



A very special Christmas Unknown uncertainties when looking into 2022

All over the world we have seen the influence of the COVID 19 virus, in various types. It made this year again a world full of very often unwanted surprises, but also finding new routes to keep our organizations, their workers and their guests ongoing in surprisingly and very often complete new ways of operation.

What has been for sure, is that the working forces of the heritage rail sector showed a great flexibility to overcome much of the extra troubles that crossed our paths. Even better, it gave a new impulse in the feeling of quality in the relations with our visitors. They felt very well looked after and felt safe to use our public offer, that has been specially made "COVID – proof" as much as was possible.

No one can foresee what 2022 will bring us. But the energy showed by our heritage rail world in 2021, may give us the trust that we will overcome the eventual new, unforeseen problems, experienced as we are now.

FEDECRAIL has been very much influenced by COVID and in a positive way. We started to use online board meetings and meetings with members and although missing the direct physical social contacts, it brought us a much more intensive co-operation structure, with much lower costs, in the end lowering the membership fee with 50% compared with the pre-COVID period.

COVID will surely not be the only subject that will ask our attention. But surely sustainability, climate, the use of fossil fuel and the cultural and economical touristic values will be a good reason to fight for the mutual interest of the whole sector of working industrial and mobile heritage as part of the new European identity. (See also further in this Update.)

The new possibilities of modern times, will be the base for the new Strategic Plan that we together with you, the members of FEDECRAIL, will develop in 2022 for the 5 year period after next year.

I wish all of you a merry Christmas and a happy and safe 2022.
In name of the board and all the team members of FEDECRAIL

Jaap Nieweg, President

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Austria

FEDECRAIL Board (2): Vice-President PIERLUIGI SCOIZZATO

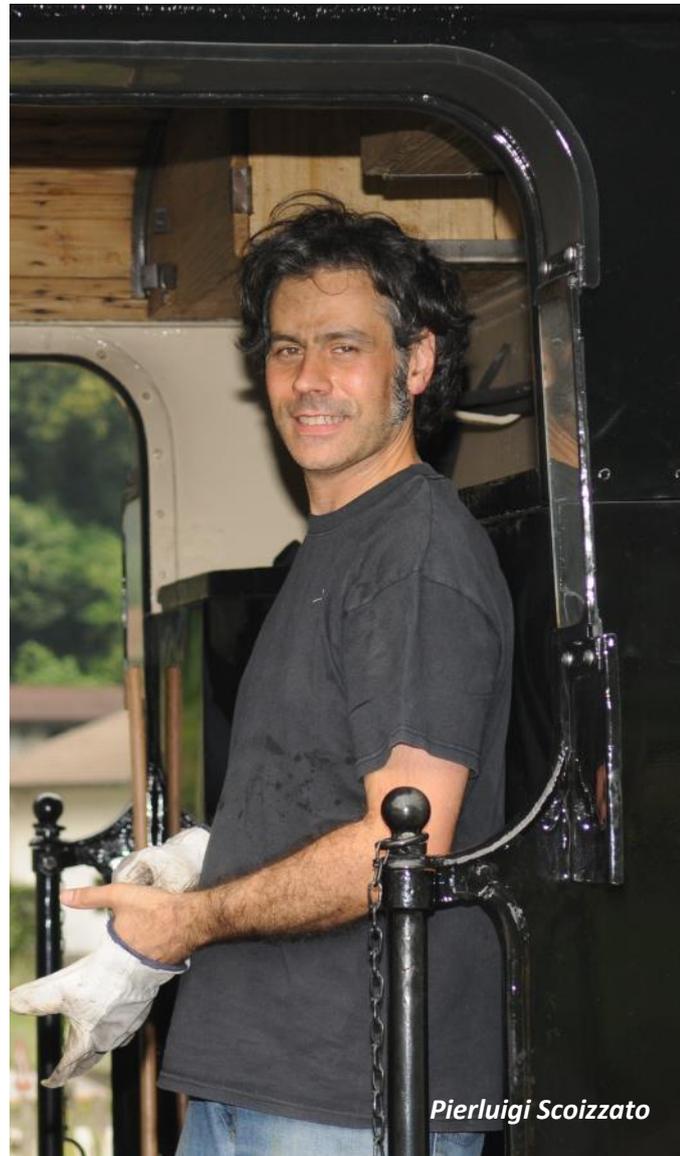
Pierluigi Scoizzato was born in 1970 in Padua, Italy. He lived near the station and the loco shed, and from an early age his father would take him to see the last locomotives in regular service on the local lines, so it was only natural that he became passionate about steam trains.

