal declaration of intent signed during Germany's six-month presidency of the Council of the EU.

Each TEE2.0 service would link at least three countries, and Scheuer envisages that a 'blueprint' would be drawn up to 'identify origin-destination pairs that have inadequate rail services today'. National high-speed lines would be 'interlinked' to form international routes 'that stimulate great demand while using as few additional paths on the domestic networks as possible'. Opportunities and risks would need to be assessed, as would 'the technical and timetable-based challenges'.

Eight routes are proposed in two phases, the second phase following after completion of the Brenner Base Tunnel, the Fehmarn Belt link, Stuttgart 21 and the Stuttgart – Ulm Neubaustrecke, together with various other projects in Germany,



envisaged as part of the Deutschland takt proposals: Hannover – Bielefeld – Hamm, Karlsruhe – Basel and Mannheim – Erfurt, including a tunnel under central Frankfurt.

#### Proposed TEE2.0 services

TEE1/2: Paris – Brussels – Köln – Berlin –Warszawa  
TEE3/4: Amsterdam – Köln – Basel – Milano – Roma  
TEE5/6: Berlin – Frankfurt – Lyon – Montpellier – Barcelona  
TEE7/8: Amsterdam – Brussels – Paris – Lyon – Barcelona  
TEE9/10: Berlin – München – Innsbruck – Bologna – Roma  
TEE11/12: Paris – Strasbourg – Stuttgart – München – Wien – Budapest  
TEE13/14: Paris – Brussels – Hamburg – København – Stockholm  
TEE15/16: Stockholm – København – Berlin – München

Scheuer envisages that a dedicated TEE2.0 company would be set up, 'for instance by SNCF and DB' with other 'interested and ambitious railways' such as the national operators in the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland possibly taking a share. The company would be approved as an independent railway undertaking and would 'purchase services from the parent companies for production'. Existing rolling stock could be used in the short term.

A blueprint for the proposed overnight network would 'identify the necessary planning steps for the way forward', with trains running at a maximum speed of 230 km/h, or 250 km/h for Talgo trains. The plans assume that existing night train services would continue to evolve and expand, and while 'the development of additional overnight trains is to be welcomed, their economic challenge is not to be underestimated'. Eight routes are envisaged, two of which would rely on completion of major infrastructure projects such as the Fehmarnbelt link.

#### Proposed TEEN overnight services

EN21/22: Paris – Brussels – Köln – Berlin  
EN23/24: Brussels – Köln – Berlin –Praha/Warszawa  
EN25/26: Amsterdam – Köln – Basel – Milano – Venezia/Genova  
EN27/28: Frankfurt – Strasbourg/Zürich – Mulhouse – Lyon – Montpellier – Barcelona  
EN29/30: Berlin – München – Innsbruck –Bologna – Roma/Nice  
EN31/32: Paris – Strasbourg – Stuttgart – München – Wien – Budapest/Zagreb  
EN33/34: Paris – Brussels/Amsterdam – Hamburg – København – Stockholm  
EN35/36: Stockholm – København – Berlin – Praha – Wien/Budapest

Somewhat optimistically, Scheuer's proposals note that 'since implementation requires "merely" co-ordination between railway undertakings with regard to timetables, certification issues, through trains and fares, implementation in the near future would appear conceivable'.

Equally, there is acknowledgement of the difficulties of implementing the proposals: different traction current and train protection systems; the nationalistic outlook of individual operators; the lack of uniform marketing and pricing in the light of passengers' rights; different requirements for seat reservations; different rules for concessions, contracts and subsidies; different languages and operating rules; different 'technical subtleties' and quality levels; expectations of stopping patterns; profit ethos versus public service and different forms of operator.

### **European Investment Bank provides €2bn loan for Naples – Bari high-speed line Oliver Cuenca**

Sep 24, 2020

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has approved €2.5bn of new funding for European transport projects. This includes a €2bn loan to support the construction of



the 146.6km Naples – Bari high-speed line in southern Italy, the largest loan the EIB has ever granted for a single project.

The project, which has an estimated total cost of €6.2bn, is currently due for completion in 2027. The line will form part of the Scandinavia – Mediterranean Trans-European Network (TEN-T), and is expected to cut Naples – Bari journey times by 1h 40min to two hours non-stop. Rome – Bari will also be reduced to around three hours of travel – a saving of one hour.

The 146.6km Naples – Bari line will reduce travel times to two hours.

