



NEXT STOP

Episode 7: Behaviour Change – What Can We Do?

Host – Nicola Donelli, CoR trainee

Guest 1 - Alberto Mazzola, Executive Director CER

Guest 2 – Livia Spera, European Transport Workers' Federation

Opening soundtrack

INTRODUCTION

All aboard to your new weekly favourite podcast “Next Stop” where you will find out all there is to know about trains! 2021 is the European Year of Rail - a year to remind us that the journey is as important as the destination. I am Nicola and this is “Next Stop”, a podcast by the Spring 2021 trainees of the European Committee of the Regions.

HOST

Thinking about buying your next train trip? While paper tickets are more and more a system of the past, digital tickets might become obsolete as soon as well! In Sweden, the state owned railway company - SJ - became the first travel company in the world to use microchip implants under the skin to validate one's journey. They justify this technological innovation as being more comfortable and more sustainable. As of 2017, there were already, think about it, 2500-3000 people using these microchips.

Did you know that some countries in the EU apply a VAT rate to international rail tickets? And that, at the same time, the aviation and maritime sectors are exempt from these charges? As a result, international rail tickets become more expensive, creating economic distortions. Particularly considering the carbon emissions of the other modes of transport, it's important to make international train travel more affordable!

This is also linked to promoting behaviour changes! And what could be done to encourage this? One idea could be for the European Commission to set up an EU-wide ticketing and payment platform to make it easier to buy tickets for international journeys and to protect passenger

rights. Rail only has an 8% share of the passenger transport market at present, and 19% of the freight market. So there is a lot to be done!

Other changes to be promoted within the transport system and railway sector in particular is the inclusion of more women, since women represent only approximately 20% of the sector's workforce. How can we change this and attract more young people?

Let's hear it from our guests!

Transition soundtrack

HOST

Joining us today to discuss behaviour changes and charging systems in the railway sector is Alberto Mazzola. Buongiorno, Alberto!

GUEST 1

Buongiorno. Good morning!

HOST

Alberto is the Executive Director of the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies, known as the CER. The CER was founded in 1988 and has since been an active voice of the railway sector at all of the EU level, covering topics from passengers, freights, sustainability and infrastructure.

The CER's role is to represent the interests of its members on the EU policy-making scene, in particular to support and improve businesses and regulatory environment for European railway operators and railway infrastructure companies. Can you tell us how the CER works to support rail operators as the EU legislative framework develops and as rail is coming into the spotlight across the EU as one of the most sustainable forms of transport?

GUEST 1

Thank you. As CER we see in particular the European Year of rail. We are very much looking at all the policies that can influence the development of transport and mobility in Europe. First of all, we spent more than 20 years in railway reforms. We had first, second, third and fourth railway packages. These were very intense piece of legislation. The second strength is about investments. So for railway to develop we need a lot of investments, capital intensive business, in particular, infrastructure, so 90% of the investments goes into infrastructure, 10% - on the stock. And this is an important point that has been developed by Europe in the last years, in particular, the funds for European network. It's an important concept, but we still need to increase investments there. Let me say, while the Connecting Europe Facility Trans-European Network has been focused, very focused on railways, are there tools in the past equation fund, additional funds, and so on, has been directed more to developing highways and byways. So in the last 20 years the railway lines in Europe has been reduced by almost 10%, on the other way, highways have increased by 50%. So you can see where the investments went. Of course, now

that we are discussing about the Green Deal, about the carbonized transport and all this, we realize that transport has been the only sector that has increased their emissions. This is why we are bleeding more investment and the message seems to pass at this moment. The last point is a level playing field. And we would like that in these fields, I mean, conditions should be fair for this model. So we are in this moment discussing about how to apply tools to heavy duty vehicles on roads and how to apply them on the railways. Each train is paying a toll, tracks has charges, technically speaking, when is running on the rail, and for each kilometre. Many countries will pay a vignette for one year. The more you run, the better it is for you. But you are not really covering the costs that you are using on the road and the emissions or the pollution that you are creating. So we would like to have a similar system in order to be coherent. So for each kilometre should recognize the cost that you are creating to maintain the infrastructure and for the cover of the emissions that you are producing, but this change is very difficult. So these are more or less railway reforms. We have done it. We would like to follow on. Investment is a critical point is better than before. We can improve a level playing field. We need a lot of work to be done here.

