



Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide

Ogilvy on In Transit

As the European Union prepares to celebrate 50 years of stability and economic prosperity, Ogilvy Brussels has decided to mark the occasion by sponsoring the [In Transit](#) community film and website.

Why did we choose to support this initiative? Firstly, because it comes from European citizens themselves, without prompting or direction from politicians or policy makers – though they wholeheartedly endorse the concept. Secondly, because in today's increasingly mobile and electronic world, a virtual train seems the ideal place to exchange ideas, insights and information on the European journey ahead of us.

By supporting a platform which fosters dialogue and debate on the issues facing Europe today – enlargement, integration, freedom of movement, the single market, Europe's role in the world, to name a few – we hope to promote open discussion and meaningful dialogue around the issues that matter to us and our clients.

Here at Ogilvy in Brussels, we believe that the most effective way to convey a message is by telling a story. So here is my personal story which explains why I was so drawn to the In Transit project.....

Just over 20 years ago, I travelled as a student by train across Europe. Except of course Europe was not Europe as we know it today, but a divided Europe of East and West. It was impossible to move freely between the two, but with a bit of planning you could apply for a visa and venture across the Iron Curtain. I decided to travel via Hungary.

On the long train journey from Athens to Budapest I met Jan, a Czech student returning from a visit to the isolated monasteries in the mountains of Northern Greece. I discovered that was one place in Western Europe a female couldn't go! On that journey, I and my travel companion also discovered the hospitality of a fellow European citizen from behind the Iron Curtain. We hadn't prepared enough food or drink for the journey across Greece and what was then still Yugoslavia, so Jan invited us to share his modest provisions. We also shared accounts of our lives in the East and West. He told us how he was stopping in Budapest to stock up on provisions for his family that they couldn't get at home – a family he had been obliged to leave behind so he wouldn't be tempted to "defect" to the West. After many hours of sharing our different perspectives, we eventually said a fond farewell in Budapest and continued our separate ways. I never forgot that glimpse into the life of an East European student on the "other side" of Europe. Nor did I forget subsequent encounters on train journeys through the Balkans, Baltic States, Russia and Turkey. But those are stories for another occasion.

I could not have imagined that less than 5 years later we would watch the Berlin Wall come down and borders open all along the Iron Curtain. Nor could I have imagined that 10 countries from the former Eastern Bloc would eventually join the EU.

So on the 50th anniversary of the European Union, in a reunited Europe and a globally connected communications world, it seems to me particularly apt that European youth are boarding a virtual train to debate the direction Europe is taking and their journeys within it.

Ogilvy Public Relations is delighted to be the privileged communications sponsor of the In Transit project, launched in the European Parliament. We hope you enjoy the experience. www.in-transit.org

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