

# Rail Report Europe

in co-operation with  
**Back on Track**

European network to support cross-border  
night trains

Issue 3/2020

## Rail Travel in Europe after the first wave of the pandemic



**By Nigel Perkins.**

During the various “lock-downs” across Europe during the spring most train operators reduced their services to a bare minimum.

Once countries

started to ease the various lockdowns from May onwards, many then resumed a full or almost full timetable. Due to the ever changing restrictions on travel between countries aimed at preventing a 2nd wave, some cross-border services are very limited at the time of writing.

As the climate crisis has not gone away, the low carbon advantages of rail (and most public transport) remain and must be exploited in full. It is encouraging to see the recent expansion of night train services. Despite the coronavirus situation some of these were soon fully booked for the Summer holiday season.

The pandemic has also severely hit the airline industry, which may take

several years to recover. Obviously, for intercontinental journeys from Europe to the Americas or Australasia air remains the only practical means of transport. For Europe, daytime rail is well placed as a low carbon alternative for many short haul flights and even night trains for some medium distance flights as well.

Some people are predicting that commuting and business travel will never recover to pre-covid levels. Others have been highlighting the perceived danger of using public transport without any clear evidence to back up their claims. While the evidence is not conclusive it suggests that train travel is no less safe than sitting close to other passengers on a plane.

In the UK the RSSB(Rail Safety Regulator) published a study based



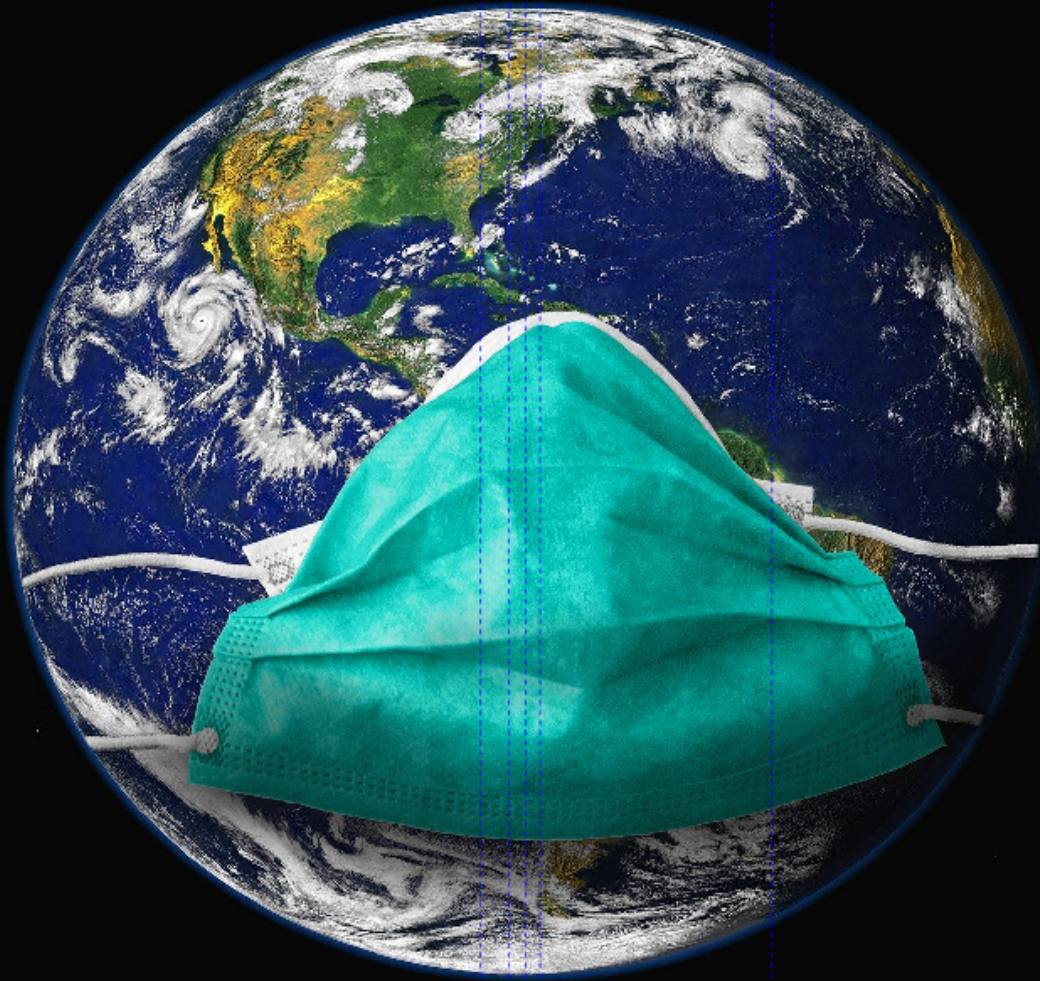
Pic.: railway-station-5528198\_1920 pixabay pasja1000

**Throughout Europe the security rules are strict and obligatory and are one reason why the risk of infection in trains can be seen as very low.**

on a train 50% full with passengers travelling for 30 minutes and concluded that(without wearing a mask) there was a 1 in 11,000 chance of being infected. In Germany Deutsche Bahn concluded that contact tracing had not found one single infection in Germany and Austria was triggered by taking a train journey. They also discovered that the

infection rate in air-conditioned carriages was lower as the air-flow tends to be vertical and less likely to pass the virus onto an adjacent passenger. They even discovered that their staff (who must wear face masks) had a lower infection rate than the general population.

The home page of Swiss Railways has clear simple illustrations such as “Coronavirus: Key facts at a glance” and “A mask protects yourself and others”. There are also simple to read bar graphs showing the busier and quieter times of day both for weekdays and week-ends. With German Railways, the home page has an illustration



Corona-Well-Maske: Alexandra Koch, pixabay

I believe it is important that Governments and Train Operators do not “over-react” to the short-term need to financially support the railways.