Until he was 12 years old, he continued to spend his afternoons watching trains arriving at the station, but by then the steam locomotives were no longer to be seen, so his passion for trains cooled and he became interested in other things, especially as he had no contact with other train enthusiasts. In November 1988, thanks to a special train commemorating the 90th anniversary of the end of the First World War, Pierluigi was able to climb into the cab of a 740 type for the first time at Padua station.

The smell of burning coal mixed with hot oil and the sound of the Westinghouse pump reawakened his passion for steam, and from that moment on he found himself not only chasing all the special trains in the region, but also becoming friends with the train drivers, with whom he was able to make transfer trips in the cab and learn directly from them how to drive the loco and manage the boiler. In 1989, after obtaining a technical diploma in building, he began attending the Faculty of Architecture in Venice.

In 1992, he organised an exhibition and a special steam train for the 150th anniversary of Italy's third railway, the Padua-Marghera (Venice). He got to know some FS employees and in 1994 he was involved in the organisation of another special train.

At FS one wondered how to coordinate the organisation of the special trains on a national level, since everything was managed on a local level without any dedicated structure. In 1994, Pierluigi



took part in a series of meetings at national level in order to establish with FS associations of volunteers at regional level who could work in the locomotive depots for the maintenance of the vehicles and the logistical organisation and support of the special trains. This was the first time this had happened in Italy, as the existing associations limited their activities to organising trips on special trains and study visits to locomotive depots. Thus, in 1996 he became a member of the first "operational" association in Italy, Itlavapore of Florence, which had an agreement with FS. This gave him the opportunity to make many locomotive trips in Tuscany and to obtain the qualification of "accudiente" (role related to the fire lighting and the surveillance of the boiler during steam raising).

From 2002 to 2006 he was a member of Musi Neri

association based in Verona, where numerous steam locomotives were still kept in running order for specials. It was in 2006 that, in order to save a steam locomotive, the 880.001, from scrapping he founded with 11 other friends the Società Veneta Ferrovie SVF, becoming its President (until 2018) and thus succeeding in securing this small locomotive that would become the symbol of the association.

In 2007 he graduated with a thesis on the tourist use of a railway line open to ordinary traffic, the restoration of a historic site in Primolano (with depot and steam facilities) and the use of a historic train. In 2009 the project was presented to the local authorities, who were interested in funding. Work began in 2013 and was completed in 2017.

Active since 2006 in the Federazione Italiana Ferrovie Turistiche e Museali (Italian Federation of Tourist and Museum Railways/FIFTM) in 2009 he began, together with President Alberto Sgarbi, to participate in meetings at the Ministry of Infrastructure and the National Agency for Railway Safety ANSF to define the first steps towards a railway regulation dedicated to the historical sector.

In 2007, he also took an interest in FEDECRAIL's activities by participating in the presentation of the Riga Charter in Brussels, where he had the opportunity to personally meet David Morgan and the members of the board. Following the retirement of Professor Guido Rossi (one of the founding fathers of FEDECRAIL) in 2015 he was elected to the Board where he is currently responsible for Youth Policy/Fedecrail Youth Exchange, the Strategic Plan, and Communication.

He continues to work as a volunteer with the SVF association (member of the board of directors) and also participates in activities at the Primolano Museum. Recently he was re-elected as a member of the FIFTM Board.

Pierluigi still lives in Padua, and always near the station. Trains have changed, as has everything around them, but his interest in history and culture has never waned, nor has his passion for steam. He is co-owner of a company active in the printing and visual communication sector. He is

married to Anna and has two children, Edoardo and Rachele.

