



by Dr. Semra Celik and Hans-Joachim Borck

# Deutsche Bahn Trainees against **Hatred** and **Violence**

It is a universally accepted fact that travel broadens the mind. There are common proverbs in many countries throughout the world which point out the educational benefits of travelling. When you travel, you get to know new places, make new friends, witness unfamiliar customs and come to realise that what may appear normal to us is considered highly extraordinary elsewhere. It is the fullness of new experiences that make a journey a special event, that teach the traveller to take a fresh look at himself and his environment.

Deutsche Bahn enables people of all ages to travel virtually the length and breadth of Germany, to get to know the country and the people who live there. However, for many young people Deutsche Bahn is also the first stage when they embark on their career, as the company is one of the largest providers of vocational training in Germany. In September 2006, no fewer than 2300 young people began a course of studies at the Deutsche Bahn academy of vocational studies or started an apprenticeship with Deutsche Bahn. While the final destination of this career journey may still be undecided, one thing is certain: in addition to providing vocational qualifications, Deutsche Bahn also endeavours to communicate social values, such as open-mindedness, tolerance and respect to these trainees.

## ► **Respect entails responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility (or CSR) is a buzzword which has played an increasingly important role in the economic policy sector in recent years. The basic concept for development of the CSR notion in Europe is the "Lisbon Strategy" resolved by the EU heads of state in the year 2000. The objective of that economic strategy is "to make the Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world – an economic area which is capable of achieving lasting economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion." (European Council 2000).

The idea behind the CSR concept is simple: business enterprises voluntarily integrate social and ecological aspects in their corporate activities and in their relations with other stakeholders. It is thus not a question of what business enterprises have to do, but rather what they can do.

We believe that it is easier for a business enterprise to succeed in a socially intact environment, so that social responsibility is seen as a central issue of our corporate policies. Our commitment to the environment, for example, goes far beyond satisfying the legally prescribed requirements.

Based on its deep-rooted awareness of its own social responsibility, Deutsche Bahn not only offers its employees numerous social benefits, but also encourages them to show social commitment.

After all, our employees serve as our ambassadors to everyone outside the company.

## ► **The Deutsche Bahn Group works and thinks globally**

With a workforce of around 229,000, Deutsche Bahn is one of the leading international providers of mobility and logistics services. With approximately 7,000 foreign employees from more than 100 different nations working in Germany alone and with more than five million customers daily from all over the globe, transnationality and cultural diversity are part and parcel of Deutsche Bahn's business.

As an actor in the transnational field, Deutsche Bahn is equally committed to all customers and employees. At the station, during the journey and also in our day-to-day organisational activities, it goes without saying that we take the requirements and wishes of our customers and employees seriously and treat every single person with respect, regardless of their faith, nationality or gender.

**“A wise person finds the best education in his travels.”**

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

We believe that business success and social commitment are inextricably linked. Deutsche Bahn consequently faces up to its social responsibility and has launched a number of projects and cooperative ventures to foster considerate cooperation, which shuns discrimination and violence. The DB Group supports numerous cultural, scientific and sports associations, initiatives and activities. For instance, our activities include sponsoring social initiatives like the street workers involved in the Off-Road Kids initiative, working together with the German Youth Institute and cooperating with many schools and colleges of higher education. The focus of these activities is primarily aimed at children and young people.

### ► Deutsche Bahn sets the course for more respect and joint commitment

We are convinced that the future of society – and thus also of our company – will be determined by the values of our young people. In the interests of anchoring crucial values such as openness to new ideas, tolerance, moral courage and respect in the minds of our future workforce, we teach our trainees the importance of social responsibility. As one of the largest employers and providers of vocational training in Germany, Deutsche Bahn launched the programme “Deutsche Bahn Trainees against Hatred and Violence” in the year 2000.

The programme encourages our trainees to take an active and creative look at the issues of violence, racism and xenophobia. It consists of the following elements:

- Seminar module as part of their vocational training
- Annual competition, with prizes awarded to the best entries
- Touring exhibition of the prize-winning projects

The programme is aimed at all vocational trainees of Deutsche Bahn during the first year of training. We actively encourage 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>-year trainees to participate in the capacity of mentors as well as trainees at approved social institutes. DB instructors also play an active role in the programme as multipliers.

