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Workshop: “The Future of International Rail Passenger Transport”

Austrian experience on international rail passenger transport

Submitted by Austria

International rail passenger transport: Situation in Austria

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1 International day trains

1.1 Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB)

The ÖBB-Personenverkehr AG (ÖBB) operates a comprehensive network of international day trains in cooperation with other railway undertakings, mainly other federal railways (see red lines in Figure 1).

Figure 1: International day and night train lines operated by ÖBB and its partners



Austria is well connected to many other European countries by day trains. For instance, from Vienna day trains run to other major European cities as follows:

- hourly direct connection: Budapest, Bratislava
- two-hourly direct connection: Munich, Frankfurt, Zurich, Praha
- several direct trains per day: Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Venice, Warszawa, Krakow
- single direct train per day: Ljubljana, Trieste, Zagreb, Kosice

1.2 WESTbahn

WESTbahn Management GmbH is a privately owned Austrian company. Since 2011 it has offered train services between Vienna and Salzburg. In recent years, WESTbahn extended its network to Munich, currently offering five trains between Vienna and Munich daily in both directions (see Figure 2). The company intends to extend its network to Budapest in the near future.

Figure 2: Train lines operated by WESTbahn



WESTbahn operates a fleet of double-decker trains (each consisting of six coaches) that offer spacious leather seats, each with a 220V power socket, free Wi-Fi throughout the train, air conditioning, luggage racks, gender-separated toilets, four WESTcafés per train (with coffee, cold drinks and snack vending machines) and three comfort classes. The trains are low-floor with extra-wide entry doors allowing for step-free boarding. The maximum speed is 200 km/h.



2 International night trains

Austria is well connected to many other European countries also by night trains (see Figure 3). The Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB), in particular, operate a comprehensive network of night trains labelled as “Nightjet”. Furthermore, partner railway undertakings of ÖBB, mainly other federal railways, operate night train lines labelled as “EuroNight”.

Figure 3: Night train network of ÖBB and its partner railway undertakings



Besides Nightjet lines starting/ending in Austria, ÖBB also operates Nightjet lines entirely outside of Austria, such as the line between Zürich and Hamburg/Berlin.

The federal state of Austria – more precisely the Federal Ministry Republic of Austria Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology – financially supports the operation of night trains that run on a regular basis. However, only the Austrian section of night trains is subsidized.

Both the Nightjet network and the EuroNight network have been extended gradually in recent years. In 2024, a new Nightjet line between Berlin and Paris/Brussels, a new Nightjet line between Berlin and Vienna/Graz and a new EuroNight line between Munich and Warszawa will go into operation (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: International day and night train lines starting in 2024



All Nightjet and EuroNight trains are currently operated with conventional coaches. However, ÖBB ordered 33 sets of new night trains (“Nightjet of the new generation”), which will go into operation in the upcoming years. The first sets of trains will run between Vienna / Innsbruck and Hamburg as of December 2023 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Nightjet of the new generation (ÖBB)



Each Nightjet of the new generation consists of seven coaches (two sleeping cars, three couchettes and two seat cars) and a locomotive. The maximum speed is 230 km/h.

There are different comfort classes, which are characterized as follows:

Sleeping car comfort

- 2 built-in beds one above the other (can be booked as a compartment for 1 or 2 people)
- Compartment with en suite sanitary facilities (WC & shower)
- Comfortable seating



Mini Cabin

- New type of sleeping pods for maximum privacy
- Lockers for shoes & hand luggage
- Movable folding table for breakfast
- Reading lamp, storage space, coat hooks, mirror



Couchette car comfort

- Modern 4-berth compartments for families & groups
- Built-in beds
- More space & privacy



Barrier-free compartment comfort

- Disabled accessible compartment for up to 2 wheelchair users & 2 accompanying passengers
- Modern accessible WC next door
- Wagon with low-floor entrance



Seat car & multifunctional area

- Double bucket seats with folding armrest & full-length headrest
- Storage facilities, reading lamps & inductive charging at the seats
- Multifunctional area with low-floor entrance
- Bicycle parking spaces
- Space for luggage, pushchairs, skis & snowboards
- Luggage security with NFC function on the luggage racks



The new Nightjet trains offer a variety of technical innovations:

- A new feature is free on-board Wi-Fi. Those who want to stay entertained can surf free of charge on the ÖBB OnBoard-Portal Railnet night, and use it to stream as well as read a range of digital newspapers and magazines.
- A modern passenger information system keeps passengers up to date with the latest travel information.
- Alongside conventional plug sockets, there are also USB charging options and an inductive charging station for a wide range of electronic devices.
- The compartments are fitted with an electronic access system using NFC cards and all wagons have video surveillance to further improve safety.

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