

***Declaration by transport ministers
on international contingency measures on
Rail Freight Corridors
Rhine-Alpine and North Sea - Mediterranean***

23 May 2018

Introduction

The Rhine-Alpine rail freight corridor is the busiest of all the EU rail freight corridors and acts as a pillar for rail freight transport between key economic centres in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. As a key section of this corridor, the Upper Rhine line between Karlsruhe and Basel is one of Europe's most heavily used rail lines with up to 200 freight trains each day running in addition to a large number of international, long distance and regional passenger trains.

The closure of the line at Rastatt between 12 August and 1 October 2017 as a result of subsidence during construction works to upgrade this line to four tracks to provide additional capacity for rail freight therefore had notable consequences for transport and rail customers in regions adjacent to the corridor. During the seven-week closure, cross Alpine freight movements by rail on this corridor were reduced by almost one third, particularly those between the North Sea ports and destinations in Switzerland and northern Italy, as described in detail in the 2017 Annual Report of the RFC Rhine-Alpine. According to a comprehensive review with stakeholders, one of the causes for the traffic reduction was that not all the deviation routes met the same technical parameters, as well as shortage of both available drivers and authorised locomotives on deviation routes. During the line closure, the use of deviation routes by diverted freight trains had increased over the first five weeks of the incident before levelling off. This indicates that there were several limiting factors including the international management of this incident.

The ministers signing this declaration recognise the joint efforts of all those involved, particularly the infrastructure managers, railway undertakings and (intermodal) operators: we thank them for the fact that a significant number of international freight trains on this route arrived at their destinations during this period, serving their customers' needs.

The Rastatt incident has highlighted that the railway sector had not been adequately prepared for incidents of this kind. This calls for additional and appropriate measures and especially for the establishment of a suitable contingency management process to safeguard operability in such circumstances and to avoid a repetition of the situation experienced during the Rastatt incident. Efforts are necessary to improve the reputation of rail freight again. The lessons learned during the Rastatt incident should help to improve international incident management procedures in Europe in general.

At European level and based on a proposal from Rail Freight Corridor Rhine-Alpine (RFC RALP), all European Infrastructure Managers have developed a handbook on international contingency management. A first draft of the handbook was presented to the European Commission and a revised version including feedback from the whole sector has been adopted during the General Assembly of RailNetEurope on 16 May 2018. The infrastructure managers of the rail freight corridors Rhine Alpine and North Sea Mediterranean will include the handbook in their procedures vis a vis the railway undertakings by referring to it in the respective corridor information documents and the respective network statements.

The Declaration does not create any legal or financial obligations for any party.

We, the Transport Ministers of the countries involved in Rail Freight Corridors Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean emphasize the importance of close collaboration between our countries and the relevant stakeholders in the event of a major incident on these Corridors and therefore we:

1. **Acknowledge** that the existing corridor organisations set up in accordance with Regulation 913/2010 of the European Parliament and the Council dated 22 September 2010 constitute the suitable bodies within which to ensure this involvement.
2. **Recognise** the content and objectives of the "Declaration of Rotterdam on Rail Freight Corridors to boost international freight" from the EU ministers plus Norway and Switzerland dated 21 June 2016 and the railway sector statement "Boosting international freight" and its priorities.
3. **Acknowledge** that the management of an event of this magnitude cannot be dealt with merely at a national level due to its substantial impact on international rail freight transport, but instead requires the support of all the countries and infrastructure managers affected and close co-operation between railway undertakings in the organisation of re-routings.
4. **Recognise** that operational connections between the Rhine-Alpine Corridor and the North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor must be improved and that this requires closer and more regular cooperation than achieved so far at all levels between the two corridors, with the aim of ensuring that lines become fully or partially useable as quickly as possible, following interruptions due to force majeure.
5. **Endeavour** to improve interoperability between the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean Rail Freight Corridors including the investigation of improvements of relevant infrastructure parameters on the relevant deviation routes.
6. **Acknowledge** that in the event of closure due to an incident, the international incident management by the leading infrastructure manager requires quick decisions to be made regarding contingency measures. We request that the full national and international impact on the rail freight transportation market be taken into account as far as possible in this process. We recognise further this information sharing should be facilitated by the existing Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean rail freight corridors through the processes specified in the Handbook on international contingency management.

