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Top 20



First Results of the #CrossBorderRail Project

Bardonecchia-Modane

Missing Service



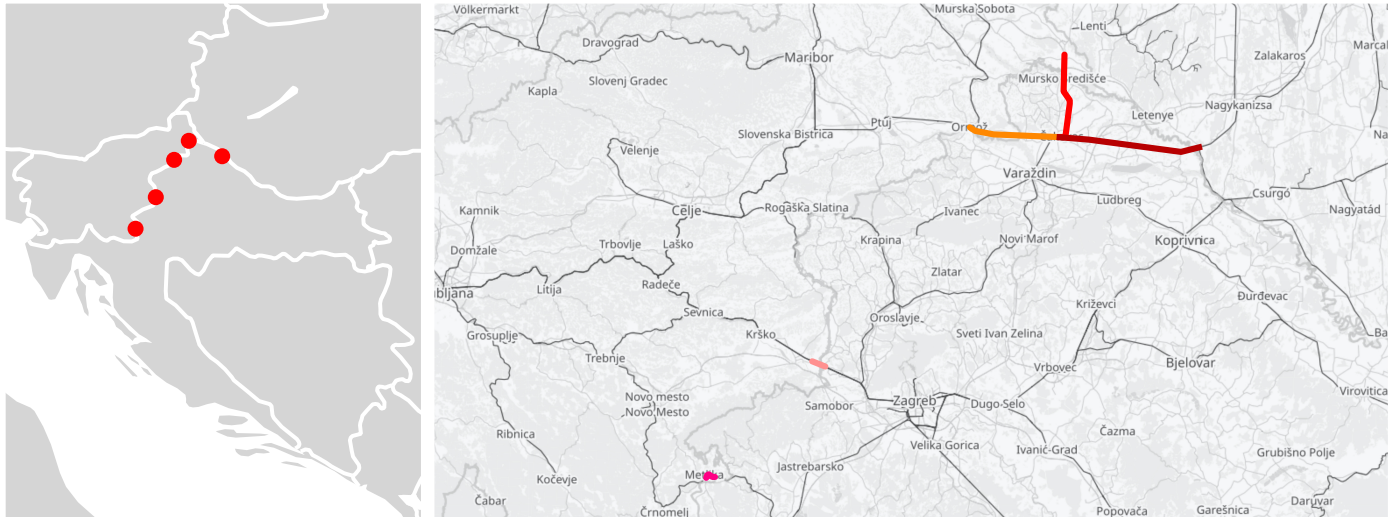
The mainline through the Alps between France and Italy, from Chambéry to Torino, has seen marked improvements in its long distance trains in recent years, but there is no cross border regional service on the same line between Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne or Modane (France) and Bardonecchia or Oulx-Cesana-Claviere-Sestriere (Italy) at all. All French TER trains terminate at Modane, and all Italian Regionale trains terminate at Bardonecchia, leaving just 18.8km through the Fréjus Tunnel without a regional service. The line is dual tracked and electrified.

What needs to be done: extend Trenitalia Regionale trains from Bardonecchia to Modane. It has to be done this way around due to the change of voltage between the French and Italian systems



Croatia-Slovenia and Croatia-Hungary

Missing Services



Croatia not being in Schengen has been the partial cause for an absence of train services on three international routes: Bubnjarci – Metlika and Čakovec – Lendava (both to Slovenia), and Čakovec – Murakeresztúr (to Hungary), and for service to be very limited on two others: Zagreb – Dobova and Čakovec – Ormož (both to Slovenia). Croatia's accession to Schengen in 2023, meaning trains will not have to be controlled at these borders, offers an opportunity for good regional rail services at all five border crossings, and the opportunity to extend Zagreb – Harmica services to the Slovenian side of the border at Dobova is especially interesting. Ljubljana – Budapest long distance services can also be routed via Čakovec, rather than the current longer route via Hodoš.

What needs to be done: approve ŠŽ's fleet of new trains for operation in Croatia, and develop a new timetable for these cross border routes post-Schengen accession



Dresden-Görlitz-Zgorzelec

Missing Electrification



Poland completed the electrification of the route on its side of the border – between Zgorzelec and Wrocław in 2019. But currently the electrification masts end in the middle of the bridge over the Neiße between Zgorzelec and Görlitz. Between Görlitz and the edge of Dresden, via Bautzen, only diesel trains run. Electrification of the route has long been planned but has not been started. Although there are hourly trains between Zgorzelec and Görlitz, the lack of electrification limits the potential for the line, especially for long distance through trains between Wrocław and Dresden, and for the sake of decarbonisation, electrification makes sense. The trains that operate the RE1 route between Görlitz and Dresden also have limited capacity – an electrified line would help increase this.