HOST

Thank you. And that going on on this theme, actually, One of the biggest challenges regarding the railway sector, as you said, it can be said it is the charging system, because international train tickets are more expensive than other modes of transport exactly because by train companies have to pay basically by kilometre while in other modes of transport this is not true. Alberto, a bit of a challenging question, can we talk about unfair competition in the transport system?

GUEST 1

All this should be going or supporting the direction of what we want to achieve and now we want to achieve decarbonization. Everybody realized CO2 emissions and other pollutants in the air are very negative for the environment and for the railways as a big advantage. We are emitting nine times less CO2 for each passenger kilometre compared to air, and for each kilometre compared to road about nine times less. It's impossible to move everything by rail. I want to be clear here. We need to be intermodal, multimodal. But the more moved by rail, the better it is for the environment. And we need to use this advantage. So when you say fair, unfair competition, a level playing field, we need to consider the economic factors that you raised that are important because we are in a market economy and at the end the price is very important. And also all of these aspects that, technically speaking, are forming standart cost and they should find a way in the market. So they should be priced. And if to price all of this, probably the equation will be very different, in favour of one or other modes.

HOST

Thank you. And exactly as you said, we also have here our statistics that are not really different from what you just said. The road transport, considering, of course, the transport sector is around one fifth of the global emissions. The road transport alone, is responsible for 17% of total emissions, aviation around 3%. However, the train sector is only responsible for 0.5%,

which is a totally different number. And it's a really good consideration, especially now that the EU wants to achieve a climate neutrality goal by 2050. And we are talking after the pandemic about the green and fair recovery. So especially now considering all of these and all of what you said. Do you see potential in the European year of the rail to change this VAT charges and make trains, generally speaking, more appealing to people also, not just from an economical point of view, but also from a practical point of view, what can we do about it?

GUEST 1

So railways, when they use electricity, they are beneath it, emission trading systems, so we pay our fair part of CO2 emissions which is included in the electricity that we use. Of course, when we compete with aviation, the aviation doesn't pay the CO2. It doesn't pay any tax on the kerosene that is being used. Equally, we have the same problem with VAT information because trains are paying VAT on this and planes are not paying. These are factors that count. I mean, the VAT can be 20%. Your question, can we correct it this year? I don't think so. It's a long battle, but I think that the next provisions, at least 54 to 55 that we are expecting for the Commission, should be able at least if they don't correct actually this, they should correct and balance it in other ways, how all the different modes should compete among themselves. So we have great expectations from these new measures that will be proposed by the commission in the mid of July and then let us see how confident Parliament will address them and what will be the final result. So that's an important point and not just the proposal of the Commission, but the final decision of political stakeholders.

HOST

When we talk about the inter-modality of transport and the role that the trains have to play in the future, of course, we also have to talk about the possibility, the accessibility for consumers in order to access and take a train. What would you recommend to our decision maker to put in practice, especially at the local and regional level to promote behaviour changes and the use of trains more often? Is it ultimately all just about the price, in your view or we can do something more?

GUEST 1

First of all, thank you for raising the question concerning a local passenger, commuters and regional transport. Let's say, very few in Europe raise this question. And I want to underline it, because you are coming from the Committee of the Regions, maybe because you are caring for the local dimension, but most of the people, here in Brussels, think about international trips that these are important and we should not forget because probably this is where the European dimension is more important. But let's say that 90% of the passengers are traveling, the local, commuters, people that go to school, people that go to work every day. So this is one of the most important parts of the railway transport contribution. So getting there, I think, to the point that the price or also other tools that can, I think here are the modalities are of use, for instance you should be able to connect railways with the rest of transport. So how do you get to the station? Public transport or parking. How when you get to the city you use also other modes of transport? The underground, the bus station and these systems should be integrated. One point where it is integrated in terms of infrastructure, first of all, that is when you get in the railway

station, you can access very easily all the other modes of transport and also the mobility as a service, most in terms of fares and tickets. This is where we are investing and I think we are investing in having integrated ticketing at the local dimension. I would say in many countries, in many cities, this is under way, we can still improve in terms of the infrastructure of connection, but this is how easy it is to take a train, to take public transport. Your question is. So this should be easy and possible. So the price is important, but not just that. I think it should be really easy to move here and there taking railways.

