

HOW TO IMPROVE CROSS-BORDER PUBLIC TRANSPORT?

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1. OVERVIEW

Until recently, borders between Member States of the European Union were a clear barrier, not only in terms of culture and language, but also in terms of transport planning and marketing. With increasing European integration **borders are losing their importance and their separating effect**, particularly where a major city in one country has a catchment area in another (e.g. Strasbourg and the Ortenau district in Germany). Consequently, cross-border car usage is rapidly increasing, whereas ridership on public transport stagnates.

Generally, little has been done so far to assist the improvement of cross-border connections in public transport whether at national or supra-national level. The CONPASS project ("Better CONnections in European PASSenger transport") aimed to provide support in this field. The project dealt with **experience-based strategies to improve cross-border local and regional public transport** in urbanised areas. CONPASS was a 2.5 year research project (2000 - 2002) co-financed by the EU under the 5th Framework RTD Programme and comprised 22 partners from 9 countries, thus providing a wide European coverage.

A major contribution of the project is a comprehensive insight into the nature of existing border barriers throughout Europe as well as providing the necessary tools on how to overcome these barriers. In this paper, selected **recommendations addressed to practitioners at site level as well as to policy makers at national or European level** are featured.

2. THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM

2.1 Reasons for presence or absence of cross-border connections

Europe is often thought of as a Europe of regions instead of national states. In this context, a border region or rather a cross-border region is seen as **instrumental in creating real integration** across national borders. Public transport might be regarded as an essential part of integration since it provides the necessary mobility options for the exchange of people across borders. Conversely, if the local and regional public transport connections across a national border are poor or non-existent, this is a convincing indicator of non-integration within a border region.

Public transport across national borders implies some **peculiarities** which make its operation more difficult and complex than domestic services:

(1) Travel motives: In general terms, people travel for work (home-to-work-trips, business trips), education (commuting to schools), provision of goods (shopping trips, visits to medical services or administrations, etc.) or leisure. The usual travel motives with respect to cross-border trips can be estimated as follows:

- For work (apart from possibly needing a work permit as a foreigner, and possible language barriers), diplomas of national educational institutes, insurance and taxation cause difficulties in working across a national border. Consequently, labour markets tend to work at a national scale rather than at trans-national scale. EU harmonisation measures (mutual recognition of qualifications, rights of EU citizens to work in other EU Member States) and improving language skills are reducing this barrier to work, however cross-border commuting is still relatively rare in most border areas.
- For education the different national curricula are a constraint. Furthermore, basic school education is organised at municipal level in many European countries resulting in a clear assignment of pupils to a certain school. Therefore, crossing the border for school education remains rather exceptional.
- For health the different national bases of health service provision and the non-compatibility of services make it difficult to seek help across the border.
- For public administration (like getting a passport, paying taxes, etc) there is normally no purpose to go to the neighbouring country.

Consequently, the potential market for cross-border trips is limited to some distinct travel motives like unskilled labour, business trips, university education, non-insured medical care, shopping, social visits, cultural events or sightseeing. This phenomenon is met in private transport as well. The severity of the problem for cross-border public transport derives from the fact that most of the missing trip purposes (listed above) are closely related to public transport provision instead of private transport (e.g. transport of pupils to school or daily trips to work). As a result, some of the major demand segments of public transport in general are absent or at least under-represented at national borders.

Only in a few cases there is a regular demand, such as where there are differentials in salaries and living expenses which make cross-border commuting financially attractive, as well as a common language. Examples include commuting into the Swiss cities of Basle and Geneva from Germany and France respectively, or commuting to Luxembourg from neighbouring countries.

(2) Efficiency: Public transport is determined by the collective conveyance of people with the same origin and destination patterns. Where people are concentrated together, there is a high potential for public transport. However, the market for cross-border public transport is limited by the likely absence of

important travel motives which makes it commercially unattractive in many cases. Hence, there must be a rather high concentration of people in a distinct border area to generate enough passengers with other than the absent travel motives for a cross-border service in order to reach the break-even point of efficient public transport services (although 'efficient' does not necessarily mean 'self-financing').