During their first weeks at the company, the programme is presented to all new trainees as an integral part of their vocational training. This ensures that the ideas on which the programme is based are communicated to all trainees without exception. However, it is up to the individual trainee to decide whether or not to enter the competition. This is because we believe that the trainees can benefit from an in-depth consideration of the subjects of hatred and violence only if they themselves are prepared to think about these issues. Because of the voluntary nature of the competition, it is therefore not possible to give the trainees time off from their lessons for project work. Instead, they meet up in the evenings or at the weekend for these social activities.

In 2000, the Board of Management and the Group Works Council of DB AG signed the

### **Group Employer/ Council Agreement in favour of equality and considerate cooperation – and against racism and antidemocratic trends**

The objective of this agreement is

- to promote a sense of team spirit at the company,
- to provide effective protection against discrimination for our employees and customers,
- to counteract anti-democratic and neo-Nazi trends within the DB Group.

### ► The annual competition

The central element of the “Deutsche Bahn Trainees against Hatred and Violence” programme is an annual campaign competition which encourages young recruits to initiate projects aimed at counteracting racism, right-wing extremism, discrimination as well as mobbing at the workplace. This shows our trainees that social commitment is welcomed and practised at Deutsche Bahn.

### **The competition is effective on three levels:**

- On the personal level it develops intercultural and social skills. Working on a social project as part of a team promotes multi-ethnic cooperation, sensitises the trainees to the issues of racism, hatred and violence, and encourages them to show moral courage and stand up for their beliefs.
- The programme also triggers substantial impetus inside the company. The participating trainees come from all the companies in the DB Group, so that their work on the programme frequently causes the other employees at these companies to consider their own attitudes to the issues of violence and hatred. DB communication media such as BahnTV, Bahn-Net, Internet and the company newsletter “DB World” provide internal and external coverage of the projects, stressing that tolerance and respect are part of the Deutsche Bahn corporate philosophy. In tandem with supporting measures within the company, this helps to sensitise our employees to these subjects. Numerous employees are increasingly willing to speak out against offences perpetrated by right-wing extremists.
- The programme is aimed at achieving widespread public attention in order to generate important impetus amongst the general public. The programme was deliberately designed to ensure that it sets a clear signal for tolerance and diversity both inside and outside the company. The competition rules consequently specify public impact and networking as two central assessment criteria. The criterion

of “Public impact” is intended as an incentive for the trainees to initiate projects which also attract attention outside Deutsche Bahn, while the criterion of “Networking” is intended to promote the young people’s willingness to cooperate with each other.

The projects entered for the competition confirm that our trainees show a great deal of creativity and obvious enjoyment when it comes to meeting these requirements. By means of websites, promotional video clips, calendars, performances at railway stations, organising parties and other celebrations, billboard campaigns and even the use of slogans on locomotives, the trainees succeed in encouraging wide numbers of people to think about the questions of hatred and violence. They also actively accept the notion of cooperation right from the start, and many projects are the result of close cooperation with schools, sheltered workshops, penal institutions, media agencies, nurseries and hospitals.

Needless to say, DB provides assistance for trainees with the implementation of expensive and elaborate projects such as slogans on locomotives and nationwide billboard campaigns.

## A Highlight of the year 2005

In its capacity as mobility and logistics services provider, Deutsche Bahn travels the length and breadth of Germany, to every region throughout the country. Thanks to this nationwide representation (our locomotives are ideal advertising media), some of our trainees came up with the idea of using our trains to promote the idea of more tolerance throughout Germany. “Tony’s Team” from the DB training centre in Frankfurt am Main designed a series of European motifs which were then featured on a Class 101 locomotive, together with the slogan: “Deutsche Bahn Trainees against Hatred and Violence”. Thanks to the support of Roco Modelleisenbahn GmbH, the locomotive has been used in regular operations all over Germany since autumn 2005 and is also available as a collector’s version for model railway enthusiasts.