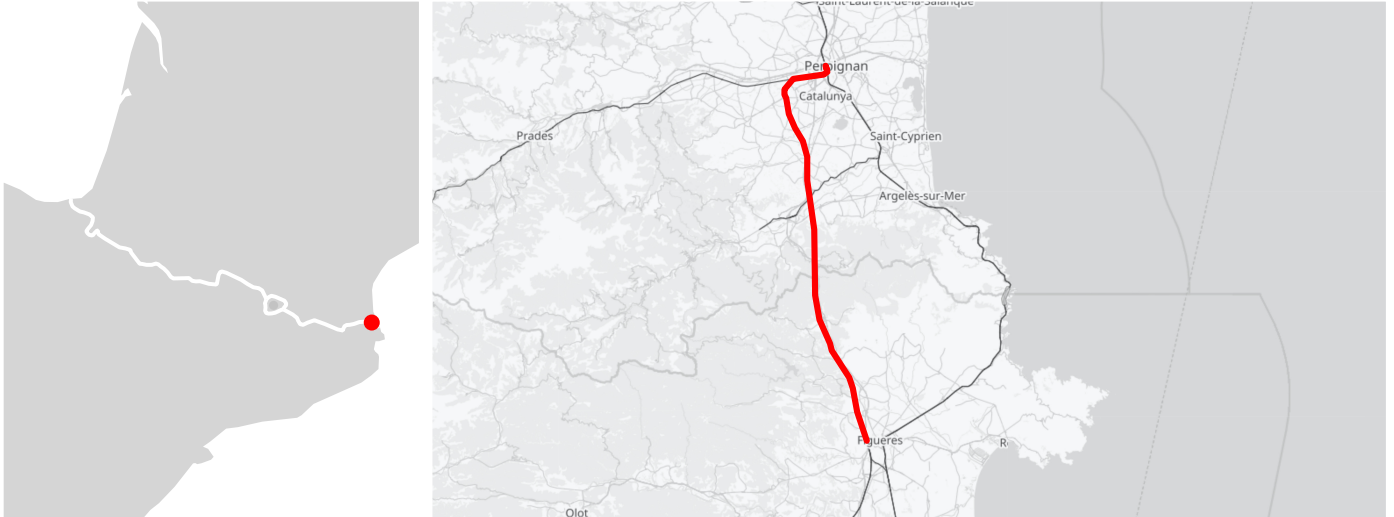
What needs to be done: Germany needs to electrify the line between the Neiße Bridge at Görlitz and the edge of Dresden (100km)



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Figueres-Perpignan

Underutilisation



The EU contributed €70 million to fund the construction of the 44.4km, 300km/h maximum speed Figueres Vilafant – Perpignan high speed line through the Pyrenees between France and Spain, but the line is shockingly under-used. One of the few cross border high speed lines in Europe, it conveys just two trains a day each way year round, and this increases to just four trains a day in summertime. The lines either side of the cross border section – between Figueres and Barcelona, and from Perpignan northwards towards Paris are much better served than the cross border section.

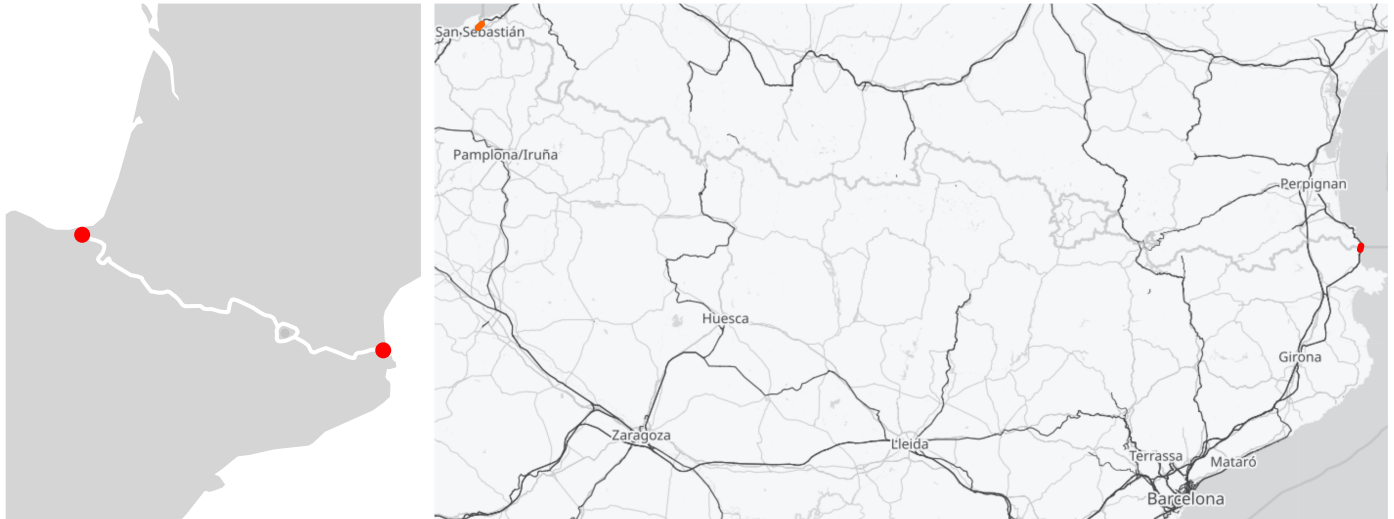
What needs to be done: run more trains. If state owned operators Renfe and SNCF are unwilling to do this, investigate obstacles preventing other operators offering services on this line



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France-Spain

Missing Services



At two of the five active cross border lines between France and Spain there are missing services. At Hendaye – Irun and Cerbère – Portbou there are standard gauge tracks from France to the Spanish side, and Iberian gauge tracks from Spain to the French side. At Hendaye – Irun these tracks are no longer in regular use, and all SNCF services terminate at Hendaye and all Renfe services at Irun, despite the two being just 2.2km apart, so passengers need to use the separate Euskotren line to cross the border here. At Cerbère – Portbou the number of services crossing the border has dropped sharply in recent years, in part because of a language dispute, often meaning passengers have longer waits to travel the 2.0km between the two stations either side of the border.

