

National report for Finland – January 2013

Date 5.1.2013
Country Finland
Organisation Suomen Rautatiematkustajat ry, <http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/>
Name Kalevi Kämäräinen

Positive points for public transport in our country:

1. FLIRT-train (here Sm 5) seems to flirt equally all climates on earth ;-).¹
2. It has been told there is a joint train / bus ticketing system being created by VR, but unfortunately for veracity purposes, the system was down at the time of typing this report.

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. Once again a report has been published about opening up of the rail passenger sector to competition by the Ministry of Transport (LVM)². And once again the reporter urges more research before the action could be taken. Meanwhile, the Minister of Transport wants to think about how the current system can be developed with new forms of co-operation with all stakeholders with whom LVM will analyze the results.
2. Proxion Oy, an entrant to the rail transport business, filed a complaint to the Finnish Competition Authority (since 1.1.2013 the Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority) about VR's behaviour in October. The state-owned company won't sell or lease surplus locomotives to Proxion (or to anybody else).³
3. And meanwhile, the "new form of co-operation" by the Minister of Transport means that she won't interfere with the VR policy of scrapping rolling stock. For example, VR places to the cutter's torch younger passenger cars than these refurbished ones made in DDR and used in Russia (they visited Finland in 2012).⁴
4. As a "Christmas gift" we received the verdict of the Finnish Supreme Administrative Court (KHO) about the economic statistics of state subsidized passenger trains.⁵ According to the verdict LVM need not disclose VR profitability calculations for every train service and railway section served. Instead, LVM should reveal the annual total income and expenses of train services provided by the state. Similarly, the total sum of state money paid to VR for the services cannot be considered as a commercial secret.
5. A peculiarity in the whole process cannot be left mentioned. This was already the second round of appeal process in the same subject matter. KHO already once found that LVM had made an illegally reasoned secrecy decision. But LVM only asked VR's view at the second round. So, the first secrecy decision was made even if VR had not required that. The civil servant behind this is the same person, who resigned as The Director-General of The Finnish Transport Agency last year (see Finnish national report October 2012, positive point two). Does this sound as good governance to other EPF members?

We have not yet received those sections of statistics that won't be blurred. So, it is too early to say whether we receive any new bits of information or not.

NOTE: Many of the provided links are mainly or purely in Finnish. By using google translator (and with a little help of us) one might get somewhat understandable text.

¹ <http://www.trenomania.org/TMF-Estero/displayimage.php?album=1187&pos=0;>

http://www.4rail.net/reference_rollingstock_emu_flirt1.php

² <http://tinyurl.com/aq8tn2h>

³ http://yle.fi/uutiset/kilpailuvirasto_selvittamaan_proxionin_ja_vrn_riitaa/6370922

⁴ http://www.kehy.fi/filebank/1069-Aleksanteri_Nevsky_juna.pdf; <http://vaunut.org/sarja/2283>;

<http://vaunut.org/kuva/74816?paik=Myllyoja>

⁵ <http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/KHO20122012.PDF>

National report for Finland – June 2012

Date	9.6.2012
Country	Finland
Organisation	Suomen Rautatiematkustajat ry, http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/
Name	Kalevi Kämäräinen

Positive points for public transport in our country:

1. The government has presented a transport policy paper for the period 2012 – 2022 to the parliament (still pending approval). If approved and carried out, there will be several positive elements:
 - Interministerial co-operation and co-operation between the state and municipalities will be enhanced in order to get the best value for taxpayer money (anybody ever heard of sectorial approach?☺).
 - Emphasis will be put on the existing infrastructure and public transport.
 - Rail investments will be favoured over road building moneywise. This is historical, as roads have dominated the scene for many, many decades.
 - The state is prepared to participate in light rail investment funding with a 30 per cent share in Turku and Tampere (plans are at an advanced stage).
 - The state is also prepared to participate in heavy-rail investment around big cities with a 50 per cent share (at the moment there are such local rail line plans around Helsinki and Tampere).
2. Liberation of the bus sector has brought innovations in ticketing and there are new entrants in the branch. For example, a trip Helsinki – Tampere is now offered at a minimum of three euros contrary to the “old school company” price of 27 euros.
3. VR has changed its mind towards a Consumer Disputes Board ruling on a ticket price refund matter. A 30-day ticket holder had complained that 36 of those 42 trains he had used were running late (late running amounting more than 16 hours altogether). The Consumer Disputes Board advised a 20 per cent refund, which VR finally accepted (regulation on railways’ responsibilities and the general consumer legislation are in conflict).