The project is expected to generate more than 2000 jobs during construction, and 200 when the line begins operation in 2027. The line is part of the Italian government's "Unlock Italy" initiative, which seeks to reduce the disparity of infrastructure development in northern and southern Italy.

The EIB loan follows a €114m grant from the European Union's (EU) European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), announced in August 2019, for upgrades to the 15.5km section of the project between Naples and Canello.

EIB also approved €450m in loans to Italian national operator Trenitalia for the purchase of 135 new diesel-electric-battery-powered hybrid trains for use on regional services in Calabria, Lazio, Molise, Tuscany, Valle d'Aosta, Sardinia and Sicily.

In addition, Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, will receive €75m to support a modernisation of its public transport network, covering both light rail and buses. The city's light rail modernisation project includes the procurement of LRVs worth €30m. Bidding for a €20m contract covering the rehabilitation of the 8.5km light rail line between Ilidza and Museji also closed in August, with a winner due to be announced in January 2021.

### **Ceneri Base Tunnel.**

4<sup>th</sup> September 2020

As the tunnel opens, the transport project of the century becomes a reality

With the inauguration of the 15.4km Ceneri base tunnel, the finishing touches are being put on the most colossal infrastructure project in recent Swiss history. The Swiss definitely like to burrow. If you were to add up the distance covered by all the longest railway tunnels in the country, it would be enough to travel underground across almost the entire national territory from Chiasso to Basel – several hundred kilometres, in particular, the 56km Gotthard base tunnel, inaugurated with great pomp in June 2016.

### **Year of Rail 2021**

The European Commission is getting excited for the #EUYearofRail 2021. The European Parliament has given the green light dedicating next year to #rail, to shine a spotlight on EU rail in all of its dimensions throughout 2021!

### **RAIL TRAVEL IN EUROPE AND THE PANDEMIC.**

#### **Nigel Perkins in Rail Report Europe – Issue 3/2020**

*[Rail Report Europe is available free, on line, from [www.rail-report-europe@catchup-pr.com](http://www.rail-report-europe@catchup-pr.com)].*

During the various "Lock-downs" across Europe during the Spring most train operators reduced their services to a bare minimum. Once countries began to ease their lock-downs from May onwards, many then resumes a full or almost full timetable. Due to the ever-changing restrictions on travel between aimed at preventing a second wave, some cross-border services are very limited at time of writing.

As the climate crisis has not gone away, the low carbon advantages of rail (and most public transport) remain and must be exploited in full. It is encouraging to see the recent expansion of night train services. Despite the coronavirus situation, many of these were soon fully booked for the Summer holiday season.

The pandemic has also severely hit the airline industry, which may take several years to recover. Obviously for intercontinental journeys between Europe and Americas and the Australasia, air remains the only practical means of transport. For Europe, day-time rail travel is well placed as a low carbon alternative for many short haul flights and even night trains for some medium distance flights as well.

Some people are predicting that commuting and business travel will never recover to pre-covid levels. Others have been highlighting the perceived danger of using public transport without any clear evidence to back up their claims. While the evidence is not conclusive, it suggests that train travel is no less safe than sitting next to other passengers on a plane.

In the UK, the RSSB (the rail safety regulator) published a study based on a train 50% full travelling for 30 minutes and concluded that (without wearing a mask) there was a 1 in 11 000 chance of being infected. In Germany, Deutsche Bahn concluded that contact tracing had not found one single infection in Germany and Austria that was triggered by taking a train journey. They also discovered that the infection rate was lower in air-conditioned carriages as the airflow tends to be vertical and less likely to pass the virus on to an adjacent passenger.

The home page of the Swiss Railways has clear simple illustrations such as “Coronavirus: Key facts at a glance” and “A mask protects yourself and others”. There are also simple to read bar graphs showing the busier and quieter times of day, both for weekdays and weekends. With German Railways, the Home Page has an illustration of the world wearing a mask.

I believe it is important for Governments and Train Operators not to over-react to the short-term need to financially support the railways.

More needs to be done to attract passengers back to rail and reassure people that rail remains relatively safe.

*[Here the author cites as a good example a poster of a mask wearing agent deep cleaning the vestibule of a carriage with the slogan “Safe travel: We’ll get there together”; and...].*

...some examples of bad practice.