What needs to be done: France and Spain need to agree how to extend services across the border in each case, to ensure onwards connections



France-Spain

Missing Timetable Data



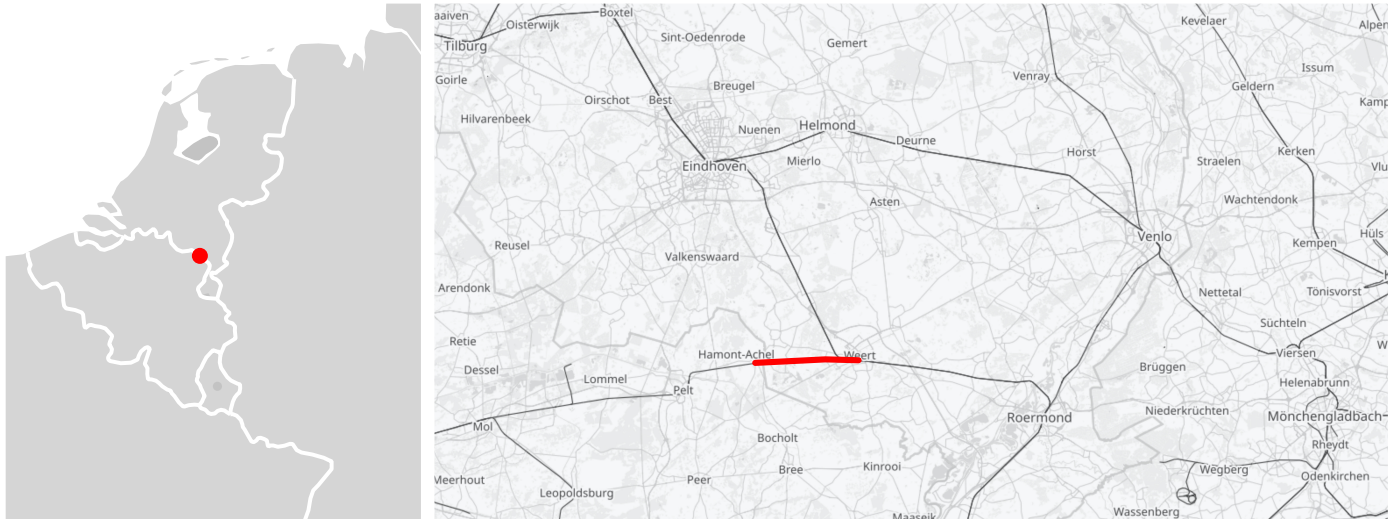
At three of the five active cross border lines between France and Spain there are data problems. None of the trains that cross the borders Hendaia – Irun (Euskotren) and Latour-de-Carol - Enveitg – Puigcerdà (Rodalies de Catalunya), and only some of the trains that cross the border Cerbère – Portbou (Rodalies de Catalunya) appear in international train timetable searches. This is because Euskotren and Rodalies de Catalunya (operated by Renfe) do not upload timetables to UIC Merits, the timetable system that is behind rail travel planners like DB Reiseauskunft and ÖBB Scotty. That means that planning a trip like Bordeaux – Bilbao or Toulouse – Barcelona is more complicated than it should be, and indeed non-locals might not even know these trains exist.

What needs to be done: put data for all trains in Spain, regardless of operator, and including Euskotren and Rodalies, into UIC Merits



Hamont-Weert

Missing Service



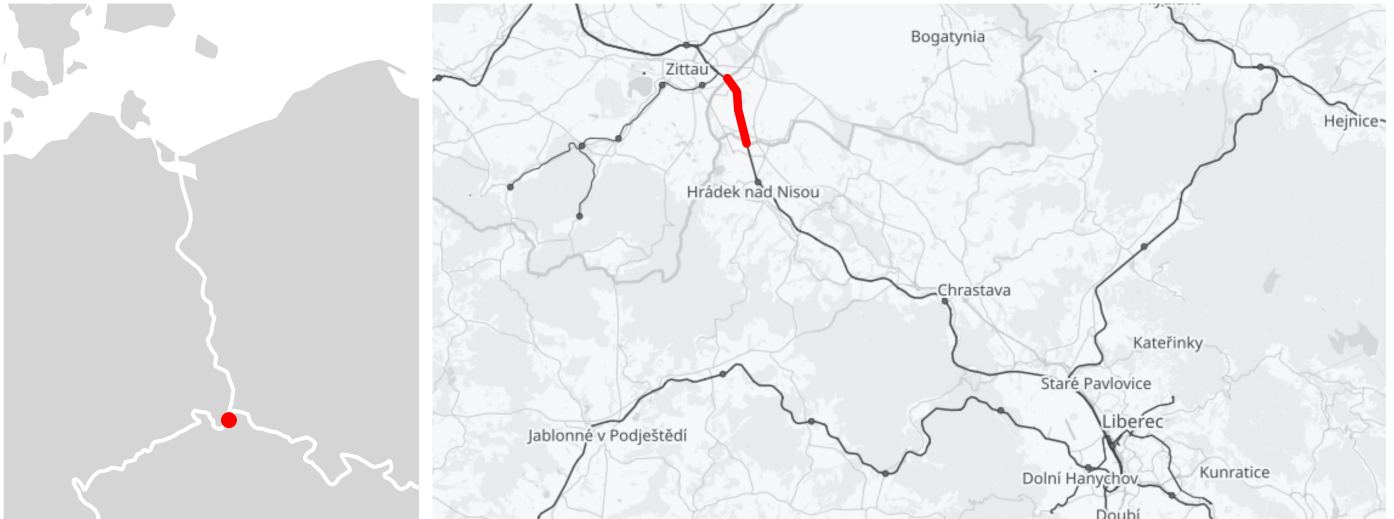
Taking the train from Antwerpen (Belgium's second city) to Eindhoven (fifth largest city in Netherlands) currently requires a detour via Breda, but an alternative is available - to use the old Eisener Rhein route from Hamont (Belgium) to Weert (Netherlands) for passenger trains, that would provide a much more direct route. There is currently 11.3km of active railway line here, dead straight and on flat terrain, that has no passenger service.

