Factsheet – stories of discrimination in train transport

Kevin Fermine, France
In June 2019, Kevin Fermine won a years-long legal battle against the French operator SCNF, who was forced to pay him 5,000€ in damages due to lack of access to toilets. Kevin, a university student, would frequently undertake 6-hours travels between Paris, where he was studying, to his hometown of Toulouse. He was refused access to toilets as they were not accessible to wheelchairs users. Due to this, he soiled himself multiple times.

Source: Kevin, handicapé, fait condamner la SCNF

Horst Frehe, Germany
In January 2019, Horst Frehe, the leader of the German Disability Council, was denied entry on an early morning train going from Bremen to Berlin.

Horst was on is way to meet the German justice ministry. As the meeting was quite early in the morning, he asked to board the first morning train, at 5h15 in the morning. Deutsche Bahn refused this request, as they did not want to make available assistance early in the morning. This meant that Mr Frehe has less freedom to travel because of his disability. Mr Frehe had to travel at night and book extra accommodation at his expense, in order to arrive to the meeting on time.

Source: Abgefahren: Rollstuhlfahrer wird der Einstieg in ICE am frühen Morgen verweigert

Charlotte Clasen, Denmark
In July 2017, Charlotte Clasen tried to board the train to go from Hjørring to Vidstrupwhat, two Danish towns separated by a 15-minute ride. However, she was barred entry by the staff, that claimed her electric scooter didn’t fit in the train. Ms Clasen’s disability means that she relies on her electric scooter for longer trips. This denial of entry means that, if she left the scooter behind, she would not be able to move past the train station.

Source: Ikke plads til elscooter: Charlotte kan ikke komme med nye tog
Sir David Adams, United Kingdom

1. Submitted by e-mail:

“My mother, who was totally blind and partially deaf, was not taken off the train when it arrived at its final destination. The train then pulled into the sidings and it was two hours before she was discovered, despite shouting. She never travelled by train again. “

2. Sir Adams also wrote to us to complain about the long waiting time to book assistance. As he travels with a guide dog, he needs to call to book Eurostar – there is no way to indicate it online. In July 2017 he need too call twice: one call lasted 35 minutes and was cut off and a follow up that took 40 minutes. This means it took 1 hour and 15 minutes to book a ticket.