

Easier, faster, safer

RFC North Sea - Med 2021 Annual Report



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Message from the Presidents and Managing Director



Cooperation was the keyword in 2021

No one has forgotten the two major disasters that dramatically impacted international traffic on the lines of the Corridor. The first was the derailment of a phosphoric acid train in France, at Rumigny, between Valenciennes and Charleville-Mezières. The consequence was the closure of the 'Artère Nord-Est' for many weeks.

The second was the floods that hit Belgium hard and resulted in the complete closure of the 'Athus-Meuse'. Despite the close cooperation between the Infrastructure Managers, but also between the Infrastructure Managers and the Railway

undertakings, the overlap of the two events led to the inevitable complete closure of the Corridor between the Benelux and Eastern France for 10 days.

Let's keep from these events the spirit of cooperation that everyone was able to deploy in these moments of crisis. It also proved that our Corridor has a role to play in e.g., in the planning deviation routes in the case of this kind of disruptions.

Cooperation also between all the players in the field, to bring the Lyon-Bettembourg 'Quality Circle of Operations' to a next level. Terminals, Railway undertakings, Infrastructure Managers, forwarding agents and the Port of Lyon were all keen to be transparent and trustworthy in 2021 in order to initiate a process of continuous service improvement.

Cooperation again between Infrastructure Managers under the lead of the Corridor, in launching a pilot to improve the path coordination process at borders after allocation.

Cooperation together with Rail Freight Corridor Rhine-Alpine, in preparing the Rhine valley closure due to the Rastatt 2024 works, by starting the international planning process at a very early stage, and in consultation with all stakeholders.

Cooperation also with Rail Freight Corridor Rhine-Alpine, to organise the first webinar dedicated to terminals or the cooperation within the RFC Network to get the symbolic Connecting Europe Express on the tracks.

Let us always bear in mind that freight trains run because women and men work together...

In 2022 we will strengthen these actions together with our partners, Railway Undertakings, Infrastructure Managers, Terminals, Member States and the European Commission. We want to thank all again for their very valuable cooperation.

The saying goes: «alone we go faster, together we go further»!

Yann Le Floc'h

Managing Director
RFC North Sea - Med

Valérie Verzele

President
Executive board

Michaël Dierickx

President of the Assembly
RFC North Sea - Med

1.

About the Corridor

1.1.

A major European rail freight route

Rail Freight Corridor North Sea – Mediterranean (RFC North Sea – Med) is a freight oriented route connecting the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Switzerland. It links the main European ports (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp, North Sea Port¹, Zeebrugge, Dunkirk, Calais and Marseille) to the industrial zones of Western Europe and to the gateways of Southern Europe, with almost 5000 kilometers of lines.

The Corridor is also an access to the rest of Europe, being connected to the RFCs Rhine-Alpine, Atlantic, Mediterranean, North Sea – Baltic

and Rhine-Danube, hence building a European network of rail freight corridors.

RFC North Sea – Med is one of the most promising rail freight corridors in Europe, with more than 33.000 international trains per year.

Information on the routing of the Corridor and of the RFC Network can be found in the Customer Information Platform (CIP). CIP is accessible, without registration, and free of charge, via the following link:

<https://cip.rne.eu/apex/f?p=212:65>



Rail Freight Corridors (RFCs) map 2022



Any use without modifications of this map in electronic or printed publications is permitted with the explicit reference to RNE as the author and holder of the copyright. This map does not include all RFC routes. For further details, please refer to the individual RFCs' websites or the Customer Information Platform.

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^{1/} North Sea Port is the result of a merger between the ports of Vlissingen, Terneuzen and Ghent



1.2. Easier, Faster, Safer

Easier, with a single counter for the supply of quality paths

Railway undertakings and other entities, such as shippers, freight forwarders and combined transport operators, can request capacity for international rail freight traffic, through the corridor one-stop-shop (C-OSS) by using the Path Coordination System (PCS) for international bookings.

This capacity takes the form of “off the shelf” paths, called Pre-arranged Paths (PaPs), reserved for international freight and that can either be requested for the next annual timetable or, for more flexibility, at short term notice (up to 30 days before the train run).

These paths benefit from a high quality:

- they are defined after the yearly consultation of all our customers;
- they are reserved for international freight traffic ahead of booking time and benefit from a specific legal protection against cancellation;
- they are built on the basis of coordinated works along the Corridor;
- they are coordinated with the paths of other rail freight corridors.

Faster, with a high level of performance

In order to increase punctuality on the Corridor, train performance is measured and analysed. When a train deviates from its planned schedule, the European IT tool Train Information System

(TIS) provides the relevant information on the delay. Railway undertakings therefore benefit from an international view of the punctuality of their trains, summarised in regular reports.

Safer, with an optimised network

By improving interoperability and exchanging information on investments across borders, the lines of the Corridor are optimised for international traffic.

RFC North Sea - Med is gradually deploying the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) on its main lines following the European Deployment Plan (EDP) published by the European Commission. This system is designed to replace national ones, which require

specific equipment for engines running on several networks.

Also, investments and improvements regarding the train length in order to run 740m trains and loading gauge improvements for running trains loaded with P400 trailers are foreseen in the future.

More information on the topic can be found under Chapter 4 – Key activities and topics in 2021.

1.3. An initiative of the European Commission

The Rail Freight Corridors

In order to promote rail freight transport and increase its modal share, the European Parliament and Council adopted Regulation (EU) 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive

freight, which entered into force on 9 November 2010. The network of Rail Freight Corridors now consists of 11 corridors across Europe, that regularly meet and coordinate their activities.

The Core Network Corridors

Regulation (EU) 1315/2013 on Union guidelines for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network and Regulation EU 1316/2013² establishing the Connecting Europe Facility, both adopted on 11 December 2013, have brought new challenges for the rail freight corridors. The first Regulation created nine multimodal Core Network Corridors (CNC), which are led by nine European

Coordinators and two horizontal coordinators: one for ERTMS and one for Motorways of the Sea. The second Regulation amended the Regulation (EU) 913/2010.