What needs to be done: electrify the 9.6km of track where overhead wires are currently missing, and build an extra platform in Weert (space is available for this) to allow Belgian trains to terminate there instead of in Hamont



Liberec-Porajów-Zittau

Poor Track



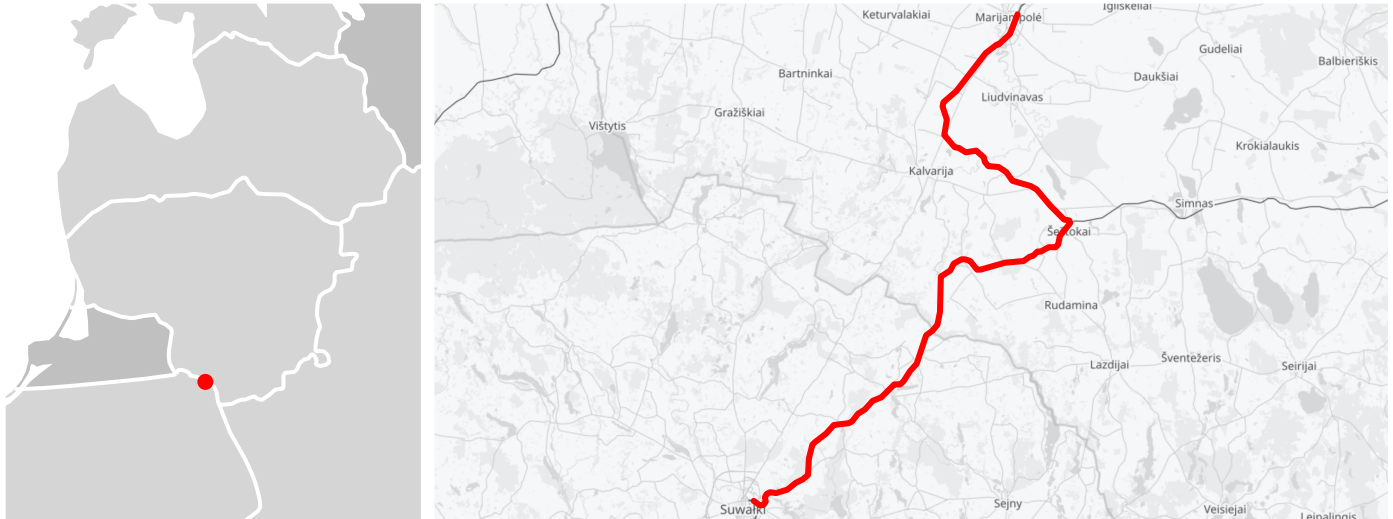
An hourly regional train service connects Liberec (Czechia) with Zittau (Germany), but this train is not as efficient as it could be as it can run at only 40km/h on a 2.7km section of dilapidated track that crosses Polish territory at Porajów, just south of Zittau. The rest of the service is on tracks rated at 80-100km/h, and the slow section through Poland prevents good onward connections in Zittau.

What needs to be done: Czechia and Germany need to find a financial arrangement with Poland to repair the track, and increase speeds to 100km/h. The land is flat, so this would not be technically difficult or especially costly. Two level crossings would need upgrading



Marijampolė-Suwałki

Poor Timetable



The Suwałki Gap is one of Europe's most geopolitically important regions, and the future Rail Baltica runs here, but the passenger service on the existing route from Białystok (Poland) via Suwałki (Poland) and Marijampolė (Lithuania) to Kaunas (Lithuania) is woefully bad - just two trains a week in each direction, at weekends. And this despite Lithuania having upgraded the lines on its side of the border using EU money.

What needs to be done: run at least a daily service between Białystok and Kaunas, and ideally also offer a daily long distance service from Warszawa to Kaunas, by extending one of the daily Warszawa – Suwałki TLK or IC trains



Marseille-Ventimiglia-Genova

Poor Timetable



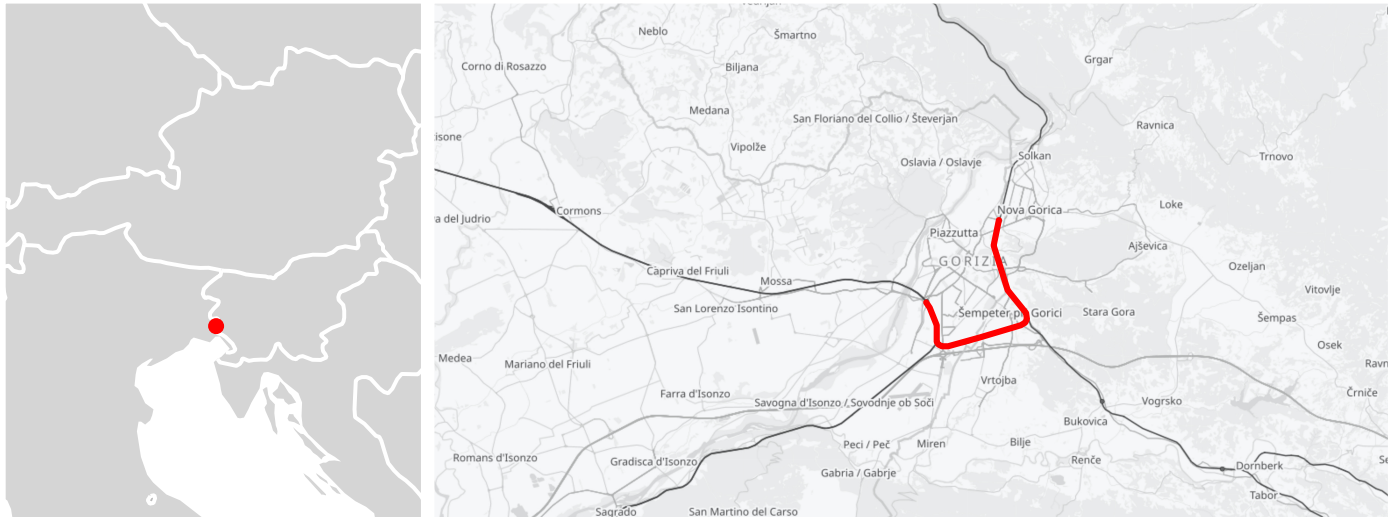
No long distance services run along the Mediterranean Coast line between Marseille (France) and Genova (Italy), via Nice (France) and Ventimiglia (Italy) any more. And as if that were not bad enough, the timetables of regional trains are so poorly coordinated that anyone making the trip the whole way between Marseille and Genova is left waiting in Ventimiglia for 1 hour 55 minutes heading eastbound, or 52 minutes when heading westbound.

