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# Open-access between Hamburg and Cologne

**In 2012, the Hamburg-Köln-Express (HKX) will start operations, thus breaking new ground for open-access operators in Germany. With three six-wagon trainsets, HKX will provide space and comfort combined with modern services on the long-distance route between Hamburg and Cologne.**

Although the railway sector deregulation in Germany started as early as 1996, very few attempts to break the dominance of Deutsche Bahn in long-distance travel have been made. Apart from the InterConnex of VeoliaTransdev running between Rostock, Berlin and Leipzig, so far no open-access operators have successfully joined the Intercity-market in Germany. In October 2009, HKX took up the challenge when it was founded as a joint venture by majority-shareholder Railroad Development Corporation, based in Pittsburgh, USA; Locomore Rail in Germany; and the British-Canadian investor and advisor Michael Schabas, who share the strong feeling that railway travel in Europe should be more competitive.

Looking at Great Britain as a compelling example of how an increase in open-access operators can raise the overall service quality in terms of number of connections, attractive pricing and on-board service, HKX is now setting up operations, which will start between Hamburg and Cologne in late-2012.

After several setbacks due to track conflicts which caused uncertainties over track availability and investments, HKX will run three six-wagon trains in each direction three times a day. At a top speed of 160km/h, the trains will cover the 450km distance between the two metropolitan areas in just over four hours, thus being almost equivalent to that of the

**HKX**  
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Deutsche Bahn ICE service. Stops will include Düsseldorf, Essen, Duisburg, Gelsenkirchen, Münster and Osnabrück, as well as three smaller stations in Hamburg in addition to the central Hauptbahnhof.

Each train will consist of six coaches taken from former Austrian Federal Railway type 4010 EMU, which will be drawn by a modern electric locomotive. The coaches were built

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between 1965 and 1978, and have always been recognised for their space and comfort as well as their excellent rolling stock quality.

Eighteen of the coaches are currently being refurbished and modernised by H. Cegielski in Poznan, Poland, where the old qualities of the coaches are being preserved and combined with new, modern features. For example, the type of seats and the spacious two-plus-one seating formation that allows additional space between the seats will not be changed. The old-

style seats are very comfortable and give wide spacing for storage of luggage directly next to each seat. Modern features to be added include LED reading lamps and electronic panels that indicate whether seats are reserved or taken. Wi-Fi will also be made available throughout the train. In addition, there will be new toilets, a wheelchair area, and a galley to store and prepare food for on-board service.

In terms of look, colour and fabric, the interior and exterior of the train will be rebranded to reflect the new HKX-design. The train exterior will be a striking deep plum colour and will display characteristic elements like the X of the HKX-logo. On the inside of the train, almost everything, from the wall panelling to the seat upholstery, will be new. Almost all seats will have desks for passengers to work at. The seat fabric, which is reused, has been newly woven and now shows coloured stripes that, together with the wall colouring, create a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. Moreover, the colours are used to differentiate between the two comfort classes, Premium and Basic, with the Premium colour being a little more subdued to give the impression of quiet and privacy.

Each train will be formed of one Premium-class and five Basic-class coaches. The comfort-class Premium will be the 'first-class' product with special service offerings like newspapers and meals served at the seat – all features that will be included in the ticket price. The Basic coaches will offer comfortable and spacious travel at a ticket price lower than that of the major competitor Deutsche Bahn. In Basic-





The exterior of a Basic-class coach of HKX

class there will also be a multipurpose compartment with space for bicycles, sports equipment, pushchairs and prams, along with family compartments and a special area for wheelchair users with a special lavatory nearby.

In general, the five major aspects that will differentiate HKX from the competitors are:

#### Price policy

The HKX price policy will be different from Deutsche Bahn. Entrance fares will be lower and demand-driven, meaning early bookers get the best price. There will be two kinds of tickets: X-tickets for a fixed train and travel time, for which the fare will be lowest, and the higher rate Flex-tickets, which allow for the change of several reservation features, including time, day or passenger, once without having to pay a fee.

#### Value for money

HKX will offer more value for money. The trains are very spacious with lots of legroom, and space for bulky objects. There will be Wi-Fi throughout the train and power sockets at

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almost every seat so that passengers will be able to work and access the internet during their journey. There will also be an 'at-the-seat' catering service on both comfort classes, with a meal included in the ticket for those travelling in Premium-class.

