



The European Charter

For the development of social and societal initiatives in train stations

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Reference to the Treaty of Lisbon – 1 December 2009.
Accession of Poland.
Reference to the support agreements.

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Preamble

The companies intervening in the railway and urban transport sector, signatories of the present Charter, hereby accept the principles set forth in the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force on 1 December 2009, and in particular the declarations featuring in Article 3, paragraphs 3 and 5, which affirm that the Union shall “work for the sustainable development of Europe...combat social exclusion and discrimination...contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity...eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights...”. In addition, in Article 153, paragraph 1 (j) of the Treaty, the Union supports “the combating of social exclusion” by inviting the European Parliament as well as the European Council “to encourage cooperation between Member States through initiatives aimed at improving knowledge, developing exchanges of information and best practices, promoting innovative approaches and evaluating experiences...”

These principles were adopted by all EU Member States and we, the signatories of the present Charter, recognise them as being part of our actions.

The signatory companies to the present Charter have also drawn inspiration from the principles set forth in the European Commission’s Green Paper on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which states that:

“Corporate social responsibility is essentially a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment. (...)

Although the prime responsibility of a company is generating profits, companies can at the same time contribute to social and environmental objectives, through integrating corporate social responsibility as a strategic investment into their core business strategy, their management instruments and their operations.” (Extract from the Commission’s *Green Paper on Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*, Brussels, July 2001). As part of a dynamic design of sustainable development, companies recognise that corporate social responsibility in the railway and urban transport sectors is an emerging value that must be taken into account in the overall performance of corporate objectives.

In short, the signatory companies, by founding the present “Europe Gare Solidaire” Network, see themselves as part of the principle of Sustainable Development, in the sense of a balanced process of combining three major areas that have caught their attention: social, environmental and economic. This principle is recalled on numerous occasions in the aforementioned Lisbon Treaty.

Social Commitment

In relation to the major areas of intervention that are part of Sustainable Development, social commitment represents the pivotal point of the work that the signatory networks intend to carry out together. Particular attention will be paid to the problems of large urban agglomerations and their train stations.

These networks are aware of their social responsibility and therefore share a vision of civic and solidarity commitment, especially on the issue of dealing with the vagrancy of fragile populations and safety rules currently in force in railway companies.

Social intervention within the area of train stations has led to an improvement in the transportation services offered and therefore to capitalise on the positive spin-off effects at urban level. This social role of the company is crucial for the general interest of the community.

The signatory companies to the present Charter are convinced that the issue of social exclusion should be tackled by a network with all the local players from both public and private sectors. The network's activities carried out in this manner should be continuously acknowledged at national and European levels.

The signatory companies, in accordance with the numerous recommendations of the Lisbon Treaty in this respect, and concerning active exchanges between Member States, have agreed as follows:

- > To share the values of their social commitment and to refer to the present Charter as the main thrust of their actions, by strictly respecting their respective corporate objectives and the current regulations in force and applicable to each of them in their country of origin.
- > To meet periodically in order to share their thoughts and experience on the issues of social exclusion in train stations, and to exchange information on the mechanisms that they have implemented in order to encourage the integration of extremely fragile persons and to reinforce social cohesion at local level.

I - Basic principles for the development of social and societal initiatives in train stations

The train station, central point of urban life

Train stations, which are meeting places within urban areas, are progressively becoming service areas that are available to all clients and local residents.

A train station is an integral part of the urban landscape and should be in tune with the town surrounding it

Companies intervening in the railroad and urban transport sector have been observing the constant evolution of the phenomenon of social exclusion, from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view, whether it concerns the types of vagrancy or the number and social origin of extremely fragile persons in train stations and surrounding areas.

Through the effects of globalisation and migration, extreme poverty is proven to exist in all urban areas of the European countries.

