Economic and Social Council

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Rail Transport

Group of Experts on Passenger Information in Stations and Hubs

First session
Geneva, 8–10 July 2024
Item 3 of the provisional agenda
Background to the Group

Background information on passenger information in stations and hubs across the ECE region*

Revision

I. Introduction

1.   At the eighty-sixth session of the Inland Transport Committee, member States endorsed the establishment of a new Group of Experts on Passenger Information in Stations and Hubs as recommended by the Working Party on Rail Transport (ECE/TRANS/SC.2/243, para. 45); and the following terms of reference as contained in Annex V of ECE/TRANS/2024/10:

- Identify best practice in the provision of passenger information in railway stations and hubs;

- Develop a framework of common requirements for passenger information;

- Propose a way forward in the form of a report to the Working Party on Rail Transport for consideration.

II. Potential aspects to be considered for the framework of common requirements

2.   As background information for the work of this Group of Experts, the secretariat is presenting a list of potential aspects that could be considered in formulating a framework of common requirements for passenger information in railway stations and hubs under two main themes:

- Wayfinding in stations and hubs;

- Provision of train and related travel information.

*   This document has been submitted late for technical reasons.

3.   Enhancing wayfinding in stations and hubs involves developing an intuitive and passenger-centric system to assist travellers in navigating effectively. It should prioritise the diverse needs of passengers, especially those with reduced mobility or sensory impairments. This includes considerations on visual, auditory, and tactile cues, such as colour contrast, typography, pictograms, layout, and languages of signages, and how frequent these signages and tactile cues are provided to ensure inclusivity and ease of navigation.

4.   Train and related travel information on the other hand focusses on providing timetable, platform information, and assistance information for train passengers in normal daily running and in the event of travel disruptions. This information should take into account the operational requirements, for instance, change of platform due to late arrival of trains. It is important to consider how this information would be best conveyed to passengers to minimise travel disruption.

5.   The two themes mentioned above are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are complimentary in facilitating a smooth journey for passengers. Design principles in wayfinding signage may also be applied in the provision of train and related travel information. In addition, considering the growing reliance on digital technologies in travellers' lives, passenger information services should incorporate digital solutions, such as real-time data availability and mobile applications for information dissemination.

6.   Experts may wish to consider additional themes for consideration within the framework of the terms of reference for the group. It is not the aim of this Group of Experts to work towards uniformity in branding across railway stations and hubs, but rather to harmonise how information is conveyed to passengers to ensure that railway services are accessible to all.

III.   Wayfinding

A.   Visual considerations

7.   Visual considerations include, *inter alia*, colour contrasts, typography, pictograms, layout, and languages. Figure 1 below demonstrates the importance of sufficient colour contrast in ensuring legibility.

Figure 1
Effect of different colour contrast on legibility

Colour contrast in %
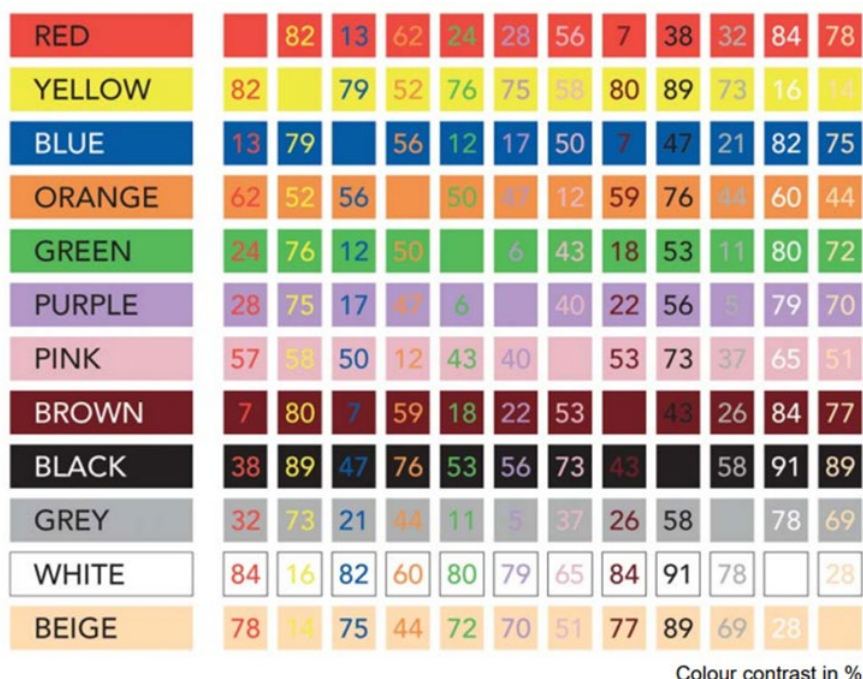
Source: IRS10181:2018, International Union of Railways

