



European Economic and Social Committee

TEN/540
Multimodal travel

Brussels, 15 October 2014

OPINION

of the
European Economic and Social Committee
on the

Commission Staff Working Document

**Towards a roadmap for delivering EU-wide multimodal travel information, planning and
ticketing services**

SWD(2014) 194 final

Rapporteur: **Jan Simons**

On 12 June 2014 the European Commission decided to consult the European Economic and Social Committee, under Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, on the

Commission staff working document - Towards a roadmap for delivering EU-wide multimodal travel information, planning and ticketing services
SWD(2014) 194 final.

The Section for Transport, Energy, Infrastructure and the Information Society, which was responsible for preparing the Committee's work on the subject, adopted its opinion on 1 October 2014.

At its 502nd plenary session, held on 15 and 16 October 2014 (meeting of 15 October), the European Economic and Social Committee adopted the following opinion by 147 votes with 3 abstentions.

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1. Conclusions and recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee welcomes the Commission staff working document as the first step towards establishing an EU-wide multimodal travel information, planning and ticketing market, although in the interests of clarity it should be made clear in the title that the proposal concerns passenger transport.
- 1.2 It endorses the Commission's approach of attempting to establish an EU-wide market by setting up a framework, rather than issuing legislative proposals.
- 1.3 The Committee proposes the establishment of a discussion platform, taking account and making use of past experience with existing discussion forums in which all parties are represented. The aim is to create a catalyst in order to be able to offer real-time travel, planning and fare information as soon as possible. The Committee is willing to play a part in that platform, inter alia in order to safeguard the interests of civil society.
- 1.4 If the cooperation between representatives of travel consumers, providers of transport services and the national and EU authorities is not a success, then, the Committee feels, the Commission should consider whether a legislative approach should be adopted, and if so in which areas.
- 1.5 The Committee notes with concern the growing discrepancy between the opportunities available to travel consumers for obtaining real-time information, e.g. via mobile phone apps, and the lagging supply of services by transport providers. The Committee believes that

particular attention should be paid to improving the situation of vulnerable groups of passengers, such as those with disabilities, and passenger rights, which differ from one mode of transport to another, the rights of passengers vis à vis service providers and vice versa, as well as the legal relationship between different service providers, also in connection with passenger rights.

- 1.6 Data collection and, above all, the distribution of revenue between transport service providers are particularly difficult problems. In this connection, the Committee recommends that the possible establishment of a clearing house of the kind which exists in Japan be studied in detail, so that travel consumers will ultimately only need to buy one ticket.

2. **Introduction**

- 2.1 On 12 June 2014 the Commission formally requested the Committee to draw up an opinion on the Commission Staff Working Document ("working document") entitled **Towards a roadmap for delivering EU-wide multimodal travel information, planning and ticketing services**.

- 2.2 The Committee welcomes the publication of a Commission document, as it considers the subject, improved access for EU citizens to multimodal travel information, planning and fare systems, to be of great importance for EU citizens.

- 2.3 During a public consultation preceding publication of the working document it became clear that a number of major problems will have to be solved before there can be a transparent, multimodal passenger transport information market in the EU:

- access to data is inadequate,
- there are major problems with interoperability,
- data and information flows are not harmonised,
- there is a tendency for companies with a strong market position to concentrate on proprietary systems.

- 2.4 The Commission would like to hear the Committee's ideas on how, in view of the problems referred to in point 2.3, a transparent, multimodal passenger transport market can be established, where travellers have access to real-time travel information and planning services and can buy a single ticket online for any journey within the EU.

- 2.5 The Committee had already acknowledged the importance of the subject before the White Paper - Roadmap to a Single European Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system (COM(2011) 144 final) - was published on 28 March 2011.

- 2.5.1 On 13 May 2009 it had issued an opinion¹ on the Commission's proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other transport modes.
- 2.5.2 In this opinion the Committee recommends the rapid development of an ITS architecture, based on increasing use of high volumes of data, involving a long-term approach which takes account of possible future system developments and the protection of personal data.
- 2.6 Five years on, however, the Committee unfortunately has to conclude that fundamentally the situation has not changed. The problem of lack of, or inadequate, access to online data still exists; moreover the data itself is incomplete and incompatible. This makes it impossible for providers of mobility platforms, and ultimately for individuals wishing to travel in the EU making optimum use of the various modes of transport, to obtain sufficient information directly on travel planning, forms of travel, journey time and costs.