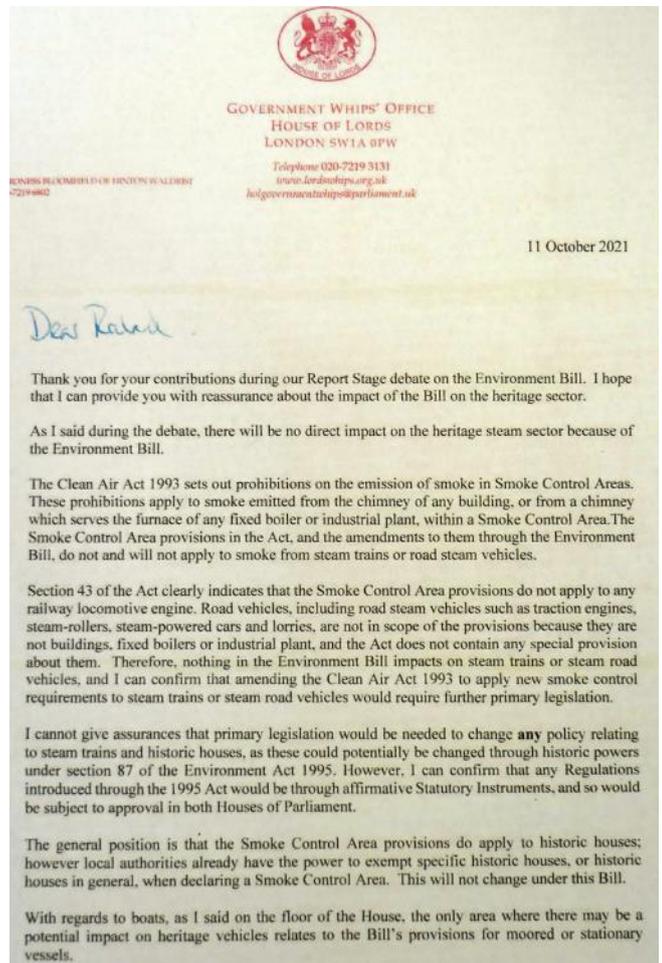
Edoardo is passionate about railways...who knows why?

British environmental bill not of influence of steam locomotives and steam rollers

FACTS IN BRIEF:

- The British parliament agreed with a new environmental bill

- This will not be of influence for steam locomotives and steam rollers



The amendments in the Bill will enable local authorities to bring moored vessels, including inland waterway vessels such as canal boats, into the scope of Smoke Control Areas should they have a specific issue in their area. They will need to consult publicly before using this power. This has the potential to apply to boats burning diesel or other fuels if they are emitting smoke, for example because an appliance has not been properly maintained, but **only** while they are moored or stationary at a mooring place.

I said during the recent debate that this is not about propulsion, and I can confirm that a financial penalty will not apply if the smoke emissions are caused by using the boat's engine for propulsion. The penalty will only apply if the fuel is being burned for a purpose other than using the boat's engine to provide propulsion or electrical power to the vessel. For other purposes, people in Smoke Control Areas will still be able to burn certain solid fuels on boats so long as they are following good practice and are not emitting smoke.

Local authorities will have the power to exempt specified vessels or classes of vessel from their Smoke Control Area provisions. The Government will consider the practicalities of implementation and will set out further detail in statutory guidance which will be published next year. I would like to reiterate our commitment to engage with the steam sector in the development of this guidance.

I hope you find this letter helpful. I am also writing in similar terms to Lord Forsyth of Drumlean and Lord Berkeley and will place a copy of the letter in the House library.

*Yours and
Omin*

BARONESS BLOOMFIELD OF HINTON WALDRIST

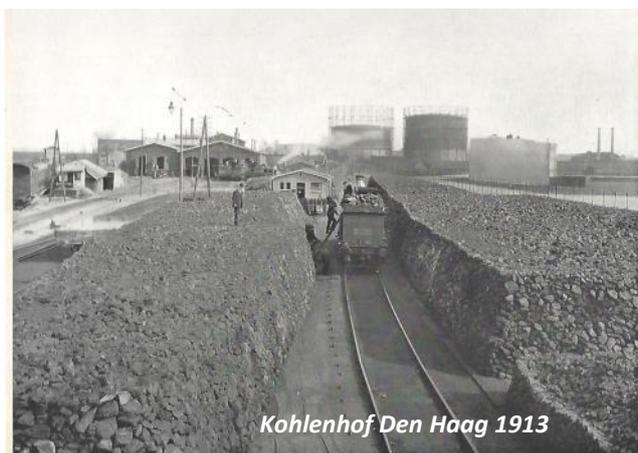
Ministerial Assurance Letter

- Heavy smoke from the steam locomotive chimney should be avoided

TEXT IN DETAIL:

During the debate about the British new environmental law in the House of Lords, Lord Faulkner of Worcester (chairman of the British Heritage Railway Association), got the assurance by the Minister of Environmental affairs, that this new Bill would not be of influence of the use of fossil fuel (p.e. coal) in heritage steam locomotives and heritage steam rollers. Also the use for traditional boating if the fuel is used for the boat's propulsion. Where possible heavy smoking should be avoided.

