

Position Paper

Brussels, 20. September 2021

Ticketing Roadmap

1. Introduction and Vision¹

European railways realize that the railway system is a fundamental pillar to reach the European carbon emission goals of the 'European Green Deal' and therefore we will actively contribute to its successful implementation.

In order to achieve the necessary modal shift, we will need to focus on different areas. The focus of this paper is on further improving the customer experience when planning, booking and travelling internationally by rail. While national journeys are quite easily arranged, today booking a train ticket for an international journey can leave much to be desired. Therefore, the railway undertakings commit to improve international ticketing for rail in the broadest sense.

The past few years, we have been working on enablers, creating the respective specifications for train ticket sales that harmonize the different ways of selling tickets (OSDM²), Europe wide integrated rail timetables (MERITS³), and the basis for full ticket digitalization (ETCD⁴). This will allow to offer a lot of the new services to our passengers.

Based on these developments, we will continue to work together and seek the support of the commission to achieve the following vision for our customers and passengers by 2030:

Our long-term vision (2030):

The passengers will have a seamless user experience when searching, selecting and buying their railways services, including first and last mile transport. They shall have access to simple, reliable and comprehensive online information regarding timetables, prices, dependable real-time information and ticket purchasing for (rail) transport services, both domestic (urban, regional, long-distance) and international. Tickets issued by different railways and ticket vendors will be easily accepted throughout Europe. In an event of travel disruption, passengers will be able to easily attain information on how to continue their journey as well as their passenger rights.

¹ This document presents the political vision of the CER members. Any further concrete steps to implement the outlined political vision will be developed and taken by CER members only provided that these are in full compliance with the legislation in force, and in particular in strict observance of the competition rules.

² OSDM: Open Sales Distribution Model

³ MERITS: Multiple East-West Railways Integrated Timetable Storage

⁴ ETCD: Electronic Ticket Control Database

2. How the railway sector wants to advance Ticketing

We have taken the passenger journey (see image below) as the focus for our improvements, ensuring that we improve the overall customer experience. The actions we will take will be grouped according to this flow:



Figure 1: Customer journey depicting the areas where we want to improve the customer experience

2.1. Concrete Actions until 2025

The next couple of years, as railway undertakings, our main focus will be on improving the booking experience for passengers. Railways will work together to enable a modal shift to rail, by making international train tickets more widely available (both in time and as well as in points of sale). In addition, we will ensure that passengers on (international) journeys with multiple carriers will get better support in case of disruptions or delays.

The railway undertakings commit to improving the passenger journey in the following ways:

A: Preparation/Orientation:

1. More up to date timetables

What: When passengers search for journeys, the timetable information they find is easy to reach and the data is accurate and up to date, on any channel of their choosing.

How: We commit to making our timetables available to any interested party in high quality and frequency and to use the MERITS database for this purpose.

2. Being able to buy train tickets at least 6 and up to 12 months in advance

What: Customers can buy train tickets further in advance, allowing them to book train journeys one year ahead.

How: Railway undertakings will work together with infrastructure managers and governments to be able to release their timetables further in advance. Infrastructure managers and RUs will cooperate to jointly improve the multiyear maintenance schedule and the quality of mutual information exchange so that long-term timetables also become more dependable. The advance tickets sale is conditional to the availability of passenger data, enabling a contact with the customer in case of an unplanned schedule alteration.

B: Booking:

3. More up to date tariff exchange, enabling through tickets

What: Customers can buy international train tickets from multiple carriers (for trains without obligatory reservation) in one through ticket, allowing seamless international rail journeys.

How: Through-ticketing as practiced today is based on tariff data exchange between the different European rail carriers, mainly for products following the NRT⁵ philosophy. The solution currently in place, UIC's PRIFIS tool, has reached its end of life in 2020 and is being replaced by a new enabler. In 2021 the railway sector created a powerful new standard for the offline exchange of tariff data between railways: the new OSDM offline platform. The implementation of the OSDM offline platform is an important first step for exchanging international tariff data more flexibly to create through-ticket offers enabling carriers to implement customer-friendly sales systems more easily.

4. European wide standardized API for selling train tickets

What: Customers can book an international rail journey (including for trains with obligatory reservations) from a wide array of sales points, websites or apps, both for domestic as well as international journeys.

