

Adopted Resolution

On Night sleeper trains in Europe

Background

Night sleeper trains are being phased out across Europe by companies such as Deutsche Bahn, RENFE and SNCF. The night train that connects Paris to Berlin, Hamburg and Munich will stop running this winter. The Amsterdam to Prague and Warsaw sleeper will now only run from Oberhausen. Last December the night trains from Paris to Barcelona and Madrid and Paris to Rome were axed citing the pricier high speed day services which replace them and competition from short-haul air travel. These cut backs demonstrate that in contrast to official declarations of the EU and member states to have closely interlaced transport links so that Europe can grow together the opposite is happening, with the rail sector ceasing to unite Europe. Night services have been a trademark and key component of intra-European rail transport for over 100 years and this feature characteristic of European travel culture should be preserved. High-speed rail provision notwithstanding cuts in motorail and night trains will not only affect passengers but will harm jobs and business (including the financial viability of the railways as a whole). The downgrading of a multi-faceted railway includes the transfer of cargo services and mail trains to road transport; ending staff presence and manned ticket offices at thousands of stations; suspending certain lines. More generally there is a compromise on the quality of night services: There are no longer buffet cars, rolling stock is outdated and inadequately maintained, and it can be difficult to book a through train which operates in another country, although it is usually possible to find the pricier high-speed alternatives.

In contrast to cuts to the rail network, there has been an expansion of intra-European aviation. The latter has been subsidised by transport and tax policies, which favour air travel in spite of its far greater contribution to greenhouse gases. Yet carbon dioxide emissions are already lower travelling by train, compared to a car, not even mentioning the plane.

The EGP Council in Istanbul

- 1 Reaffirms the pledge in the EGP 2014 Manifesto to 'get serious about climate change and the ecological crisis.' The Manifesto notes that sustainability must be at the heart of economic decision-making.
- 2 Supports pan-European co-operation to improve rail services, build an interconnected European railway system and allow for a common European ticketing scheme to realise the necessary modal shift to the low carbon economy envisaged by the EU's 2020 Energy and Climate Package to 20 % from 1990 levels or 30 % according the EGP 2014 Manifesto.
- 3 The EGP deplores the subsidy of air travel over rail travel as ecologically and economically harmful. Regarding EU's goals in reducing emissions a balancing mechanism in which petroleum used by airlines is finally taxed and the revenues from it would be allocated to support rail travel, should be taken into serious consideration. The EGP 2014 Manifesto supports a European railway network that caters to regional and long-distance needs which must be 'prioritised over roads and aviation, especially for the movement of goods.'
- 4 The EGP re-affirms its commitment to the creation of a Green economy which generates green jobs and deplores the loss of jobs in the rail and related industries (hospitality).

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- 5 Supports investment in the rolling stock and infrastructure of night trains (eg the cost of rail-track charges) to continue to be a viable and affordable alternative for travelers to European destinations as it has been in the past, retaining or reactivating routes as necessary.
- 6 The EGP calls on Green MEPs to work with campaign groups and the Green parties in member countries to table motions in the European Parliament to protect the viability of the railways to deliver on its low-carbon potential.