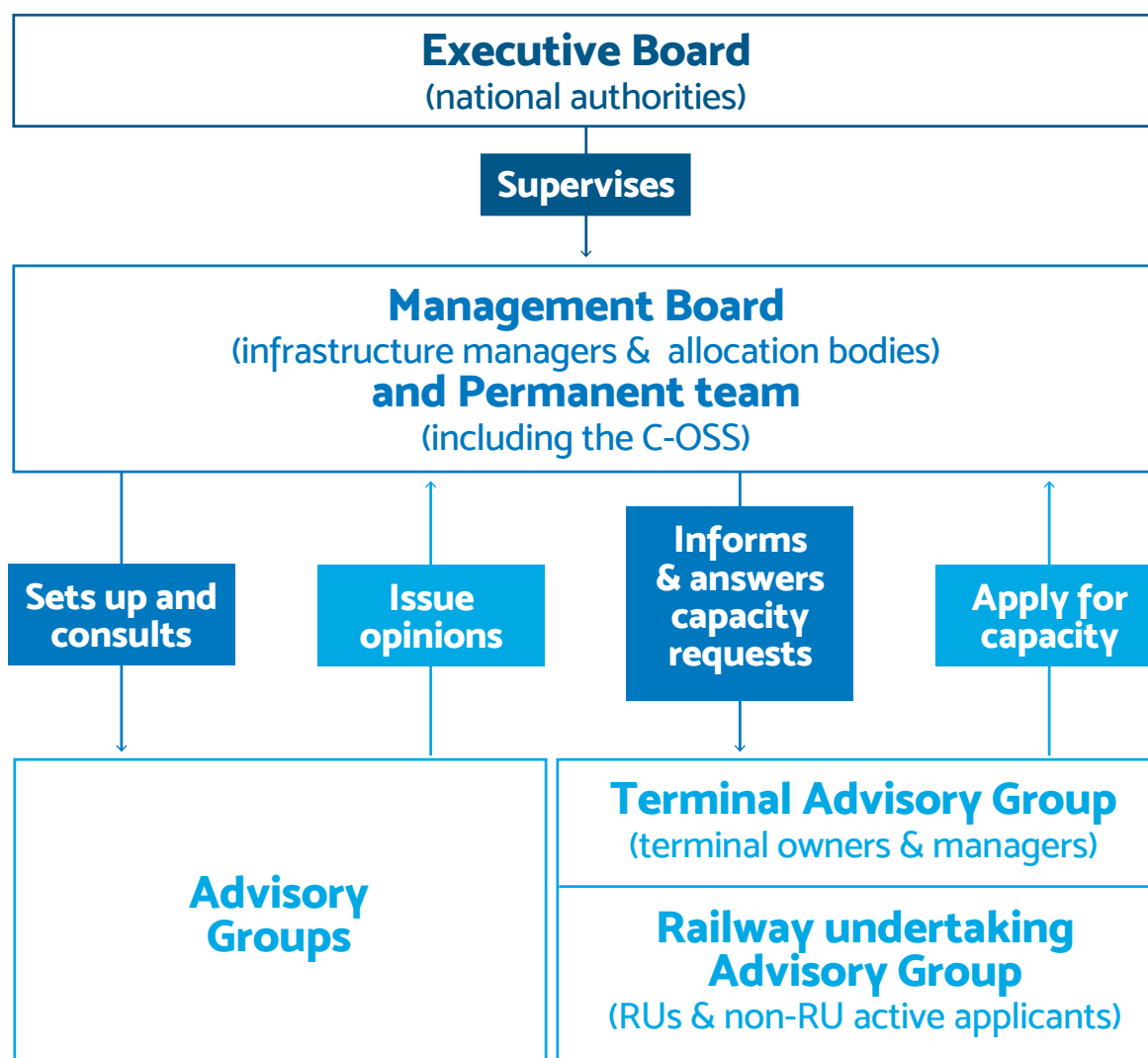
Also the revision of the TEN-T regulation was launched by the European Commission in December 2021.



^{2/} In the meantime, this Regulation is no longer in place and is repealed by Regulation 2021/1153

2. The governance of the Corridor, an ambitious collaborative approach

The governance of the rail freight corridors includes an Executive Board, a Management Board and two Advisory Groups. The coordination between these entities is shown in the chart below:





Mission and vision

The Executive Board, through its cooperation at the level of the Ministries of Transport has the objective of improving the conditions for international rail freight transport. It has the general responsibility to implement Regulation (EU) 913/2010 with regard to RFC North Sea - Med, and the equivalent Swiss measures.

According to the Agreement establishing the Executive Board, it has the following main responsibilities:

- to ask the Management Board to report on any matter relating to the smooth functioning of the Corridor;
- to ensure that the extensions of the RFC North Sea - Med are duly established
- to take decisions on general matters of common interest concerning the internal functioning of RFC North Sea - Med without prejudice to the competence of Member States and Switzerland regarding the planning and financing of rail infrastructure;
- to adopt the Framework for Capacity Allocation (FCA);
- to consider, and where appropriate to support, the requests of the Management Board for European subsidies;
- to support the Management Board's work, in particular if the latter encounters any difficulties in fulfilling its tasks.

It has the following cooperation responsibilities:

- to ensure, as far as it can, that the development and implementation of RFC North Sea-Med is conducted in a manner consistent with those of ERTMS Corridor C and in line with the EDP published by the European Commission;
- to work together, where necessary, with the European institutions and organisations, the National Safety Authorities and the Regulatory bodies of its members;
- to strive for good cooperation between rail freight corridors;
- to coordinate the work of the RFC North Sea - Med and the CNC North Sea-Med with the European Coordinator and national authorities.

The Executive Board of RFC North Sea-Med also assumes the responsibilities of the Executive Board created by the Letter of Intent for the deployment of ERTMS on Corridor C “Antwerp – Basel/ Lyon” signed on 6 June 2006 by the Ministers of Belgium, France, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

The functions of the Board under this Letter of Intent include:

the coordination of the deployment of ERTMS along the former ERTMS Corridor C and ERTMS coordination along the Corridor in accordance with the national implementation plans, as well as coordination of the decommissioning of national systems in order to foster the implementation of ERTMS on the Corridor.

Organisation

The Board is constituted on the basis of an international Agreement which was signed on 8 October 2014 by the Ministers of Transport of Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom³.

It is composed of representatives of the authorities

of the Member States concerned and Switzerland.

The Board takes decisions, which are provided for by Regulation (EU) 913/2010, on the basis of mutual consent. These decisions, signed by all the members of the Board and published, are legally binding on their addressees.

The Executive Board meets four times a year. The following have a standing invitation to attend the meetings of the Board:

- the representatives of the Management Board and Permanent Team;
- the representatives of the European Commission and of the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA);
- a representative of the Regulatory bodies for the railway sector in the countries concerned.

And on invitation:

- the European Coordinators for TEN-T;
- the representative(s) of the National Safety Authorities of the countries concerned;
- the representative(s) of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA);
- the Speakers of the Advisory Groups.

The Executive Board is chaired by the Belgian Ministry of Transport. The chair is responsible for the secretariat, which provides the appropriate administrative support to enable the Board to carry out its work. It ensures that the tasks of the Board are properly coordinated and organises all other associated aspects of the work.

The activities of the Executive Board are described in Chapter 4 – Key activities and topics in 2021.

^{3/} The United Kingdom left the Corridor on the 1st of January 2021.

FULL REPRESENTATIVES



Valérie Verzele

General-Director
Federal Public
Service Mobility
and Transport of
Belgium



Raphael Zumsteeg

Principal Inspector
Ministry of Mobility and
Public works,
Grand Duchy of
Luxembourg



Pierre-André Meyrat

Deputy Director
Federal Office of
Transport of
Switzerland



Rob Morsink

Program Manager
Rail Freight,
Ministry of
Infrastructure and
Water Management of
The Netherlands



Joseph Lunet

Head of unit, National
railway network unit,
Ministry for the Ecological
Transition of France

STAND-IN REPRESENTATIVES



Pierre Bodiaux

Federal Public
Service Mobility
and Transport
of Belgium



André Bissen

Ministry of Mobility and
Public works,
Grand Duchy of
Luxembourg



Matthias Wagner

Federal Office of
Transport of
Switzerland



Hinne Groot

Ministry of
Infrastructure and
Water Management
of The Netherlands



Milena Kobler

Ministry for the
Ecological Transition
of France

2.2. The Management Board

Mission and vision

The mission of the Management Board is to offer services to customers that answer their needs and the needs of the market. By doing this, we intend to increase the market share of rail freight by promoting measures to improve its efficiency and more specially:

- to offer good quality capacity;
- to improve interoperability, inter alia by the deployment of ERTMS on the lines of the Corridor;
- to improve the quality of service on the Corridor;
- to coordinate and monitor applications for financial support related to the Corridor;
- to coordinate the Corridor approach and action plan with the other RFCs;
- to check and evaluate the results obtained, with a view to implement further developments to progressively improve the quality offered.

Organisation

The EEIG

The Management Board takes the form of a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), named Rail Freight Corridor North Sea – Mediterranean. Its head office is located in Luxembourg and the

office of the corridor one-stop-shop in Brussels. It is composed of the infrastructure managers and allocation bodies of the Corridor, which either have the status of member⁴ or partner .



^{4/} Members Network Rail and Eurotunnel left the EEIG as of 1st of January 2021.

