

National report for Finland – September 2017: no secrets

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Country Finland
Organisation Suomen Rautatiematkustajat ry, <http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/>
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Positive points for public transport in our country:

1. HSL allows bikes in commuter trains in rush hour in a [one-year trial](#) since June.
2. VR added 45 services around Finland as well as some train stops in June¹. Helsinki [commuting area](#) was also extended from Riihimäki to Tampere².
3. The Government aims to [open](#) passenger rail traffic to [competition](#) on [concession basis](#). There will be five traffic “packages”, the first of which to be put on tender being [local services](#) in Southern Finland. Every package will also contain unprofitable services just like the present contract with VR. All rolling stock owned by VR (freight fleet included) will be transferred to a state owned [rosco](#). Provinces will also have say determining services. Although lots of details are still in the dark, abolishing the monopoly is certainly a step forward.

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. Lots of new jobs have been created especially in Southwestern Finland. This means that people increasingly move across the country because workforce has been hired from the East. That is why we suggested the Ministry to reconsider introducing the so-called inland sleeper services which ceased over 10 years ago³. The Ministry naturally knew it better and said that buses are more suitable and cheaper with distances in the region of 500 kilometres or more⁴.
2. HSL [quit selling tickets](#) in trains in June. The transition was a failure as there were stations with no ticket machines at first. Conductors are still “at your service” but with no tickets while ticket inspectors are also working all the time. The Ministry of Transport and Communications had to [intervene](#) with the mess eventually.
3. Although details of the passenger train reform are still pending, it seems no new routes will be introduced. There are rail lines technically fit for passenger trains but with nobody yet having the chance to try and run such services.
4. VR employees did not buy the idea of the rail reform, so at this stage drivers set up a 30-hour [strike](#). It caused less mayhem than one could have thought⁵. So, if you want, you can question the significance of passenger rail transport in Finland.
5. The aim of the state-owned rosco is to provide material to every company qualified to offer train services, but VR has been successful with its ongoing [“scorched earth” -policy](#) (according to VR those vandalized cars are still in reserve⁶).
6. It seems that we simply always must make things stupidly here. Accordingly, the Government published reports about the passenger rail reform only selectively, but the press naturally did its job and [unearthed concealed documents](#). If you read only one of the unearthed papers, things do look somewhat bad. But when you go through all the published material chronologically, you can see that at least some of the warnings have been taken into consideration. So why on earth didn't the Government draft a summary of all the material and elaborate their options?
7. The opposition chose a “carpe diem” approach and made an [interpellation](#) about the reform (vote will be in October). They have some valid points, but basically every opposition party (both on the left and right) seems to love VR's right to decide what happens on rails paid for by the taxpayers.

NOTE: Feel free to ask further details, if this report and links are not informative enough.

¹ <https://goo.gl/ke4b5Q>

² <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9669497>

³ <https://goo.gl/FHzQff>

⁴ <https://goo.gl/6cmjnv>

⁵ <https://goo.gl/d92YX5>

⁶ <http://www.ts.fi/uutiset/paikalliset/3630481/VRn+vaunut+hajoavat+ratapihalle+Turussa>