HOST

Thank you for the answer. Actually, I really agree with you in the sense that it is way easier for the person to be able to just purchase one ticket than maybe change the modality of transport. It becomes also way easier for the consumer. This is really good initiatives, especially, of course, at the local level. And now, unfortunately, I would like to stay here a lot more with you. But, we are coming to the end of our broadcast interview, and we know that the CER has been very active within the European Year of Rail, of course, particularly in relation to the Connecting Europe Express - which we already discussed in this podcast series. What are your expectations for the upcoming Connecting Europe Express and European Year of Rail in general? What are your views, Alberto?

GUEST 1

So the European Year of Rail has been a bit unfortunate in the beginning. We are in the year of Covid, we also lost six months, so we didn't really physical events. The first one that I participated was last Monday when we celebrated 175 years for the first international rail connection between Paris and Brussels. And we launched anyway the Connecting Europe Express, CER together with European Commission, all the CER members are cooperating with this. The topic here is to promote, first, investment in infrastructure, it's a fancy train at the origin. So we need to show what will be Europe if we will get all the infrastructures that we need. But we have a bigger ambition because we are promoting to have High-Speed connections among all capitals in major cities of Europe. Where you have high speed connections, nobody will go back to plane or road. So we would like to develop this at the European level. And with this Connecting Europe Express we show that we can do it and we hope that we can do it. What we want to promote here, I think, Interrail is very new. We like maybe when you get 18 years old, every European citizen to get an Interrail pass to go around in all Europe. We would like the Erasmus, when you move in Erasmus, you move by train and not by plane in continental Europe. We would like to promote Erasmus by rail we would like to promote Interrail for each citizen. We would like to connect the European identity and language. So how to build this stronger. Language contributed a lot to Europe, it can contribute, we are showing that we can connect all the countries and we can do even a better job. So it's a big opportunity that we like, we promote railways for one month all around Europe and I hope that we bring that also for the future decisions.

HOST

Thank you very much. Actually, as a previous user of the Interrail, when I did it I was twenty, it completely changed my view of Europe. So let's hope, as you said, that these can also be true

for our next generation, for our "Next EU Generation". Gracia mille, Alberto! It's been an amazing pleasure and an amazing experience to have you here. Let's hope we can probably catch up live next time, in non-pandemic times and thank you again for your appearance here on our podcast.

GUEST 1

Thank you. Gracia. Please participate in our event also in Strasbourg and promote also with young people and with the regions our train around EU. Thank you.

Transition soundtrack

HOST

Good morning, we have the pleasure to have with us today Livia Spera from the European Transport Workers' Federation, also called ETF. Founded in 1999, the ETF has since been campaigning for a fair transport system and better working conditions for transport workers. Today we will talk about the workforce of the railway sector, particularly gender equality, and behaviour changes in the sector. Thank you, Livia, for being here for us. Buongiorno and welcome!

GUEST 2

Good morning! Thank you very much for having us here today.

HOST

Perfect. We will start maybe with the first question, already one of our really challenging questions. I wanted to ask you, today we talk a lot about, for example, automation, the reskilling of the workers and those so that there is a worker shortage and a gender imbalance in the sector. But apart from that, what do you think are the main challenges for the railway sector workforce in the future? Do you think these are the main challenges? What could be highlighted? Do you have something more, please tell us.

GUEST 2

So we would need the full day to talk about the employment in the railway sector. As you know railways is a very big employer, I mean, railway companies are very big employers, the very big share of transport workers in general. So we, in terms of workers, like to say, that we adapt. We otherwise would still be talking about, horse and cars. So transport workers have adapted constantly to the innovation, to the technological innovations. Now, of course, there are big disruptions of that taking place now that are unprecedented. But for us, the main thing is negotiating change. So this being said, we already have some good examples. For instance, in railway, our unions had an agreement that digitalization and negotiations with Deutsche Bank in Germany, apart from these, of course, in railway we have our fields are fighting against the continued pressure for the drivers on the operation. Now, the trains are not generating as much employment as in the past. So, of course, that is much more in the way within just the train itself. But just to say that we are negotiating at the moment with the CER the agreement about including more women in rail. This is a big problem in the sector. So we absolutely need to

attract more young people and we need to attract especially more women. The European Year of Rail is certainly for us a big opportunity, but let's not forget that the working conditions in the sector have dramatically worsened over the last decades. The railway was traditionally a very good sector to work. This reality has changed due to liberalization, to the fragmentation, the separation of old operations and an infrastructure and so on. All these trends have pushed for more outsourcing, for subcontracting, for more precarious conduct. Subcontracting is a real issue, especially for long distance. And night trains, now there is a revival of night trains, which is absolutely welcome by us. But what you are telling policymakers, be careful, because night trains are the ideal place for creating social dumping practices through, for instance, subcontracting. All the services that are available on board night trains are often subcontracted. So for us, this is a big problem and this is a growing trend.