Most of these exemptions are based on the clean air act 1993. A statutory implementation guide will be developed by the Government next year. For this process an engagement with the heritage steam sector has been promised.



Kohlenhof Den Haag 1913

Present Locomotive Coal Supply Situation

FACTS IN BRIEF:

The supply of locomotive coal is proving increasingly difficult. Research carried out by FEDECRAIL and VDMT into the current locomotive coal supply situation has so far identified three generally suitable locomotive coals: Polish coal from the Wesola mine in Silesia, British coal from the Ffos-y-fran mine in Wales and Russian coal from the Ssibirskij 9 mine in Siberia. Only the Ffos-y-fran coal is currently readily available, but the mine is expected to close by the end of 2022. Russian coal is largely bought up by China, Polish coal is needed in its own country .

TEXT IN DETAIL:

Research carried out by FEDECRAIL and VDMT so far has identified three generally suitable locomotive coals:

- Polish coal from the Wesola mine in Silesia (various importers);
- British coal from the Ffos-y-fran mine in Wales (Hargreaves; continental European sales office in Duisburg, Germany);
- Russian coal from the Ssibirskij 9 mine in Siberia (importer: Terval in Liège, Belgium).

Of these, only the Ffos-y-fran coal is readily available at the moment. The present shortage on the European coal market is due to China's boom and purchasing power.

China, the world's largest emitter of CO₂, generates ne thousand Gigawatts of coal power domestically, accounting for over half of the globe's total and more than four times that of the second- and third-largest users (India and the US). China continues to add coal-fired power plants within its borders, bringing forty-one Gigawatts of coal power on line in 2020 alone. All these new coal-burning

power stations need coal urgently to supply the electricity needed for China's rapid economic growth.

The Chinese have bought the whole production of the Sibirskij 9 mine up to May of 2022 (information from Terval)! Due to the high cost of its own underground mining, Poland – to some extent – had switched to imported Russian open-pit coal. Now the Chinese pay twice the original price for Russian coal – so the Russian coal goes east. Hastily, Poland opens up new seams in its existing mines to make sure its citizens (the majority dependent upon district heating from coal-fired CHP plants) won't sit in the cold and the dark during the coming winter. The little coal that is left for export is auctioned off – and heritage railways are not at all likely to be able to offer the highest bid!

Thus we are practically cut off from Russian and

Polish coal. Hatfield Energy in the UK will try to import further coal from Russia next year but says the price will "probably not be as competitive as before" (what a nice euphemism for unaffordable). The Belgian terval company will also try to secure Russian coal for 2022. Considering these facts, the closure of the Ffos-y-fran mine in Wales at the end of 2022 (a political battle is waged about an extension of the mining permit till the end of 2024) could mean the end of economically feasible coal-burning steam locomotive operation in Europe, even more so in the light of the ever-increasing CO₂-levies. At the moment, Ffos-y-fran is the only option in Germany!

The latest VDMT coal specifications, which take into account the different geological history of Russian coal and all present environmental regulations, are attached.

In contrast to the coal situation, there are so far relatively ample supplies of liquid fuels for oil-burning steam locomotives at still reasonable prices, among them also zero-carbon-footprint fuels.

For further details, contact the author directly: info@sphys.de.

Reinhard W. Serchinger

Specifications for environmentally friendly steam coal

SePhys Dr. rer. nat. Reinhard W. Serchinger for VDMT and FEDECRAIL, November 2021