(3) National framework for public transport: National borders are the limits of societies ordered in accordance with different regulation systems. When crossing a national border, public transport has to comply with two different national regulation systems. Government regulations and policies create disparities between public transport systems on both sides of the border:

- The legal frameworks for public transport which affect the organisation and the funding of public transport services may be different.
- The whole complex of government regulations with regard to public transport is developed for application in national territory.
- Regional or municipal councils often support public transport, so problems arise concerning organisation and funding of cross-border connections.

2.2 Types of obstacles and barriers in cross-border public transport

By performing an exhaustive state-of-the-art survey as well as an in-depth analysis of the current situation on cross-border public transport in more than 20 urbanised European border areas, CONPASS experienced various obstacles under which cross-border public transport generally operates. These obstacles can be subdivided into three categories with respect to the likely ways of overcoming them to reach improvements:

(1) Some obstacles derive from **socio-economic border barriers**, i.e. the absence of certain travel motives in cross-border traffic like school transport across the border (catchment areas of schools do not usually extend across international borders, but school transport is an important share of public transport demand in many European countries). Generally speaking, those obstacles cannot be tackled at all from a transport-related point of view.

(2) Some barriers are **produced by the public transport supply itself** (e.g. physical transport options are available, but there is no co-ordinated interchange between two domestic lines which both run only as far as the border). This clearly requires commitment and actions undertaken by the respective actors at the site to overcome them. However, actors need support (recommendations on how to start improvements, what to consider etc.) which have not been available so far. CONPASS produced a 'Toolbox' - a handbook-style document featuring supporting material. Essential recommendations from the 'toolbox' are outlined below (cf. Section 3).

(3) There are obviously some obstacles that derive from the **overall policy framework**. This can be only changed if the policy framework is adapted or new tools and options are available. A compilation of these targeting this aspect are presented in Section 4 of this paper.

3. HOW TO GET THINGS STARTED

3.1 Stages of Development

For practitioners (i.e. actors such as public authorities and transport operators), the most important information is that on practical steps and therefore about how to get things started and what to consider when heading for a certain step of improvement. The recommendations are sorted with respect to the **stage of development of cross-border transport in a border region**. The lowest stage, 'starting cross-border services', applies where cross-border services are either non-existent or are limited to infrequent long-distance trains or express coaches which happen to have stops in the border region. 'Co-ordinating cross-border services' is the key objective at the medium stage of development and 'integrating cross-border services' is the focus at the highest stage, where cross-border services are already well developed and there is a fairly long history of co-operation.

3.2 Starting cross-border services

When starting to work on improvements of cross-border services at an early stage, it is advisable to think first of possible measures to undertake. Recommendations to get things started at an early stage are:

Focus on benefits for the passengers. The passengers in public transport are the main focus of any effort which is undertaken. Therefore, those measures or activities are of a special interest which bring direct advantage to the passengers.

Establish good and trusting contacts. Improvements in cross-border public transport depend on personal contacts with players across the border. Consequently, well-established contacts are a prerequisite for any co-operation. Common talks should be focussed on a clear vision of improvements in cross-border public transport.

Avoid new and comprehensive institutional frameworks. At a low stage of development all involved parties co-operate on a voluntary basis. Existing cross-border institutions may help starting a closer co-operation of responsible bodies for cross-border public transport. New institutional frameworks bear the risk of failure since (1) they have to be financed, (2) take time to be set up instead of improving cross-border services and (3) might be in conflict with the national legal framework conditions in public transport. Things are different, however, at a higher stage of development, or in the case of a major project (e.g. new infrastructure).

Start with a 'loose' working group. The working group should integrate all relevant parties from both sides of the border. Cross-border public transport improvements depend on individual initiatives and local commitment. Under these prerequisites, a working group could be a fruitful approach to channel this commitment to common projects. The group should be co-ordinated by a player with cross-border experience (e.g. a cross-border institution).