We, the Transport Ministers support the ongoing efforts made by the infrastructure managers within the organisational framework of the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean rail freight corridors since Rastatt to improve traffic management in the event of disruption and thereby improve the reliability and availability of European rail freight corridors and its players, and therefore

7. **Support** the development of the common provisions to apply the Handbook on international contingency management as adopted on 16 May 2018 by the general assembly of the European Infrastructure Managers cooperating in RailNetEurope on national level, **recognise** it as key element to improve international incident management, and **seek** to adopt the framework conditions to develop clear rules for allocating capacity for the available train paths in the event of an incident, and for non-discriminatory allocating capacity between the railway undertakings and the diverted services and the services that are allocated train paths on the diversion route in the normal timetable.
8. **Support** ongoing efforts made by the infrastructure managers and Rail Net Europe to improve international traffic management cooperation in the event of disruption and thereby improve the reliability and availability of European rail freight.
9. **Noting** in this regard the importance of enhancing digital exchange of data in the logistic chain and the recommendation that the Network of Executive Boards adopted 7th February 2018 in support.
10. **Support** the development of re-routing overviews and re-routing scenarios by the infrastructure managers for the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean Rail Freight Corridors for the first time by end of 2018 with a comprehensive corridor diversion overview, making them available to all corridor users for planned as well as unforeseen line closures for all sections of both rail freight corridors, and that defines routes for the diversion of corridor freight trains. This diversion overview has to provide the RUs with detailed information based on European standards on the operational parameters available on the diversion routes, such as train control systems, power systems, loading gauges, indication of capacities, maximum train lengths and theoretical travel times.
11. **Invite** the Railway Undertakings to examine such re-routing overviews developed by the Infrastructure Managers and to give feedback for their improvement, while asking them to use the re-routing overviews to improve their own international contingency management plans.
12. **Support** continued work on cross-acceptance of operating rules and the development of specific vehicle authorisation conditions consistent with the European framework in the event of incidents on the diversion routes in accordance with existing legislation as defined in the re-routing overview by the Transport Ministries together with National Safety Agencies, and in cooperation with the European Commission and the European Union Agency for Railways, the Infrastructure Managers and the Railway Undertakings.
13. **Welcome** initiatives proposed by the European Commission and European Union Agency for Railways to progress on cross-border operational and interoperability issues.

14. **Aim at** introducing standardised train control systems (on-board units), operational rules for managing rail traffic and standardised production for railway undertakings, respecting the deadlines both from the European Deployment Plan for ERTMS of January 2017 and national implementation plans.
15. **Invite** the European Commission to conduct, in consultation with the stakeholders involved in Rail Freight Corridors Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean, an analysis in order to achieve more flexibility of the train driver language requirements while ensuring a sufficient safety level, and support and initiate activities regarding the analysis of possible derogations already covered by the directive.
16. **Support** the efforts on operational rules for both braking sheets and tail signals on the corridor lines as well as for the deviation routes detailed in the re-routing overview in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders to improve operational efficiency.
17. **Facilitate** the framework conditions for a common approach through the Infrastructure Managers for planning and scheduling of engineering work along the corridors, in accordance with Annex VII 2012/34/EU as modified as well as Regulation 913/2010 in close collaboration with customers, particularly when carrying out works while lines are in operation.
18. **Recommend** that the Executive Boards of the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean corridors monitor the developments of points 7 to 17 of this declaration within the framework of existing reporting activities, e.g. the annual reports.
19. **Confirm** that the implementation of the objectives set by the Rotterdam Declaration of 21 June 2016 “Rail Freight Corridors to boost international freight” will continue and thereby decisively contribute to enhancing the performance of rail freight in Europe, with the current focus on the pilot process on timetable review, the harmonization of operational rules and technical requirements of the Rail Freight Corridors, the sensible use of digital data for the enhancement of production processes and the advancement of development targets including key performance indicators for the Rail Freight Corridors.