HOST

Thank you. Thank you. A really difficult question. We have several points to consider. I wanted to ask especially you also touched the subject of women and young people during your answer and according to the data I have, almost half of the workers were aged 50 or above in the transport sector in Europe, in the railway sector. So my question is, of course, that can be seen maybe as a problem. Is it difficult for young people to get in touch with these professional sector? How can we make a railway sector careers more attractive to young people? And is that just the problem of being attractive or there is something more behind it?

GUEST 2

I think attractiveness comes from good working conditions because there are sectors that have very bad reputation and they're still attracting a lot of people. So when you talk about contracting, that's often the employers want us to join campaigns of making communications campaign about the sector. The real thing is the working conditions, and again, there is only one way to improve working conditions, it's collective bargaining with the unions. Of course, we need to make sure that the working conditions in the railway get back to what they were in a way, that they are collectively bargained. And by doing this, we will be able to attract young people and we will be able, of course, to attract especially more women.

HOST

Since we are also talking about now women, not just about the employability, but why it is so important to achieve an equal gender balance workforce, especially in the transport system. And what added value can this bring to the railway sector?

GUEST 2

In railway we have about 21% of the workforce that is represented by women. But it's very uneven. So we have from 2% to 4% only of the train drivers and also in engineering and technical positions we have a very low percentage of women. And of course, this contributes to the gender pay gap because the better paid jobs in railway are those where women are less present. So this is one thing. First of all, why are women not joining the sector? It's very trivial issues. It's unfortunate the presence is still of a male dominated culture in the sector. The fact that there is discrimination, that is unequal treatment, so this is the fact and an obstacle. Work

life balance can be an issue, of course, in the sector. But also what we have, especially in passenger railway, it's high levels of violence and harassment against women, not only from co-workers, but also from third party, so passenger violence it's a real issue. We had some investigations in the ETF and this is really a very big problem. We have at the moment, as you probably know, negotiating a social part of the agreement together with CER. So this comes, let's say, as the exit of a very long collaboration with them on women in rail, we had joint recommendations with them which were then monitored, very good intentions. So by signing this agreement, we are committing both our members and the members of CER to take some concrete actions for improving the number of women, for increasing the number of women present in the sector.

HOST

Thank you. You absolutely gave me a new perspective on the issue. And as you said, absolutely, rights of women are the rights of the entire society. So having a gender balance work force will probably be a great achievement for the future of the railway sector. And now we're wrapping up the interview and I'm going to ask you the last question before it's over, unfortunately, because it was a really interesting interview, if I have to be honest. One of our previous guests, Vincent-Immanuel Herr, in our episode dedicated to "Discover EU" said that the European Year of Rail, and I quote, might be an opportunity for the railway sector to take advantage and to show to young people that they're modern, innovative. In your opinion, on the other hand, is the railway sector doing enough during this European Year of Rail, in this regard?

GUEST 2

So our impression is that we are engaging, we are organizing events, we are trying to mobilize our affiliates as well on this. One main problem is that there is a reason to keep this European Year of Rail as a purely PR exercise, we should go beyond this, we should talk meaningful talks, we should involve all the actors, including, of course, the trade unions, and we should talk about employment and railway can be a generator of employment in the EU and we should talk about this. But one thing that is also missing in the debate, according to us, is how will railway change after Corona? Because we know there is an intention to boost the sector. But we also know that there will be drop that we are expecting drop in business trips with more online meetings. So there will probably be also a drop in commuter's rates because people will work more from home and we think that this is a bit of a missing element along with employment in railway. Otherwise, yes, I agree, this is an opportunity, a good initiative from the European Commission. But again, it should be taken according to a systemic approach, because talking about the railway in isolation from all the other sectors, it won't have the supply chain, the users would go to other transport modes, if they are allowed to save. At the end, it's all about cost. So we shouldn't lower the price of rail, we should have higher price of other sector. The price for us is a crucial element in making transport more sustainable.

