

## **CER general overview: Impact of COVID-19 outbreak on European railways**

### **Update: 16 March 2020**

On 4 March, Ms. Elisabeth Werner, Director for Land Transport, on behalf of DG MOVE requested CER to provide information in relation to current crisis caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its wide-ranging consequences for the transport sector.

The request included specific questions concerning the economic impact suffered from our sector as well as inquiries about any additional specific hygiene measures, to protect employees and passengers and to contain the spread of the virus. CER has already asked its members, European Railway Undertakings and Infrastructure Managers, to report any service disruption and the business impact and to update on a regular basis.

We like to stress that the situation is very dynamic with changing conditions every day so that it difficult to give complete figures at this stage.

Please find herewith a general overview of the situation to date:

- **Measures taken towards staff (in terms of information, sanitary procedures, remote work, etc...)**

Measures taken by freight companies are very similar to those taken by Passenger companies for their staff not in contact with the public.

- Setting up of ad-hoc working groups task forces, crisis assessment and crisis management cells to monitor and steer the crisis.
- Information sheets with recommendations for action made available. These include up-to-date information on how individuals can prevent infection, and also railway-related and job-specific advice.
- Access to a forum on company's intranet, in which doctors answer questions individually.
- Telephone hotline for employees.
- Advice to minimise business travel as much as possible (including advice not to travel to Italy);
- Visits to operations centres suspended.
- Increase home working as much as possible.
- Staff who do not feel well are encouraged to stay home;
- For people that cannot work from home, increase of spaces between workplaces.
- Flexible work times whenever possible to avoid rush hour.

A rail-specific measure particularly relevant to rail freight operations...

- concerning the "hand-over of international trains/locomotives": cleaning of the drivers cabine with sanitary tissues and minimising contacts when handing over trains.

- **Measures resulting from authorities recommendations or prescriptions.**

- No events with more than a certain number of participants
- Comply with sanitary rules (hand washing, sneezing in elbow, etc.)
- Work from home whenever possible
- Commuters should avoid rush hours in public transportation
- No hand shakes
- Keep a distance of 2 meters when interacting with each other.
- Postponing of business travels.

Lately, there are indications of:

- Freight train drivers being placed in quarantine due to entering “no travel countries”
- Difficulties in moving personnel around due to lack of public transport
- Difficulties in moving essential staff across borders

As for the situation in France, on Président Macron closed the schools (from Kindergaten to universities) in order to stop the transmission of the virus and asked the parents of kids under 16 to do home office while school at home. All employers, SNCF included, check which employees were affected and it occurs that this is concerning 80% of SNCF employees. Therefore, SNCF is trying to cope with the situation.

## 1. Rail Passenger Services

### ▪ General

All CER members are cooperating closely with the national authorities and governments and contribute to the fight against the spread of the virus. The safety of passengers and employees is the highest priority for our members. All members reported to conduct additional specific hygiene measures.

Particular measures have been taken for staff in regularly contact with passengers or staff that is crucial for the safe operation of trains (e.g. train managers, traffic controllers, etc.) as well as for additional sanitising and disinfecting of stations, coaches and trains.

Railway undertakings operate rail passenger services in Europe as scheduled as long as no authority has requested to cancel or reduce a services.

For travellers with tickets to the areas affected by the coronavirus, CER members uphold goodwill arrangement.

### • **Impacts suffered as a consequence of the various measures and restrictions imposed on the transport providers**

At this stage, many members have reported measures requested by authorities that will have economic impact on passenger services and how it is operated, e.g. additional costs. Over the weekend a number of EU Member States' have introduced border-controls or even the closing of borders, which also affected international rail passenger links. Also, many governments are introducing measures to reduce national railway passenger services.

**Austria:** Due to the situation e.g. in Italy and a travel warning level 6 by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all passenger train service to Italy has been suspended by a decree of the Ministry of Health. This decree allows the suspension of PSO based train services to Italy. Long-distance trains to and from

Italy will end and begin in Villach and Innsbruck respectively. There are also no rail replacement services to these border stations. There are normally about 20 daily OBB trains between the two countries, and moreover the Brenner Pass is an important train route between Italy, Austria and Germany.

There are two exceptions: freight trains (engine and driver are changed at the border) and passenger trains from Italy to Germany without a commercial stop in Austria can run as scheduled.

Due to the current situation, train traffic to and from Italy, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland has been suspended until further notice. National long-distance transport and local transport has also been reduced.

**Czech Republic:** After the government declared a state of emergency, there are imposed travel restrictions on 15 countries. Citizens from those countries cannot enter into the Czech Republic and Czechs are prohibited from going to those countries. Due to the measures, Ceske Drahy (CD) will reduce as of Friday night all international connections. The trains will run until the border and return. This concerns e.g. Eurocity-Connections between Hamburg-Berlin-Prague. The train to and from Slovakia has been reduced since today from 7am.

