



## **TOPIC 1: INTERCITY AND LONG-DISTANCE BUS AND COACH REGULAR LINES**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Intercity and long distance bus and coach regular lines for growth, competitiveness and social inclusion**

Intercity bus and coach transport in Europe is a large and growing business. However, unlike in many other world regions, it is still struggling for recognition by policy decision makers at EU, national and local level, in particular as far as medium- and long-distance bus and coach services and their customers are concerned.

The lack of appropriate data and the lack of recognition often lead to non-adapted or sometimes restrictive legislation, which prevents buses and coaches from delivering the best of their mobility and travel potential to society and customers.

The EC White Paper of 2011 did not provide a clear vision and strategy on how buses and coaches, and indeed their customers, could be integrated into the future EU transport, mobility and travel chain. An EU approach to mobility and travel as a multimodal chain, in which seamless mobility and travel by buses, coaches and taxi services is a key constitutive element – since 97% of all individual trips of EU citizens are carried out <100 km - was not provided either.

In some European countries, in particular from the old "EU core", intercity and long-distance bus and coach transport has long been seen merely as a corollary and a "support mode" for intercity and long-distance rail transport, thus leading to political, legislative, infrastructure etc. neglect and underinvestment, and resulting in a poor image with the customer.

As a result, Europe is lagging behind other more advanced regions worldwide in innovation in bus and coach transport, both short-, medium- and long-distance. European citizens are not fully benefiting from the affordable mobility benefits offered by intercity and long-distance bus and coach services.

In addition, compared to other commercial passenger transport modes in Europe, the intercity coach sector is lagging far behind in terms of on-line services (information, booking and ticketing) provided to customers. This leads to sub-optimal or even non-visibility of intercity coach services for customers and, hence, a massive loss of potential customers and business for service suppliers, and foregone opportunities for citizens and society as a whole.

On the other hand, should intercity coach services become part of such integrated internet multimodal facilities and journey planners, it is likely that these coach services will most of the time appear on top of customers' search results and preferences, thus generating a significant amount of additional business for coach companies. In addition, a better internet visibility of bus and coach scheduled services will considerably improve customers' choice, including for elderly and persons with disabilities and reduced mobility, in terms of the customer being able to better exploit the potential of the multimodal transport chain.

And yet, bearing in mind the current political and economic situation, intercity and long-distance bus and coach transport in Europe has the strongest potential for green mobility growth. This can be achieved without massive public subsidies – at the lowest cost for the European taxpayer. With the expected opening of intercity markets in some large European countries, such as France and Germany, market incentives and private sector initiative will draw in millions of new customers for buses and coaches, most likely from among car users, rather than from other commercial modes. Indeed, both scientific research and recent practical evidence (Norway, 2002-2007) consistently support this conclusion.

Doubling the use of bus and coach transport in the EU is expected to:

- Reduce CO2 emissions by 50 mio tonnes per year,
- Reduce the number of fatalities on European roads and streets by 3000 per year,

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campaign to increase the use of  
buses and coaches and achieve  
sustainable mobility for all





- Reduce city traffic by 10-15%, practically eliminating congestion,
- Create up to 4 mio new green and stable jobs.

In addition, both research and practical evidence consistently show that consumers in countries, which have liberalised to a large extent their long-distance intercity market, enjoy a much better offer and service quality, at a lower price for the consumer and a lower cost for the tax payer, whilst at the same time improving the performances of other commercial modes and the entire mobility and travel chain.

The role of pro-active, cooperative and future-looking city and regional authorities is paramount in devising mobility plans, which take fully into consideration the mobility and travel potential of intercity and long-distance bus and coach transport and its infrastructure. They can ensure coordination and stability of services, in particular on short-distance scheduled routes, to better serve the mobility and travel needs of both their citizens and visitors, whilst at the same time saving public money.

In spite of the different legislative and market environments for intercity bus and coach travel in the various EU Member States, a range of common items could be identified, which would need a strong and coordinated public-private cooperation and partnership at local, national and EU level, to address them in the most efficient way, and to provide green growth and affordable mobility for all, at the lowest cost for society.

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Users' needs

- Place the emphasis on passenger-friendly terminals with adequate staff and/or other security and information facilities, accessible for PRMs and with adequate interchange with other modes, including taxis, taking also into account the needs of elderly and persons with disabilities and reduced mobility;
- Support training programmes and awareness training for staff, including customer care, before, during (where possible) and after the journey;
- Open a regular channel for consultation between business' and users' representatives and handling of complaints - the outcome of which should also be reflected in ongoing training programmes;
- Carry out a study on how elderly people and people with disabilities and reduced mobility use regular lines' coach services in Europe.