Start with low-cost solutions. Financing of improvements in cross-border public transport is a decisive problem, this is why low-cost solutions bear a higher potential for implementation. Cross-border public transport is a 'weak' market and revenues are limited. Therefore, measures which can be self-funded by the operator or the responsible authorities are at the top of the agenda. An example of such a low-cost measure is the extension of existing domestic services over the border for a short distance to the next town or a suitable interchange point with the local network in the neighbouring country. Exchange of information (availability of timetables and maps) and provision of bilingual information are also good examples of low-cost solutions.

Keep cross-border measures as simple as possible. Cross-border measures work well if the idea or solution is very simple, e.g. on a line with a joint service every operator runs 50% of all trips instead of a complicated measure to share the revenues. Consequently, no sharing of revenues is needed.

Keep the fares simple. At an early stage of cross-border connections, the focus is on the level of service, i.e. it is important that a cross-border connection with a reasonable supply (and demand) is established. Therefore, complicated tariff schemes should not be taken into account, because this requires a longstanding co-operation of the involved actors. Level of service measures should of course coincide with information measures since a new or improved connection has to be made well-known to the potential customers.

Think about additional demand to improve revenues. In case of a weak demand level on existing cross-border services, new market potentials could be exploited. Customers often do not know a lot about destinations abroad and, therefore, see no need to cross the border. Especially in the field of leisure trips, additional demand can be generated by providing detailed information on trip destinations (e.g. sites with a tourism potential like castles or museums, city centres for shopping, theme parks) to potential customers by flyers, posters, Internet, etc.

Co-operation with owners of major tourist attractions can be mutually beneficial (e.g. they can help with the marketing as it is in their interest, and provide incentives such as reduced prices for public transport users). A good example is the special coach service from Strasbourg to Europa Park, a major theme park in Rust (Germany), with a combined travel and entry ticket (co-operation between Europa Park and CTS, Strasbourg's public transport operator).

3.3 Co-ordinating cross-border services

If the basic framework for better cross-border connections has already been set up, further efforts for a better co-ordination of transport supply and its organisational background are necessary. At this stage, the following recommendations can be drawn up:

Concentrate on the necessary aspects of your cross-border project.

Generally, working on improvements in cross-border transport calls for greater efforts than in domestic transport. Therefore, measures or activities which really bring the biggest advantages to the passengers should be pushed first.

Continue and maintain good and trusting contacts. Improvements in cross-border public transport depend on personal contacts with players across the border. Maintaining personal contacts will help to strengthen any form of co-operation in the border region. For that, communication aspects have to be stressed in order to reach this goal. Common talks should not be burdened by questions of day-to-day business, but focused on a clear vision of improvements in cross-border public transport.

Consolidate your institutional co-operation. Strict and tight institutional frameworks are still not necessary at the stage of co-ordinating cross-border services, but it is important to bring liability into the co-operation, e.g. fix a responsible deputy for cross-border issues from each party involved. On a higher stage, institutional frameworks or agreements on governmental levels might be necessary, e.g. for major projects such as infrastructure improvements.

Give a binding character to your 'loose' working group. In order to get things started, a working group with participants of all relevant parties from both sides of the border should have been established in the past. The working group has to be made stable to ensure proper work progress and to obtain a reliable structure. For example, hold meetings at regular intervals.

Stick to low-cost solutions. Since financing of improvements in cross-border public transport is a decisive problem, low-cost solutions bear a higher potential for implementation. If a low cost measure has achieved 'miracles' in cross-border services (which is not unlikely!), think of a proper marketing of the success in public.

Work on tariff measures. Once a well established cross-border link exists, pricing aspects become more and more important. However, the customer will hardly accept special and complicated regulations concerning cross-border fares over years. The removal of barriers in the tariff sector is therefore regarded as a highly effective strategy to attract additional cross-border trips at this stage.