Grade	Medium volatile bituminous coal (low volatile bituminous coal permissible)
Sizing (for hand firing)	Cobbles (80 – 120 mm) Large nuts (50 – 80 mm)
Lower calorific value (as received)	≥ 28 MJ/kg
Lower calorific value (dry basis)	≥ 29.3 MJ/kg
Ash (as received)	≤ 6 % (m/m)
Total sulphur (dry basis)	≤ 1 % (m/m)
Combustible sulphur per MJ lower calorific value (dry basis)	≤ 0.20 g/MJ
Moisture (raw coal)	≤ 5 % (m/m)
Volatiles (dry and ash free basis)	19 – 28 % (m/m) (14 – 35 % permissible)
Chlorine (dry basis)	≤ 0.18 % (m/m)
Ash fusion temperature (reducing atmosphere; hemisphere)	> 1300 °C
Further parameters:	
Iron (Fe ₂ SiO ₄ , FeO and Fe ₃ C are formed in reducing atmospheres and lower the melting point of the ash => heavy clinker formation) (dry basis)	< 3500 mg/kg
Nitrogen (as received)	< 1.89 % (m/m)
Mercury (boiling point = 357 °C) (dry basis)	≤ 0.18 mg/kg
Slack (sizing 0 – 20 mm)	≤ 5 % (m/m)

Europa Nostra Awards 2022 – Call for entries

FACTS IN BRIEF:

The new "Europa Nostra Awards 2022" are here. The European Heritage Award, supported by the European Commission's Creative Europe Programme and managed by Europa Nostra, has been restructured with new categories and criteria. The most relevant category for the historic railway sector is likely to be "Conservation & Adaptive Reuse". The awards include five "Grand Prix", each worth €10 000. The deadline for nominations is Tuesday 1 February 2022.



Award Winner Central Station Antwerpen

TEXT IN DETAIL:

The European Heritage Awards scheme supported by the EC 'Creative Europe' programme and administered by Europa Nostra has now been re-structured with new categories and criteria, entries are now open for 2022. Some railway buildings and structures have won awards in previous years, but have tended to be major "institutional projects" on national networks (e.g. Antwerp Central Station; Stephenson High Level Bridge, Newcastle-on-Tyne; former loco works at Tilburg). However, more generally, winners have also included many small buildings and projects by community and volunteer groups as well as 'giant schemes' by national bodies. Fedecrail remains hopeful that at least one nomination from the rail heritage sector will eventually be among the winning projects!

Likely most relevant category for our sector is *Conservation & Adaptive Reuse* - other categories include training & skills, research, "Heritage Champi-

ons" (both individual persons and organisations). Awards will include five heritage achievements 'Grand Prix' which will each receive a € 10,000 financial award. The scheme has its own website, so to get full details and application form please look at: www.europeanheritageawards.eu/apply The call from Europa Nostra is "Submit your application and share your success stories across Europe!" Deadline for nominations is **Tuesday 1 February 2022**.

Peter Ovenstone
Secretary EN Industrial & Engineering Heritage Committee

Europa Nostra – News Headlines

FACTS IN BRIEF:

- *EN continues to support the Working Industrial & Mobile Heritage project.*
- *The Committee's Sources of Coal research pro-*

ject will continue.

- EN now Co-Chair for the Europe Region of the Climate Heritage Network.

TEXT IN DETAIL:

At its recent meeting the Europa Nostra (EN) Industrial & Engineering Heritage Committee re-affirmed its support for the *Working Industrial & Mobile Heritage* campaign project and will continue to be actively involved. Additionally, work is ongoing with the Committee's "Sources of Coal" research project. Peter Ovenstone represented Fedecrail at the EN General Assembly on Mon 29.11.2021, at which it was announced that EN has now been appointed as co-chair for the Europe region of the Climate Heritage Network (a body which we may need to convince of the continued value of industrial and mobile heritage and of course our modest fuel needs). Progress on the '7 Most Endangered' programme fact finding mission investigating the Achenseebahn threats (and also for the other six locations on this year's list) has been greatly hampered the COVID pandemic.

Peter Ovenstone
Secretary, EN Industrial & Engineering Heritage Committee

My article in Update 46 UIC (TopRail – What is the “New Normal” for Museum and Tourist Railways and Tramways?) outlined the multi-modal studies targeting to identify the “New Normal” for transport modes post-pandemic. A window of opportunity specific to rail has been identified and a strategy document “Vision of Rail 2030” was published last month by the UIC defining the pathway to design a better future for Rail. FEDECRAIL members are strongly recommended to obtain this as part of your planning and strategy development for the next decade.

The link is uic-design-a-better-future-vision-of-rail-2030.pdf and this key document was published in time to be widely distributed at COP26 (Conference of the Parties) in Glasgow.

Whilst it is a worldwide document for the rail industry you will find many parts that relate also to the paths that our museum and tourist railway businesses will need to follow to be successful in the coming years.