Members

The Netherlands:
ProRail

ProRail

Belgium:
Infrabel

INFRABEL

France:
SNCF Réseau



Luxembourg:
CFL



Partners

Luxembourg:
ACF



Switzerland:
TVS, SBB Infra



The Assembly



Decisions on the strategy of the Corridor, its objectives, actions and any administrative and financial issues of importance are taken by the Assembly, with mutual consent.

The Assembly is chaired by Michaël Dierickx.

The Vice-President of the Assembly is Britta Schreiner of CFL.

The representative or stand-in representative of each member and partner, the Managing Director of the EEIG, the ERTMS technical advisor and the Permanent Team attend the Assembly meetings. The Assembly meets on average six times per year.



Michaël Dierickx

President of the Assembly

ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES



John Voppen
President Director
ProRail



Benoît Gilson
CEO,
Infrabel



LucALLEmand
President,
SNCF Réseau



Marc Wengler
General Director,
CFL



Marc Oestreicher
Director,
ACF



Peter Kummer
Head of
SBB Infrastructure



Thomas Isenmann
Managing Director,
TVS

STAND-IN REPRESENTATIVES



Guus de Mol
Head International
Logistic Affairs, ProRail



Claire Hamoniau
Corridor Manager
SNCF Réseau



Michel Geubelle
Manager, Corridor
Management, Infrabel



Britta Schreiner
Head of external affairs, Infrastructure
management department, CFL



Claude Lambert
Head of Path Division,
ACF



Rudi Achermann
Program Manager
SBB Infrastructure



Daniel Haltner
Head of International Affairs,
TVS

THE PERMANENT TEAM



Yann Le Floc'h
Managing Director



Matthieu Maeselle
Communication & Finance
Manager, Advisory Groups



Jean Quaeys
Corridor one-stop shop
leader, Capacity Manager



Marie-Anne Menguy
Operations & Investments
manager, ERTMS coordinator

The Management Board has a Permanent Team which is responsible for the day-to-day business and the chairing of working groups. It consists of four people, all coming from the

members of the EEIG. This streamlined structure allows the EEIG to react with promptness, flexibility and efficiency.

Working groups and Committee

C-OSS WG	WG Temporary Capacity Restrictions	TPM* WG
Leader Jean Quaeysaegens	Leader Jean Quaeysaegens	Leader Marie-Anne Menguy
Communication WG	Corridor Information Document WG	Legal WG
Leader Matthieu Maeselle	Leader Matthieu Maeselle	Leader Yann Le Floch
CIP** WG	ERTMS Committee	Transport market study*** WG
Leader Matthieu Maeselle	Leader Marie-Anne Menguy	

* Train performance management **Customer Information Platform ***Temporary unactive or stopped

The activities of the Management Board, including the Permanent Team and the Working groups and Committee are described in Chapter 4 - Key activities and topics in 2021.



2.3. The Advisory Groups

The Railway undertaking Advisory Group (RAG) and the Terminal Advisory Group (TAG) were created in 2012 according to the Regulation (EU) 913/2010. These groups can issue an opinion on any proposal made by the Management Board. They may also issue own-initiative opinions, which are to be considered by the Management Board.

The Railway undertaking Advisory Group (RAG)

The RAG is composed of all Railway undertakings interested in the use of the Corridor. In addition, the following are also invited to take part in the activities of the RAG:

- four railway sector organisations: CER (Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies), ERFA (European Rail Freight Association), RFG (Rail Freight Group) and KNV (Royal Dutch transport federation);
- applicants who are active on the Corridor, but are not Railway undertakings.

The RAG is chaired by **Lieven Goethals** (Lineas).

Vice-Chairman of the RAG is **Eric Lambert** (CFL Multimodal)



Lieven Goethals



Eric Lambert

"2021 was the Year of the Rail with a lot of initiatives by the European Commission to spread it wide around that the Future is Rail ! Every kilometer we run as Rail Freight Companies, we're part of a journey to cut emissions. Though the (rail)road is difficult, as we were heavily impacted by disruptions linked to the Climate Change... Let it motivate us to persist and to remain working together: connecting RU's, IM's, Ministries and other RFC's, as we firmly believe it will make us stronger together !"

Lieven Goethals, Chairman of the RAG

Two RAG meetings were organised in 2021, each preceded by a pre-RAG between Railway undertakings:

On the 25th of March as an online meeting, with following topics:

- State of play of the traffic on the Corridor
- Investments
- Start of the WG with RUs running on our RFC, RFC Rhine-Alpine and Atlantic
- State of play traffic 2020
- Perspective on the traffic and success conditions
- User Satisfaction Survey 2020.

On the 23th of November as an online meeting, with following topics:

- State of play essential elements of the next timetables
- Path Alteration Pilot kick-off presentation
- Presentation of the RFC train portfolio
- Lyon-Bettembourg Quality Circle Operations
- Presentation of the French 'Plan de relance Fret'.

In the afternoon, a dedicated RAG session with a feedback regarding the ICM cases in the summer of 2021 was organised.



The Terminal Advisory Group (TAG)

All the managers and owners of terminals - such as combined transport terminals, river ports, multimodal platforms, maritime ports or infrastructure managers' marshalling yards - which belong to the Corridor are invited to the TAG meetings.

The TAG community agreed on the nomination of a TAG Chair, **Paul Kronenberger**, and of a Vice-Chair, **Frédéric Buyse**. As speakers of the TAG community, they represent and advocate the interests of the whole community.

The tasks of the Chair of the TAG are the following:

- Chair the yearly TAG meeting organised by RFC North Sea - Med in order to coordinate the messages and expectations from the TAG members to the Executive Board, Management Board & Permanent Team;
- To participate, where possible, in meetings and events organised by the European Commission (two to three a year, such as SERAC WG, Rail Freight Day, TEN-T Days, ...) as speaker of the TAG community of RFC North Sea - Med.



Paul Kronenberger

Head of Freight
CFL-MultiModal
Chair of the TAG
community



Frédéric Buyse

BMC-T
Vice-Chair of the
TAG community

"The year 2021 was again a challenging year. The sector had to deal with a shortage of employees due to the impact of the Covid-19 in order to guarantee the services. The same time the maritime sector was and still is completely fallen out of step."

Paul Kronenberger, Chairman of the TAG

The joint TAG meeting with RFC Rhine-Alpine took place online, on the 24th of March with the following topics:

- Presentation Port of Antwerp and Port of Zeebrugge and their merger plans
- Discussion on growth perspectives
- KPI Market development
- Performance topics + User Satisfaction Survey
- Overview of European transport policy developments – Presentation by UIRR

First dedicated TAG Webinar on 'Innovation'

On 8th of November 2021, RFC North Sea-Med and Rhine-Alpine organised a first common dedicated TAG on 'Innovation'. The subject addressed during this webinar was the upcoming CEF II financing opportunities for terminals, financing innovation on terminals.

This new setting of regular webinars was highly appreciated by the TAG audience, and both RFCs will continue to organise this kind of common TAG webinars in the future.



3. Cooperation with stakeholders

3.1. The European Commission

The European Commission plays a major role in the Corridor. Sharing the common objective of improving the conditions for international rail freight, it acts as a facilitator for communication and coordination. It also contributes to the development of the Corridor through its financial support (see Chapter 7. Finance).

The European Commission organises the Single European Railway Area Committee (SERAC) Working Group on Rail Freight Corridors which aims at facilitating dialogue with the other ministries, infrastructure managers and regulatory bodies involved in the rail freight corridors.

The Permanent Team of the Corridor participated in the 18th SERAC meeting on the 28th of October, that was held online. The main topics were capacity for cross-border rail freight, International contingency management, where the Corridor explained the handling of the ICM cases we were confronted with during the summer, and EU co-financing for rail freight under CEF II.

On the 2nd of June 2021 the European Commission also published its evaluation report of the Regulation (EU) 913/2010.