#### Easy booking service

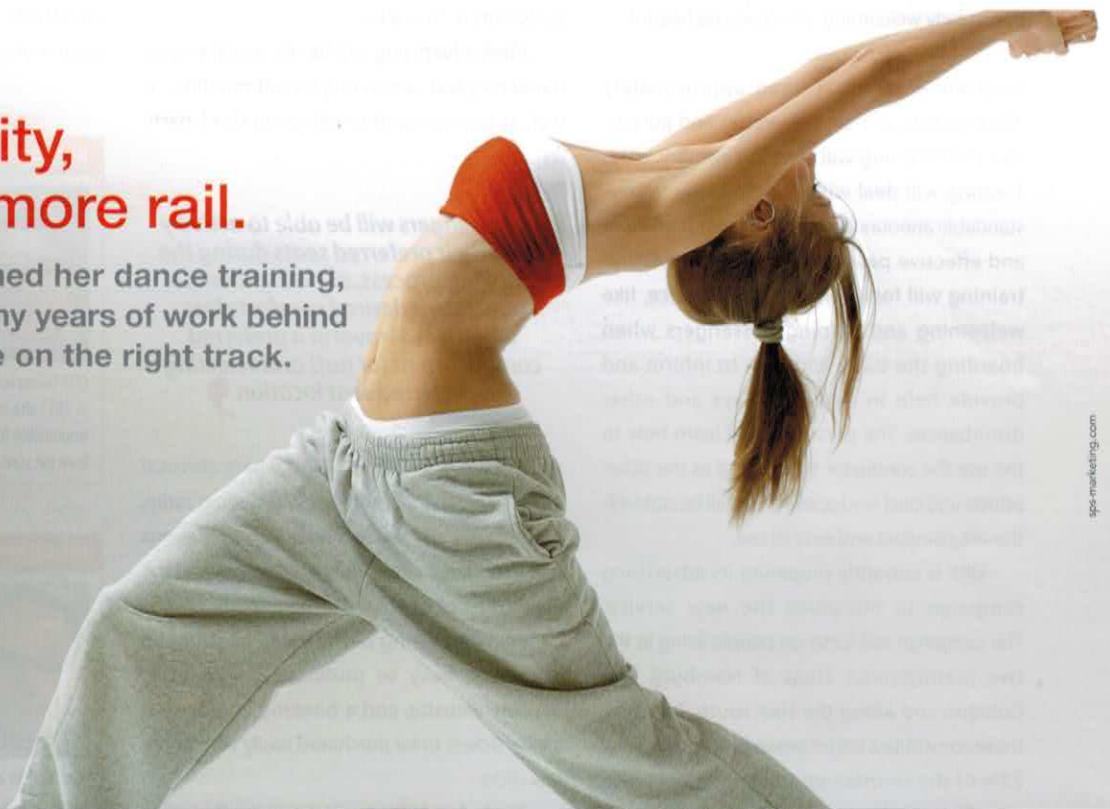
HKX will offer easy booking, with the main channel being via the internet. A hotline will provide additional service. And for spontaneous travelers, booking will be possible directly on trains, though at a somewhat higher rate.

#### Easy orientation

With HKX, passengers will be able to actively book their preferred seats during the booking process, allowing them to select their desired comfort class, whether to travel in a preferred compartment (or not) and selecting a preferred seat location. Special care has been taken to highlight all information relevant for boarding by pictograms as well as seat numbers on the outside and inside of the trains.

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The interior of a Basic-class coach of HKX

#### Excellent service

The biggest asset of HKX will be its personnel who will offer an exceptionally good on-board service. They were selected through a specially designed assessment process according to HKX specifications and will be trained to be particularly welcoming, attentive and helpful.

Meanwhile, HKX has hired approximately 30 employees as train purserettes and pursers, and their training will start in February 2012. Training will deal with how to make understandable announcements and provide efficient and effective passenger information. Other training will focus on excellent service, like welcoming and helping passengers when boarding the train, and how to inform and provide help in case of delays and other disturbances. The personnel will learn how to use the conductor tool as well as the ticket printer and card reader, which will all be state-of-the-art, compact and easy to use.

HKX is currently preparing its advertising campaign to introduce the new service. The campaign will focus on people living in the two metropolitan areas of Hamburg and Cologne and along the HKX route. Together these constitute a target group of approximately 25% of the German population, albeit with specific local characteristics, of which around 70% use the internet. Thus the campaign will not

be national, but regional and will make use of local and special events. Since the main sales-channel of HKX will be via its website, advertising will be heavily based on the internet. But where classical advertising channels are used, they will all have the objective to drive customers to the web.

Most advertising will be via search engine marketing and search engine optimisation, as well as banners and postings on third-party

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websites, e.g., Facebook. And where classical advertising channels are used, including radio, newspapers and posters near railway stations and in underground stations, QR codes and the web address of HKX will be shown. HKX is currently investing heavily into building an attractive, easy to understand and user-friendly website, and a booking engine that allows tickets to be purchased easily with only a few clicks.

But before HKX can start proving that more competition makes for better service, it has to

tackle one last hurdle: The trains have to receive homologation by the German Federal Railway Authority (Eisenbahn-Bundesamt (EBA)). The last tests are currently being run, and are proving successful, and since HKX is working together closely with the EBA, it is expected that sales and operations will start no later than the second quarter of 2012.

#### BIOGRAPHY



**Eva Kreienkamp** worked for big corporate companies in various management positions in finance, controlling, sales and marketing and as CEO of a marketing institute and event management agency before joining the Hamburg-Köln-Express GmbH in 2009 as CFO. Giving her longstanding expertise in sales and marketing, in 2011 she took over as CEO, a position in which she is now responsible for a successful positioning of the product right from the start.

#### BIOGRAPHY



**Carsten Carstensen** began his career in the rail industry in 1996. For many years he has worked in different management positions at Veolia Verkehr GmbH, mainly in the field of business development. With the experience of a successful re-launch of the InterConnex in 2006, he was founder and COO of Locomore Rail, which in 2009 began preparations for the Hamburg-Köln-Express GmbH, which Carsten Carstensen is now COO of.