HOST

Thank you. Thank you very much, Livia from the European Transport Worker's Federation.

And we see you back on track with our cultural section later. Thank you again for your presence today here.

GUEST 2

Thank you very much.

Transition soundtrack

POP WAGON

Speakers - Jose Llopiz Ortiz, Mila Coric and Xavi Miro, CoR trainees

JOSE

Hola! We are Mila, Xavi and Jose, your cultural advisors on the road.

MILA

And we are on air again to bring you more interesting stories and facts.

XAVI

I can't believe how much I have learnt with you guys.

MILA

That was the objective Xavi, and I'm sure our audience is sharing our passion for trains too.

JOSE

Should we start?

ALL SPEAKERS

Let's go!!

[Pause]

MILA

Jose, tell me, why do you look so excited today?

JOSE

Girl, I have been very busy recently. You know how much I like movies, so after my trip to Germany I started watching many films that are related to trains. And I can't wait to share them with you.

MILA

Well, there shouldn't be so many, right?

JOSE

You would be surprised to know how many Mila! The motion power of trains, as a tireless machine that continues its way impassibly, has been exploited in action movies and thrillers. Some examples are Unstoppable and Runaway Train. The high speed of trains, together with its limited space, makes them an appealing scenario for action scenes, as it happens in Train to Busan, which is a Korean movie with zombies and trains, can you imagine a better combination?

XAVI

James Bond agrees with you, that's why there are very impressive action scenes with trains in Skyfall and Spectre movies.

JOSE

Absolutely, and one thing I have discovered, is the interesting use of the morphology of trains in movies. Especially when we see how the vehicle is divided in different wagons according to social status. Water for elephants, is an example of this. Another extreme case, would be Snowpiercer, where we see a dystopia in which the last survivors of mankind occupy the tail of the train if they're poor, or the head if they're rich.

MILA

You are right. Now I need a movie marathon to watch all of your recommendations!

[Pause]

XAVI

Indeed, movies bring us amazing stories, but I am also into real history. That's why I wanted to ask you if you have heard about The Compiègne Wagon?

JOSE

Yes! Isn't it an attraction from Disneyland?

MILA

Hahaha. No, no, no Jose. I think you are not even close!

XAVI

The Compiègne Wagon was the train carriage in which two armistices were signed. In November 1918, close to the Forest of Compiègne, the First World War ended when Germany surrendered to the allies with this agreement.

JOSE

Cool!

XAVI

A few years later, after the successful invasion of France, Adolf Hitler had the wagon moved back to the exact site of the 1918 armistice to sign there the capitulation of the French army in 1940.

[Pause]

JOSE

And that's it for today, dear Pop Wagenners, I think we shared a bunch of good information with you! Join us next week for more interest...

XAVI

Wait, wait, wait Jose. Mmmm, we won't be here next week.

JOSE

What?

MILA

Yes, look at your ticket. The final destination of the Pop Wagon is the 7th episode.

JOSE

Party poopers...

MILA

Focus on the bright side of the track. I really think we have contributed to make the travellers more interested in trains.

XAVI

You are right Mila. During all this journey, with our podcast guests, we have listened to many reasons for the people to use the trains more. But we shouldn't forget that the central role of trains in history and culture may have attracted some passengers as well.

JOSE

So, who knows? Maybe in the future you will be part of a historical trip in a train or you will read an amazing book while sitting in a wagon. From our part, we hope you have enjoyed this trip as much as we have enjoyed sharing knowledge with you.

MILA

And remember "The trains always arrive at your station. The question is: which one to take?".

JOSE

You couldn't leave without saying your quote of the day, right?

MILA

Yeap.

XAVI

Thank you guys, it's been a pleasure.

ALL SPEAKERS

Muchas gracias! Hvala! Moltes gràcies!

Transition song**CLOSURE**

And as usual, with the Pop Wagon section our episode of "Next Stop" comes to an end. Thank you to all our listeners and don't forget to follow us and give us your feedback in social media: twitter, facebook, Instagram, all is included. We can't wait to hear from you! We are also coming to an end to our series, so make sure to listen next week to our last episode. My name is Nicola Donelli and we'll see you in the "Next Stop"!

Closing soundtrack