At Trenitalia under “Our Offers” is a shaded grey area with the message “Recommendations to contain the spread of coronavirus”. Here they seem to have copied and pasted a colourful poster from the Ministry of Health-giving general advice. There is absolutely no guidance or advice in relation to train travel. In the UK, the National Rail home page has plenty of information about the coronavirus; but they do not really encourage you to travel by rail. Their “Safer Travel Pledge” on the website is not easy to find.

Some countries are launching special promotions aimed at getting people “back on the rails”. In France 12 – 25 year olds could buy a monthly pass in July and August for 29euros giving them unlimited travel on virtually all regional train services.

From now on and for the European Year of the Train in 2021, train operators must focus their marketing more on the relative safety of rail travel under covid-19. They should also launch a range of special promotions to tempt passengers back to rail. Finally, they resist pressure to cut services due to short term falls in demand.

### **BRUSSELS- VIENNA WEEKLY NIGHT TRAIN SERVICE.**

The Brussels – Wien weekly night train started again on 31st August. It was prompted by Austrian MEPs and officials working in Brussels, but is also available to other travellers. For example, British passengers can catch a Eurostar from London to Brussels and change there to a night train the “Brussels hub” concept begins.

In Sweden, agreement has been reached to launch a night train from Copenhagen to Umea; and in France President Macron announced plans to resume the night services from Paris to Tarbes and Paris to Nice. The Nice service could resume as early as March 2021

## **SPAIN OPENS NEW HIGH-SPEED RAIL SECTION**

**by Oliver Cuenca (Rail Journal)**

Oct 27, 2020

SPAIN inaugurated a 110km section of the Madrid – Galicia high-speed line between Zamora and Pedralba de la Pradería on October 26.

The new section, which opened to traffic on October 27, cost €898m, and expands the Spanish high-speed network's total length to around 3567km.

The section reduces travel times between Madrid and the major Galician cities, including 24 minutes to A Coruña, 31 minutes to Vigo, 39 minutes to Ourense, 41 minutes to Santiago de Compostela, 1h 2min to Lugo and 1h 26min to Pontevedra.

In addition, the new section allows for a higher frequency of traffic along the route, with services between Madrid and Ourense, Santiago and A Coruña now operating at a frequency of four trains per direction per day. The Madrid – Pontevedra service will operate six times per day both ways, the Madrid – Lugo service will operate five times per day, and the Madrid – Vigo service four times daily.

Renfe plans to further increase the frequency of services once demand recovers to pre-Covid levels.

This frequency increase is supported by the introduction of new services, including a Madrid – Santiago – Pontevedra train, which provides a direct Vilagarcía de Arousa – Madrid connection for the first time.

Additionally, new services between Santiago and A Coruña, Santiago and Vigo and Ourense – Lugo have been introduced, and the previously weekday-only Vigo – A Coruña service will also operate on weekends.

### *Castellon station upgrade*

Spanish infrastructure manager Adif AV also began work on Phase II of upgrades to Castelló de la Plana station in Valencia on October 26.

The work, which is part of the wider Castellón – Valencia section of the Mediterranean TEN-T corridor, is centred around the northern end of the station, and will be carried out overnight to minimise disruption.

The project includes the installation of 1435mm and 1668mm mixed-gauge track to enable the through operation of freight services between southern Spain and the rest of Europe. The work includes the installation of five new mixed-gauge turnouts and around 1000 sleepers, upgrades to catenary, station electrification and platform signage.

The work is being co-funded by the Spanish government and the European Union (EU), through its Connecting Europe Facility (CEF).

## **BOOSTING EUROPEAN RAIL TRANSPORT: HARMONIZED PROCEDURES ACROSS THE WHOLE EU**

The end of October was the deadline for Member States to transpose the technical pillar of the Fourth Railway Package, thereby granting the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) the powers needed to become Europe's single certification body for rail vehicles and railway traffic operators. Within its new role, the Agency will take responsibility for vehicle authorisation, safety certification, and European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) trackside approval across all Member States. This is an important change for the European rail system. In the past, train operators, manufacturers or anyone who planned to operate in or sell to clients in more than one Member State, had to apply for vehicle authorisations and safety certificates separately in every Member State concerned.

*[This is an instance where post-Brexit Britain could lose out. - Ed.]*

**In terms of mobility, the world should look to Luxembourg for inspiration.**

Luxembourg recently (March 1<sup>st</sup> 2020) became the first country in the world to make its entire public transport free for all. This drew press attention from around the globe and raised the question of feasibility for other European countries.

