

Hardly had the rail been discovered transport, when a real boom started in the second half of the 19th century: railway company shares were an immediate hit, but not all of the many companies managed to survive. The railway system was nationalised.

Very soon a dense rail network spanned the Danube Monarchy. Its uniformity can still be seen today: railway buildings that look just the same in Southern Tyrol as in Galicia, narrow gauge railways that have the same narrow gauge width of 760 millimetres throughout all the states of the former Habsburg Empire. In fact, it is actually called a „Bosnian“ gauge.

The new mode of transport soon had to meet military requirements in addition to civilian transport tasks. For this reason, a city railway was built to traverse Vienna, so that troops could be transported through the city as quickly as possible.

In 1912 began the electrification of the railway. Starting in the west with the Karwendelbahn in Tyrol, the electrical lines only reached the federal capital after the Second World War.

The network of Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) now mainly consists of the Westbahn (Western Railway) between Vienna and Vorarlberg, and the Südbahn (Southern Railway) between Vienna and Carinthia as the main lines. Connecting routes such as the Brenner, the Tauern and the Pyhrnbahn cross the Alps.

Branch line found few attraction

The ÖBB paid little attention to the regional network after the Second World War, causing a vicious circle of fewer passengers and fewer offers: speed restrictions made travelling there increasingly less attractive, so the ÖBB continued to reduce traffic. Again and again there were waves of decreasing usage, and most recently a number of branch lines in Lower Austria were sold to the state for the symbolic price of one euro. Although the state had previously announced that none of the acquired rail lines would be shut down, in actual fact only one route, the Mariazellerbahn, is still in daily operation. A complete regionalisation of funding for regional traffic like in Germany does not exist in Austria. Of the 6,710 km of tracks belonging to the Austrian na-

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