

Rail Baltica Growth Corridor WP5 Connectivity Pilot

Report / Working Package Milestone Output

Marketing concept for extension of transnational travel information system

The Rail Baltica Growth Corridor Travel Information Network (RBGC TIN) is not an end in itself. It shall have a direct benefit for the customers and the providers of travel planning services. In the end the extended services based on TIN shall help to promote usage of public transport by showing the easy accessibility of regions by public transport. Referring to the former milestone Catalogue of Existing Travel Information Systems it can be found that the field of currently available travel planning services in the Baltic Sea region is quite heterogeneous. So an overall marketing concept has to take into account several different prerequisites.

1. Background

For understanding the prerequisites, the structure and mode of operation of the TIN has to be understood. TIN is technically based on EU-Spirit which is a network of already existing internet-based travel planning services. There are partners having their own website that customers can use for finding travel and time table information. Each partner and website covers a certain area with information on

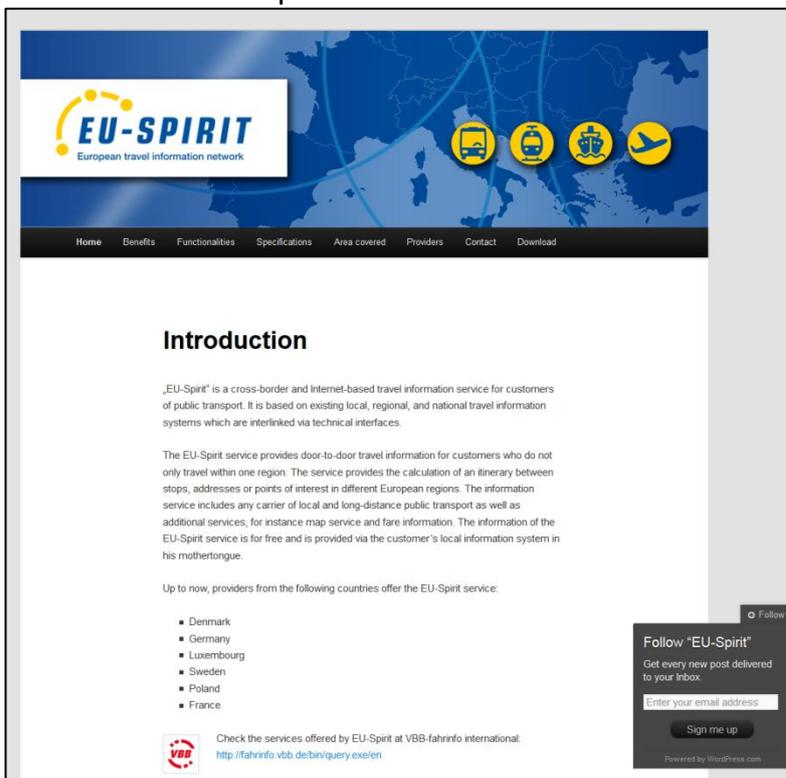
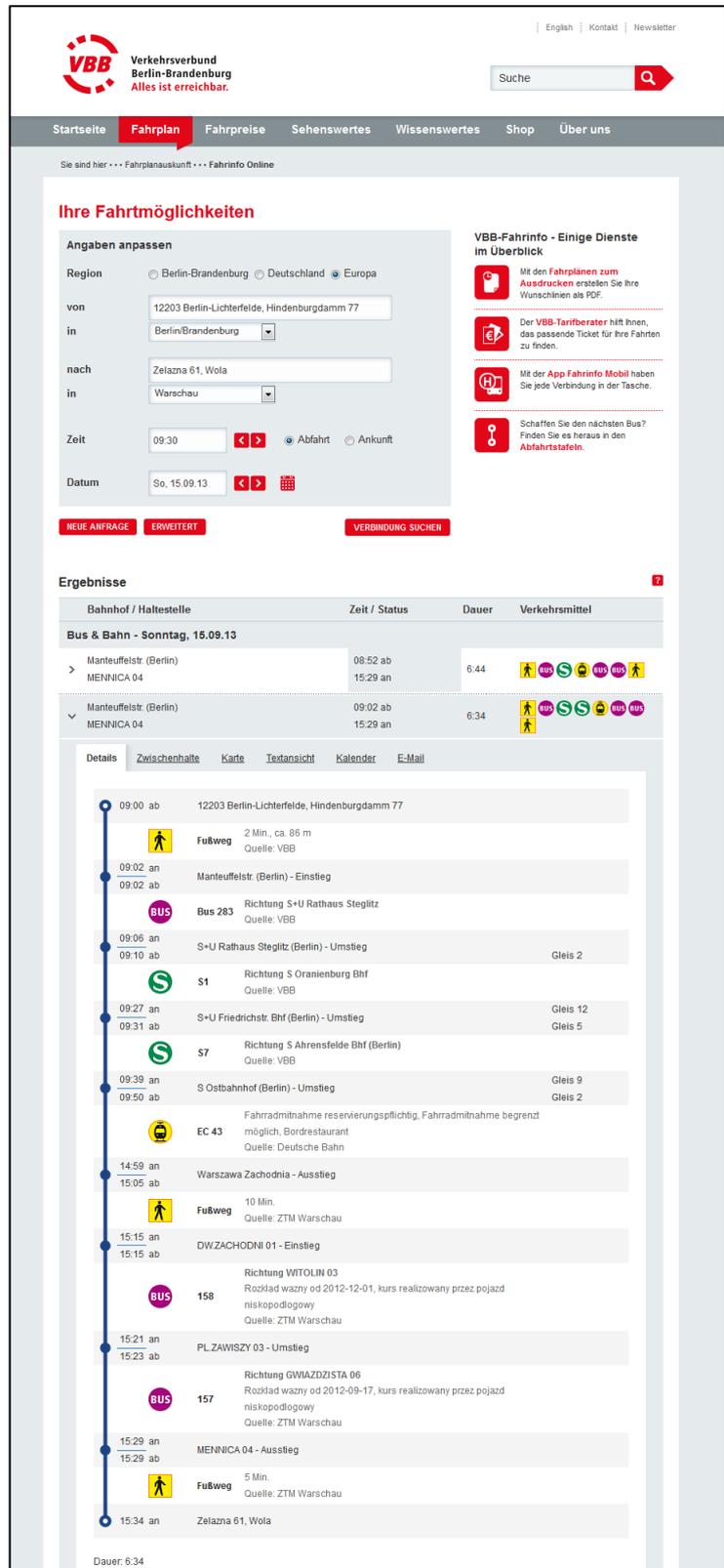