### 2. Legislative and administrative frameworks

- Take systematically into account bus and coach operational specificity (i.e. compared to road freight transport), arising from passengers' needs, when devising/amending social, fiscal, technical etc. legislation;
- Promote competition-neutral and transparent access to terminal infrastructures, including terminals of other transport modes;
- Increase maximum authorised weight for two-axle coaches in international traffic to at least 19.5 tonnes;
- Guarantee fair and efficient treatment of applications for authorisation for international regular lines, and a freedom of cabotage in international regular lines within the EU;
- Member States to ensure fair and equal treatment of scheduled coach and rail services, and promote their complementarities, including through a better use of their physical terminal infrastructure and journey planning;





- Work towards a transparent, cooperative and efficient EU framework for traffic restrictions and Low Emission Zones (LEZs) in Europe, in the interest of both industry and cities;
- Simplify administrative and control documents and promote digitalisation of controls;
- Create a single European control form, to avoid repetitive controls in different EU Member States;
- Support and promote cooperation, agreements and exchange of best practices between enforcers and industry, including regarding the possibility to carry out road safety and other related checks at terminals rather than on the road side;
- Promote the collection of statistics on long-distance bus and coach transport, to base policy and business decisions on facts.

### 3. Fiscal matters and user charging

- As a priority, ensure that any new EU/national/local decision in the field of taxation and user charges do not increase the fiscal burden on European bus and coach sector. Refrain from introducing new or extra user charges;
- Incentivize the use of collective land passenger transport, by ensuring a favourable fiscal treatment to collective land passenger transport and its customers compared to the use of the private car;
- Ensure equal fiscal treatment of all collective passenger transport modes (VAT, excise duties on mineral oil, etc.) and equal opportunities regarding state aid;
- Take a strategic long-term political commitment to incentivize the use of collective land passenger transport through fiscal incentives, such "0 rate" VAT, as well as exempting collective bus and coach transport from congestion charging and user charges;
- Harmonise and simplify existing VAT-related procedures to facilitate intra-EU and international bus and coach transport;
- Maintain/establish a "low-tax" commercial diesel for professional users;
- Promote/maintain a "0 rate" VAT for international bus/coach transport;
- Facilitate cooperation between road infrastructure managers and bus and coach business, to ensure equal treatment of single deck 2 and 3-axle coaches when applying motorway tolls.

### 4. Infrastructure and seamless intermodality

- Allow the use of existing dedicated infrastructure and separate lanes inside and outside cities by intercity and long-distance coach traffic, to boost reliability and punctuality;
- Give priority to creating a European network of multimodal bus and coach terminals, including as part of the trans-European Network (TENs), with EU's political backing and financial support. Support the creation of a European network of high quality bus and coach terminal infrastructures, capable also of meeting the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility;
- Ensure an optimal access of scheduled bus and coach services to other modes' terminal infrastructures, to ensure genuine seamlessness, intermodality and customer satisfaction, including for customers with disabilities and reduced mobility;
- Create a European website with a list of coach stations in Europe, their facilities and connections.

### 5. Easy access to services through better information and new technologies

- Ensure the integration of bus and coach scheduled services in current and future multimodal journey planners;

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- Support genuine intermodality in terms of information supply to customers, including information on access to other modes, safety, help and services, including to customers with disabilities and reduced mobility;
- Provide assistance to European bus and coach SMEs to catch up the information and technology gap.

**6. Safety and environment**

- Promote the establishment and dissemination of bus and coach safety programmes, with recommendations to industry, manufacturers and policy decision-makers;
- Support the development of a concept of a safe, green and customer-friendly coach of the future;
- Support the creation of adapted voluntary safety and green (self)audit systems for bus and coach SMEs;
- Work towards improving safety and security of customers, including at bus and coach terminals and stops.

**7. City-related aspects**

- Promote long-distance bus and coach services and their terminal and other related infrastructure, as an integral part of any (future) urban mobility planning;
- Allow the use of dedicated bus lines in cities by visiting coaches (scheduled and occasional);
- Ensure genuine intermodality and seamless access for collective bus and coach services, when designing and planning multimodal passenger terminal platforms;
- Develop a concept of intercity "coach express travel" system/network and promote its systematic integration in sustainable urban mobility planning;
- Work towards a transparent, cooperative and efficient EU framework for traffic restrictions and Low Emission Zones (LEZs) in Europe, in the interest of both industry and cities.

**8. Cross-border dimension**

- Conclude an international agreement with neighbouring third countries, to facilitate regular bus and coach lines, controls and procedures, and to harmonise conditions of competition;
- Harmonise and facilitate controls at external EU borders, to speed up border crossing, including by making use of available best practices;
- Eliminate controls at internal/Schengen borders;
- Ensure fair and equal treatment of all transport modes and their passengers within the European single transport market and travel area.

**9. Innovation and best practices**

- Develop a concept of intercity "coach express travel" system/network;
- Develop a concept of a "bus of the future" and a "coach of the future";
- Promote passenger-friendly terminals across Europe, focusing on passengers' needs, when planning, designing and building terminals throughout the mobility/travel chain;
- Establish an interactive website and dissemination channels to promote service, technology and management innovation and best practices, to support their take over by bus and coach service providers across Europe.

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