

National report for Finland 1 / 2019 (no secrets)

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Positive points for public transport:

1. Happy enough, EPF shares national reports instead of progress reports, so here you have...
2. According to ETLA¹, deregulation of the Finnish long-distance bus market has increased patronage and fares have ceased to increase².

Negative points for public transport:

1. As a result of our elections the Government changed³ and passenger rail reform⁴ went down the drain⁵. This means that passenger rail market is not going to be opened for competition under this Government and not before 2025. The regional rail services around Helsinki (routes Helsinki – Karjaa, Helsinki – Riihimäki and Helsinki – Lahti) are an exception as the market has been open for competition since 2018, according to the monopoly contract between the ministry and the incumbent operator (VR Group). As far as I know, criticism of this outturn is scarce and regrettably available only in Finnish⁶.
2. Consequently, Sanna Marin⁷, the current Minister of Transport and Communications has made her profession of faith in the Parliament by referring to “facts” provided by VR⁸. This means, among other things, that aluminium bodied rolling stock⁹ will be scrapped instead of renovated as is customary in the civilized world¹⁰.
3. A direct result of the reborn VR faith is that there is no talk about reintroducing inland sleeper services¹¹, which the previous Government studied early this year (minister Lintilä sits also in the new Government)¹². Over the years, we have made several proposals to see them running again¹³. Instead, expensive highspeed rail lines will be studied (how about the existing infrastructure?)¹⁴.
4. VR is going to reduce its customer service personnel¹⁵.

NOTE: For some reason hyperlink function does not work just now in my computer, so sources in Finnish and English are all in footnotes; further details provided per request.

¹ <https://www.etla.fi/en/etla/>

² <https://www.etla.fi/wp-content/uploads/ETLA-Muistio-Brief-82.pdf>

³ https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/antti_rinne_appointed_finlands_new_pm/10818473

⁴ https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/article/-/asset_publisher/raideliikenteen-kilpailutus-etenee-hankeyhtiota-rahoittamaan-investointeja

⁵ <https://www.lvm.fi/-/preparation-of-competitive-tendering-of-southern-finland-s-regional-rail-services-to-be-suspended-1014537>

⁶ “Regression in passenger rail traffic will persist” (<https://puheenvuoro.uusisuomi.fi/kalevikamarainen/277796-henkilöjuna-liikenteen-taantumus-jatkuu/>), “The Government mucks up improvement of passenger rail while the opposition watches idly by” (<https://www.hameensanomat.fi/kolumnit/hallitus-sossii-junaliikenteen-kehittämisen-oppositio-seuraa-mykkana-vieresta-874811/>)

⁷ <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/rinne/minister-of-transport-and-communications>

⁸ https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/Kysymys/Documents/KKV_65+2019.pdf

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VR_Class_Sm2

¹⁰ <http://vivarail.co.uk/class-230-development/>

¹¹ <https://www.kainuunsanomat.fi/kainuun-sanomat/kainuu/elinkeinoministeri-lintila-selvityttaa-vojunan-paluumahdollisuuden/?fbclid=IwAR2cqpnBkqpeBmkXp1s0Uajjx0GH0VIGUj6PObr3j4vMhe1kqokHQ2o9PEw>

¹² http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161435/19_2019_Pohjoisen%20ja%20itaisen%20Suomen%20junaliikenteen%20vaikutukset_netiti.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹³ <http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/Updates.htm>

¹⁴ <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/politics/16475-marin-government-to-only-plan-three-large-rail-infrastructure-projects.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.is.fi/taloussanomat/art-2000006237690.html>