3.2. The Rail Freight Corridors Network

The RFC Network intensified its common work in 2021 in organising eleven RFC network meetings. These meetings were led by the RFC Network assistant, appointed jointly by all RFCs.

This intensified cooperation intends to harmonise its methods and documentation, with the goal to facilitate the allocation of capacity for trains running on more than one corridor.

The Managing Director and a representative of the Management Board participated in the

meetings of the RFC Network, mainly to discuss harmonisation between RFCs, common tools and studies.

Moreover, in order to promote the activities of the RFC Network, a LinkedIn account was launched in 2021.

The RFC Network finally held a workshop on the evaluation of the Regulation (EU) 913/2010.

3.3. The Core Network Corridor

Coordination between the core network and rail freight corridors is required by Regulation (EU) 1315/2013.

In order to foster the cooperation and to favour exchanges between RFC and CNC, the CNC North Sea-Med assistant is invited to all Executive Board meetings. The Executive Board also hold once a year a dedicated meeting with the CNC

Coordinator. In 2021, the CNC North Sea-Med Coordinator participated to the ExBo meeting on the 17th March.

A videoconference meeting was finally organised on the 8 of January 2021 by the CNC. .

There was finally a CNC Forum on 24 November 2021.

3.4. The Regulatory bodies

As required by Regulation (EU) 913/2010, the Regulatory bodies covering the networks of the Corridor coordinate in order to ensure non-discriminatory access to the Corridor for international rail services. They are also the appeal body under Art 56 (1) of Directive 2012/34/EU. In general, the Belgian Regulatory body represents all

regulatory bodies at the Executive Board meetings of the Corridor. The Regulatory bodies also participate in the Advisory Group meetings.

An online meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic took place on 31st of August 2021 between RFC North Sea – Med and the Regulatory bodies.

3.5. RailNetEurope

RailNetEurope (RNE) is an association consisting of 38 rail infrastructure managers and allocation bodies in Europe to enable fast and easy access to European rail, as well as to increase the quality and efficiency of international rail traffic. RFC North Sea – Med, which is an associated member of RNE since May 2015, uses RNE services and guidelines as well as RNE IT tools such as the Path

Coordination System (PCS), the Train Information System (TIS), the Corridor Information Platform (CIP) etc.

RFC North Sea – Med participated in two General Assemblies of RNE as well as in two RNE/RFC High Level Group meetings in preparation of these Assemblies.

The members of the Permanent Team also participated in the following RNE working groups in 2021:

- Traffic management
- C-OSS Community
- Capacity working group:
 - Temporary Capacity Restrictions (TCR) coordination
 - PCS
- Train performance management
- RNE/RFC KPI coordination working group
- International Contingency Management (ICM)
- Customer Information Document (CID) & Network Statement (NS) working group
- User Satisfaction Survey working group
- Customer Information Platform (CIP) Change Control Board
- Data quality working group;
- Cross-border issues working group.



4. Key activities and topics in 2021

4.1. Activities of the Executive Board

The Executive Board (ExBo) continued its activities related to the implementation of the Regulation (EU) 913/2010 and to implement the orientations set within the strategic objectives defined in 2018, which specify the goals of the ExBo.

Furthermore, the Executive Board continued to monitor the orientations defined in the Leipzig Declaration, following the disruption of freight traffic at Rastatt between August and October 2017.

Regular topics addressed

The Executive Board assessed throughout the year 2021 the potential impacts of envisaged major TCRs, such as the TCR in 2024 on RFC Rhine-Alpine and the TCR in 2023 on the Alsace plain, on the capacity of the Corridor. Moreover, the Executive Board followed the discussions between the two RFCs regarding the TCR in 2024 on RFC Rhine-Alpine.

The Board also focused on the improvement of the parameters of the Corridor, with discussions on the long trains and the loading gauge, as well as the punctuality of traffic on the Corridor, its

capacity and the measures taken to improve both. The pilot Lyon – Bettembourg was, for example, at the agenda of the discussions.

Other topics were also discussed, including, but not limited to, the impact of COVID-19 on the Timetable, the deployment of ERTMS, the relations with the end-users, the ICM and floods of summer 2021. Furthermore, the Board adopted new guidelines for the cooperation on ERTMS. The new guidelines should allow for an increased cooperation, including with the ERTMS Coordinator.

European Cooperation



Cooperation with the CNC

The CNC North Sea-Med Coordinator, Prof. Balázs, participated in the Executive Board meeting of the 17th March. During this session, the Executive Board exchanged ideas on the revision of the regulations (EU) 913/2010 and (EU) 1315/2013, as well as the cooperation between the Executive Board and the CNC Coordinator with the foreseen improved alignment between RFC and CNC.

The members of the Executive Board participated in a workshop organised by Prof. Balázs on the 20th July. The objective of this workshop was to discuss the freight parameters and their implementation in the countries that are part of RFC North Sea-Med.

Cooperation with the ERTMS Coordinator

The Executive Board also invited the ERTMS Coordinator, Mr. Ruete, to participate to its meeting on the 17th March. During this session, the Executive Board exchanged views on the execution of the ERTMS Coordinator's work plan, the deployment of ERTMS on the Corridor, the decommissioning of the Class-B systems and other topics such as the FRMCS⁵ and the cross-border sections issues.

Joint Executive Board meeting RFC North Sea - Med and RFC Rhine-Alpine

The Chairs of the Executive Board, the Presidents of the Assembly and the Managing Directors of both RFC Rhine-Alpine and RFC North Sea-Med met on the 1st of March to informally discuss the coordination between the two Corridors. The interoperability of the corridors, as well as the

works that could affect them were discussed. Moreover, a formal Joint Executive Board took place on the 29th November. Several topics were discussed, among which the growth forecasts and rail freight policies of each country, the TCR 2024 on RFC Rhine-Alpine, the quality initiatives in place on both corridors and the interoperability of the corridors.

Network of Executive Boards of RFC

Finally, the Ministries of the Executive Board participated to the work of the Network of Executive Boards of RFCs (NExBo). In 2021, the NExBo focused on topics such as the Issues Logbook, the allocation rules, TTR and the revision of the ICM Handbook. Furthermore, the NExBo continued to encourage the exchange of good practices and initiatives from various corridors were presented.

Cooperation with Railway undertakings and Terminals

Continuing its policy to foster cooperation with the Corridor's customers set up since 2017, the Executive Board invited the RAG Speaker at each meeting to exchange respective views on the most critical issues expressed by the RAG.

Various topics are discussed during the exchanges with the RAG Speaker. The main ones in 2021 were the evolution of the loading gauge on the Corridor, especially in France, as well as the long train working group launched by the members of



5/ Future Railway Mobile Communication System, will replace the GSM-R radio part in ERTMS

the RAG and the impact of the TCR 2024 on RFC Rhine-Alpine on the RUs of the Corridor.

The Executive Board also renewed its invitation to the TAG Speaker to exchange views during the Executive Board meetings. This invitation was sent for the first time in December 2020. These exchanges aim at fostering the cooperation with the terminals of the Corridor, share views on the problems raised by the TAG and gain additional knowledge on the perspective of the terminals.

During these exchanges with the TAG Speaker, the Executive Board encouraged the TAG to initiate a common project to be submitted in a next CEF Call.

Finally, the Chair of the Executive Board participated to the RAG and TAG meetings to provide a concrete link between the Executive Board and both Advisory Groups and ensure a follow-up of the problems raised during those meetings at the Executive Board level.

Governance

The Executive Board governance was, as in 2020, affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The meetings of the Board indeed occurred in an online format throughout the year. An informal meeting between ministries also took place in June.

The Executive Board also examined the agreement establishing the Executive Board, following the departure of the United Kingdom from the Corridor. Its members however decided to postpone its revision after the revision of the regulations (EU) 913/2010 and (EU) 1315/2013.