How: To make it more appealing for railway undertakings and distributors to connect to different railway distribution systems, the access to their distribution interfaces (APIs) has been standardized and simplified. The sector has created the OSDM online standard which reduces barriers for API integration across multiple railway undertakings. It is important to include dynamically priced offers to make sure that different segments of different railway undertakings along an international journey are being combined to a complete offer for all tickets at the best price available in real-time. The railway undertakings want to gradually achieve OSDM-compliance of their APIs or introduce new OSDM-compliant APIs. Railway companies and third-party distributors shall work together to ensure a migration from the previous interfaces to the new OSDM-compliant APIs. Only in this way the capability of a specific company to receive and send OSDM messages will be ensured. This step is a prerequisite to a pan-European roll-out of OSDM online to reciprocal links between all railway undertakings and distributors in medium term.

As a harmonized technical solution, OSDM saves each participant considerable amount of investments that otherwise would be necessary to develop tailor made individual ticket distribution channels with other parties.

5. Increased harmonization of ticketing conditions (general conditions of use).

What: Customers booking international connections by rail involving several railway undertakings want to receive the best available offer they are entitled to without the need to care for individual tariff rules or ticketing conditions in the background.

⁵ NRT: non reservation ticket. Meaning this applies to those trains where you do not have to reserve a seat to buy a ticket (in some cases you can buy a separate reservation, but it's always separate from the ticket).

How: Currently different tariff rules – e.g. with regards to flexibility (change of trains, exchange, refund), customer segmentation and age groups, application of reduction cards or acceptance of rail passes, definitions of items (luggage, bikes), necessary ID documents – are sometimes making it difficult to book a consistent international connection. Technology can heal some of these issues, but the higher the complexity the higher the probability that a certain tariff or offer combination is not made available at all. By clustering ticketing conditions, creating standardized traveler/ tariff types based on OSDM tariff clusters and allowing through-ticketing, barriers for selling the best offer to all target groups will be reduced. RUs will work together with EU institutions and governments to overcome these barriers.

D: Boarding/ticket control

6. Full digitalization of tickets

What: After their booking, customers receive an e-ticket from their point of sale (whether it's a rail company or a ticket vendor) and/ or ticket-issuing/ operating railway undertaking which can be inspected throughout their journey. Whatever train operator (RU) they are travelling with, the on-board team is able to read their e-ticket, inspect it and provide information to the customer and to other operators involved, if any. It is seamless for the passengers.

How: All tickets that do not have obligatory reservations will be automatically registered by the party issuing the ticket in an online shared database (ETCD) and their status will be kept up to date. Access will of course be restricted only to the relevant stakeholders of that ticket (seller, carrier, ticket control organization) and the data does only contain the strictly necessary personal information.

E: On the train

7. Real time information during the journey

What: When there's a delay or disruption in the rail journey, passengers will be informed by the party the tickets were bought from.

How: Railway undertakings will work together to develop a European real time data service, allowing all relevant parties (railway undertakings, ticket vendors, transport authorities and other stakeholders) to connect to this and inform passengers. Railways undertakings as "the carriers" are accountable and responsible for passenger information, complaints and claims in case of disruption. Railway undertakings can involve or even delegate this to ticket vendors, but railway undertakings remain the original and responsible source.

8. Better support during disruptions and delays

What: In case of a disruption or delay on a train that will hinder passengers' continuation of their journey by rail, the passengers will be notified of the situation, informed about their passenger rights and also be given options on how to best continue to their destination. Upon inspection of their tickets in any subsequent trains, the disruption or delay becomes apparent to staff and their tickets remain valid.

How: Railways will further digitalize their services to support passengers in case of delays and disruptions (such as Agreement for Journey Continuation⁶ and Hop on the Next Available Train⁷), by combining technical enablers for booking (OSDM) timetable (MERITS), real time information and online ticket status (ETCD).

⁶ The Agreement on Journey Continuation (AJC) by CIT governs the relationship between railway undertakings that take action to support international passengers in the event of disruption to their journey.

⁷ Hop On The Next Available Train (HOTNAT) by RAILTEAM allows travellers to take the next service leaving from the same station as originally planned when a delay on or cancellation of a preceding service prevents them from making their originally planned connection.