It describes a 2030 mobility landscape where:

- Cars and lorries are used less because more passengers and freight have moved to rail.
- High speed rail has doubled and competes successfully with air on short and some medium distance routes.
- Short distance air routes have ceased and airlines work closely on rail connections.

John Fuller FCILT
UIC-Vertreter

UIC TopRail

From „New Normal“ to Vision of Rail 2030

FACTS IN BRIEF:

A strategy document “Vision of Rail 2030” is published by the UIC defining the pathway to design a better future for Rail. The link is

<https://uic.org/IMG/pdf/uic-design-a-better-future-vision-of-rail-2030.pdf>

TEXT IN DETAIL:

UIC TopRail

The Future of Railways : Modal Shift

UIC World Symposium

FACTS IN BRIEF:

UIC TopRail kicked off the anniversary year of its foundation in 1922 with a World Symposium attended by 50 speakers and delegates from all

over the world. In summary, railways worldwide are looking in the same direction to achieve their 2030 strategy. The main outcomes are

- Rail will be the basis for mobility in decarbonisation and the Green Deal.
 - We have 10 years to make the change and make rail the first choice.
 - The railways must become the customer's choice.
- And from COP26: Young people want more public transport.**

TEXT IN DETAIL:

Following the "Vision of Rail 2030" strategy paper and the COP26 meeting in Glasgow, the anniversary year of the UIC foundation (1922) was launched with an international symposium on 30 November and 1 December 2021. This was attended by all UIC regions from around the world with some 50 high-profile speakers, including Josef Doppelbauer, Executive Director of the EU Rail Agency. The aim was to provide a roadmap for transforming railways into a sustainable backbone of mobility in the coming years and to show policy makers which effective transformation projects would have a major impact on modal shift to rail to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Green Deal targets in Europe.

Link to the presentations (full video coming soon) at:

<https://uic.org/events/uic-symposium-2021>

The opening presentations by UN-Habitat, the EC Commissioner's Head of Cabinet for Transport and SNCF aimed to define what kind of world we live in and what we are doing to improve it. The European Commission will present its green package for rail transport later this month. SNCF pointed out that emissions from transport continue to rise and the voice of rail needs to be louder to point out that rail is only responsible for about 1.3% of these emissions.

The focus was then on the transition to clean mobility, with a focus on the opportunities that the rapidly developing artificial intelligence will offer in the next five years. New technologies are being

driven by the pandemic and software is becoming more important than hardware. Important: cyber security, seamless cross-border operation and access to end-to-end products.

The UITP Strategy Director pointed out that leisure travel is recovering much faster than commuter travel and there are bigger differences between age groups. Three important "easy" goals: easy ticket purchase, easy access to information and easy payment.

The European Commission's Director General for Mobility and Transport explained that the European Rail Partnership has been in place since the end of November 2021. Lessons have been learned from the operation of the "Connecting Europe Express", which make it clear that a common digital approach, a common timetable design and a redesign of capacity are essential, which is why the TEN-T guidelines will be revised. Also, in 2022, the legislation for train drivers to remove national restrictions, and the TSIs for digital and green rail will be reviewed. After that, provisions for new technologies such as automatic coupling will be developed, and electronic multimodal tickets will be targeted by 2030. 2022 will be the European Year of Youth.

The DB Board emphasised the need to focus on customer expectations. By 2030, she said, the railways must be sustainable and intelligent. Artificial intelligence (AI) would be needed to support more trains and more punctual trains.

The Greens/EFA MEP on the TRAN Committee was emphatic about the facts that the railways need to drive forward: With 0.4% of greenhouse gases, 8.0% of passengers are carried. A key message, she said, was "Think as a Network instead of a Patchwork!"

The Belgian Deputy Prime Minister pointed, among other things, to a study that young people no longer have the primary goal of getting their driving licence, so the market for the new paradigm is there.

The CER Executive Director stressed that the eco-balance of rail must always be driven forward (rail

28 g CO₂/km; road 102 g CO₂/km; air 244 g CO₂/km). The CER roadmap foresees tickets 6-12 months in advance by 2025, as well as up-to-date fare exchange with digital ticketing and real-time information. The EU must legislate so that all railways can work together and the TEN-T network must be completed without a minimum speed of 160 km/h for passenger trains. ERTMS, satellite positioning (Galileo) and digital capacity management are goals.