Additionally, the Executive Board held a strategic meeting in September 2021. This meeting had as objective to assess the relevance of the strategic objectives defined in December 2018 and to revise them if needed. The Board deemed the objectives still generally relevant but updated some of them to better take into account the developments of the Corridor. The updated objectives were approved in the aftermath of the meeting.



4.2. Activities of the Management Board



The COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 continued to impact traffic on the Corridor's routes, even if a small recovery in the economy was marked during the year, traffic in general decreased on our Corridor. The consecutive waves of the pandemic over the year continued to lead to quarantine of personnel working in signal boxes e.g., but also still had an impact on the economy in general, reflecting in the traffic.

Worth mentioning is that all member IMs, taking the lessons learned of the first wave, were able to mitigate to a maximum the impact of the following waves in 2021.

The severe slowdown in manufacturing production in the second quarter of 2020, still continued in 2021, even if for some goods recovery was marked in 2021, e.g. automotive is still at a low level with weak to no recovery of the pre-COVID-19 traffic.

But most importantly, a succession of ICM cases on our Corridor in the summer had a strong negative impact on the traffic.

First, there was the accident that occurred on the night of 15 to 16 June in Rumigny on the 'Artère Nord-Est', where a heavy goods vehicle (HGV) carrying a boat was immobilised on the level crossing and was hit by a freight train. It was carrying dangerous goods (phosphoric acid). This caused severe damages to the infrastructure, for which SNCF Réseau needed two weeks to repair it, with still weeks of limited traffic on the line.

Unfortunately, this ICM was followed by the exceptional flooding in Belgium. Extreme rainfall during several days forced Infrabel on the 15th of July 2021 to interrupt the traffic on large parts

of the network in Wallonia for safety reasons. The resulting floods led to huge damages to the railway infrastructure, which triggered an ICM case on the next day.

Given the vast scope of the damages (25 lines were concerned) and the simultaneous impact on the 3 rail freight corridors running through Belgium, it was decided that the coordination of this incident would be led by Infrabel's account management team. For several weeks regular teleconferences were held among IMs and between IM and RUs to inform them about the operational capacity in the flooded region and to give updates on the planning for the gradual re-opening of the network. Additional stakeholders were informed via the rail freight corridors, mainly RFC North Sea-Med, the most heavily impacted corridor (both principal line and diversionary line blocked). The concerned lines on RFC North Sea-Med were partly open again on the 16th of August (Athus – Meuse). Less than 6 weeks after the damaging floods only 3 sections were still to be restored. All lines of the Corridor were fully operational again on the 18th of October 2021.

As a matter of fact, the two consecutive ICMs led to the inevitable complete closure of the Corridor between the Benelux and Eastern France for 10 days.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the employees of our committed members SNCF Réseau and Infrabel who have done everything possible, day and night, to restore the situation as quickly as possible.

More details can be found in Chapter 5. Performance of the Corridor.

Deployment of ETCS on the Corridor



ERTMS deployment on the Corridor remains patchy depending on the investment choices of countries and infrastructure managers, even though the ERTMS concept and vision to enhance interoperability is not generally questioned by the rail sector.

In the framework of the elaboration of the Implementation Plan update in 2020 and published in 2021, the state of play of the ETCS deployment on the Corridor was updated. More information can be found under the link 'Implementation Plan' on our website:

<https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/index.php/en/page/implementation-plan>

In 2021 the WG ERTMS resumed its activities after the formal reactivation decided by the Assembly end of 2020.

They met once, and discussed the following:

- State of play of the deployment per country;
- Position and vision regarding ERTMS Level 3
- Speed limits on international traffic relative to the ETCS train category



4.3. Capacity and Temporary Capacity Restrictions

Capacity management

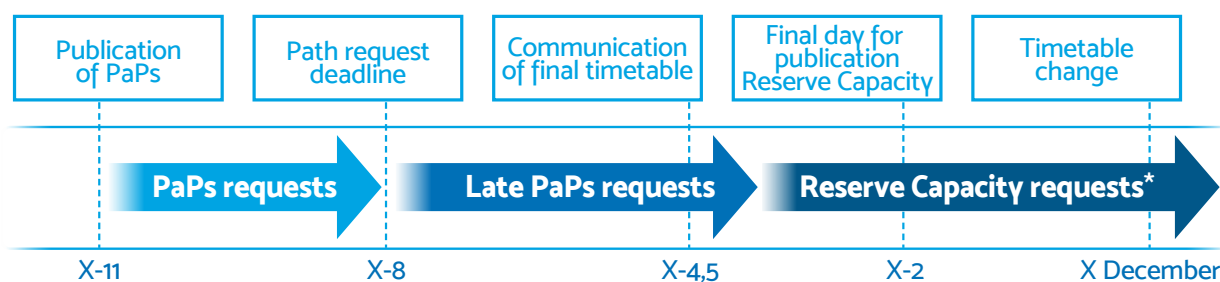
2021 started with the publication of the Pre-arranged Path catalogue for timetable (TT) 2022, and ended with the finalisation of the catalogue for TT2023.

The results of the allocation process for TT2022 (capacity KPIs) and the evolution over the years can be found in the Performance Report 2021 published on the website under the following link:

<https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/en/page/capacity>

Another important milestone was reached with the allocation of Rolling Planning paths between Antwerp and Rotterdam, and the extension of the scope of the Capacity and Timetable Redesign (TTR) Pilot to Amsterdam and Paris. ProRail and Infrabel, together with the Railway undertakings running on these lines, opted for the C-OSS as the single source for Rolling Planning capacity. With the extension and inclusion of SNCF Réseau, the Corridor enters a next phase, which must see a full implementation of TTR for the entire European network in the coming years.

Capacity allocation calendar in 2021



* continues in following year until 30 days before train run



Proof of Concept ‘Capacity visualisation study’

RFC North Sea - Med launched a tender in 2020 for a Proof of Concept (PoC) study on the visualisation of capacity.

The motivation for the launch of this study was to reflect on how to support the ambitions targets for modal shift fixed by the European Union and its Member States for 2030. Corridors therefore reflected on their capacity to support the achievement of these objectives.

While Regulation (EU) 913/2010 placed capacity at the heart of the corridors’ activity, in particular via the implementation of the C-OSS and the coordination of catalogue paths and works, RFC North Sea - Med noted that the appropriate analysis tools were not available. Tools to objectively measure the capacity situation on the various international routes in a «seamless» approach, i.e. harmonised between IMs, were missing.

Therefore, in agreement with its Management Board, RFC North Sea - Med initiated an innovative approach, a ‘proof of concept’, called ‘Capacity Intelligence’, in reference to the ‘Business Intelligence’ approach. Business Intelligence aims at collecting, assembling and

organising business data in order to feed the decision-making process with consolidated business information. In our case, we wanted to look at how to collect, assemble and organise the data, this time of the capacity data, in order to feed the decision-making process with consolidated capacity information.

After a market consultation in 2020, the study was awarded to the Swiss company SMA, and an extension to this study was awarded to and completed by the same company in 2021.

The study resulted in a direct added value for the Corridor as it brought innovative insight in the core business activity of the RFC, namely offering capacity on its routes. It also forms a basis for further studies and growing insights in this core activity in the coming years.

Also, in consortium with RNE, the Corridor will launch in 2022 a MVP (‘Minimum Viable Product’) continuation study of this capacity visualisation. Aim is to ‘industrialise’ and ‘anchor’ this capacity visualisation approach into the set of tools that are provided by RNE to the Rail Freight Corridors.

Temporary Capacity Restrictions

During the course of the year, infrastructure managers along the Corridor faced the problem that the magnitude and volume of TCRs impacting their networks became difficult to manage with the existing set of procedures. The Corridor helped establishing a new long-term coordination process, based on the needs of the customers and of the IMs, and the tools at hand. Such an extensive program for the coming years could be reinforced, with the Corridor in a central role as facilitator and guardian of the process.