What needs to be done: coordinate timetables of TER and Regionale trains to make sure cross border connections are efficient at Ventimiglia. Medium term re-introduce direct Marseille – Genova or Marseille – Milano trains



Nova Gorica-Gorizia

Missing Services



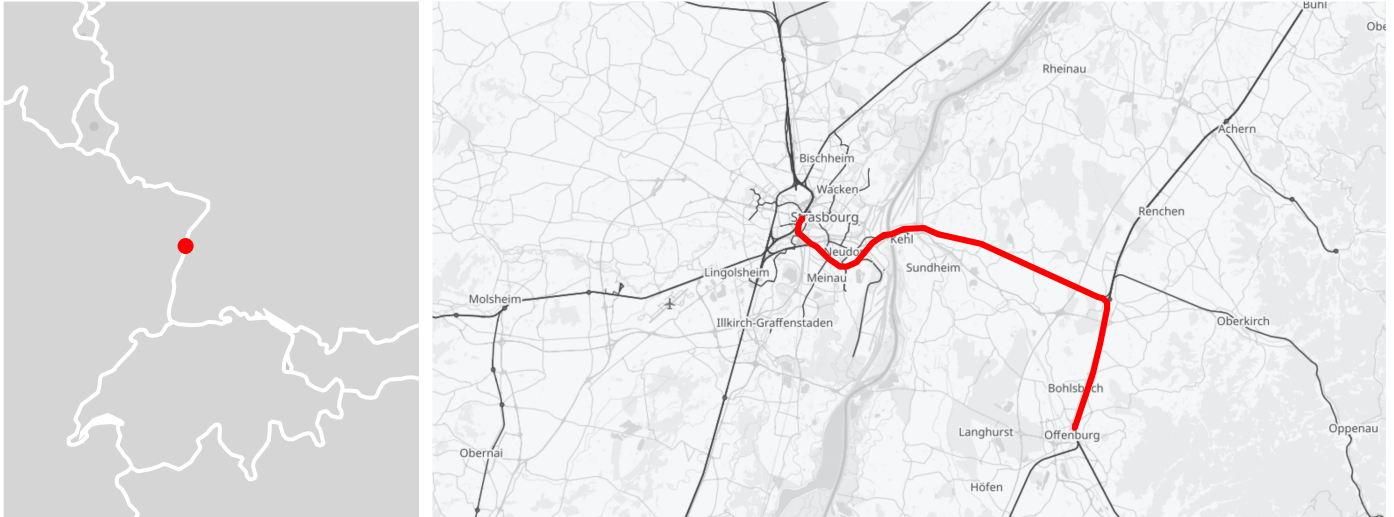
Passenger trains between Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Gorizia Centrale (Italy) ceased in 1997, leaving just 3.0km of track (and just 7.5km between the two main stations) without a passenger service. The line remains active for freight and is not electrified, but nor is the network on the Slovenian side. Currently passengers have to cross the gap between the Slovenian and Italian rail networks on foot or by bus. With Nova Gorica nominated as European Capital of Culture 2025, and with the Slovenia-Italy border bisecting the square outside Nova Gorica station, it is high time these two towns – linked in so many ways! – are also once more linked by train.

What needs to be done: Slovenian railways SŽ needs to extend Jesenice – Nova Gorica trains to Gorizia Centrale, or run a simple connecting shuttle service Nova Gorica – Gorizia Centrale



Offenburg-Strasbourg

Ticketing Problem



A bug in the way cross border tariffs are calculated leaves long distance passengers with a hefty bill if they do not know a trick for booking trains from Germany to Strasbourg. If a passenger changes from a long distance IC or ICE train onto the local train from Offenburg to Strasbourg for the cross border section of the trip, Deutsche Bahn sells only full price tickets, while the cheaper Sparpreis is available as far as Kehl - the last station before the border. For example a Berlin – Kehl ticket is normally €61.90, while Berlin – Strasbourg is €147.80. Strasbourg – Kehl is just 8.1km and costs just €4.30 when bought on its own. This is especially absurd as Strasbourg is the seat of the European Parliament.

What needs to be done: list Strasbourg as a station in the Baden-Württemberg tariff system to allow Sparpreis tickets to be booked easily, without a ticket split in Kehl



