

**Meeting of the Association of Paneuropean Coach Terminals (APC)**  
**Riga 5 September 2013**  
**Round table – "Role of bus terminals in inter-urban transport"**  
**Speaking points for**  
**Ms Meglena Kuneva**  
**special adviser on passenger rights to Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the invitation of the Association of Paneuropean Coach Terminals to be present at this meeting and discuss with you how we could make bus and coach journeys a pleasant experience for all passengers.

The Commission was happy to hear that the meeting takes place in Riga, because we are aware of the high quality of the bus and coach transport system in Latvia and in general in the Baltic states which has been developed in the last two decades. It is appropriate to discuss the challenges of the bus and coach transport industry in a region where this is the predominant collective transport mode. I was particularly impressed to hear that the Riga International Bus Station is the biggest transport hub in the Baltic region with 6,8 million passengers per year, and more than 60 international and 560 regional services each day. I am convinced that other regions of the EU can learn a lot from your experiences.

As you know on 1 March 2013 a new EU legislation became applicable extending EU level passenger rights to bus and coach services as well. I am proud to tell you that with this Regulation the EU became the first integrated area of passenger rights in the world.

The Bus and Coach Passenger Rights Regulation is instrumental in improving the passenger experience as well as assuring that all operators in the bus and coach sector throughout Europe, bus and

coach companies, bus terminal managing bodies, tour operators and ticket vendors alike comply with harmonised, appropriate rules.

### **Obligations of bus and coach terminal managers**

Bus and coach terminal managers play a crucial role in the application of bus and coach passenger rights.

The new Regulation covers bus and coach terminals which have their own staff and are equipped with facilities such as a check in counter, waiting room or ticket office. The new Regulation impose twofold obligations on them: they shall provide information to passengers and assist disabled passengers and passengers with reduced mobility.

#### Obligations related to the provision of information

1) The management of bus and coach terminals together with the carrier (each within its respective area of competence) must provide appropriate information on the essential characteristics of the journey (departure, arrival, duration of the journey, etc.).

2) The management of bus and coach terminals together with the carrier (each within its respective area of competence) must provide travellers with information on their passenger rights at the latest before departure. This information shall also include the name and contact address of the national enforcement body where passengers can submit complaints

In this context the Commission published posters and leaflets about passenger rights in all the official languages of the European Union, following consultation with the industry. The International Road Transport Union (IRU) provided us valuable comments on the posters and leaflets related to bus and coach passenger rights. We hope that you will display these posters at your terminals and allow distributing the leaflets to passengers.

3) The Regulation imposes special obligations to bus and coach terminal managers in case a service is cancelled or delayed at departure.

The bus and coach terminal managers together with the carriers (each within its respective area of competence) must inform passengers as soon as possible and in any event not later than half an hour after the scheduled departure time about the situation and the estimated departure time. If a passenger misses a connecting service due to cancellation or delay, the terminal managing body shall make together with the carrier reasonable efforts to inform the passenger about alternative connections.

#### Obligations related to disabled passengers and passengers with reduced mobility

In order to build an inclusive society in the EU, we must ensure that the right of transport is an effective right for everyone, including disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility.

1) The bus and coach terminals must have in place non-discriminatory access conditions for the transport of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility. Before they establish their access conditions, they must consult the organisations representing disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility.

2) Member States must designate at least some of the staffed bus terminals with long-distance international or domestic regular services where terminal managing bodies must provide together with the carriers assistance to disabled passengers and passengers with reduced mobility. This assistance includes helping to board and alight from the buses and coaches, and load and retrieve the luggage.

The managers of the bus terminals must ensure that the staff providing assistance to disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility are properly trained.

The list of the bus terminals designated by the Member States will be published on the Commission's website. So far only 15 Member States notified to the Commission the list of their designated bus terminals. The Riga International Bus Terminal is one of the designated bus terminals.

In the light of the preliminary assessment of the notifications from the Member States, the Commission considers that the designation of bus terminals to assist disabled passengers will be one of the most sensitive questions related to the application of the Regulation:

- some Member States do not want to designate any bus terminals to assist disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility, although it seems to the Commission that they might have bus terminals which satisfy all the conditions stipulated in the Regulation.
- some Member States experience a significant delay because in order to designate the relevant bus stations, several stakeholders (the owners, local authorities etc) must be consulted, and they started this procedure after the Regulation became applicable.
- some Member States notified a long list of designated bus terminals, and the Commission has the suspicion that not all of them fulfil the requirements of the Regulation (for example they are not staffed bus terminals) so in practice not all of them can provide assistance to disabled persons or persons with reduced mobility.

The Commission is aware of the practical difficulties and costs of making bus and coach transport in general, and bus and coach

terminals in particular, more accessible to disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility and to provide assistance with them.

On the other hand, there is certain type of assistance that disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility can only expect at the designated bus stations, therefore the lack of such bus stations may make it impossible for them to exercise their right to transportation. The Commission cannot accept this, and will be very strict with those Member States which do not designate any bus terminals despite the fact that some terminals in their territory satisfy the Regulation's requirements.

3) The management of bus and coach terminals must pay full compensation if it is liable for losing or damaging the mobility equipment of disabled passengers or passengers with reduced mobility.

I understand that complying with these obligations will have a financial and organisational impact on your work, but I also trust that your efforts will bear their fruits and the number of bus and coach passengers will increase as a result of the higher standards.

### **State of play of the EU Bus and Coach Passenger Rights Regulation's implementation**

I am sure that most of you are interested to hear about the implementation and application of this new Regulation, so I conclude my presentation with these topics.

Member States were supposed to set up a national enforcement body to monitor the application of bus and coach passenger rights and to deal with individual complaints before 1 March 2013. They were also obliged to lay down sanctions to be applied in case stakeholders breach the Regulation.

As of today, 11 Member States have completely or almost completely implemented the Regulation.

Infringement procedures will be launched against those Member States which indicated that they wished to delay the implementation to next year.

We know from the experience of other transport modes that it is useful to have a forum where the representatives of the national enforcement bodies can meet to exchange their views on the daily application of the Regulation. The Commission has set up an expert group for bus and coach passenger rights which had its first meeting in July in Brussels. The personal contact established at the meeting will be useful to solve more complex cross-border individual complaints. The Commission explained its views about the interpretation of different provisions of the Regulation, in order to enhance their coherent application.

The Commission hopes that its intervention will help to ensure that the conditions for the correct application of the Regulation will be established soon: national enforcement bodies will be set up in all Member States, they will have the power to impose effective and dissuasive sanctions to those who do not respect the regulation, and the meeting of national experts will serve as a genuine forum for the coherent application of the Regulation. This way the Commission can contribute raising the service quality of bus and coach transport, convincing more people to use this collective mode instead of private cars.

Thank you for your attention.