3.4 Integrating cross-border services

In border regions where considerable effort has been spent in the past to improve the cross-border public transport situation and a relatively good level of service exists, the major issue is to create the necessary basis for further integration. Several recommendations to the actors can be progressed:

Find a nucleus for closer formal co-operation. A working group of public transport professionals could be a fruitful approach to get things started and to co-ordinate common projects on a 'voluntary' level. Especially, if advanced

measures are targeted (e.g. complicated tariff measures, infrastructural improvements), a tighter institutional framework is regarded as necessary. Consider your 'loose' working group as such a nucleus. For example, a general contractual agreement on co-operation among all partners can provide the necessary power for rapid decision making and avoid bureaucracy.

Set-up an integrated cross-border master plan. If a certain level of integration is reached, a plan will be necessary to co-ordinate future activities and will help to lay down ideas, perspectives, and intentions for the cross-border public transport developments in the region. In particular, it will be the core for tariff integration. This plan should be of course rather strictly limited to cross-border aspects and consider the following aspects:

- analysis of the current situation,
- objectives for improved cross-border services,
- feasible concepts for improvements,
- financial plans,
- evaluation of success and quality control,
- marketing,
- responsibilities of parties involved.

Don't try to integrate everything. Each national state has an outer border causing some peculiarities for border regions and borderlines will not disappear in the near future. Consequently, integration does not mean to level the structures for organising public transport on both sides of the border but to find ways and solutions to work together across a national border which results in an integrated transport supply. In this sense, working on measures which facilitate the use of public transport is at the top of the agenda, but working on measures that integrate organisational structures across borders carries a high risk of failure.

Use standardised exchange formats. Even in domestic public transport, problems occur in various countries if a technical standard is the prerequisite for a joint action. One example concerns the data formats for electronic timetable information software or other software applications which might differ from operator to operator or from region to region. Investigating options and then agreeing on strict organisational procedures for data exchange and printed information is therefore highly important.

3.5 General hints

Despite different stages of development, there are several hints which are regarded as valid for cross-border public transport in general:

Reach common sense. If co-operation with neighbouring responsible bodies (operators and/or authorities) is impossible, measures normally fail. Consequently, there must be a common interest of all parties from both sides for a certain measure. Improvements are likely to be implemented, if co-operation is possible and each player cares for 'his' national contribution to the project.

Don't wait for a change in legal conditions. At national borders, different national legislation and regulation frameworks (and even cultures) meet which might cause barriers or difficult framework conditions for operating public transport services across the border. Since national legislation will always retain a local (or in this case: national) flavour, it is unlikely that barriers will totally disappear in the near future, even with the ongoing European integration and harmonisation process. Therefore, working on solutions that 'infiltrate' the different frameworks and bridging existing gaps and differences is highly advisable from a local perspective, instead of waiting for overall better framework conditions for cross-border public transport.

Test small-scale improvements in-situ. Measures implemented in cross-border public transport are in general small-scale measures and their success can be very difficult to forecast. Therefore, using the trial-and-error principle is the best way to see what works and what doesn't work. Results are not always a 'big deal'. Even if a measure only has limited success, it can be advisable to keep it alive: as long as it is not costly, it may facilitate cross-border public transport in the long-term.

Domestic solutions may not work on an international basis. The differences between the countries in organising public transport are very relevant. Consequently, a concept which has been successful in one country might not be feasible on an international level because it could be in conflict with one of the national framework for organising public transport. It seems that all measures are feasible as long as they do not affect (1) the respective national strategies in organising public transport, (2) each player's independence.

Avoid a fixation on your domestic public transport system. If there is a considerable cross-border traffic flow the responsible bodies for public transport must accept their joint responsibility for attractive public transport supply across the border. Otherwise, the border will lead to de-integration and barriers will even increase by a wrong understanding of regionalisation.