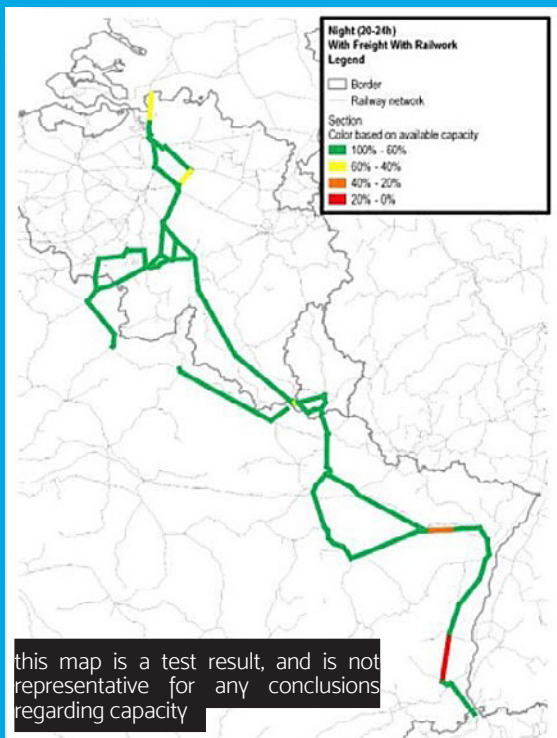
On overview of TCRs is published and updated on the Corridor website each semester

Finally, the Corridor continued to be involved by DB Netz in 2021 regarding the total line closure during the summer of 2024, between Mannheim and Basel. RFC Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Med facilitated the dialogue between DB Netz, SNCF Réseau, ACF/CFL and Infrabel. Also, there is ad-hoc communication with ProRail, and the TCR coordination is also included in the TTR pilot, where RFC North Sea-Med is involved.

The coordination process put in place will be enhanced in 2022 with a common TCR working group with RFC Rhine-Alpine.

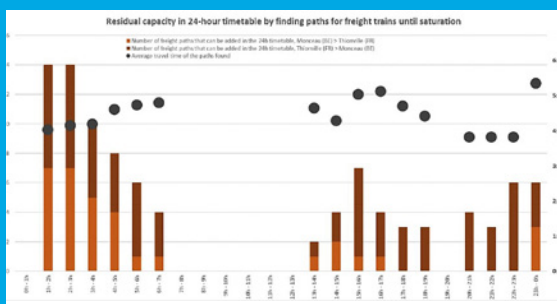
<https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/en/page/temporary-capacity-restrictions>

Map of critical sections via « compression » analysis



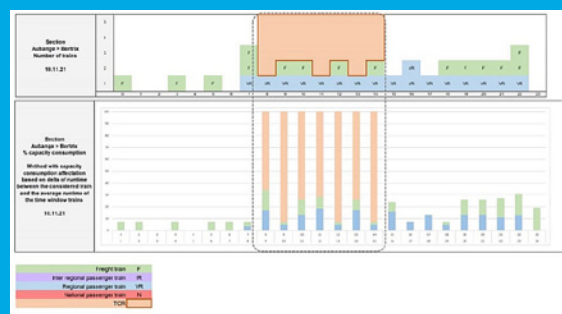
10 Nov. 2021

Residual capacity via « path-search » analysis



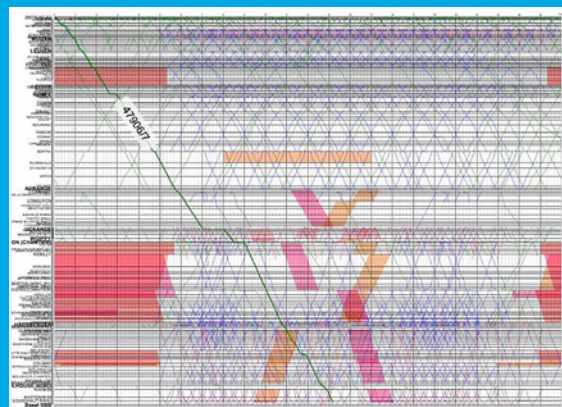
Between Namur (BE) and Thionville (FR),
on 10 Nov. 2021

Capacity Model



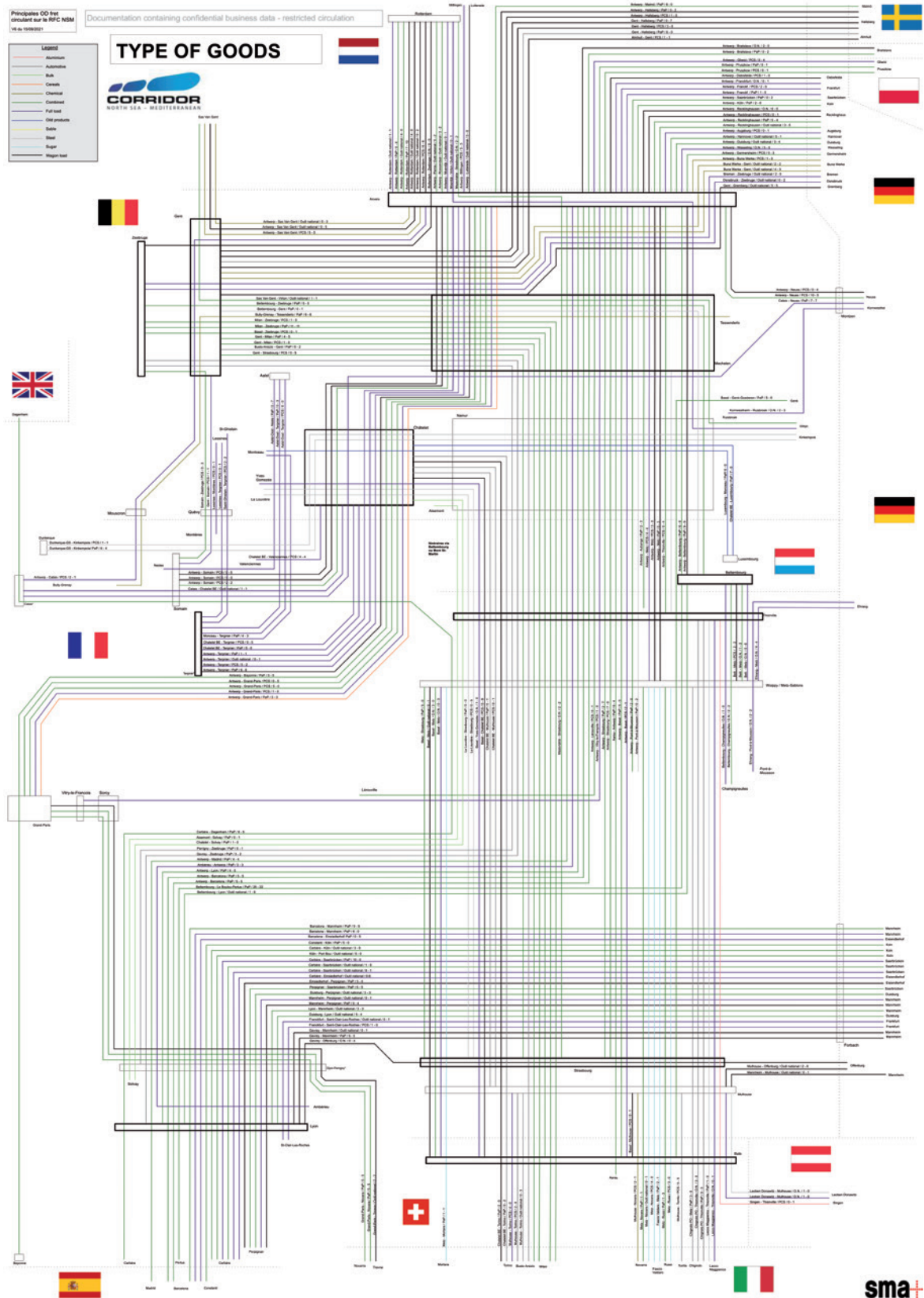
On Aubange > Bertrix section on 10 Nov. 2021