**Denmark:** On Tuesday, the Danish government has recommended the public transport operators in Denmark to implement measures which can ensure that the passengers is not crowding too much during rush hour in the different transport modes. For example by requiring seat reservation or increasing capacity during rush hour. Furthermore DSB shall communicate the governmental advices/recommendations to the passengers via posters or screens. The government requires DSB to focus on proper cleaning of public spaces in trains and stations. DSB is asked to display on posters advice for "sick passengers" to not use public transport. DSB ticket sales are down 70% meanwhile.

**Germany:** The Federal Minister of the Interior has required all railway companies in Germany to issue forms, the so-called " Aussteigekarten", handed to passengers in the event of a suspected Corona-infection on the train.

The DB is constantly in contact with the ministries and authorities, DB gradually equipping long-distance and regional trains with those forms.

Due to the decision of the Austrian government regarding the Brenner Pass, one DB service (EC Munich-Innsbruck-Italy) between Germany and Italy has been reduced – stops in Innsbruck now. There have been 5 regular DB train pairs between Innsbruck to Italy. Before the crisis, in March DB counted 160 passengers on Italian-Austrian border per train, last week it was only 50.

As of this morning, 8 a.m. Germany will partly close its borders with Austria, France, Denmark, Luxembourg and Switzerland but Deutsche Bahn is not changing its timetable so trains are running. There are impacts however on the connections to Poland.

Regarding rescheduling and limiting regional, sub-urban and urban rail service, these are PSO contracts and must be implemented with the agreement of the Competent Authorities/Regions.

**France:** Due to new governmental measures, SNCF needs to adapt its national schedule.

**Italy:** A new Decree of the Italian Prime Minister entered into force this week (Tuesday), in which the Italian government adopted urgent measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 on the whole national territory.

This means that the measures previously adopted just for the Orange Zone in Italy on 8th of March 2020, are now extended to the whole national territory. Regional trains operating in the red zone do not stop in some highly-affected municipalities (this measure was already imposed by the initial decree).

The offer of high-speed rail is being reduced all over Italy. Customer can find up to date information on Trenitalia website.

Based on the instructions of the Italian authorities, all railway operators have to disinfect trains running to Italy every day since February 27th. As for regional transport, a rationalisation by 30% of the existing services in almost all the regions is currently under review. This must be implemented with the agreement of the Competent Authorities/Regions.

For international trains to France, Austria, Switzerland and in cooperation with the railway undertakings, Trenitalia connections to Austria and France have been reduced by 100% and by 75% to Switzerland.

**Poland:** In Poland, a special act on coronavirus was adopted last week at the national level. Some of the provisions of the act relate to transport sector. One of them states that "airport managers, railway station, air, rail or road operators are not responsible for damage caused in connection with reasonable actions of public authorities to counteract COVID-19, in particular for the lack of possibility of transport". Based on new governmental decision, PKP halted all international connections.

**Slovakia:** Since today 7am, new restrictive measures are in place regarding the rail passenger service in the country, effective for the next 14 days. The international connections to Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Ukraine are reduced and trains running only until the border stations. Passengers can cancel all bought tickets free of charge. Due to the restrictions, the national timetable for rail passenger services of Slovak Railway has to be reduced to the "Saturday-schedule" as of tomorrow, i.e. passenger trains do run on the frequency of Saturdays but not anymore as in normal weekdays. It means that about 33% of the regular passenger service is being reduced.

**Spain:** Regarding the situation for passengers until last Wednesday, Renfe has seen a severe drop in demand (14.5 to 24.9 less anticipated ticket sales, compared with 2019) during the last 2 weeks for Long Distance and High Speed Services. We are also seeing a reduction in number of passengers as of beginning of March (-7,41% in commercial services compared with 2019, -6,11% in High-Speed). Commercial services has also seen a reduction of revenues of 8.6 million Euros in past two weeks.

**Switzerland:** SBB reported during this week (Tuesday) a reduction of customers of about 10-20% in trains and stations. The reduction of passengers in international passenger service from and to Italy has dropped by 90% whereas for services from and to France passenger numbers have decreased by 60%. The development amounts to a loss around half a million Swiss Francs a day. Last week, the Federal Council tightened the measures to contain the corona virus again

- Entry restrictions for people from risk countries and risk areas. People from Italy are denied entry to Switzerland (exception: people living in Switzerland)
- Ban on public and private events with 100 people or more.
- Public transport will continue to be largely maintained according to the timetable.

### **Choices of passengers to not travel**

Generally, it is too early to confirm exact loss in passenger volumes and the economic impact is yet to be assessed but members already noticed an increase for reimbursement requests. More members report a decrease in demand for international rail passenger services.