There is no doubt, free transport comes with a price tag. The Luxembourg government set aside 41 million Euros for the project, an amount corresponding to the yearly revenues from train, bus and tram fares.

*"Considering the money that is being invested in other areas such as infrastructure, this amount is rather minimal and makes it easier for Luxembourg to implement the measure than other countries"* reads the Luxembourg public transport site.

This is one of the factors that allowed the country to take the leap. And even if Luxembourg is currently the only country to have introduced free public transport, it is not a new idea. Cities such as Tallinn (Estonia), Dunkerque and Aubagne (France), Hasselt (Belgium) or Templin (Germany) had already introduced it and drawn very positive conclusions.

We know, for instance, that free transport has convinced many car owners to switch to softer mobility, that public transport has not become less safe (France) and that it has helped reduce carbon emissions, even if the impact was qualified as *"limited"*.

These conclusions will be useful reference points for the Luxembourgish authorities when they release their first annual report in March 2021. But with the pandemic, lockdown and subsequent fear of infection, Luxembourg's first year certainly won't have been a standard experience.

*"The lockdown dropped us into the abyss"*, admits the Minister for Mobility, François Bausch, stating that they can forget April, May and June altogether in terms of public transport usage. *"And this isn't over,"* he adds. Seeing the latest rise in infections, he is no doubt right. But this is no reason to be pessimistic long term. *"I expect there will be a massive (usage) increase after the crisis,"* he says.

François Bausch promises *"a first great leap"* in Luxembourg's mobility from December 2023. *"The transformation of the Central Station in Luxembourg-City will be completed, the rail line to Bettembourg will be done, the station in Howald will be finalised, a number of Park + Rides will be completed and the tram line between Findel airport and Cloche d'Or will be done"*, he explains.

This first *"leap"* will be followed by another, says François Bausch. As of 2030, he expects Luxembourg to be *"a model for the organisation of mobility"*. He is relying on projects such as the rapid tram between Esch-sur-Alzette and Luxembourg City to really jumpstart a change of behaviour in the country.

Free public transport is only one stage in a *"transformation"* that *"began seven years ago"*, says François Bausch. Luxembourg has indeed made massive investments in public transport over the past years.

547 million Euros have been set aside for mobility and climate investments for 2021 alone. This investment is part of the government's global strategy, after it announced in March a total of 3.2 billion Euros would be dedicated to increasing the rail network until 2027.

*"We have introduced a new dynamic which will lead to a change in behaviour"*, François Bausch says. He is convinced that *"Luxembourg will look different in 2030"*. The minister expects that these new infrastructures will also improve the urban areas in the Gare quarter and in Esch-sur-Alzette, but not only there.

François Bausch explains that by linking *"the economic centres of the country (Esch and Luxembourg)" with the multimodal corridor, the country's economic attractiveness will only increase*". He also predicts an *"important ecological impact"* of the emerging alternatives to the car, especially once all the public works will be completed.

Even if it will be some years before all of the projects can be enjoyed, the tram's arrival at the Central Station in December 2020 will be an important next step. At least it will give mobility fans a first taste of what they can expect further down the line in 2030. Free public transport, along with an ambitious investment strategy, has made Luxembourg an international reference in terms of mobility. A model that François Bausch thinks is "*transferable to big cities such as Paris, Berlin or Lyon*", stating that "*we must continue in this direction.*"

**POINT OF VIEW OF THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF SNCF FRENCH RAILWAYS, (correction) M. LE FLOCK-PRIGENT, ON INCIDENTS IN THE DAX, MORCENX, ORTHEZ AND YCHOUX AREAS IN SEPTEMBER.**

*[Loik Le Flock-Prigent, the former President of the French Railways, SNCF, has a blog at*

*<https://www.atlantico.fr/decryptage/359...ch-prigent>*

*He offered the following comments on a messy situation that developed from the evening of 6th September 2020. All I can say is that it all sounded very familiar! Pierre Laberny sent a copy of what was said. Here is my translation. – Editor]*

**How is it that the SNCF so often manages to ensure that small incidents turn into routs?**

**Since Saturday evening (06-09-20), the SNCF has been the victim of a series of incidents in the areas of Dax, Morcenx, Orthez and Ychoux**

**The incidents caused breakdowns on several trains in the south of Aquitaine. Here Loïk Le Floch-Prigent discusses SNCF's strategy.**

When an electrical incident in Aquitaine led hundreds of travellers into difficulty, in need of information and alternative possibilities, we rub our eyes. For years we have had the feeling that SNCF has been unable to deal properly with the inevitable difficulties of a collective transport company. What is happening then? Has our level of demand increased or are effective reactions no longer up to the occasion? Certainly, the reactions of the media are important; the train has become an object of fixation after endemic strikes and the loss of mobility due to confinement; but that does not explain everything, far from it. Travellers and the general public consider that they are not being properly treated: no information, no help, no mutual aid and no humanity emanating from the 'Ivory Castle'.