Communicate your experiences with other actors. Cross-border public transport is a rather rare aspect in the transport business involving only a limited number of professionals. Since it is always helpful to learn from other experiences, it is advisable to make contacts with players in other border regions. For practitioners, it can be therefore a fruitful option to contribute to a loose networking of people who work on cross-border public transport solutions.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVISED TRANSPORT POLICIES

Since cross-border public transport plays a key role for the integration of border regions, policy actions to overcome obstacles will contribute to further European integration. The most important policy recommendations derived from the project's analysis work are based on the following theses, each of which points to a specific obstacle at the policy level.

Thesis 1: There is little focus on international short distance transport.

In public discussions, cross-border public transport is often thought of as long-distance services by rail, although the majority of cross-border travellers make local and regional trips. A key part of the EU's transport policy is the development and support of trans-European transport networks (TEN-T), with investment and harmonisation measures significantly improving international passenger and freight rail connections between major European centres.

On the other hand, some TEN-T improvements can cause negative side effects in border regions, because improvements in long-distance rail (i.e. new international high-speed train projects) deteriorate accessibility of border regions: long-distance high-speed trains are mostly replacing the ordinary train service with stops in the border regions, but high-speed trains do not stop there anymore. This phenomenon can be studied at many European border rail stations (e.g. Emmerich/D, Verviers/B). It forces the respective regional bodies to think about additional complementary rail services in order to close the arising gap on the level of regional cross-border connections.

Actions similar to those on the TEN-T (infrastructure improvements, investment in interoperability, harmonisation of levels of service, etc) are largely missing as regards the local and regional level of cross-border public transport. Aspects to be considered by these actions would be how to avoid such negative side effects and how to increase cohesion between the border regions at local/regional level in the same way as the TEN-T does on trans-national level.

Thesis 2: Regionalisation of responsibilities and funds is regarded as a positive policy for organising public transport in border regions.

Regionalisation of responsibilities and funds is regarded as a positive policy for organising public transport in border regions, because it brings back the responsibility to decide on local/regional services to the border area concerned. It can also help integrate different modes, e.g. traditionally in many countries local rail services were centrally planned and controlled whereas local and regional bus services were not, so bringing local rail under regional control allows for common planning, timetabling, marketing and fare structures for regional bus and rail services. Among other goals, justified or unjustified accusations of neglecting border regions - e.g. with provision of rail services which were planned at the headquarters of the respective state railways but not within the border region - can be remedied.

Regionalisation, however, tends to favour the improvement of domestic services within the catchment area of the responsible body but not cross-border services. For local decision makers their responsibility for the own region counts first, and consequently, there is a risk that cross-border services are neglected (unless there is an extremely urgent call for action e.g. due to enormous cross-border commuter figures which affects their "own" regions as well). Countries with a longer experience in regionalisation of public transport responsibilities and funds even experienced this development between neighbouring regions within the country. Consequently, policy makers at European and national level should make sure that a commitment for cross-

border services still remains at the local decision makers, since cross-border public transport plays an important role for cross-border integration.

Furthermore, it can be observed that regionalisation models in different countries do not fully integrate. At practical level, many differences between the models are experienced, leading to slow progress in improving the overall situation. At a very basic level, it was found that local actors were often frustrated co-operating at a cross-border level due to confusion as to who is responsible for what on the other side of the border. Although many border regions are very creative in coming up with very clever and effective approaches to bridge obvious gaps, special tools are needed to support local players to cope with the border situation. One major element of it will be a cross-border public transport master plan (cf. thesis 4). It helps practitioners at site level

- to understand the framework situation of public transport organisation and funding on the other side of the border (which is a prerequisite for working together),
- to set down their definite plans for improvements,
- to forward the discussion and negotiation process to the respective level of decision makers which are responsible within the national regionalisation framework.

Thesis 3: The transformation process of the market access in public transport by tendering of services carries the risk of weakening cross-border public transport. Most experts are regarding the current approach on new EU public transport laws (i.e. regulation concerning public service requirements and the award of public service contracts in passenger transport) as a feasible way to organise market access in public transport, but nevertheless, the ongoing discussion is affecting cross-border projects with public-owned operators involved.