Ormenio-Svilengrad

Missing Service



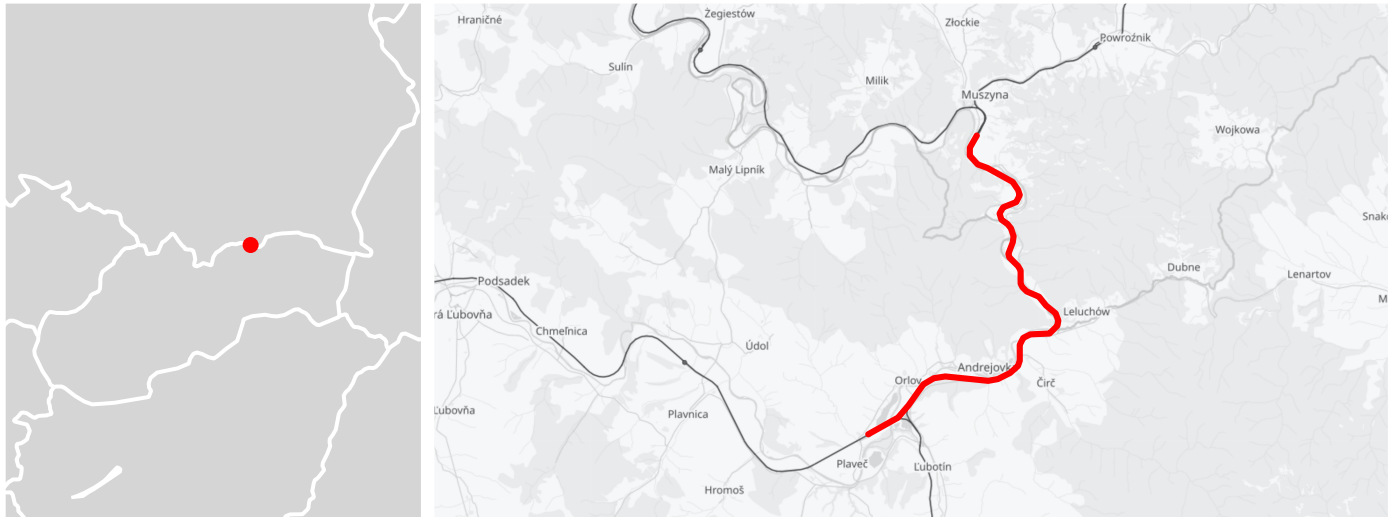
At present passenger trains run on none of the four cross border lines to Greece (1 from Turkey, 1 from North Macedonia, and 2 from Bulgaria). The poor quality infrastructure at 3 of these borders means running passenger trains would be complicated, short term. At the fourth, between Ormenio and Svilengrad in Bulgaria, the infrastructure is in good condition on both sides of the border, but currently no trains (neither freight nor passenger) use the 8.7km of cross border track.

What needs to be done: extend the one daily Alexandroupoli – Ormenio service as far as Svilengrad, and medium term increase frequencies on the whole line



Plaveč-Muszyna

Poor Timetable



A minimal train service operates between Poprad (Slovakia) and Muszyna (Poland) just twice a day on weekends in the summertime and wintertime, but not in spring or autumn. But regional services operate all year round to Plaveč in Slovakia that is just 14.2km from Muszyna, and Muszyna is likewise served by passenger trains from towns in southern Poland all year round. There would be potential for a Košice – Nowy Sącz – Kraków long distance service.

What needs to be done: at the very least extend regional services to Plaveč as far as Muszyna all year round, to assess the potential for daily cross border journeys here



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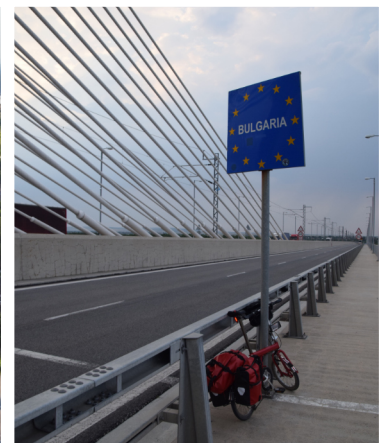
Romania-Bulgaria

Missing Electrification



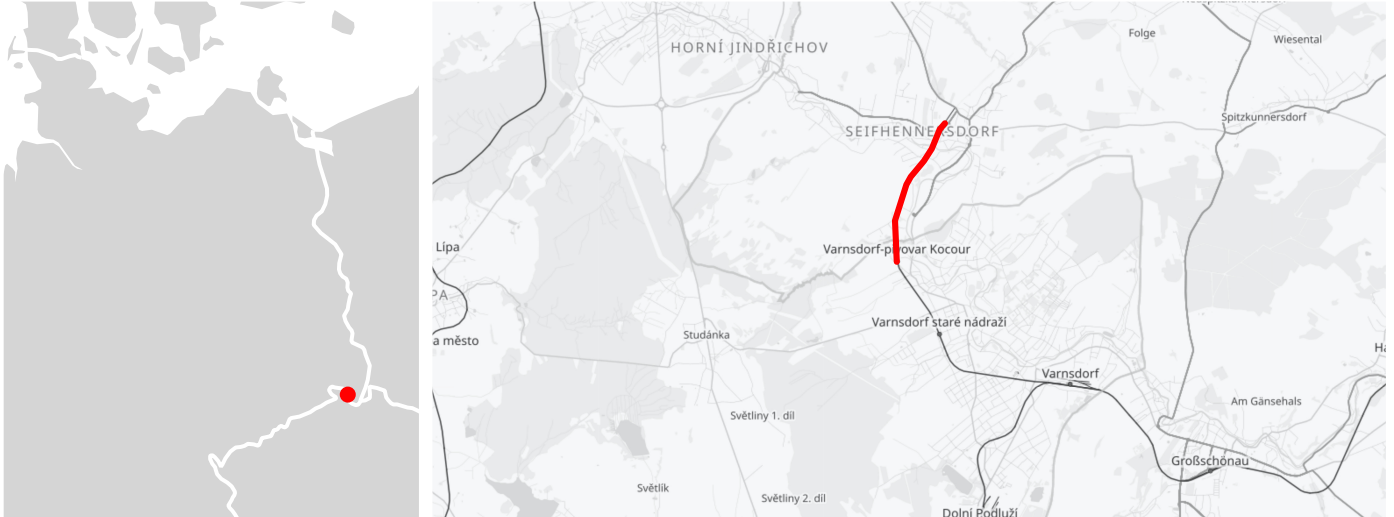
There are two rail bridges across the Danube between Bulgaria and Romania – Vidin-Calafat and Ruse-Giurgiu – and the lines to both are electrified on the Bulgarian side, but not on the Romanian side. This means passenger and freight trains have to switch to a diesel locomotive Golenți (near Calafat) – Craiova (100km), and Ruse via Giurgiu – Rădulești (65km) or Ruse via Giurgiu – Chiajna (84km), although a collapsed bridge at Grădiștea currently renders the latter inoperable. Road traffic at both crossings is prone to long delays, potentially rendering rail transport as a viable alternative, especially for the crossing at Ruse that would be used by Sofia – București trains.