8.   Figure 2 below shows the effects of typography on legibility. This includes the choice of typeface, spacing, and lower/ upper case on different signages.
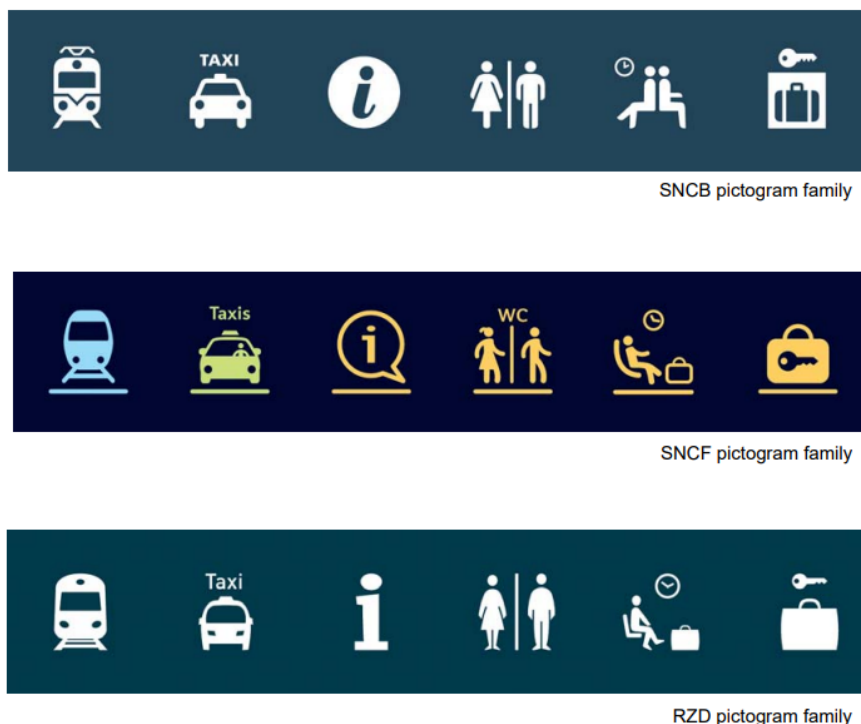
Figure 2
Effect of typography on legibility

Source: IRS10181:2018, International Union of Railways

9.   The use of pictograms can assist passengers with reading difficulties to navigate around stations. Figure 3 below depicts various pictograms used across different railway systems. While these pictograms are not identical, they share a significant level of similarity. This similarity could assist travellers in navigating in stations and hubs across various railway systems more easily.

Figure 3
Pictograms used in different railway systems

SNCB pictogram family

SNCF pictogram family

RZD pictogram family

Source: IRS10181:2018, International Union of Railways

10.   Figure 4 below shows an example of the layout and languages of signages. It is important to ensure pictograms and directional signs are clearly organised to improve legibility.

Figure 4
Layout of and languages on signages
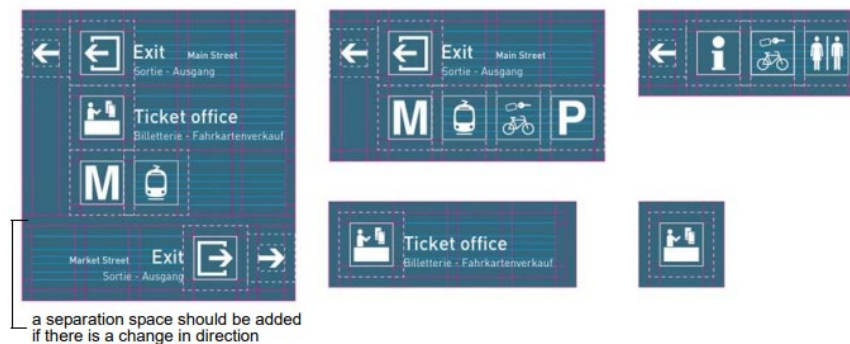
Source: IRS10181:2018, International Union of Railways

B.   Auditory considerations and tactile cues

11.   Barrier-free access should not be confined narrowly to physical infrastructure such as ramps and lifts, but also how information is provided to passengers with reduced mobility or sensory impairments (visual or hearing) to create truly barrier-free railway stations and hubs. These include tactile cues for functional information, call for aid, warnings indicating the boundary of a danger area (e.g. end of platform) etc.

12.   Audio information should also be clearly intelligible and provide guidance, as well as warnings to indicate a danger area. Reference may be made to the Speech Transmission Index for Public Address Systems (STI-PA) in terms of intelligibility.

IV. Train and related travel information

13. Real-time train schedules and other related travel information should be readily available. This includes information on the trains' destinations and en route stops, platform details, departure times etc. Information displays or boards containing this information should be strategically placed throughout the stations or hubs and easily legible from a distance. Audio announcements, particularly in the event of service disruption, such as delays or change of platform, should be made to compliment the information provided on the information displays or boards. However, to effectively convey the information without overwhelming passengers, it is important to strike a balance between providing the necessary details and avoid overloading information in the announcement, in addition to making the announcements concise and intelligible.

Figure 5
Platform display board at Basel Station

Source: Swiss Federal Railways

14. It is important to consider how this information is conveyed to passengers, particularly when there has been a disruption to train services, be it a delay, change in platform, or otherwise, and how passengers could seek assistance in such event. Integration with mobile applications should be considered, given the increasing reliance on mobile devices.

15. It is also important to ensure that train and related travel information are inclusive and accessible to persons with reduced mobility and sensory impairments. These may include barrier-free access to ticket sales counters/ kiosks and information desks, accessible to wheelchair users.

V. Spatial planning

16. The placement of information displays and boards should not only be strategically placed to ensure visibility, but also consider the flow of passengers within the station and platforms to minimise congestions and blockage.

17. Staffed information booths or kiosks are also crucial in high-traffic train stations and hubs in order to provide passengers with personalized assistance and essential information during disruptions. These booths or kiosks should be conveniently located within the station and easy to navigate to with legible signs and tactile cues.

VI. Next steps

18. Experts are requested to consider the information in this document and discuss whether there are areas that have been omitted or need modifying for the analysis going forward.