Publicly owned operators operate cross-border public transport services in many border regions on a self-financing basis. Facing the situation of new EU public transport laws, they are currently trying to become competitive with privately owned operators in order to be prepared for a tendered market (or in some countries they are already privatised commercial entities). For that, they cut the most inefficient services to lower their deficits. Generally, cross-border public transport is a weak market with marginal revenues in many cases, cross-border lines are therefore often a target for service cuts at present.

Furthermore, the respective companies often hesitate to spend efforts on work for cross-border improvements with partners from across the border because

- personnel costs to carry out the work on improvements does usually not contribute to a reduction of the overall company's costs and a pay-off is unlikely in the case of improved cross-border services,
- follow-up costs of agreed improvements are shunned, since they will most probably not contribute to reduction of the company's deficit,
- it remains unclear if planning agreements concerning cross-border lines are still a task of the operators in future (unclear basis for long-term agreements),

- operators from the neighbouring country can easily face competition if the market access changes.

On the other hand, there are some examples where competitive tendering and opening up of access to operators can bring benefits, especially in terms of providing innovative services for growing markets. For example the tendering of German regional rail services previously operated by Deutsche Bahn has resulted in the franchise for two German lines north of Basle being won by SBB-CFF (Swiss Federal Railways). This has increased cross-border integration with Swiss services in terms of through services and tariffs, although it remains to be seen what the effect will be on wholly German journeys between these lines and other regional services in Baden-Württemberg.

The transformation of the market access in public transport by tendering of services is again a clear field on which a policy aims to contribute to improvements of domestic services but carries a risk for cross-border public transport. It is therefore necessary to monitor in detail the impact of the expected transformation process of the public transport market on local/regional cross-border connections.

Public transport authorities in border areas should therefore include an obligation to co-operate with operators from across the border and maintain/develop cross-border services in tender contracts to commercial operators. Such contracts should safeguard cross-border services and include targets for improvements.

Thesis 4: A cross-border public transport master plan is a necessary planning tool. Without any doubt, an integrated or at least an agreed planning approach is a prerequisite for improvements in cross-border public transport. For that, a specific tool is necessary to facilitate cross-border planning. Such a tool can be seen in a cross-border public transport master plan updated every 3 to 5 years.

It will allow border regions to present their ideas, perspectives, and intentions for the cross-border public transport developments in their area. The plan should take European transport policy objectives into account. It should also be based on voluntary commitment (self-binding) of the region, but funded by EU programmes as long as EU standards are met. The plan should include statements on

- analysis of the current situation,
- objectives for improved cross-border services,
- feasible concepts for improvements,
- financial plans,
- evaluation of success and quality control,
- marketing,
- responsibilities of parties involved.

Such a plan involves low financial commitment but can provide a high outcome by mobilising synergy effects, since it points separated activities to

one common goal. Furthermore, it helps to bridge barriers and gaps which derive from the different organisational frameworks for public transport between the countries and speeds up the developments by bringing (voluntary) binding forces to the discussion on cross-border public transport. The plan should be restricted to cross-border aspects taking into account all national plans in each part of the border region. Any interference with national planning procedures should be avoided.

Thesis 5: Cross-border public transport needs continuity. A long-standing continuity of cross-border service supply and related measures (e.g. information) is important in order to attain high levels of success. Existing funding practices (e.g. Interreg programme) are providing subsidies for a limited period as knock-on financing in most cases. Furthermore, the voluntary commitment of public transport operators in this field will decrease due to the fact that they are facing tendered services (cf. thesis 3).

In order to allow a continuation of integration processes in border regions (which is regarded a goal of European policy), strategies are needed to support cross-border services on a more permanent basis. One concept could be to provide special funds to cross-border services as long as services are based on an integrated public transport master plan (cf. thesis 4).