Fig. 1: EU-Spirit website

public transport and the services are independent from each other; e.g. there is VBB's website (VBB.de), a Finnish website (matka.fi), a Polish one (Jakdojade.pl) etc.. So each partner is responsible for its own service to keep it up-to-date and running.

These different websites are connected with each other using EU-Spirit. This means there are technical interfaces (so called "API"s) which allow each participating website to send requests and answers to each other via EU-Spirit. The interfaces exist between each travel

planner and the central EU-Spirit components. The central EU-Spirit components handle the connection requests a customer places and distribute them between the partners' travel planners. So from the technical point of view the central EU-Spirit components are "only" a broker. From the organizational point of view EU-Spirit is a network with independent partners. The relationship to the customers, design aspects, language etc. are handled by EU-Spirit partners themselves. Although using EU-Spirit technology this does not necessarily have to be visible to the customer. EU-Spirit is more a B2B solution. The official central EU-Spirit website (eu-spirit.eu) has no customer frontend (it is planned to have one as a B2B demo case only), but all necessary information for new partners to inform themselves about EU-Spirit and to join the network.



The screenshot shows the VBB (Verkehrsverbund Berlin-Brandenburg) website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation links for 'Startseite', 'Fahrplan', 'Fahrpreise', 'Sehenswertes', 'Wissenswertes', 'Shop', and 'Über uns'. The main content area is titled 'Ihre Fahrtmöglichkeiten' and includes a search form with fields for 'Region' (Berlin-Brandenburg, Deutschland, Europa), 'von' (12203 Berlin-Lichterfelde, Hindenburgdamm 77), 'in' (Berlin/Brandenburg), 'nach' (Zelazna 61, Wola), 'in' (Warschau), 'Zeit' (09:30), and 'Datum' (So, 15.09.13). Below the search form are buttons for 'NEUE ANFRAGE', 'ERWEITERT', and 'VERBINDUNG SUCHEN'. The search results are displayed in a table with columns for 'Bahnhof / Haltestelle', 'Zeit / Status', 'Dauer', and 'Verkehrsmittel'. The results show a route starting at Manteuffelstr. (Berlin) and ending at Zelazna 61, Wola, with a total duration of 6:34. The route includes several bus and train segments, such as Bus 283, S1, S7, EC 43, and Bus 158. A detailed view of the route is shown below the table, with a vertical timeline and icons for each mode of transport.