Yet we are far from the tradition of railway workers proud of their train, able to "get stoned" to minimize the consequences of delays, accidents, and ready at any time to mobilize tirelessly to welcome and minimize the consequences of traffic difficulties. The new equipment made available to them, in particular cell phones, leaves no possibility of ignorance of a problem and its consequences on traffic. This multiplication of incidents and debacles therefore deserves a more in-depth analysis. A business works when there is an "esprit de corps" that allows most staff to mobilize in the event of a hard blow. It was the great strength of the SNCF; but accompanied by its great flaw - a culture of strikes and endless notices of strikes unacceptable as much for the customers as to management. In a world without alternative mobility, we end up accepting suffering, but with the presence of highways and of aircraft the uncertainties linked to journeys by train ended up becoming unbearable. Companies were thus led to abandon rail freight, and travellers were increasingly irritated by the work stoppages that disrupt their mobility. SNCF lost much of its cohesive force in the face of unforeseen events while travellers have been less and less patient or resigned. The results of the last strikes disappointed the railway workers, the Government saw it as a victory, but it is often awkward to humiliate a social body which then thinks only of revenge. We can thus measure the drift of a company with an anchored

public service tradition, an unwavering dedication, especially in times of difficulty in a largely de-motivated company wearily waiting for the latest measures emanating from the officials, considered as the "breakage" of a tool to which they have devoted their life, and often their parents and grandparents before them. The first explanation is therefore that of the disillusionment of the railway workers with regard to those who want at all costs to reform their working tool without taking into account its traditions and history; and even more so, how it actually works.

But we cannot stop the diagnosis there, we must also talk about the organization because the desire to create two distinct companies, that of the network and that of travel has led to major dysfunctions at the base of rail activity. Everything is linked in the train, the rail, the signalling, the machine, the station ... it is a profession with specialties and close relationships between people who pursue a common goal: "to make people prefer the train ". All these personnel must work together and converse on a permanent basis both to prevent difficulties and to deal with them to best effect at the same time.

By instituting technocratic and ideological reforms, several chains of command have been instituted; hierarchies at the same time redundant and antagonistic and thus the responsibilities have been diluted, the objective being to exonerate oneself and not to avoid incidents. The train is a structural monopoly; we are not going to increase the footprint of the tracks. By wanting to generate competition by separating the network from the train, we only achieved a dressing, an ideological satisfaction, and this desire led to the distancing between the two parts of the static and operating staff which are, in fact, two inseparable aspects of the same body of skills. The consequence is when the incidents occur communication is poor and focuses on issues of responsibility and not on methods of getting round the problem, especially on the actions to be taken to support travellers. There is a great historical solidarity of the railway workers, but the organisation has shattered it and ten years later we reap the consequences ... while the communication tools are exceptional - it is more often the travellers who are the first to obtain information... what shame!

Finally, faced with the problems posed by the train and its nationalised nature, we wanted to make the politicians responsible for the measures.

On a daily basis, there is an incident and the Minister speaks and announces both the causes of the incidents and the measures taken to reduce the consequences. But then why appoint a boss of the company? This has two consequences, the first being the impossibility of having a technical debate, engineers and technicians considering that we are immediately outside their field of expertise, especially when they hear the nonsense uttered by political leaders! However, incidents, in particular electrical ones, have various causes that an analysis could clarify, but who says politics means justice, trial ... and the scientific and technical world knows that we must move away from it. We then have to wait for an "old" engineer who has long retired to find out, eventually, what really happened. The politician will denounce the dilapidation, the ineptitude of his predecessors; the engineer will talk about maintenance and budgetary constraints leading him to denigrate not the installation of the network in years gone by, but the lack of inspections and repairs due to both de-motivation of staff and the incompetence of some members of middle and lower management who want above all to pursue a career at headquarters. To be able to resolve these business problems in the future, we must have a true entrepreneur appointed by the political power who has management autonomy and who bears full responsibility for operation of his regime as well as the colleagues he has chosen.

