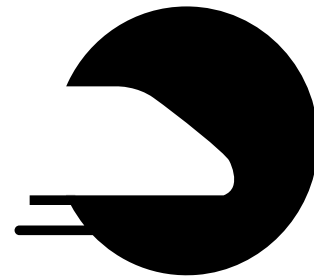


Fact sheet 3: Night Trains to Replace Air Travel



Night trains do not presuppose massive infrastructure investments as they can use the existing infrastructures and do not need high-speed infrastructure. Yet, they are the comfortable alternative to flying on distances up to 2000 km, with a significant decrease in emissions.

Why is it important:

Night trains are the only sustainable travel alternative for distances above 1,000km, and can cover larger distances than day trains unless there exists high speed infrastructure, saving one night accommodation.

What is the challenge?

The number of night trains has dropped dramatically over the last decades, especially in Western Europe as high speed trains have popped up to connect destinations with day trains.

Once there was a dense net of night trains all across Europe. Night trains also have a hard time competing with low-cost airlines: airlines are exempt from kerosene taxes, and from VAT on international tickets. Furthermore, in contrast to airlines, trains pay a toll (track access charge) on every kilometre, need to be adapted to the different rail networks and rules of each country

(which often implies changing locomotives and train drivers at the border).

The major national rail operators do not show much interest in the night train business. New entrants or start-ups do have a hard time to penetrate the market as it is difficult to find sleeping cars or couchettes; the second hand market is empty and there is not enough starting capital for ordering a new fleet.

What could be a solution?

- help operators to order new sleeping cars
- reduce track access charges to direct costs levels
- oblige major national rail operators to sell tickets on their websites
- Ensure non-discriminatory access to tracks
- Implement strategic European coordination with sufficient mandate and resources

Which upcoming policy processes to watch out for

The European Commission has published an action plan on night trains and international passenger rail in December 2021.

Various Member State governments have announced the relaunch of night trains, e.g. France, Sweden, Austria.