3. Contents of the working document

- 3.1 The Commission proposals, as set out in the working document, follow on from the vision developed in the 2011 Transport White Paper, which stressed the need for further integration of the various modes of transport in order to make mobility more efficient and user-friendly.
- 3.2 The Commission's policy goal in the Transport White Paper is to establish a framework for multimodal transport information and payment services to be operational around 2020. It emphasises that availability of information is essential for seamless door-to-door mobility.
- 3.3 In addition, conditions are to be created which are conducive to the development and use of intelligent systems for interoperable, multimodal travel information, planning and booking systems, as well as intelligent fare systems.
- 3.4 The Commission points out in the working document that there are currently more than a hundred multimodal journey planners in the EU, and yet the information available to travellers is fragmented, making it impossible for them to make choices based on complete information. The same applies to tickets. It is impossible to buy one single ticket for a multimodal journey crossing a number of EU borders.
- 3.5 At the informal ministerial meeting held in Nicosia on 17 July 2012 ministers stressed the need to guarantee the availability and accessibility of EU-wide multimodal travel information and real-time traffic information, and to adopt standards to ensure interoperability. The Commission was asked to explore more ways to improve accessibility of transport data.

¹ [OJ C 277, 17.11.2009, p.85.](#)

- 3.6 There have been initiatives, such as the first Smart Mobility Challenge, which called on industry and other stakeholders to come up with ideas and ways of creating a genuinely European multimodal journey planner; the Smart Ticketing Alliance, which was set up to improve interoperability between regional and national electronic ticketing systems for public transport; and the Full Service Model an initiative by rail industry stakeholders aiming to develop and implement technical specifications for the exchange of railway data, including door-to-door mobility.
- 3.7 The Commission acknowledges these initiatives, but they only address part of the problem. They are not EU-wide, they do not cover all passenger transport modes and they are not completely real-time.
- 3.8 The Commission states in the working document that the following obstacles will need to be overcome in order to achieve seamless door-to-door mobility:
- insufficient access to multimodal travel and traffic data,
 - insufficient availability of good-quality multimodal travel and traffic data,
 - lack of interoperable data formats and data exchange protocols,
 - lack of cooperation between stakeholders.
- 3.9 The Commission argues that these obstacles can be overcome by means of an integrated approach along six axes:
- a) fair and free access to multimodal travel and traffic data,
 - b) optimum availability of reliable multimodal travel and traffic data,
 - c) interoperable, harmonised data formats and data exchange protocols,
 - d) promoting the interconnection of existing services,
 - e) facilitating efficient cooperation between stakeholders,
 - f) showcasing the benefits of multimodal travel information, planning and ticketing services.
- 3.10 The Commission has incorporated these actions into an indicative timeline and states that it is currently working on an impact assessment.

4. **General comments**

- 4.1 The Committee is strongly in favour of removing barriers to the smooth operation of the internal market, not least with regard to the enormous passenger transport market. In the interests of clarity, the title should include a reference to passenger transport.
- 4.2 It should be pointed out that a conflict arises in this area: on the one hand, information is becoming available to travel consumers at a steadily increasing rate, while at the same time, for the same reason, an instrument like legislation, which is supposed to serve the consumer,

can never keep up with events, quite apart from the question of whether data providers will support the legislation.

- 4.3 The Committee believes that the solution to this conflict is close cooperation between representatives of travellers, the providers of the various transport modes and the national and European authorities. This could take the form of a permanent discussion platform in which problems are jointly discussed; account should of course be taken here of experience with the various forums in this field existing under the aegis of the European Commission. The Committee is willing to play a part in that discussion platform, for example as a mediator.
- 4.4 For a platform of this kind to work properly, suppliers of transport services have to be ready to include their data and information, including information on fares, in the discussions in a fair and open manner. Reluctance to do this or protectionist behaviour are not conducive to this goal.
- 4.5 The reasons for providers' reticence are, *inter alia*, passenger rights, which differ from one mode of transport to another, difficulties with data collection and - above all - distribution of revenue. A possible issue here too is the necessary competition within and between transport modes, but a solution would be a sort of clearing house for payments between transport service providers. A solution of this kind is operating satisfactorily in Japan.
- 4.6 Standardisation of Near Field Communication (NFC) technology² as well as other existing or emerging technologies should, the Committee believes, rapidly make it possible to travel across transport carriers and country borders, using mobile phones, for which one of these technologies is designed.
- 4.7 Multimodal travel information, planning and pricing systems with virtually pan-European coverage are currently being developed, including German railways' Qixxit (www.qixxit.de), which is already up and running, and the EU-funded Enhanced Wisetrip global scientific consortium pilot project. These are promising developments but currently only offer travel planning information. The providers of these services need to publicise the opportunities they offer.
- 4.8 The Committee also stresses that it endorses the approach taken by the Commission, which sees its role as that of stimulating, facilitating and innovating rather than in drawing up new legislation.
- 4.9 The Committee would point out, however, that if the platform stakeholders cannot arrive at effective solutions, the Commission should reconsider whether additional measures, possibly in the form of framework legislation, are needed.