In a de-motivated and disorganized business, one cannot be surprised at the inevitable incidents which turn into media dramas. The fact of saying, one day, that we are going to eliminate the small lines, then a year after that we are going to re-evaluate them; the fact of wanting to eliminate the freight train last year, then to praise it six months later, illustrate the manifest inconsistency of politics and the media with regard to the train. This is also one of the aspects of the de-motivation of

those staff who no longer want to be fed sweet words; but who want to see clear action. The railway workers want to know one thing: where is the train going? We can tell them that the policy is clear; but they find it more and more opaque, both to the railway and to themselves. It's easy to show irritation about the unhelpful strike culture, it's true, but in their search for answers, the railway workers want to save "their train". They are humiliated collectively when events like the one in Aquitaine are taking place and first of all they want to find solutions. Clear objectives, a pattern, measures taken after analysis, consultation and explanations and a return to procedures accepted and followed during incidents, in particular electrical incidents, would make it possible to regain the confidence of the staff, travellers and other rail users alike in that which is an unparalleled conquest by men.

## **EUROPEAN DAYS AND OTHER EVENTS**

**What appears below as proposed is all dependent on the progress made on defeating the Covid-19 virus and re-opening Europe to its citizens and visitors.**

### **Dates of European Events.**

**AEC European Days in Bulgaria (Sofia) 2021** organised by the Romanian section 16/17<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2021 Existing bookings stand or may be cancelled. For new bookings see detailed programme on page See programme below. Booking is open until **31<sup>st</sup> January 2021. NOTE CHANGED DATES**

**French section 'Sortie à Nice', is cancelled. At present no decision has been made regarding later reinstatement.**

**The Spanish section proposed European Days in Madrid/Toledo for May 2022** (postponed from 2021).

**Proposed AEC European Days in Lublin, Poland 2023** – postponed from 2022.

**56th European Congress of FEANDC 2021** in Lugano (CH) - see preliminary programme on page 17.

## **ITEMS FROM THE GERMAN SECTION CALENDAR.**

### **Aktuelle Veranstaltungstermine**

02.12.2020 RV Rostock: Adventsfeier im Clubraum

### **Europäische Treffen**

**17-22.05.2021 Europäische Tage 2021 der Sektionen Rumänien und Bulgarien in Sofia**

**September 2022 Europäische Tage 2022 der Sektionen Spanien in Madrid**

**Mai 2023 Europäische Tage 2022 der Sektionen Sektionen Polen in Lublin**

## **PROGRAMME FOR EUROPEAN DAYS IN SOFIA – CAPITAL OF BULGARIA FROM 16/17 TO 22 MAY 2020 – NOTE CHANGED DATES**

### **Organized by the Romanian Section (and Bulgarian Section) of AEC**

Accommodation in **Hotel Rila \*\*\*** with full board including drinks for lunch and dinner, bus transport, tour guide with guide, entry to visits and transfers.

### **Sunday: 16 May 2021**

- 08.00-24.00 – Arrival of participants at the European days of the AEC. Transfer from the train station and from international airport of Sofia. Accommodation at Hotel Rila \*\*\* located just 50 meters from the main shopping street of Sofia, equipped with restaurant, terrace, conference room, bar, etc.
- 19.00-23.00 - Dinner at the restaurant.



**Monday: 17 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 – Breakfast
- 09.00-13.00 - Administrative Council meeting in the conference room of the hotel.
- 13.00-15.00 – Lunch in the hotel's restaurant.
- 15.30-18.00 - Meeting of General Assembly and election of the new European Bureau AEC.
- For other participants, take the program relax by the pool or stroll through the historic centre.
- 18.30-22.00 - Official opening of the European Days of the AEC. Festive dinner with music, dance and a folklore programme with a Bulgarian flavour at a restaurant in the area.

**Tuesday: 18 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.30 - Breakfast
- 10.00-13.00 – Tour of the city of Sofia with a visit to the Cathedral Alexander Nevski, St. Sophia Church, Sfantu Gheorghe Church, the Royal Palace and the National Theatre Ivan Vazov.
- 13.30-15.30 - Lunch at a restaurant in the city.
- 16.00-19.00 – Continue to the city and visit the National Park Mount Vitosha, the oldest natural park on the Balkan Peninsula, visible from almost all parts of Sofia.
- 19.30-21.30 - Dinner at a restaurant in the central area.

