

## EDITORIAL

As the New Year dawns and some of the implications of Brexit become just a little less opaque I am happy to report at least one travel law related experience that shows the benefit of being in the EU rather than out.

In October I travelled by train from Budapest to Timisoara in Romania. The landscape outside was not particularly inspiring but one interesting feature of the journey was the intense security at the Hungarian/Romanian border. The train halted for about 30 minutes in both directions as border guards patrolled the perimeter of the train with dogs while others searched underneath using mirrors – rather like the police used to search for IRA bombs under vehicles. Meanwhile more security personnel boarded the train and checked everyone's ID while still others brought on a small ladder so that they could look into the roof void of each compartment. It was an impressive show of the kind of border control I have not seen in Europe for many years. It was reminiscent of a train journey I made between Helsinki and Leningrad during the cold war when Soviet border guards undertook a thorough search of everything I was carrying even to the extent of squeezing my toothpaste tube to see what it contained! While not in the same league as the Soviets this more recent trip was a clear advert in favour of Schengen and the free movement of people, including tourists such as myself.

But that is simply an aside to the principal point of this piece which is that on the return journey the train arrived over two hours late at Keleti station in Budapest. And it is at this point that EU law is triggered. Thanks to Regulation (EC) No 1371/2007 on Rail Passengers' Rights and Obligations I am entitled to compensation for the delay. But having that right in law and enforcing it are two different things. I must admit that when I sent a letter to Hungarian Railways asking for my compensation I had no great confidence that they would even respond, never mind compensate me, not least because I had, with typical Anglo-Saxon arrogance written my letter entirely in English. If the boot had been on the other foot how would one of our railway companies have responded to a letter written in Hungarian asking for compensation?

But to my intense surprise I received a prompt reply, in almost perfect English, apologising profusely for the delay and offering me the compensation I had asked for. In terms of customer relations this is hard to beat. Given that they had provided an inferior service and

were now obligated by law to offer compensation for this then their response was as good as could be expected – a good recovery from a bad position. All this is in stark contrast to the treatment my daughter and I are receiving at the hands of one of our domestic rail companies. Both of us have separate complaints about the service we have received but despite numerous reminders over a period of several weeks we are each still waiting for an acknowledgement, let alone a resolution. We receive dozens of seductive emails telling us of their wonderful service and the great prices they offer but when the service is less than acceptable their customer service seems intent on emulating it. I suggest they take a leaf out of Hungarian Railways' book.

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As for the future as the TLQ moves into the New Year we will be publishing more in our comprehensive series of articles on PTD 2, plus articles on Airbnb and the legal implications of organising international sporting events. There will also be two articles on airline pricing – one from each side of the industry. The first looking at how airlines publish prices on their websites and the other examining how consumers take advantage of pricing mistakes on airline websites.

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