The railway and urban transport companies that are signatories to the Charter agree on the need to combine public safety policies with solidarity actions. These should not be purely charitable and based on voluntary work, but should also go hand in hand with local authority initiatives, such as specialised structures capable of providing people facing extreme social exclusion with adequate care for their specific needs and of guiding them towards specialised shelters where they can receive counselling for social and economic rehabilitation.

Dealing with major social exclusion

On the strength of their conviction that dealing with social problems is the prime responsibility of local authorities, the signatory companies, with the support of all personnel, managers of train station services and executives, declare their intention to collaborate with the institutions and the network of associations in charge of persons facing extreme social exclusion, who are occupying train stations.

The goal of this social intervention is to offer these people a second chance to rebuild their lives, both socially and economically.

II – Shared Commitments

The signatory companies to the present Charter are committed to the following:

- Planning social actions in urban and railway areas by at the same time involving public institutions, association networks, charitable organisations, civil society and public security forces.
- Studying and monitoring the evolution of vagrancy through the pooling of studies and research carried out by the different signatory networks.
- Offering awareness-raising and training courses to train station personnel on how to deal with persons facing extreme social exclusion.
- Developing instruments to manage and monitor the ‘vagrancy’ phenomenon in train stations.
- Periodically sharing good practices.
- Creating a website to increase knowledge, diffusion and enhancement of the actions carried out by the different signatory networks.
- Tackling, developing and further examining the other aspects of Sustainable Development, especially concerning environmental projects with major spin-off effects and strong social and economic consequences for citizens and for the region.

III – The Life and Organisation of the “Europe Gare Solidaire” Network

A willingness to share

The representatives of the transport companies, signatories to the Charter, declare their intention to share their action programmes in order to contribute to raising corporate awareness of extreme social exclusion at European level.

All of these actions are in keeping with the perspective of sustainable development that places the preservation of social ties on an equal footing with environmental issues.

A willingness to communicate

Reports or publications related to exchanges have been drawn to the attention of managers of the different transport companies, signatories to the present Charter.

A copy of these publications is systematically given to the Head of the Station Management and High Speed Group at the UIC (International Union of Railways).

Coordination proceedings

The directorship of the “Europe Gare Solidaire” Network is entrusted to two co-directors, belonging to transport service companies from two different countries. This rotating directorship can be renewed every two years.

The co-directors represent the Network in all public initiatives and in relations with institutions and all stakeholders.



For day-to-day business, the co-directors in charge provide the Network with personnel responsible for secretarial duties and activity coordination.

The co-directors are assisted by a Management Committee composed of a representative from each signatory company and in charge of deciding on major strategic guidelines, approving the annual operational plan, the mandate report and in appointing representatives to the management of the network and appointing the co-directors.

Twice yearly, a European network conference is organised to exchange information on the social and societal missions undertaken.

The Network's rules of procedure, annexed to the present Charter, define in detail the tasks, role and obligations of the signatories.

Expansion to new representatives

In accordance with the spirit of the Lisbon Treaty, the signatory companies commit to expanding the Network to other European railway companies or members of the 47 Member States that make up the Council of Europe, and to facilitating their integration into the Network's organisation, projects and activities.

Support agreements for the Charter

With the dual role of public carriers and service companies, European railway networks find themselves in direct contact with the social reality of the places where they develop their activity. Aware that this issue is beyond their unique responsibility, they wish to associate institutional and associative players with their struggle against social exclusion.

That is why official support from representatives of local institutions and local or European-based associations for the initiatives developed by the members of the "Gares Européennes et Solidarité" Charter seems relevant in order to increase the effectiveness and the visibility of actions to combat extreme social exclusion.

The initiatives of the "Europe Gare Solidaire" Network in fact need to be carried out on a daily basis with vagrant persons.

Each company, member of the "Europe Gare Solidaire" Network can formalise support agreements with the partners they deem necessary to associate in order to facilitate operational support for the implementation of societal mechanisms.

List of signatory companies to the Charter

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