The UN Secretary General, International Transport Forum has listed the Sustainable Development Goals that actively promote rail transport. Their paradigm for 2030: integrated intermodal transport systems in which public transport and rail play a greater role.

The President of SNCF International stressed the need for proactive measures and a holistic strategy, as well as measures to reduce our environmental footprint.

The Executive Director of ERA stated that their goal by 2030 is a seamless European network with the integration of rail into European transport services. Under the 4th railway package, there will be a single safety certificate with EU-wide competence, national rules will be integrated and applied internationally in a single European railway area. Measures should be taken to fill missing links for ports and airports. By 2030, there should be Euro-control for rail transport.

The UIC Director General called for international integration, for which 5G is the decisive factor. GSM-R already automatically changes parameters at borders.

The rest of the symposium presentations focused on the Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific and the Americas. In its summary of the symposium, the UIC Director General acknowledged the production of the UIC "Vision of Rail 2030", which shows that railways around the world are looking in the same direction to achieve their 2030 strategy.

Key findings:

- Rail will be the basis for mobility in decarbonisation and the Green Deal.

- We have 10 years to make the change and make rail the first choice.

- The railways must become the customer's choice.

- COP26: Young people want more public transport.

Conclusion Message for the world: "Rail is the Smart Green Sustainable Opportunity for Seamless Accessible Mobility shared by all for our Planet".

**John Fuller FCILT
UIC representative**

ÖMT Autumn Meeting 2021 in Gmünd

FACTS IN BRIEF:

This year's autumn conference of the ÖMT Association of Austrian Museum and Tourist Railways from 19 to 21 November 2021 in Gmünd/Lower Austria was hosted by Niederösterreich Bahnen in cooperation with the WSV-Waldviertel Schmalspurbahnverein. The total of 34 representatives of the member organisations and cooperation partners were offered an attractive programme of excursions on rails in addition to a rich lecture programme on current museum railway topics.

TEXT IN DETAIL:

The invitation of the ÖMT Association of Austrian Museum and Tourist Railways to this year's autumn conference in Gmünd, hosted by Niederösterreich Bahnen in cooperation with the WSV-Waldviertler Schmalspurbahnverein, was accepted by a total of 34 representatives of member organisations and cooperation partners in the Waldviertel, the northernmost part of Lower Austria.

The majority of the delegates took part in the first part of the excursion programme, which began with a welcome by Barbara Komarek, Managing Director of Niederösterreich Bahnen, and Herbert Frantes, Head of Service, in the reception hall of the newly built Waldviertelbahn station. After a short presentation of the Waldviertelbahn, which



Waldviertelbahn

meeting with the 2091.09 of the WSV was used for photo stops in the station and at the line junction, with the once legendary double exit of the trains to Litschau and Heidenreichstein. Then on to Litschau to visit the station and museum wagons. The station, which is in-

with the northern and southern lines comprises a total rail network of 68 kilometres with a gauge of 760 mm, the tour of the station facilities and the workshop continued. Not only were insights into the maintenance of traction units and wagons provided, but the measures taken to improve the infrastructure were also dealt with in detail. These were urgently needed after the takeover from ÖBB in 2010 in order to ensure the continued existence of the company and will continue to be a field of activity in the coming years, especially in the infrastructure sector.

The lecture programme in the Sole-Felsen-Welt was dedicated to the following topics, among others, in addition to the presentation of the host organisations: Austrian Railway Culture Award, cultural heritage on Austria's railways, insurance in the railway sector, the future of training and examination of train drivers for "historic rail vehicles", damage patterns on steam boilers, emission measurements on the steam locomotive and online booking systems for museum and tourist railways.

The traditional supporting programme at the ÖMT Autumn Meetings provided a livening up: a trip with a characteristic two-axle set hauled by the diesel locomotive V 12 - originally as 2095.12 already a regular locomotive in Gmünd since 1962 - over the northern line first to Alt-Nagelberg. The

conveniently located from today's point of view, has its origins in the planned line extension to the narrow-gauge railway Neuhaus - Neubistritz, which, however, fell victim to the break-up of Austria after the end of the First World War and the new course of the border.