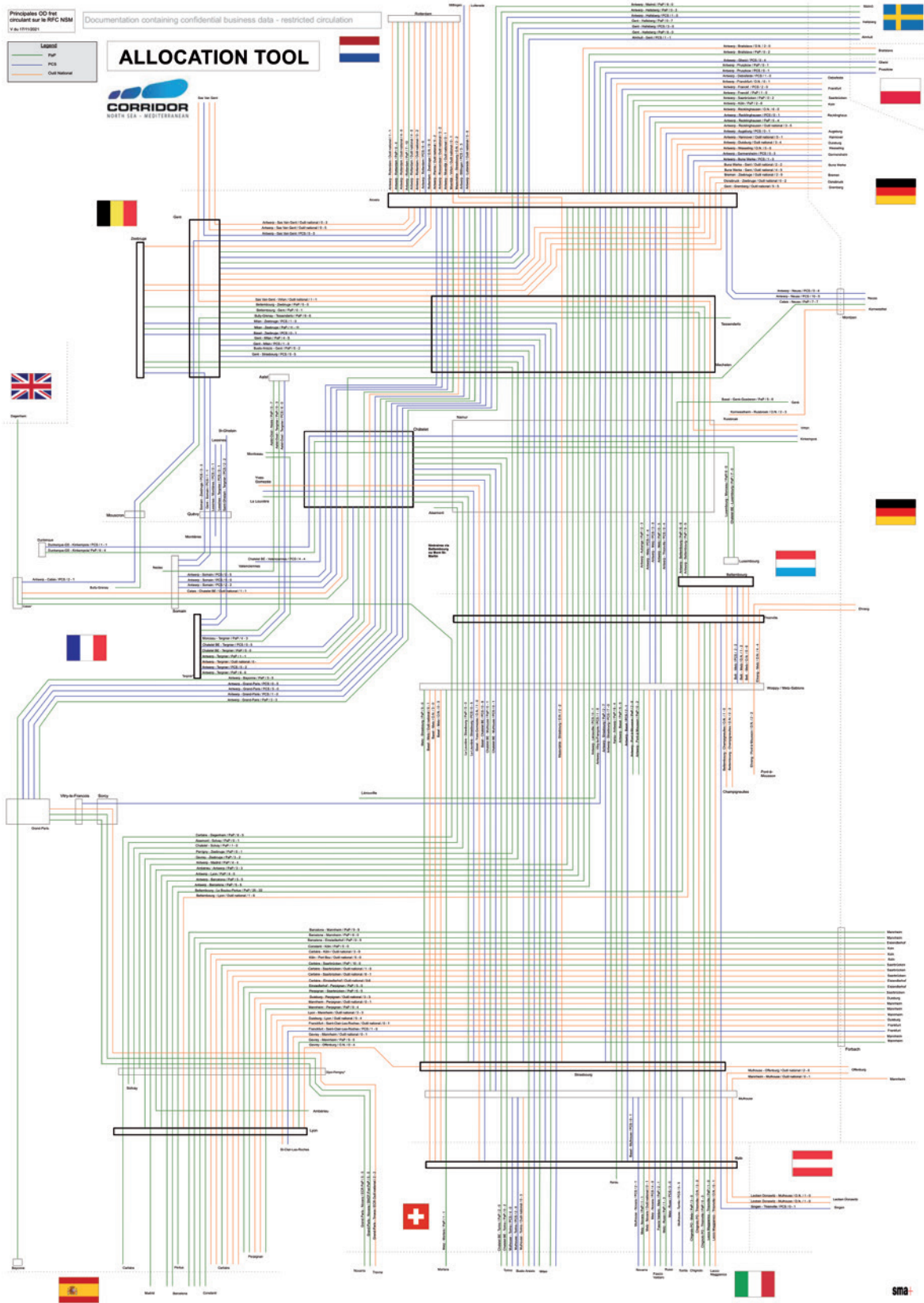
Capacity Supply



On Antwerp < > Basel route on 10 Nov. 2021

4.3. Capacity and Temporary Capacity Restrictions







4.4. Train Performance and Traffic Management

Train Performance and Traffic Management

The TPM Working Group monitors the punctuality of international freight trains running on the Corridor, and initiates actions to improve punctuality where necessary. The WG consisting of performance managers from the infrastructure managers has been analysing the Corridor punctuality reports on the basis of data from the Train Information System (TIS), which provides real-time train data. A list of poor performing trains has been drafted which are in continuous close observation. In this way, the WG ensures that the problems are tackled at national level and structural issues can be identified where needed.

A precondition for a good reporting is the quality of the data in TIS. Under the umbrella of RNE, a Data Quality project was initiated in order to define common standards for TPM reports and improving the monitoring via automatically linking trains.

On the occasion of the TAG held in Lyon on the 8th of October 2019, the participants agreed that it could be beneficial to launch in 2020 a Pilot on «on-time departure» from the originating terminal. As the host terminal for this TAG was Lyon and as the Chairman of the TAG is the terminal manager of Bettembourg, it was agreed that the scope of the pilot should focus on the «Lyon-Bettembourg» traffic.

The pilot aims at establishing certain standards to improve train punctuality, in particular a mapping of the pre-departure processes within the terminals, an associated timetable, operational monitoring of this timetable and the establishment of local governance to ensure continuous improvement. In 2021 the Corridor continued this pilot which will last the time needed to drive change.

International Contingency Management

The revision of the ICM Handbook under the lead of RNE started in 2020 and was approved in May 2021.

The joint simulation planned with RFC Rhine-Alpine was postponed, on the one hand because of the real ICM cases on our Corridor in Belgium and France, which were real-life cases that led to several lessons learned. On the other hand, it was agreed to involve the RUs in a future simulation, which requires more preparation time.

Also, an update of the re-routing scenarios was carried out in 2021 and has been updated accordingly in the document on the website as well as in CIP.

<https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/en/page/traffic-management>

Corridor Information Document

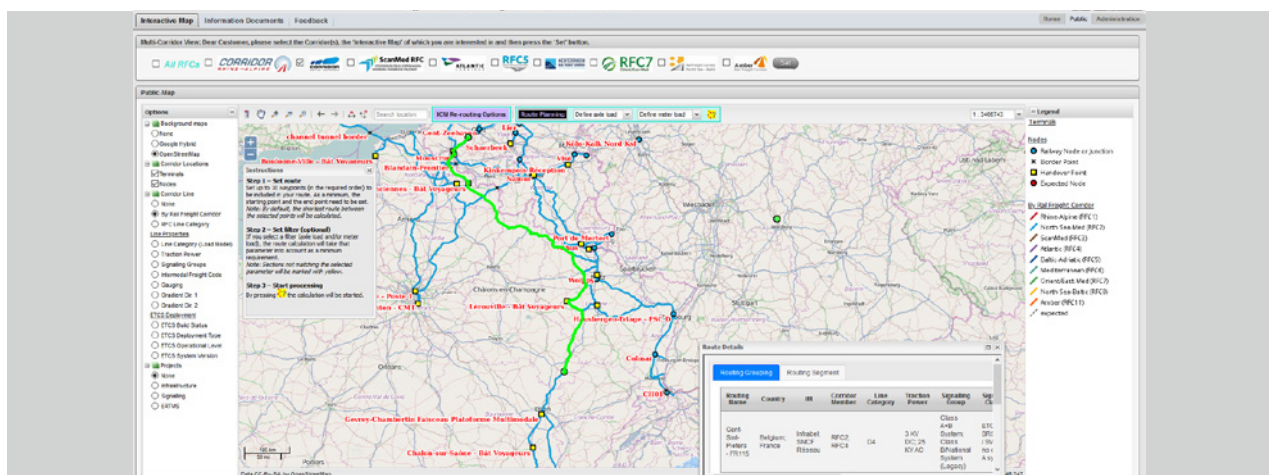
place, streamlining the information and merging the former Books into one single document with four sections. Moreover, the digitalisation project of the CID, called NCI portal (Network statement and Corridor Information) kicked off in 2019, was continued in 2021 and will be fully implemented in 2022.