**Belgium:** The government advised citizens to reduce the usage of public transport to a minimum and avoid peak hours. This may affect passenger's choice to travel by rail. Note, this advice also has been given by other Member States in the meantime.

**Italy:** Due to the critical situation and the restriction of the Italian government, many passengers are not traveling by rail.

**Lithuania:** Last week, our member Lithuanian Railways has experienced a 13% drop in passenger flows over the past week. After the first virus case was announced in Lithuania, weekend's customer traffic dropped by 23% and trip cancellation increased by 368%: After the first case of the virus on Thursday, they had 187 cancelled tickets, with the usual amount being 40 units over the weekend. However, for the last weekend customer traffic and cancellations became normal again.

**Eurostar:** Eurostar reports a heavy economic impact: Sales collapsed since week before last week (-40%) and last week Eurostar is on a -60% trend. Business sales are almost flat.

- **Decisions of the operators not to provide certain services (or of any other reason related to the outbreak)**

. As much as possible, European railway undertakings are running their services as scheduled, however the service is impacted and reduced by governmental decisions and imposed restrictions as well as official recommendations to passengers to travel only if necessary. Therefore, some members started to rationalise their service offerings to correspond with dropping numbers of passengers.

**Eurostar:** In order to save costs, Eurostar will operate a reduced timetable from March 21<sup>st</sup>. However, cancelling services and reimbursing passengers will have a major cash flow impact.

**Belgium:** SNCB has reduced peak hour trains as of today to match the drop in the number of commuters. Despite the reduction in the number of peak hour trains, 97% of the regular offer is maintained. Train composition will be adjusted as needed with extra coaches so passenger numbers aboard trains can remain low (avoiding crowding and lowering the risk of contamination between travellers).

Train use is down drastically to a 30-35% occupation rate on Friday 13 March during peak time. The crisis is also having an impact on staff availability, but they acknowledge the importance of maintaining the public transport offer throughout Belgium.

SNCB and Infrabel qualify the new measure as of 16 March as a first phase of adaptation, which they will adjust as the situation evolves, also based on staff availability and train occupation rate.

**Switzerland:** Due to the ban on events with more than 1000 visitors, various special trains had to be cancelled by SBB because of the cancellation of major events (Geneva Motor Show, Basel Carnival).

Due the increased restrictions on rail passenger services from and to Italy and the economic impact, SBB has reduced its offer on the Gotthard axis, where three out of nine EC train pairs will only run between Chiasso and Zurich and two out of seven train pairs are affected on the Simplon axis, which only operate between Basel or Geneva and Brig. More information provides SBB.

**Sweden:** SJ noticed an increased number of staff on sick leave, and had minor adjustments yesterday

- **Information on any initiatives individually taken or intended to contain/alleviate the economic damage**

The FS Italiane Group informed the Italian Government about its commitment to support the Italian economy. FS Italiane will speed up the procedure for launching tenders for over € 20 billion: € 14 billion for railway infrastructure and € 6.5 billion for road infrastructure. The Group FS Italiane will contribute significantly to the national economic growth making infrastructural and technological investments.

Members reporting to uphold goodwill arrangement for customers who decided to no longer start their journey to Italy. The customer will be refunded free of charge.

Trenitalia has also announced a full refund for all tickets including those for which reimbursement is not foreseen. Trenitalia has also started to use a new booking tool for seats on board of the Freccie. The new

booking function ensures compliance with the safety distances prescribed by the provisions on the prevention and spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Other members also take into account decisions from national, regional or local governments to cancel major events: DB for example applies the same goodwill for travellers with a DB ticket for which the specific reason for the journey has been cancelled due to the corona virus (e.g. official cancellation of a trade fair, a concert, sports events, etc.). Also, DB announced special goodwill arrangements for travellers with a ticket that do not wish to travel within Germany due to the Corona outbreak over the next months.

In France, SNCF passengers can now postpone or cancel their long distance journey for free until April, 30th. For journeys until April 20, 2020, SNCF has decided to waive fees for exchanges and refunds on TGV InOui, Ouigo and Intercités tickets. The move also applies to connecting TERs.

Thalys, due to the decrease in demand in response to the Covid-19 epidemic has adjusted its timetables and reduces the number of connections, whilst providing generous goodwill arrangements with affected passengers).

Romanian CFR Calatori is in exchange with the neighboring railway undertakings MAV-Start and ÖBB, in order to establish common steps to inform passengers about the measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Swedish SJ implemented a generous re-booking and refund policy for airline passengers travelling to or from China, Iran, Italy, South Korea and the Tyrol in Austria, if they had bought a train ticket to or from affected airports. This policy ended on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Eurostar are offering e-vouchers to passengers holding tickets for travel until April 7<sup>th</sup> and wishing to rebook their travel at a later date.

