



Sustainable travel i Europe – a complicated affair

For over twenty years now, the airlines have dominated travelling within Europe. International rail travel is a nearly forgotten way of exploring Europe. Decreasing number of travelers by train has led to the dismantling of the network of rail lines through Europe. With increasing awareness of environmental threats the demand for sustainable travel, both for leisure and business has increased. But to actually put the idea of travel sustainable into action is not always an easy thing to do. Environmental activist Greta Thunberg spent 32 hours travelling from Stockholm to the WEF in Davos. Most of the other delegates flew there! Currently it just takes too long time, to use the way of communication that modern travelers demand.

Travelling between two locations in Europe by train is today for the most part very complicated – if they are not connected by a direct line, such as Paris and London. In order to travel more sustainable a comprehensible and international strategy needs to be developed for all of Europe.

Through our hostels all over Europe, we make it possible for our 2,5 million members and other guests to travel and stay at our many unique locations – which in turn promotes cultural exchange between our countries. Hosteling International has promoted rail travel for decades, especially during the Interrail era, when thousands of European backpackers discovered Europe by train.

Today the hostels are prepared to welcome all groups of travelers, from families to young couples or groups of friends, searching for a new and more sustainable way to travel in Europe.

Tourism is the fastest growing business sector in the world. But it relies heavily on travel and to ensure that this development can continue without harming the environment and the places visited, sustainable travel is a must.

The weekend of March 15th – 17th, we the CEO and Presidents, from over twenty national hostel organizations, within Hosteling International, gathered in Stockholm to discuss our challenges and opportunities:

- The price level of tickets. In order to choose the sustainable alternatives, there is a need for greater variety of ticket pricing and more affordable tickets.
- A significant increase in sleeper train connections. This is a must to make trains a viable alternative for the longer connections within Europe
- Developing new co-operations among rail companies. Eurail and the likes are good initiatives but we need to make international rail travel as easy to book as booking flights.
- Standardizing the rolling stock, rails and signal systems on European railways. This is a longer process but necessary for the future development of rail travel.

We call upon the rail companies and politicians of Europe to take it from here and move forward! Now is the time to increase cooperation and implement common standards to be able to meet the increased demand of sustainable travel. This is how we secure the future development of the travel industry in Europe and together secure a sustainable future.

Signed:

Robert McGuirk President HI, Gerhard Koller President EUFED, Boris M. Mičić President ERA, Darren Barker CEO HI international office with participating members from: Austria (ÖJHV), Belgium LAJ, Belgium VJH, Croatia, Denmark, England & Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland (Republic of), Israel, Italy Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.