Bahnhof / Haltestelle	Zeit / Status	Dauer	Verkehrsmittel
Bus & Bahn - Sonntag, 15.09.13			
> Manteuffelstr. (Berlin) MENNICA 04	08:52 ab 15:29 an	6:44	Bus, Bahn, S-Bahn, U-Bahn, Tram, Fahrrad
< Manteuffelstr. (Berlin) MENNICA 04	09:02 ab 15:29 an	6:34	Bus, Bahn, S-Bahn, U-Bahn, Tram, Fahrrad

Fig. 2: Usage of EU-Spirit in VBB's travel planner

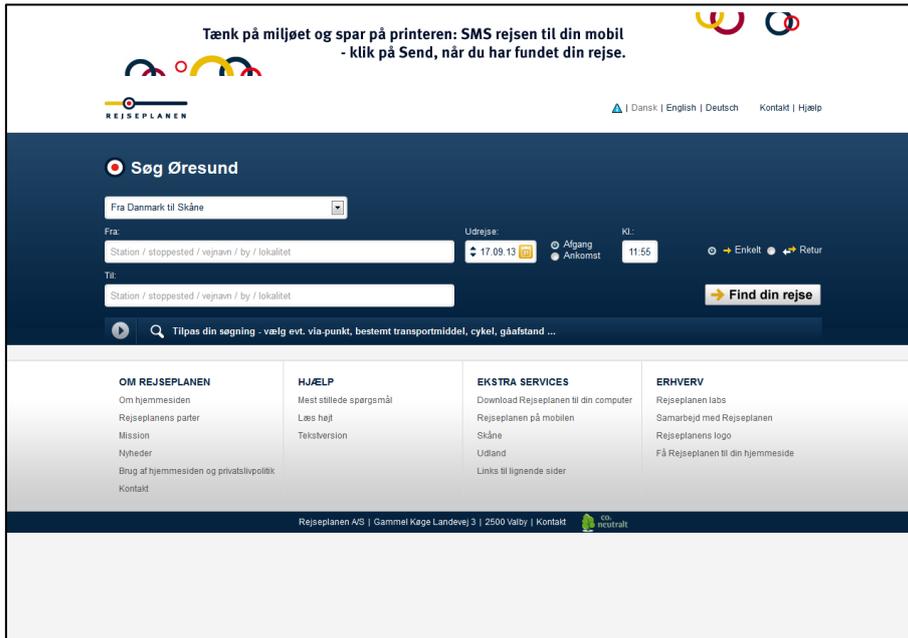


Fig. 3: Usage of EU-Spirit in Rejseplanen's travel planner across Oresund

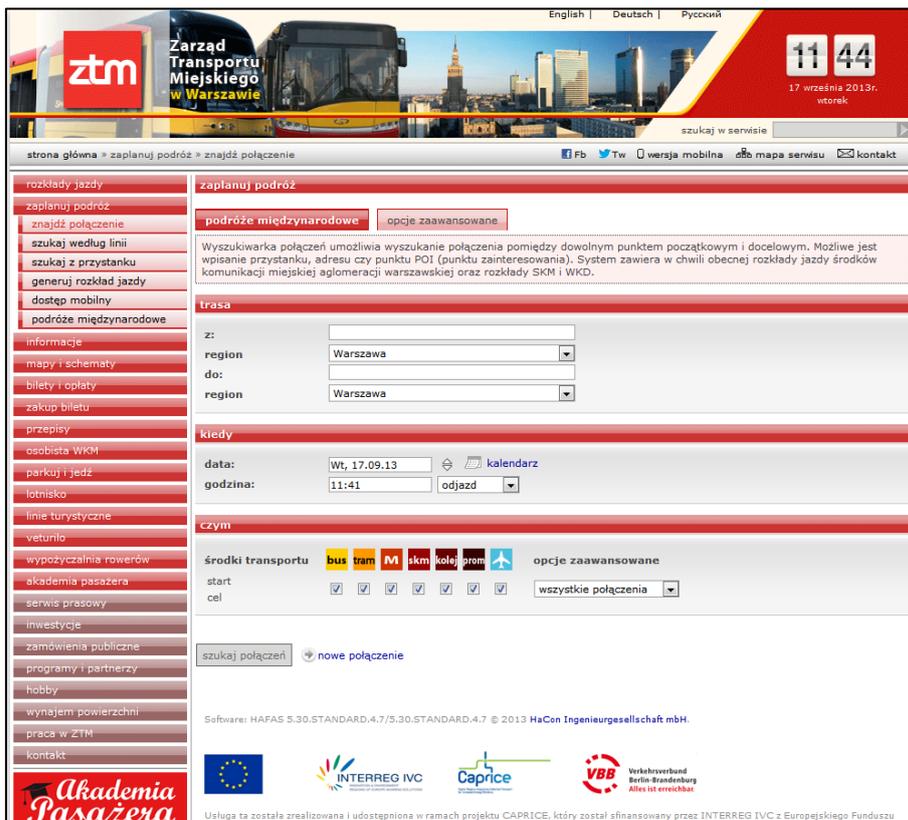


Fig. 4: Usage of EU-Spirit in the travel planner of ZTM Warszawa

2. Marketing

Marketing in this context focuses on three stakeholders:

- a) Customers (who will use the service)
- b) Information service providers (who will offer the service to their customers)
- c) Public bodies: regions, cities, transport authorities

Also in the main focus of extending the TIN towards a transnational information system around the whole Baltic Sea all three aspects are important. High customer demand for the service is always a good reason for joining a network. Without a remarkable demand in reality information service providers would see their initial invest quite critically.

Marketing for information service providers in this context has to accept this fact that there is a heterogeneous target group with different interests and prerequisites. EU-Spirit is always a mean to cross borders. But the most important border is always the nearest border. The longer a travel may take the more seldom it will be travelled. This is what everybody knows from daily life: commuting to a neighbouring region happens more often a year than travelling far away e.g. for business trips or holidays. That's why the connection to next neighbouring region is usually the most important for EU-Spirit partners. The most impressive case today is the connection between Denmark and South of Sweden via the so called Oresund Bridge. Since it was opened the number of daily commuters is heavily increasing. By this the demand for cross border time table information between Denmark and Sweden is increasing, too: the main reason for the providers of those information services to cooperate via EU-Spirit. They offer long-distance information via EU-Spirit, too, of course, but the main usage takes place on the regional level. So these are the main features to advertise for providers of travel information services: intense interconnection with their neighbours and at the same time opening local services to the rest of Europe.

So the main reasons for information service providers to join the network are:

- EU-Spirit is a technology to interconnect already existing travel planning services.
- Information of each information system can be used by other systems being connected.
- Customers can still use their well-known systems (no change needed) for the whole journey.