**Wednesday: 19 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 - Breakfast at the hotel.
- 09.30-12.30 - Visit the Krakra Fortress and the Pernik Mining Museum (35km)
- 13.00-15.00 - Lunch at a restaurant in the Rila Nature Park (95km).
- 15.30-18.00 - Visit to Rila Monastery, the largest Orthodox monastery in the Balkans. Return to Sofia.
- 19.30-21.30 - Dinner at a restaurant in the central area.

**Thursday: 20 May 2021**

- 07.00 - Packed breakfast. Bus departure in the centre of Bulgaria – about 200 km.
- 10.30 -12.00 - Visit Arbanasi - the oldest village in Bulgaria, in fact a mini architectural jewel.
- 12.30 – 14.00 – Lunch at Sevastokrator Restaurant in Arbanasi.
- 14.30 – 16.00 – visiting Veliko Tarnovo - the former medieval capital of Bulgaria
- 16.30 - Travel to Sofia.
- 20.30 – Dinner at one restaurant in Central Sofia.

**Friday: 21 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 - Breakfast at the hotel.
- 09.30-12.00 - Visit to the City Hall in Sofia and the Headquarters of the Bulgarian Railways.
- 12.30-14.30 - Lunch at a restaurant in Sofia.
- 15.00-18.00 - Free time for shopping and relaxation.
- 18.30-22.00 - The official closing of the European Railway Days - AEC - with music, dance and a special artistic programme at a restaurant in the area.

**Saturday: 22 May 2021**

- 07.00-09.00 - Breakfast at the hotel.
- Departure of participants. Transfer to the railway station or the airport.

### **ESTIMATED COSTS:**

1. From May 17 (festive dinner) until May 22 (breakfast) – **525 euro**.
2. From May 16 (dinner) until May 22(breakfast) – **595 euro**.
3. From May16 (dinner) until May18 (breakfast) – **180 euro**.
4. Supplement Single room - **20 euro** / night.

The programme includes accommodation in **Hotel Rila \*\*\***, full board including drinks for lunch and dinner, bus transport, tour guide with guide, entry to objectives and transfers from the station or airport.

Registration with deposit of 200euros per person (or full payment if less) open until **31<sup>st</sup> January 2021**. Final payment due before **15<sup>th</sup> March 2021**.

Euro account: **RO19 BRDE 240 SV 265 2520 2400**; Swift Code: **BRDEROBU**

Beneficiary: **ECO NET CONSULTING SRL Iasi Romania**

For the action: **AEC - SOFIA 16 / 17 – 22 May 2021**

### **FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES AMICALES NATIONALES DES DIRIGEANTS DE CHEMINS DE FER – SECTION SUISSE**

Below are the details of the postponed FEANDC Congress, now to be held in 2021. But please be aware of the dates of AEC European Days in Sofia in late May 2021.

#### **Congress 2021 in Lugano.**

Due to the still very unsafe situation:at the beginning of June the restaurants in Switzerland and in Italy may not open again and the ships, mountain railways may not be in operatopn, so .....?

**we are forced to postpone Congress until 2021.**

The programme remains the same:

- Arrival on Wednesday, **June 9, 2021**
- Excursion to Ponte Tresa, **Thursday June 10, 2021**
- Excursion to Monte Generoso on **Friday, June 11, 2021**
- Official day on Saturday, **June 12, 2021**
- Excursion to the Verzasca Valley on **Sunday, June 13, 2021**
- Departure on Monday, **June 14, 2021**

Participants registered for the cancelled Congress 2020 will receive a personal letter. You remain registered for 2021.

Since it is possible that some friends of the European Union have not registered for Congress 2020 due to scheduling conflicts, we wish to give them the opportunity to register for Congress 2021. We will send you registration forms again.

### **JUST A THOUGHT**

**Philip Worsfold**

I've been looking back through some old photographs for nothing connected with AEC; but came across those I took during European Days in Lüneburg in 2009. During that event we visited the part of Lüneburg Heath where motor vehicles are not allowed. There are descriptive panels around the site but not all relate to what you actually see. I rather liked the one which asked the question:

#### **Was ist Politik?**

Since as I write, we are awaiting the result of the U.S. Presidential election. I thought I would translate it into English.

