

Testing local public transport systems in major European cities

Methodology: How we tested

Without local public transport, traffic systems in our cities would collapse. That's because local public transport is vital for the entire flow of traffic since it can efficiently transport large numbers of people. However, to do that, public transport must be so attractive that people actually use it. But all too often, passengers are annoyed by "their" local public transport system. In the latest test of the quality of local public transport, conducted within the scope of EuroTEST, the European consumer protection test programme, ADAC and its 15 partner clubs in 14 countries attempted to find out where the problem lies. Testing was conducted from a passenger perspective.

Local public transports systems in 23 major European cities were put to the test: Amsterdam / the Netherlands, Berne / Switzerland, Brussels / Belgium, Budapest / Hungary, Helsinki / Finland, Copenhagen / Denmark, Lisbon / Portugal, Ljubljana / Slovenia, London / UK, Oslo / Norway, Paris / France, Prague / Czech Republic, Rome / Italy, Warsaw / Poland, Vienna / Austria, Zagreb / Croatia, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Cologne, Leipzig und Munich / all in Germany, as well as Barcelona and Madrid, both in Spain. The analysis was carried out in several steps between 24 October and 11 December 2009 and included the following categories:

- Travel time, such as journey time, number of changes, headway, operating hours (weighting: 35 percent)
- Changing, such as distance to walk, signposting, accessibility, link up with passenger cars and bicycles (15 percent)
- Information prior to and after the trip, i.e. notices, displays and announcements at stops and in vehicles, possibilities for buying tickets, online information (25 percent)
- Offer of tickets and cost of trips (25 percent)

ADAC commissioned the Department for Transportation Planning and Traffic Engineering at Stuttgart University led by Prof. Dr.-Ing. Markus Friedrich. The department focuses mainly on the development and analysis of models for multi-modal transport planning and modelling. The department's efforts to determine and evaluate the quality of services offered in road transport and local transport had a decisive role to play in shaping the German Guidelines for Integrated Network Design (RIN).

Practical testing was conducted in each city on the basis of a uniform scheme. Twelve stops were selected in each case which were distinguished according to number of passengers, changing function and number of transport systems. The inspectors travelled between these stops and care was taken to ensure that the share of different transport systems matched their actual use, and that in each city at least one mode of transport that is affected by road traffic, such as the bus, and one form that is not affected by road traffic, such as regional rail, were tested.

The next step involved gathering data on other connections, for instance, via the passenger information system. Using a standardised grid for all cities, inspection areas were determined and broken down into: city centre, inner city, city outskirts and greater city area. Seven test stops were then selected in each of these areas, once again using a standardised system. The biggest airport, the central train station and one major stop in the city centre were the other test stops. This resulted in a total of 31 stops for each city, between which 85 connections were tested for Thursday, 10 December 2009, during peak, medium and low traffic hours typical for each city.

The website of the respective linked transport system or the city transport company were used to retrieve information online. Marks were given for how easy it was to find the website, for the timetable information system, the offer of network maps for downloading, along with fare information and tickets. In cities with currencies other than the Euro, the prices found were calculated at the official exchange rate in effect on 26 November 2009.

In excess of 30,000 data records were collected and evaluated. Changes resulting from a change in schedule after the end of testing on 11 December 2009 were not considered. The evaluation led to ratings of Very Good, Good, Acceptable, Poor and Very Poor.