What needs to be done: electrification of the lines Golenți – Craiova, Ruse – Rădulești and ideally also Giurgiu – Chiajna, so as to allow through trains to run without a change of locomotive



Seifhennersdorf-Varnsdorf

Missing Service



The passenger service from Seifhennersdorf (Germany) to Zittau (Germany) ran through Varnsdorf (Czechia), until the service was cut back to run only on the Zittau – Varnsdorf Pivovar Kocour section. That leaves Seifhennersdorf without any train connection. The reason for the lack of service on the 2.1km of track back into Germany is a problematic level crossing on the main road in Seifhennersdorf that needs to be rebuilt.

What needs to be done: rebuild the level crossing in Seifhennersdorf and extend services. No extra trains nor staff are needed to do this. Medium term extend services further from Seifhennersdorf to Eibau, to allow better connections towards Dresden



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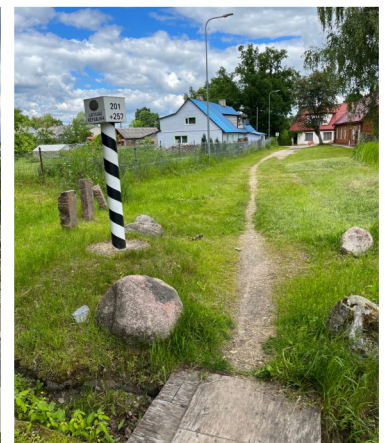
Tallinn-Valga-Rīga

Poor Timetable



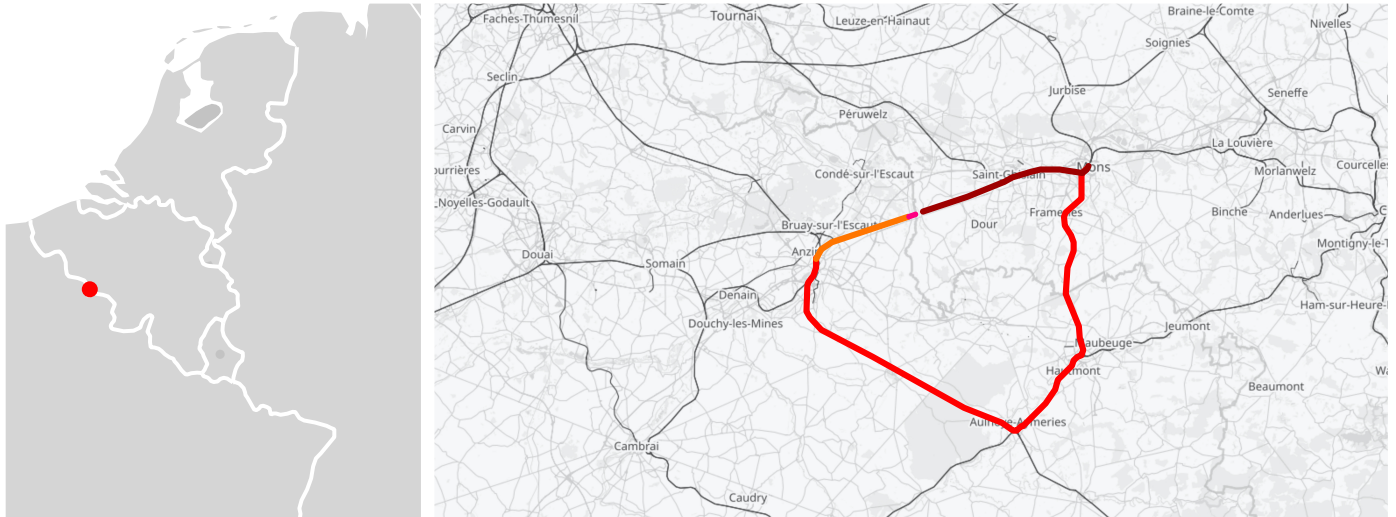
The only border in the Baltic states with a daily cross border service is between Estonia and Latvia, at the border station Valga, but the connection is let down by a poor timetable. Tallinn – Rīga connections are missed in Valga by 51 minutes southbound, and 39 minutes northbound, instead meaning passengers have to wait 3 hours 59 minutes when heading southbound and 2 hours 43 minutes going northbound for connecting trains.

What needs to be done: coordinate timetables between the Estonian operator Elron and Latvia operator Pasažieru vilciens to provide passengers with an easy and swift change of trains at Valga. Medium term extend Rīga – Valga trains as far as Tartu, Estonia's second city (84km)