- Running costs are low, integrating new partners is easy.
- Although there are some integration costs when joining EU-Spirit / the TIN they are still much lower than doing a regular data pooling with the partners.
- The interconnection among the countries in the Baltic Sea region will grow.
- EU-Spirit supports many modern travel information aspects such as (among others) real-time information, different modes of transport, addresses etc.

When promoting EU-Spirit among information service providers the individual needs, prerequisites and aims of the potential partners have to be taken into consideration. For Helsinki e.g. the interconnection with Tallinn is most important and the information should be in Finish/Estonian language. For Western Poland the interconnection to the VBB area is most important and information should be in Polish/German language etc.. But they all can use the TIN by EU-Spirit to cover their needs. That's the main message.

Marketing also has to take into account different business models of the information service providers. It makes a big difference if the provider has to earn money with its service or not. Those who do not earn money by offering their travel planning services are in a bit better position. Usually they have a certain budget for maintaining and extending their service. This budget (optionally together with a project funding) can be sufficient to develop the interfaces and to pay the integration work.

Providers who earn money with their service may see the integration costs as an investment which has to amortize itself within a certain time. So for them it is not self-evident to spend that integration money although they could benefit from it a lot.

For the third group - public bodies like Cities, Regions or public transport authorities - the reasons for joining TIN and EU-Spirit are located on a more political level. They aim at improving the competitiveness and accessibility of their cities and regions. Showing that there is a good public transport service is an important aspect of their regional marketing strategy and to attract tourists and business people. The question in this case is how to bring the relevant information to customers. How do customers know where to look for local / regional public transport information? That's the point where the TIN and EU-Spirit can offer a solution: by integrating local / regional travel planning services into the TIN via EU-Spirit the information will be spread across Europe with very little efforts. People in other regions will find the relevant information via their local travel planner they are used to; and in their own language. By doing this the regions gain new economic potential as the major business hubs will be connected with the EU core.