Thesis 6: Marketing for cross-border public transport issues needs support. It can be easily noticed that a lobby and promoters for cross-border public transport issues is missing. If these services are recognised as important tools to create integration and cohesion between the two parts of a region which are divided by an international border, there is a clear need to nominate a body in charge of lobbying and promoting cross-border public transport issues.

In many border regions, cross-border organisations like Euroregions or Euregios already exist. These organisations as spin-offs of the local and regional administrative bodies have a clear mission to work on cross-border integration and hold an comprehensive knowledge on general cross-border planning issues within that specific border region, but are normally not involved in public transport. Their neutrality and their ability to “think across the border” provides the excellent basis to promote cross-border public transport issues and to encourage public transport responsables and operators of the regions to commit themselves in the field of cross-border public transport improvements.

Furthermore, Euroregions could serve as channels to distribute funds for specific planning tools (e.g. to set-up a cross-border master plan, cf. thesis 4).

Thesis 7: Technical standards have to be fixed. Many technical developments are under way at present, e.g. electronic ticketing or real-time on-trip information in the vehicle, at stops or on mobile devices. Many of them are currently in the stage of pilot demonstrations in many European countries and might result in various European standards. Especially urbanised border regions will suffer from different technical standards. In order to avoid

incompatibility (as it is recently the rule in heavy rail transport!), efforts should be made to harmonise technical standards in border regions. Otherwise, expensive solutions are necessary to bridge the gap between the national standards later on.

Thesis 8: Networking among practitioners is a key-issue. Cross-border issues are only of interest for border regions with a limited number of professionals involved. But these professionals all face the same or at least similar problems and are all carrying a high responsibility for European integration in their respective border regions. Consequently, it can be regarded as highly efficient to support these practitioners by loose networking or platform activities. For example, it could be established in co-operation with the UITP. Internet-based communication structures can make the approach affordable.

Thesis 9: Special support for accession countries is necessary to speed up integration. Cross-border co-operation has a long-standing history along some border lines in western Europe with experiences over 40 to 50 years. In contrast, co-operation is right at the beginning in some eastern European border regions or only lasting for some years now. Consequently, the necessity to provide support to get things started in cross-border co-operation and public transport and to speed up integration are likely more essential at eastern European borders. This fact is substantiated by (1) results of the cross-findings of the CONPASS case study analysis which showed clearly different results for border sites in western Europe than those at the eastern edge of the EU, (2) participants of the CONPASS dissemination workshops from eastern European countries who emphasised this problem.

This requires putting more emphasis on borders between EU countries and accession countries as well as between eastern European countries in policy making and in dissemination of research & development outcomes in this field. Although EU programmes like PHARE are underway, the interest in this subject - for example proofed by the large audience of the CONPASS workshop held in Bratislava in June 2002 - showed that cross-border public transport is a less exploited field. Practical aids like translation of information tools into major eastern European languages (since English language skills are regarded as even a higher barrier for practitioners in accession countries than in western Europe) or local information workshop events to spread the results in border regions even between accession countries and other eastern European countries could contribute to improvements in this field in future.

Thesis 10: Incentives could speed-up cross-border planning. There has not been a focus on cross-border public transport planning issues so far. Incentives might speed up this process, e.g. a Europe-wide award for outstanding ideas on improvement in cross-border public transport could be established.

5. THE COMPASS TOOLBOX

The 'Toolbox' is the handbook-style collection of all main findings of the COMPASS project **addressed to people involved in cross border public transport planning issues** (operators, local/regional transport administrations, public transport associations, cross-border institutions; consultants, etc.). The toolbox provides

- easy access to the knowledge base gained by COMPASS,
- support on "how to bridge border barriers?",
- measures to overcome transport-inherent border barriers,
- recommendations for further development of cross-border connections.

The document is **freely accessible on the Internet**, either as web-based electronic version or as print version (PDF-files for download) at <http://www.compass.org/toolbox>.

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