# 2005

## ► Appreciation encourages commitment

Our trainees have displayed impressive creativity in the development of numerous actions and projects over the past six years. In recognition of that commitment, Deutsche Bahn awards attractive prizes to the best projects. In 2006, the prizes awarded to the trainee groups included trips to the south of France and to Hungary, vouchers for sports stores, and tickets for the 2006 FIFA World Cup™. The venue for the prize-giving ceremony changes from year to year. This closing event gives our trainees the opportunity to exchange experiences and celebrate the competition final together with the trainers and sponsors.

## ► Our partners

Considerate and harmonious cooperation is based on a central concept of fairness and mutual trust. Deutsche Bahn also aims to promote this solidarity at the level of the initiators and is consequently always in search of partners who are willing to cooperate with us to maximise the effect of the programme. We enjoy the concrete and strategic support of two major rail workers’ trade unions and the Group Works Council. In addition to these longstanding cooperation agreements, we also welcome support for specific campaigns, such as the participation of pop stars or politicians.

## ► The programme competition is a real challenge – not only for the trainees...

Over the past six years, the programme and the competition have met with an excellent response from our trainees, who also use the competition as a platform where they can exchange their opinions and experiences in matters of moral courage as well as ethnic, religious and gender differences.

### Three tips for the execution of CSR projects in large business enterprises:

- Try to attract participants for your project from all sectors of the company. As well as the formal communication channels, this will also provide you with informal ways of promoting your project.
- Regularly seek feedback from the people you wish to reach with your project, as even the best theoretical plan also has to be successful in practice.
- Don’t forget to encourage the element of fun in working with young people.

The programme has evolved into an elementary part of vocational training at Deutsche Bahn. The path towards achieving that status was not always smooth and even today, the programme team still faces a number of challenges. For example, we believe it is necessary to set new key topics every year to ensure that we provide new impetus for our trainees’ social

commitment. As a result, the contents of the programme repeatedly have to be coordinated throughout the entire DB Group and organisational procedures updated. As working hours and processes vary throughout the DB Group, the flow of information is sometimes obstructed, making programme coordination more difficult.

We have set ourselves the target of inspiring all our trainees to show social commitment and we have already achieved a great deal in that respect. Since 2000, more than 6500 Deutsche Bahn trainees have taken part in the programme and submitted around 500 project ideas. However, one of our problems is that the programme team has only indirect contact to the trainees through the instructors. That is why we would like to encourage not only the trainees, but also the instructors to join in this programme. While we know that most instructors approve of the programme in theory, in the course of their day-to-day work they often simply do not have the time to actively support the social commitment of their trainees. The programme team therefore wants to increase its contact with the instructors to try and find mutually acceptable ways of strengthening the links between job and social commitment.

In addition to increasing internal lobbying, the programme has now also been opened up to partner companies in the social sector, such as the Deutsche Bahn health insurance fund (BAHN-BKK), the Railway Staff Social Services (BSW), DEVK insurance, and the Association of Sparda Banks.

## ► Widening the perspectives from national to European level

Positive feedback from many sources and offers to cooperate have convinced us that we are on the right track and have motivated us to develop the programme not only at national, but also at international level.

This is because an increasing number of people now live and work at different places. Crossing borders is just as much a part of everyday life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. In other words, diversity is a central element of our daily life, but it is not one without questions. Establishing a lasting positive concept of diversity requires linking up regional and national commitment at international level. We shall therefore endeavour to expand our programme cooperation in an international context and have taken the first steps towards doing so by attending the European Youth Forum run by the Council of Europe in Budapest last year. This is only the first step of many to follow.

## A Highlight of the year 2002

A ticket is one of the most important travel documents. Everyone who travels by rail picks up his ticket at least once during the journey. Some of our trainees decided to exploit the potential of these tickets in order to convey their message of tolerance and respect to as wide as possible an audience. They designed a ticket pouch which featured the following slogan :

**Peace always pays. Every day, Deutsche Bahn carries millions of passengers from different countries all over the world and of highly different nationalities.**

**We wish to speak out against racism and right-wing violence in Germany. With the help of our "Deutsche Bahn Trainees against Hatred and Violence", we wish to promote tolerance and humanity all over the world.**

2002



## Notes and references :

- European Council Lisbon Goals:  
[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/de/ec/00100-r1.do.htm](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/de/ec/00100-r1.do.htm)

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