- **Information about any such measures you are aware of from within your sector (e.g. availability of hand sanitiser dispensers, additional cleaning efforts, specific guidance to staff, etc.)**

Most members have established special internal task forces to deal with the outbreak and to monitor the spread of the virus in collaboration with the relevant national bodies coordinate measures, including reporting to responsible national bodies. Regarding disinfection of rooms and trains, CER members also refer to the recommendations of the ECDC, as well as concerning preparedness and response to cases of COVID-19 at ground crossings (trains and rail stations), members take measures to fulfil the requirements of the publication of the "Healthy Gateways" Initiative.

At the moment, we receive no reports of shortages from disinfectant or sanitisers.

To protect the health of staff and passengers in rail transport, a number of similar preventative measures are being:

- Raising awareness, e.g. through the company's intranet website, amongst staff of preventative measures against the coronavirus (e.g. Guidelines);
- Displaying advice per posters or on screens about handwashing, coughing and on use of disinfectants in visible areas at train stations, on trains, and in the offices;
- Supplying disinfectants to operations staff in contact with passengers and with business partners and freight arriving from infected or high risk areas;
- Supplying disinfectants and protective masks and gloves to passenger trains for use by the train staff and by passengers who think they might have coronavirus;

- Introducing procedures to be applied by staff with respect to train passengers showing symptoms, as well as procedures and advice for staff who think they might have coronavirus;
- Purchasing protective masks for all staff, if recommendation by the appropriate national authority exists in case of an epidemic.

Subject to recommendations of national authorities, many measures being applied by railway undertakings that also include (non-exhaustive):

- Preventive cleaning of train station facilities (cash desks, benches, handrails, door handles, desks, desk space) with disinfectants;
- Railway station disinfection;
- Cleaning ventilation of railway stations;
- Preventive cleaning of trains with disinfectants;
- Preventive cleaning of ventilation of passenger trains;
- More frequent train cleaning if necessary or requested by the national authorities (trains are always cleaned according to a schedule on a regular basis);
- Reduction of cash operations at checkouts and trains;
- Additional cleaning and disinfection of business essential departments (such as operations control centres, control centres, etc.), which are considered critical infrastructure facilities..

On global level, a task force has been established by the UIC to regularly exchange information on status and about preventive measures and procedures, in collaboration with international health organisations. A guideline document has recently been published.

## 2. Rail Freight Services

### ▪ General

Same propensity of Freight companies as for passenger companies to fight against the spread of the virus, by following public sanitary prescriptions and via industry specific voluntary measures.

Impact of the crisis on rail freight traffic is apparent, especially as far hinterland segments of intercontinental maritime transport chains are concerned, but not compensated by a relative increase of intracontinental transport, linked to a shift from road transport to rail.

- **Variations of rail freight traffic since the beginning of the outbreak up until now. Market segments most affected.**

Generally, decrease of the hinterland traffic coming from and going to Ports mainly linked to decrease of intercontinental maritime traffic (especially from China). Further decrease is expected in the coming weeks taking into account a 45-days journey time for maritime traffic coming from China.

Also, general traffic decrease for oil products linked to a decrease in demand.



In **Belgium**, Lineas records a 50% decrease in intermodal traffic from Italy. On the total volumes, the decrease of traffic seems to be at a rate of -5% per week since the beginning of the outbreak.

In **Luxembourg**, CFL Cargo also records a drop in traffics on certain routes, especially from/to Antwerp. Clients have partly revised downwards their forecasts for the coming months. And clients and partners are less likely to commit into projects.

Same in **Slovenia** for SZ Cargo from the Port of Koper. The number of ship has been in decline since February and this trend is expected to continue in the future. The decrease in imports had also a negative impact on exports from Slovenia owing to shortage in equipment, such as containers.

In **Slovakia**, so far, ZSSK Cargo has not noticed any restrictions in transport in connection with Corona (including combined transport).

In **Spain**, up until Wednesday 11 March, the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on Renfe's freight revenues was about -1.2%. But it is expected to get worse as RENFE is anticipating a possible drop on the transport of automotive products of 12 to 15%. RENFE also fears an economic impact on traffic to and from sea ports of -30% to -40% in the second half of March, directly linked to the reduction of loadings in China of the past two months.

- **Market segments that may have progressed because of the CORONA outbreak...**

In some cases, increase in continental rail-road combined transport or to rail-only transport chains, due to companies shifting their traffic from road to rail. At this stage, it is unclear whether this shift is linked to restrictions of road traffic imposed by authorities or by free initiatives of shippers or road transport companies to reduce contamination of and via truck drivers.

The **Austrian** ban of Friday 13 March on rail traffic from Italy does not concern rail freight which seems to remain unaffected by public contingency measures. ÖBB-RCA even announced to its customers that their capacity for intermodal and conventional rail freight transport can be increased at any time.

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