More needs to be done to attract passengers back to rail and reassure people that rail remains relatively safe.

Here are some examples of “good practice”:

#### Editorial committee

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Pic. DB / Hans-Joachim Sigrist

with the message "Safe Travel – we'll get there together"

Here are some examples of "bad practice" :

At Trenitalia, under "our offers" is a shaded grey area with the message "Recommendations to contain the spread of corona virus". Here they seem to have copied & pasted a colourful poster from the Ministry of Health giving general advice. There is absolutely no guidance or advice in relation to train travel. In the UK the National rail home page has plenty of information about the coronavirus, but they do not really encourage you to travel by rail. Their "Safer Travel Pledge" on the website is not easy to find.

**Back on Track in the web:**  
<https://www.back-on-track.eu>

Some countries are also launching special promotions aimed at getting people "back on the rails". In France 12 - 25 year olds could buy a monthly pass in July & August for 29 Euros giving them unlimited travel on virtually all regional train services.

From now on and for "The European Year of the Train" in 2021, train operators must focus their marketing more on the relative safety of rail travel under covid 19. They should also launch a range of special promotions to tempt passengers back to rail. Finally, they should resist pressure to cut services due to short-term falls in demand.

Especially in times of Covid-19-Pandemie the night train is a safe and comfortable way to travel throughout Europe – here the Alpen-Sylt-night express train run by RDC AUTOZUG Sylt GmbH.



### Salzburg Hbf

Freilassing - Traunstein - Prien am Chiemsee - Rosenheim - München-Pasing - Augsburg Hbf - Donauwörth - Nürnberg Hbf - Würzburg Hbf - Aschaffenburg Hbf - Frankfurt (Main) Süd - Hamburg Hbf - Hamburg-Altona - Husum - Niebüll -

### Westerland (Sylt)

RDC AUTOZUG Sylt GmbH | [www.nachtexpress.de](http://www.nachtexpress.de)



Pic.: NEX\_(c)B.Bisping\_Damm\_Simon\_Onkel



Pic.: NEX\_Ramabadranch



Pic.: RDC-Liegewagen 06-20@Magutski-0877

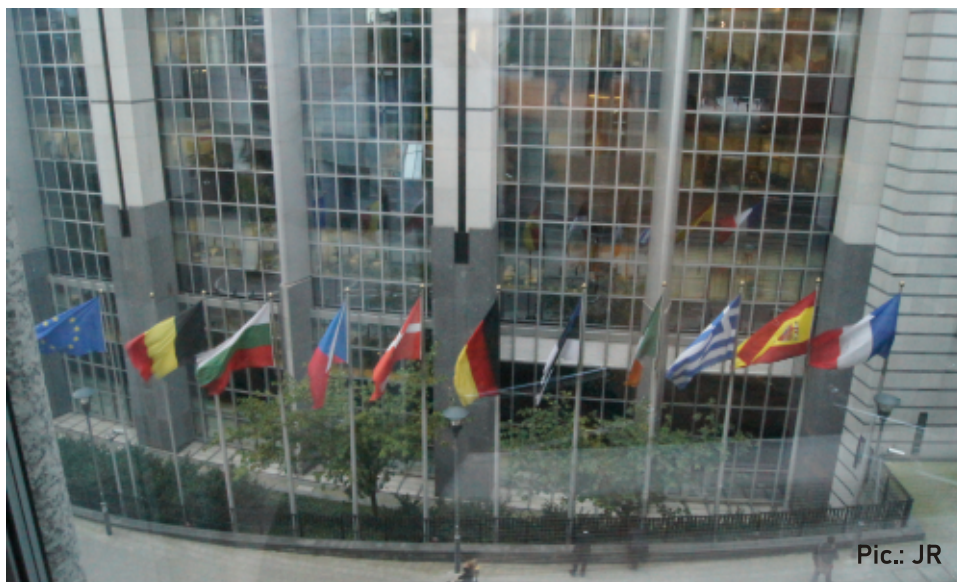
## Encouraging news

# The Brussels - Vienna weekly night train started again on August 31st

It was prompted Austrian MEPs and officials working during the week in Brussels, but is also available to other travellers. For example, British passengers can catch a Eurostar from London to Brussels and change there to a night train - the "Brussels hub" concept begins.

In Sweden, agreement has been reached to launch a night train from Gothenburg to Umea. In France, President Macron announced plans to resume the night service from Paris to Tarbes and from Paris to Nice. Indeed, the Nice service could start again as early as March 2021. There are proposals for further night trains in France over the next decade, as part of a general plan to improve French rail services.

On February 5th, a seasonal night train (for winter sport enthusiasts)



Pic.: JR

Ad

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will run from Copenhagen to Zell-am-See in Austria.

The European Rail Timetable has resumed publication after being suspended during the height of the pandemic.

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the potential role of Brussels as a night train hub.

Detailed information about the webinar programme will be available on the website:

<https://back-on-track.eu>

## Back-on-Track event replaced by webinars because of coronavirus restrictions

The three-day event planned by Back-on-Track for mid-October in Brussels has had to be postponed and replaced by webinars because of the coronavirus. The key points are:

**Friday October 16th 11.00 - 12.30:** For Back-on-Track members and selected experts. Presentations by DGMOVE, CER and ALLRAIL. - the views of the European Commission, state operators and new entrants.

**Saturday October 17th - 11.0 - 13.00:** For Back-on-Track members only - consideration of the ideas from Friday's webinar and planning of our further action.

**Thursday October 22nd - 11.30 - 13.00:** Part of European Week of Regions & Cities -open to wider audience, including presentations by Back-on-Track Belgium and the European Passengers' Federation, focussing on