

Citizens' Mobility Forum Workshop on Multimodal Terminals

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Summary

Multi-modal terminals can give access for bus and coach passengers to the networks of other collective transport modes, thus offering a wider choice of services and more seamless journeys. At the same time, they can contribute to a more positive passenger experience offering high quality services (e.g. ticketing, passenger information, assistance). This can persuade citizens to switch from the use of private cars to the more ecological and sustainable collective transport modes.

The Bus and Coach Passenger Rights Regulation was adopted with the view of improving passenger experience. It contains harmonised obligations for carriers and terminal managing bodies throughout the EU. The obligations of terminal managing bodies are twofold: to provide information to passengers about the most important characteristics of the journey (departure, arrival, delay, cancellation) and about their rights, as well as to assist passengers with disability and reduced mobility.

The Commission took legal action against Member States that have not taken the necessary measures for the application of the Regulation. The Commission also prepared information material to educate passengers about their rights, and created a network for the national enforcement bodies to enhance cooperation between themselves and to ensure the coherent application of the Regulation.

Long distance regular coach services and short distance bus services play an important role in passenger transportation within the European Union. Their role varies by Member State: in the Baltic states they are the predominant collective transport modes; but even in Member States where their market share is less significant, they play a crucial role, as buses and coaches reach communities in remote areas which are not served by any other collective transport modes and they are the preferred choice for low income citizens and households who do not possess private cars and cannot afford more expensive travel modes. In order to build an inclusive society in the European Union, we have to take into consideration their individual needs when we plan or implement the European passenger transport policy.

In addition, in order to convince those citizens who can afford having a private car to opt for the most ecological and sustainable public transport modes, policy makers and the industry (carriers, terminal operating companies, ticket vendors) must create together a more positive perception for bus and coach transport and integrate them with the other collective modes of transport into a multi-modal sustainable mobility system.

Enhancing the image of bus and coach transport

I trust that my colleague in the other panel will speak about how bus terminals could contribute to encourage multimodality and improve the balance between the collective and private transport modes. I would like to consequently focus my presentation on how we could improve the experiences of passengers travelling on buses and coaches.

We must have in mind that a journey does not start with the departure of the bus or coach and it does not end with its arrival in the final destination. Bus and coach terminals offering high quality services and a decent link to other collective transport modes are indispensable for carriers to offer better quality service for their passengers.

Let's take the example of Germany: after the liberalization of the interurban coach market, the number of passengers using coach services in 2013 rose 19,5%¹ compared to the previous year. IGES, an independent consultancy firm, and FahrtenFuchs, a coach ticket booking portal, published in April 2014 their public opinion survey about the effects of liberalization: while 85% of the 798 respondents who replied to the questions were satisfied about the increasing number of journeys offered by coach companies, many of them indicated the lack of appropriate coach terminals as one of the major problems to be solved in order to increase the quality of services and to enhance the image of coach transport².

The Bus and Coach Passenger Rights Regulation (the Regulation)³, which became applicable in March 2013, was also adopted in order to improve passenger experiences. The Regulation aims at assuring that all operators in this sector, not only bus and coach companies but also terminal managers, tour operators and ticket vendors, comply with appropriate harmonised obligations throughout the European Union.

Obligations of bus and coach terminal managers

The Regulation only covers bus and coach terminals which have their own staff and are equipped with facilities such as a check-in counter, waiting room or a ticket office.

Terminal managers play a key role in the application of bus and coach passenger rights. The Regulation imposes on them twofold obligations: they shall provide information to passengers and assist passengers with disability or reduced mobility.

Obligations related to the provision of information

1) Terminal managers and carriers (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) Terminal managers and carriers (each within its respective area of competence) must provide travellers with information on their rights, including the name and contact address of the national enforcement body where they can submit complaints, at the latest before departure.

One major obstacle of the enforcement of passenger rights is that citizens know very little about them. This is particularly true regarding bus and coach passenger rights which were adopted quite

¹ <http://www.bdo-online.de/presse/pressemeldungen/bdo-2014-wird-das-jahr-der-entscheidung-fur-den-deutschen-fernbusmarkt>

² http://www.iges.de/presse07/fernbus/index_ger.html

³ Regulation (EU) No 181/2011 concerning the rights of passengers in bus and coach transport

recently. In order to inform passengers about their rights, the Commission published posters and leaflets in all the official languages of the European Union following consultation with the industry. It would be a great help for us if similar to airports or train stations our posters would also be displayed at bus and coach terminals and terminal managers would allow distributing our leaflets to passengers.

3) The Regulation imposes special obligations on terminal managers in case a service is cancelled or delayed at departure. They and the carriers (each within its respective area of competence) must inform passengers as soon as possible and in any event no 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 manager 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 persons with disability and reduced mobility.

1) 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, terminal managers must consult the organisations representing disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility.

The Commission has already launched inquiries on the basis of complaints from organisations representing disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility which have claimed that this obligation had not been implemented in certain Member States.

2) Member States should designate at least some of the staffed bus terminals in their territory with long-distance international or domestic regular services, where the terminal managing body must provide, together with the carriers, assistance to passengers with disability and 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.

So far 22 Member States notified to the Commission the list of their designated bus terminals. There are certain types of assistance that disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility can only expect at the designated bus stations and as such the lack of such bus stations may make it impossible for them to exercise their right to transportation. Therefore, the Commission have already started legal actions against Member States to enforce compliance with this requirement.

The list of the designated terminals is published at the Commission's homepage⁴.

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.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/passengers/road/doc/designated_bus_terminals_en.pdf

The Commission's role in the enforcement of the Regulation

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, 20 Member States have satisfied these obligations. Infringement procedures are ongoing against the rest of the Member States.

The Commission set up an expert group for bus and coach passenger rights: it is a forum for national enforcement bodies to exchange good practices, to enhance a more uniform interpretation and coherent application of the Regulation and to meet the industry and organizations representing passengers.

The next step: assessment of the functioning of the Regulation

The Commission is obliged to publish a report on the application of the Regulation in 2016. In the beginning of 2015 the Commission will start a public consultation: in order to assess thoroughly the functioning of the Regulation and to propose solutions for the current challenges, we would also need more information about bus terminals because the studies published on this topic are not comprehensive and are quite outdated. We count on your and on other stakeholders' active participation in this public consultation.