Marketing among public bodies is - so to speak - a kind of location marketing. It is a chance for public bodies to make their cities and regions more accessible with little efforts.

3. Action Plan

A TIN marketing action plan focuses on two aspects:

- a) Promoting TIN among information service providers and public bodies
- b) Promoting the websites connected with TIN / EU-Spirit to customers to use it

For aspect a) there is the website eu-spirit.eu as a B2B platform where new partners can find all relevant information. VBB and all other partners will recommend to

potential new partners to visit the website. It has recently been re-launched and shall be technically extended in 2014 with a live demo show case including all technical features EU-Spirit supports.

Additionally VBB has produced some time ago an EU-Spirit brochure which gives a compact overview and which can be handed over to potential partners at any kind of meeting. The brochure is attached to this concept as an annex. The brochure is expected to be redesigned and reprinted in 2014.

Further more VBB as the coordinator of the network and on behalf of all EU-Spirit partners attends several conferences, meetings and other events during the year to present and promote EU-Spirit among a broad public. Especially experts in public transport and members of public bodies are addressed by presentations and live demos about EU-Spirit. But not only VBB as the EU-Spirit coordinator takes over this tasks; also other EU-Spirit members advertise the network among their neighbouring regions and countries.

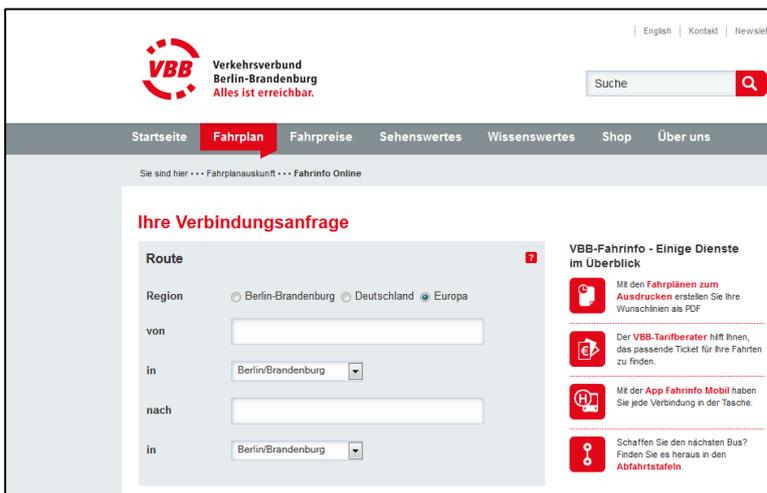


Fig. 5: VBB's travel planner offering connections to Europe

Finland via VBB's website. On the other side e.g. the provider of the Finish system could tell its customers that they can now find time table information from/to Estonia, Sweden and North Eastern Germany via the Finish website etc.. Which aspects of the network each partner promotes depends on regional aspects (usually it is the next neighbouring region which is mostly interesting for local customers). However, for example VBB's travel planner offers all supported regions already on the "home" page of the travel planner.

Another strategy to distribute EU-Spirit services to the broad public is to place hyperlinks (or small input masks) to the travel planners on other relevant websites. These websites can be for example information sites for touristic topics, websites of municipalities, websites promoting cultural events or websites of cinemas, museums etc. There are many more suitable topics. The advantage in all cases is that people can find travel information exactly at that place where they plan their activities. So people plan their activity (e.g. visiting a museum) and the important information "how to get there" is already available at the website where they are. They get an

To advertise the travel information services (the websites) to customers (b)) the measures are different. Taking into account the existence of several independent and different websites TIN consists of a regional/local advertisement is needed: e.g. VBB could tell customers from the Berlin/Brandenburg area that now they can find time table information also for Poland, the Baltic States and



Fig. 6: Hyperlink to VBB's travel planner (red button)

individual routing from their home address across borders directly to the museum (in this example). There are several technical solutions how to do this integration. If a hyperlink is used it directly transports the intended place and time to the travel planner in the best case. As an alternative the websites can include a small box with an input mask which is an identical small copy of the travel planner itself. People type in their home address and the time they

want to arrive. The rest is done by the travel planner and the TIN via EU-Spirit.

The general regional promotion can be done by advertising banners on the websites, flyers, posters, TV spots or any other media. This is up to the information service providers but things will be arranged with the other partners within the half-yearly EU-Spirit members meetings.