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. Drafting the government policy paper has been civil servant –driven. We are not convinced that citizens were consulted bona fide.
2. The government wants to build “Pisara-rata” to Helsinki in spite of the huge price tag¹. We think that all possible alternatives have not been openly investigated, although this should be proper procedure. This is a great flaw while Pisara takes 750.000.000 from the 1.300.000.000 euro “cake” of three main rail investments.
3. The policy paper is also otherwise somewhat Helsinki-centric. For example, the potential of cross-country connections (such as the withdrawn so called inland sleeper services) is underestimated.
4. New entrants in the bus branch have faced problems with the “clearing-house” and station facilities owner of the old bus companies². For example, they have had to find their own terminals in cities.

¹ http://portal.liikennevirasto.fi/sivu/www/e/projects/planning_phase/city_rail_loop_pisara

² <http://www.matkahuolto.fi/en/>

National report for Finland – October 2012

Date	20.10.2012
Country	Finland
Organisation Name	Suomen Rautatiematkustajat ry, http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/ Kalevi Kämäräinen

Positive points for public transport in our country:

1. The transport policy paper for the period 2012 – 2022 was approved by the parliament (see national report of last June). If carried out, this will mean that:
 - Interministerial co-operation and co-operation between the state and municipalities will be enhanced in favour of the taxpayer.
 - Emphasis will be on the existing infrastructure and public transport.
 - Rail investments will be favoured over road building. This is historical, as roads have dominated the scene for a long time.
 - The state is prepared to participate in light rail investment funding with a 30 per cent share in Turku and Tampere.
 - The state is also prepared to participate in heavy-rail investment around big cities with a 50 per cent share.
2. The Director-General of The Finnish Transport Agency¹ made his own conclusions and resigned instead of a formal dismissal. These are so recent developments, that all details have not been unearthed yet. But it seems that under the D-G's tenure principles approved by the parliament in the transport policy paper have been ignored, infrastructure funds have been used to raise the staff salaries and out-of-court contract disputes have been approved to the detriment of the State.

This will be no personal tragedy, as the D-G will return to his previous office in the Ministry of Transport and he will soon be eligible to retirement (without losing his pension). The process was initiated by the Minister of Transport, Ms. Merja Kyllönen. "A piece of good advice" was enough this time, which is fairly unique in our administrative and political culture. This episode is a great advancement, if our policymakers really mean that the tail is not made to wag the dog.

3. New entrants in the bus sector are gaining territory, most evidently because of their pricing policies². Meanwhile, the "old fellows" have dropped questionable practices such as free tickets to government civil servants deliberating bus sector matters.

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. The Minister of Transport has been inconsistent with her positive actions. So far, she has not offered EPF-like organizations such as SRM a seat in the round-table think-tanks with seats already for bus / rail operators and public authorities.
2. The transport policy paper remained somewhat Helsinki-centric also in the parliament. For example, the "Pisara-rata" was approved in spite of the huge price tag³ and the potential of cross-country connections was underestimated.
3. New bus companies still face problems with their ordinary life. Many principal disputes are pending in administrative courts such like territorial questions and usage-fees in Matkahuolto-owned bus stations. Matkahuolto, with similar functions to the Railway Clearing House⁴, is owned by the "old fellows"⁵.

¹ <http://portal.liikennevirasto.fi/sivu/www/e/>

² <http://www.onnibus.fi/en/>

³ http://portal.liikennevirasto.fi/sivu/www/e/projects/planning_phase/city_rail_loop_pisara

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Railway_Clearing_House

⁵ <http://www.matkahuolto.fi/en/>