#### **What is Politics?**

A son asked his Father, "What exactly is Politics, Dad?"

The father replied, "My son, that's quite simple. You see, I bring money into the house so that makes me a CAPITALIST. Your Mum manages the money, so she

is the GOVERNMENT. Grandpa keeps an eye on things to check that they are in order. So, he is the TRADE UNION. Our maid *[no comment]* is the WORKING CLASS. We all have one thing in mind – your wellbeing. It follows then that you are the PEOPLE. Your little brother who's still in his nappies; he's the FUTURE. Have you understood that, my son?

The lad thought for a moment and then asked his Father if he could sleep on it. During the night, the boy woke up because his little brother in nappies had bawled out awfully loud. He did not know what he should do, so he went to his parents' bedroom. But only his mother was there and she was sleeping so soundly that he couldn't wake her up.

So, he went to the maid's room, where straightway he saw his Father enjoying himself with her, while Grandpa was watching inconspicuously through the window. They were all so preoccupied that they did not notice at all the small boy standing at the foot of the bed. So, without achieving anything, he decided to go back to bed straight away. The following morning, the father asked his son if he could explain in a few words what POLITICS was. The boy answered "Yes."

"CAPITALISM abuses the WORKING CLASS while the TRADE UNIONS look on and the GOVERNMENT sleeps. The PEOPLE are completely unaware of what's going on and the FUTURE lies in a mess.

### **THAT IS POLITICS!!!**

*[Nearly a month after the U.S. Election, we still await Donald Trump's conceding defeat. But no; he challenges the result with untruths that so many of his supporters believe. Sadly, if you say something often enough, it becomes established as 'truth'. That little boy got it oh so right!]*

### **RECENT EVENTS...**

#### **...AND THINGS TO COME**

##### **Monthly Reunions and Annual General Meeting.**

Since our last report, all meetings have been postponed until further notice. An Annual General meeting will be arranged as soon as it is safe to do so.

### **ASSOCIATION TIES AND BADGES.**

In common with other sections, the British section of the Association has a necktie and a badge. Our particular items are common to both the British and Belgian sections. We have produced the ties and the Belgian section, the badges. We are looking into the possibility of having a unisex T-shirt or sweatshirt. What do you think?

Ties are available, at £4.50 plus postage, and badges are in stock in small numbers, at £1.50 each, including UK inland postage. These items are available from **Philip Worsfold**. Please contact him first by e-mail or phone to check availability (details at the top of page 2.)

### **CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT (CILT)**

**Railway Study Forum:** The former Railway Study Association has merged with the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) as the Railway Study Forum. Subscription rates have changed and no longer include a subscription to 'Modern Railways'. Each annual session of lectures, in London and Birmingham and other locations are, held on various evenings.

Full details of the changes and details of all activities can be found on the CILT website.

#### **YOUNG BUFFERS ASSOCIATION.**

There is no subscription provided that you have an e-mail address; and no obligation to attend their events. If you would like further details, the Secretary is Larry Fullwood, tel. 01485 541599, e-mail [larry.fullwood@virgin.net](mailto:larry.fullwood@virgin.net) .

#### **REPTA.**

The long-standing Railway Employees' and Public Transport Association offers bargain price insurance through offers including competitive insurances through their brokers the Alan Boswell Group; and concessions and discounts at stores and attractions throughout the country. The 'Yearbook' gives full details, including the invaluable guide to staff travel facilities throughout the world. For details contact our Asst Secretary, Peter Davies (see page 2), who is also General Secretary of REPTA; or visit: [www.repta.co.uk](http://www.repta.co.uk)

#### **FEANDC.**

FEANDC has similar social aims to AEC; and like AEC has sections in a number of European countries, including some which do not have AEC sections. More details and all other information about FEANDC are available from Peter Davies (address etc on Page 2).

#### **AND FOR THE FUTURE???**

We shall endeavour to continue the production of these newsletters. I use a variety of sources for news of international interest and thank those members who send me information – but I continue with my plea for more from you. I hope I shall be able to keep my promise of more articles. So please, put pen to paper yourselves so that I can build up a library of articles. Please keep in touch and let us have your information, your views and your ideas. The next issue will be published for 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021  
The copy deadline is **1<sup>st</sup> February 2021.**

***There are currently no events to summarise; so, there is no summary of events in this issue.***