² [OJ C 24, 28.1.2012, p.146.](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012C024)

5. **Specific comments**

- 5.1 The Committee notes a growing imbalance between travellers' rapidly increasing need for real-time planning, journey and fare information and the lagging supply of services available to meet those needs.
- 5.2 In the area of technological innovation standardised interfaces are needed to enable different information and booking IT systems to communicate with each other in full respect of business models and go-to-market approaches. Operators and third parties are working on this.
- 5.3 The Committee points out that high-quality timetables are available for most European railways. There might be exceptions, but then with the implementation of Commission Regulation (EU) No 454/2011 on telematics applications for passenger services (TAP TSI) all licenced railway undertakings will meet their obligations within the next years. The challenge is to be able to share this data with other modes in a market-orientated way.
- 5.4 Following an unconditional “open data” approach, for example, risks yielding inconsistent results across information channels from a customer point of view. The customer does not need data, but reliable information. While it is absolutely essential that operators as data providers grant access to timetable data, they need to be able to ensure maximum quality of the information given about their services and that liability for any errors is clearly defined.
- 5.5 While setting up a multimodal journey planner, integrating different data formats across modes into operators' and other information providers' systems is a complex and cost-intensive task. So is the connectivity between these proprietary systems.
- 5.6 But then again, the established data formats represent good practice in their specific area of application. They largely meet today's demands and are constantly improved as customer and business requirements change and technology progresses. As a consequence, prescribing specific data formats across modes does not per se help overcome connectivity issues.
- 5.7 On the contrary, it risks diluting quality of data and customer information as a lowest common denominator would have to be found. Prescriptive usage of data formats across the board also risks creating white elephants and reducing the ambition to make use of technological advances as they happen.
- 5.8 The Full Service Model initiative (FSM) of the rail sector in collaboration with third parties is currently specifying such interfaces for the rail market in a multimodal context. What is important is that the principle of non-discrimination is preserved and that each actor has the same possibilities to launch its own idea. The Full Service Model initiative builds on this principle with its Internet-like distributed IT architecture, enabling technology providers to

take up the specifications and start their own new platforms or apps, or whatever technological developments the future will bring.

- 5.9 Likewise, IATA has launched its New Distribution Capability (NDC) initiative with a similar goal. In public transport, UITP is pursuing its Smart Ticketing Alliance (STA) with the aim of interoperable smart card based data exchange. This shows that solutions will be brought to the market by industry-driven initiatives to overcome the difficulties in integrating data formats.
- 5.10 To receive enough data to build a journey planner, efficient cooperation between transport modes, municipalities, etc. is necessary to enable a seamless travel experience. It has to be recognised though that the market for multimodal journey planners is comparatively young and is developing with high momentum: several start-ups (e.g. fromAtoB, GoEuro, Waymate) as well as established mobility companies (e.g. Daimler with Moovel, DB with Qixxit) build up such journey planners.
- 5.11 The Committee believes that the service providers of all modes of transport should not be blinkered by business and market-orientated thinking and should get together to establish a comparative source of travel and fare information, geared to the differing wishes of travel consumers.
- 5.12 The Committee wholeheartedly supports the Commission's goal of establishing a system of integrated ticketing, i.e. one single ticket for all modes of transport, but this will be the most difficult, and probably the last, market hurdle to be overcome.
- 5.13 There are some hopeful developments. For example, in June of this year the rail sector launched a multimodal platform that also contains information on air and bus transport, for example, as well as bicycle hire; unfortunately it does not yet include ticket information.
- 5.14 The Committee realises that at present any connection is possible off-line, but not yet online. And there's the rub. The consumer wants online information, one ticket for an international journey within the EU, using different modes of transport.

Brussels, 15 October 2014.

The President
of the
European Economic and Social Committee

Henri Malosse