After the return in Alt-Nagelberg, the journey with the 2091.09 to Heidenreichstein was completed to visit the vehicles and facilities of the WSV. Return to Alt-Nagelberg, namely as far as Aalfang as a GmP (Goods train with passenger transport) in proper style with a standard gauge freight wagon loaded on a narrow-gauge transporter wagon. After a quick trip with the two-axle set pulled again by the V12, Gmünd was reached again for the continuation of the programme.

The next day, the VT 8 diesel railcar took the participants to the photo opportunity at Gleisdreieck. Afterwards, the participants went in the VT 11 over a part of the southern line to Weitra. After returning to Gmünd, the ÖMT Autumn Meeting 2021 came to its official end with the Association Chairman Harald Baminger thanking Niederösterreich Bahnen and the Waldviertler Schmalspurbahnverein for the hospitality shown and the rich, smoothly running supporting programme thanks to numerous helpers working in the background.

Harald Baminger, Chairman ÖMT

Portuguese National Railway Museum and the Pandemic: New Times and Strategies

FACTES IN BRIEF:

"We're not quite there yet, but we think we're on the right track with the focus on digitalisation." This is how the Museu Nacional Ferroviário, the National Railway Museum in Portugal, sums up the past months of trying to get through the pandemic as well as possible. The museum seized the lockdown and its consequences as an opportunity for new strategies to attract visitors.

TEXT IN DETAIL:

Inaugurated in May 2015, the Portuguese National Railway Museum Museu Nacional Ferroviário in Médio Tejo sub-region tells the story of more than 160 years of railways in Portugal, spread over four buildings and the outdoor area. The collection ranges from smaller objects such as the First Train Ticket to multiton steam locomotives and treasures such as the "Royal Train" and the "Presidential Train".

When the pandemic hit Portugal in January 2019, we didn't know for a long period what challenges

it would bring. It created an unprecedented level of uncertainty and brought our National Railway Museum a drop in visitors of more than 60%.

Portugal had two general lockdowns, forcing our museum to close for three months at a time. After the government allowed the use of cultural facilities again, the museum reopened with a contingency plan.

During these periods of lockdown, we managed to keep our entire museum team working. Those who had to stay in person at the museum dedicated themselves to cleaning, preserving and restoring the collection. The rest kept their functions, but in telework. We also invested in improving the museum's accessibility.

At this point, we realised that the museum needed to invest more in digital content to maintain the relationship with its audience - the paradigm had changed! We invested in digital content, from texts to filming and editing videos. This involved online training and the purchase of new computer equipment. The whole team was involved to create a sense of mission common to all. Of the various initiatives we have developed, were the virtual tours.

The museum does not yet have a professional virtual tour and we did not have mobile equipment, so we created a tour with videos and photos. The



Theater session



Photo exhibition

visits were made available through online platforms like Zoom and Teams.

We publish the virtual visits through our social media and website. At the same time, we sent mailing lists to schools, care homes, old people's and medical facilities, youth prisons, among others.

We were aware that we did not have a professional product, so it was a great surprise and pleasure to receive hundreds of appointments. We did virtual tours for individuals, families and up to groups of 20 and 30 people. We reached a lot of people, many had never heard of the museum, others knew the museum and still others - and this is the interesting thing about this initiative - had never visited the museum and probably never would, for example because of prolonged illness or very serious mobility problems.

This adjusted reality has brought us a new audience. For some, our visits have contributed to lighten and brighten their days, with the certainty that they will visit us in the future. For others, this was the only opportunity to get to know us.

Since the reopening of the second lockdown, the museum has been offering all its services and even committed to cultural programming such as plays, literature events, conferences and even a music

festival (Railfest) and two temporary exhibitions.

The big challenge has been to find a balance between health requirements and providing a good experience for the public. For the confidence of our visitors, the museum has the Clean and Safe seal (awarded by Tourism of Portugal and the Ministry of Culture) and the European tourism covid-19 safety seal.

A strong adaptation to these new times required a quick, accessible and comprehensive response that allowed us, even from a distance, to continue to promote and publicize our collection and our museum.

Alongside our efforts to make the museum visitors' experience even better, we decided to invest in digital - we are developing a virtual tour with tour guide, we have launched a new website in several languages and keep our online content.

This recent August and September, we have surpassed the number of visitors in August 2018 (before the pandemic) and we strongly believe that this has happened because of our strategy during the pandemic. We are still far from the arrival point, but we believe that the strategy we have been adopting especially with the emphasis on digitalization is the way to go.

Museu Nacional Ferroviário