Valenciennes-Mons

Missing Link and Missing Service



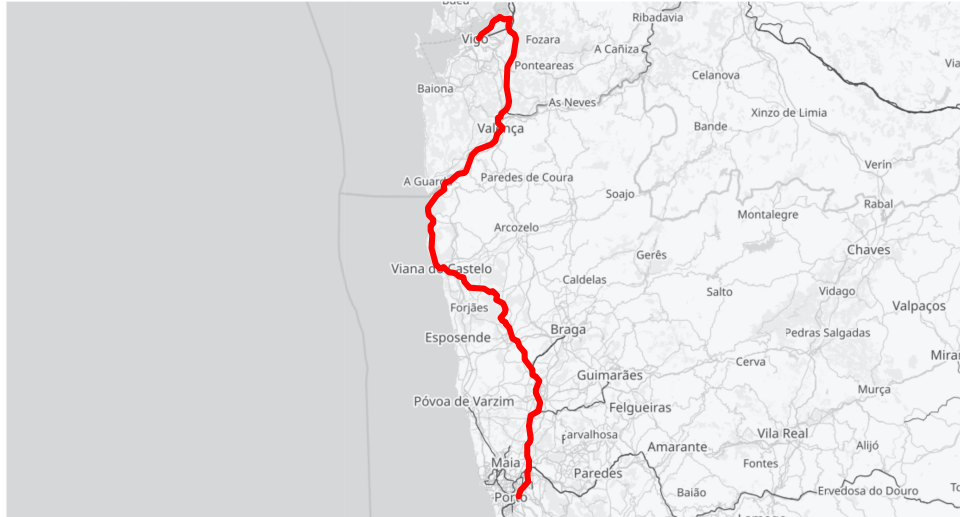
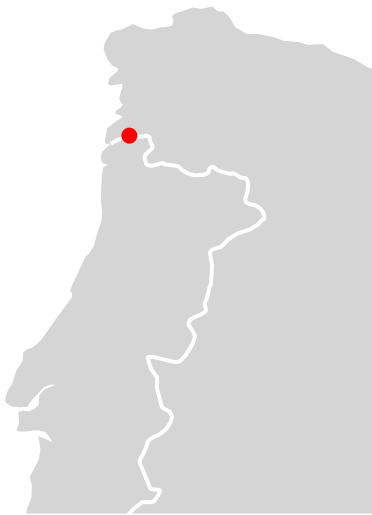
Valenciennes (France) – Mons (Belgium) is possible today crossing the border at Quévy, but with just 2 trains per day each way. Even that minimal service is slated for closure in December 2022. The more direct route between the two cities and onwards to Bruxelles - via Crespin and Quiévrain - is currently not possible as 2km of track are missing at the border. This means that Valenciennes, location of the European Union Agency for Railways, will only be connected to Belgium via long detours either through Lille or through Charleroi.

What needs to be done: maintain and increase the frequencies at the Quévy border, ideally with a train every two hours, allowing connections at either Aulnoye or Maubeuge for Valenciennes, and medium term rehabilitate the line via Quiévrain



Vigo-Porto

Missing Electric Trains



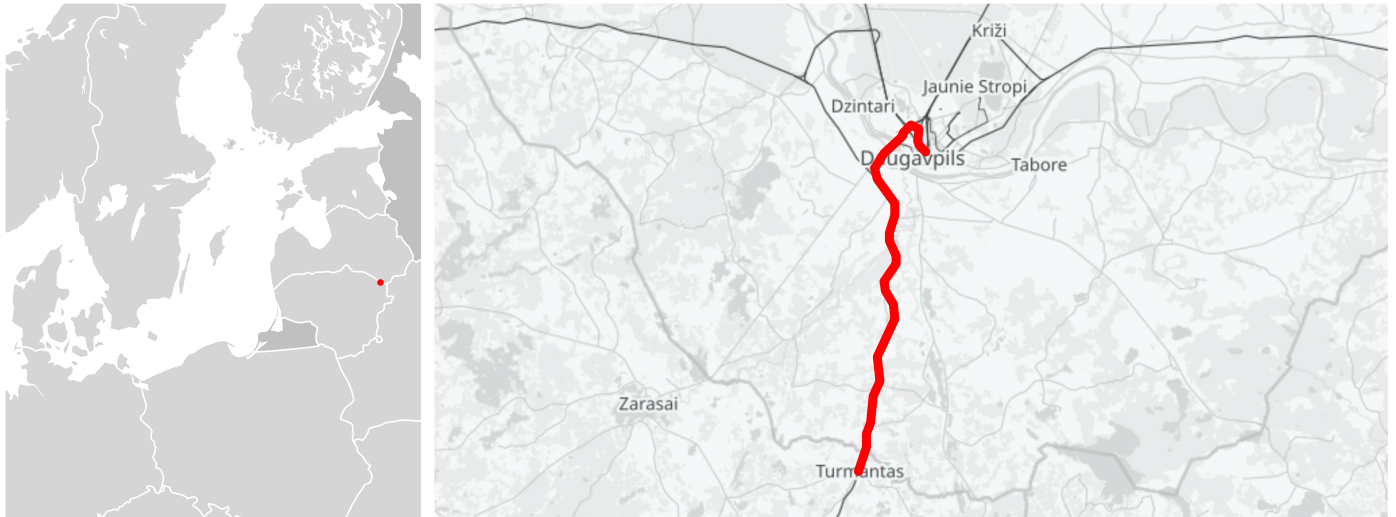
Electrification of the Minho Line between Porto and Valença, at the Portugal-Spain border, was completed in 2021, and was funded by the EU. The line on the Spanish side of the border between Tui and Vigo-Guixar is likewise electrified. But because neither CP (Portuguese railways) nor Renfe (Spanish railways) own any regional trains compatible with the electrification and signalling systems on the other side of the border, polluting diesel trains that date from the early 1980s are deployed on the route instead – and run for 170km under electric wires. This also means the service on the line is irregular – just 2 trains per day.

What needs to be done: procurement of new electric trains for cross border operation, or installation of Portuguese signalling equipment in Spanish trains that are already capable of running on Portuguese electrification system



Vilnius-Turmantas-Daugavpils

Missing Service



No passenger trains cross the Lithuania – Latvia border at all, because the former Vilnius (Lithuania) – Daugavpils (Latvia) service has been cut back to Turmantas, the final station on the Lithuanian side. This leaves Turmantas (population: 286) with 6 daily trains to Vilnius, and Daugavpils (population: 80000, Latvia's second city), and just 25.2km track distance from Turmantas, with none. Trains and staff to run the service exist already, for the trains wait for hours in Turmantas before returning to Vilnius. At present people take a bus on dirt roads to Zemgale and walk across the border to Turmantas.

What needs to be done: extend services from Turmantas to Daugavpils. The only cost is fuel for the diesel train, as adequate numbers of trains and staff exist for the service already



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