2.2. Concrete Actions in Long Term (until 2030)

After having improved the train booking experience, we will use the period until 2030 to both build on what was already achieved, as well as focusing further on multimodal travel information and ticketing.

The railway undertakings commit to improving the passenger journey in the following ways:

A: Preparation/Orientation

9. Multimodal travel information

What: When passengers search for journeys, the multimodal timetable information they find is accurate and up to date, on any channel of their choosing.

How: Railway undertakings will ensure that their timetables are available in a multimodal context and will include other timetables of other modes of transport in their own travel information.

B: Booking

10. Pan-European roll-out of OSDM-online, extending to the whole sector, e.g. smaller railways

What: Passengers will be able to have access to a further range of ticketing offers at their preferred sales points, websites or apps, both for domestic as well as international journeys, as all railway undertakings in Europe will make their tickets available.

How: All railway undertakings will offer their ticket catalogue based on commercial contracts to ticket vendors and other railway undertakings, so that the whole of Europe is covered.

11. Multimodal ticketing

What: When travelling with multiple modalities, passengers can use the same ticket/ID-carrier to gain entrance to all modes of transport.

How: Railways will work together with other modes of transport to create a shared framework for digitalized tickets, making it possible to link any ID-carrier to a digitized ticket.

C/F: To the station/to the destination

12. Multimodal travel information

What: When a passenger is travelling, the multimodal timetable information they find is accurate and up to date, on any channel of their choosing. In case of a disruption or delay, passengers can easily get information on how to continue their journey.

How: Rail will ensure that their timetables and real time information are available in a multimodal context and will include timetables and real time information of other modes of transport in their own travel information.

E: On the train

13. Better support during disruptions and delays

What: When passengers are confronted during their journey with a disruption or delay, and given options on how to continue, rebooking the tickets for the next train they choose is possible. Therefore, the passengers have a valid ticket/reservation for the next train, where necessary.

How: This builds on the previous developments for digitalizing AJC and HOTNAT, using the OSDM booking API to book a ticket/reserve a seat on the next train.

3. Requests for support from the Commission

To achieve the above-mentioned improvements for the passengers, the railway undertakings are relying on the support of the European Commission mainly in two areas: financing and legislation.

Financial support

- The sector has listened and acted, the OSDM (Open Sales and Distribution Model) Off- and On-Line -specifications are ready to be implemented in order to provide the expected improvements in ticketing.

The sector is committed on the implementation of OSDM and we ask the Commission to support this with an adequate financial and regulatory framework, ensuring that the sector will invest in a solution which meets both Commission' expectations and RUs' business needs. In this way passenger booking and travel experience will be enhanced, ticketing/distribution simplified and hereby its costs lowered as well as made more easily accessible.

Legislation

- The sector wants to contribute to the European Green Deal by offering more long-distance cross border services to passengers, as preferable alternatives to other modes of transport. Due to the higher risks involved and the much greater financial investments required, this can only be realistically achieved by allowing different railway undertakings to work together. Therefore, we ask for Commission Guidelines defining criteria under which agreements that serve the objectives of the Green Deal would be qualified as not restricting competition.
- Data exchange should continue to rely on voluntary contractual agreements and the rights of data generators should be explicitly recognized in the EU framework on data governance and the forthcoming Data Act. Data sharing should be based on a level playing field and the principle of reciprocity while respecting the protection of trade secrets and intellectual property rights.
- Seamless ticketing solution only is not enough to ensure modal shift towards rail. There is an urgent need to improve the competitiveness of rail and to create a level playing field for all transport modes. The aim should be to shift short and medium distance travel in Europe from air to rail to cut CO₂ emissions.

About CER

The Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) brings together railway undertakings, their national associations as well as infrastructure managers and vehicle leasing companies. The membership is made up of long-established bodies, new entrants and both private and public enterprises, representing 73% of the rail network length, 76% of the rail freight business and about 92% of rail passenger operations in EU, EFTA and EU accession countries. CER represents the interests of its members towards EU policy makers and transport stakeholders, advocating rail as the backbone of a competitive and sustainable transport system in Europe. For more information, visit www.cer.be or follow us on Twitter [@CER_railways](https://twitter.com/CER_railways) or [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cer).

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