The Customer Information Platform (CIP) was further developed and improved in 2021 under the lead of RNE.

- As of January 2021, the full roll-out was realised to all 11 RFCs who benefit now from a full joint data platform
- General improvements regarding completeness of information on line properties and projects
- Improvement regarding display of coherent ETCS information and ERTMS projects
- Modifications to the user handbook
- Development of a joint marketing approach.
- Also, a marketing campaign to promote CIP was launched in 2021.



Further improvements, developments and integration with other RNE tools are foreseen in 2022, mainly linked to the new Big Data project steered by RNE.



5. Performance of the Corridor and User Satisfaction Survey

5.1. Performance of the Corridor

As requested by the Regulation (EU) 913/2010, RFC North Sea – Med publishes each year its Performance Report. It contains information on KPIs related to capacity management, operations and market development that are monitored by all RFCs according to the RNE guidelines.

Below we present some of the results. The full report can be found on the Corridor website under figures:

<https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/en/page/figures-performance-corridor>

Operations

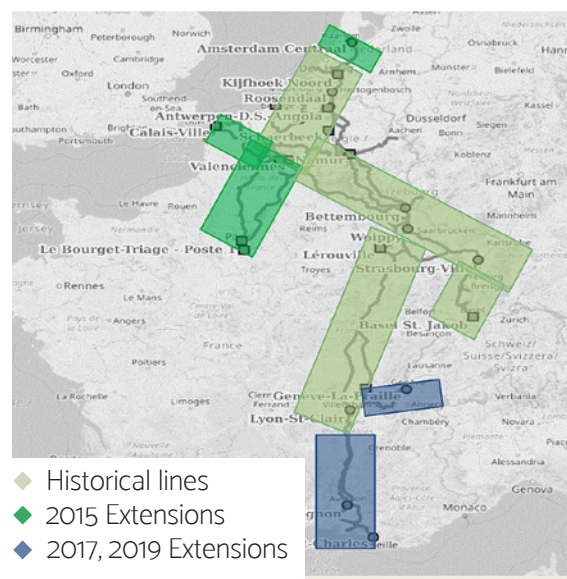
Number of trains crossing a border along the RFC

In the figures below, all international freight trains that pass a border on the Corridor are taken into account.

The evolution of the total amount of Corridor traffic is heavily influenced by the economic growth of the Corridor regions.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is clearly seen in the number of trains in 2020 and 2021.

This KPI shows the trend on the Corridor for the last four calendar years.

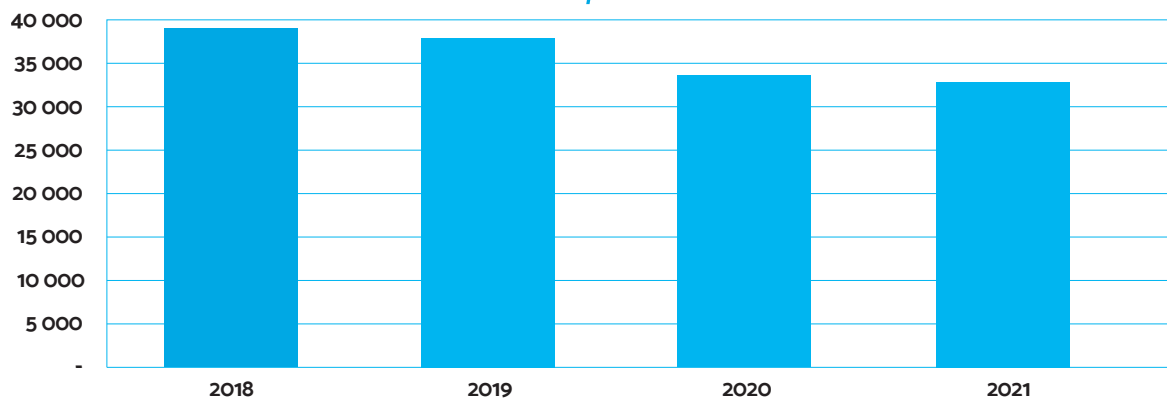


- ◆ Historical lines
- ◆ 2015 Extensions
- ◆ 2017, 2019 Extensions

Dec. 2020 UK leave

Geneva' volumes counted since 2019

Annual number of trains 2018 - 2021



Variation	January 19 vs 18	February 19 vs 18	March 19 vs 18	April 19 vs 18	May 19 vs 18	June 19 vs 18	July 19 vs 18	August 19 vs 18	September 19 vs 18	October 19 vs 18	November 19 vs 18	December 19 vs 18	19 vs 18
2019 vs 2018													
Total	9%	9%	4%	15%	10%	-5%	-7%	-10%	-7%	-4%	-15%	-37%	-3%

Variation	January 20 vs 19	February 20 vs 19	March 20 vs 19	April 20 vs 19	May 20 vs 19	June 20 vs 19	July 20 vs 19	August 20 vs 19	September 20 vs 19	October 20 vs 19	November 20 vs 19	December 20 vs 19	20 vs 19
2020 vs 2019													
Total	-23%	-11%	-20%	-31%	-25%	-10%	-7%	-13%	-2%	-8%	-1%	45%	-11%

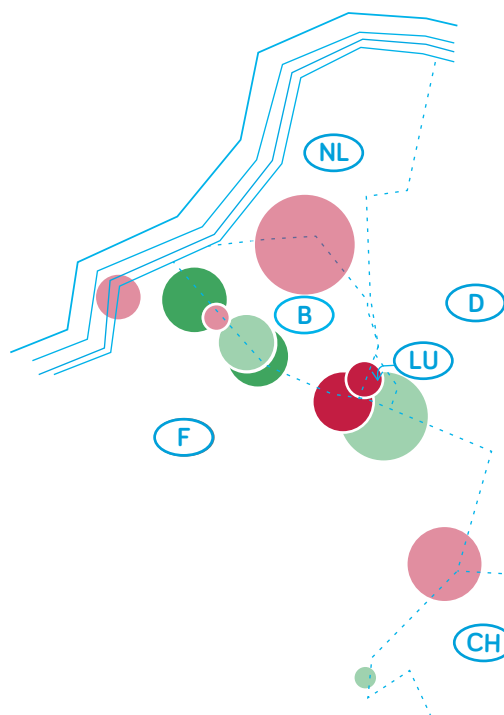
Variation	January 20 vs 21	February 20 vs 21	March 20 vs 21	April 20 vs 21	May 20 vs 21	June 20 vs 21	July 20 vs 21	August 20 vs 21	September 20 vs 21	October 20 vs 21	November 20 vs 21	December 20 vs 21	20 vs 21
2021 vs 2020													
Total	-6%	-15%	5%	31%	9%	9%	-14%	9%	-9%	-11%	-18%	0%	-2%

Market Development

Number of trains per border

The evolution of the number of trains per Corridor border gives an indication of the geographical spread of the traffic on the Corridor. This is especially important given that there are many different traffic flows with very different O/Ds using the Corridor lines.

The shares on Baisieux/Blandain and Pougny Chancy / La Plaine appear to be small but are corridor borders which do not yet have significant volumes compared to the other border points.

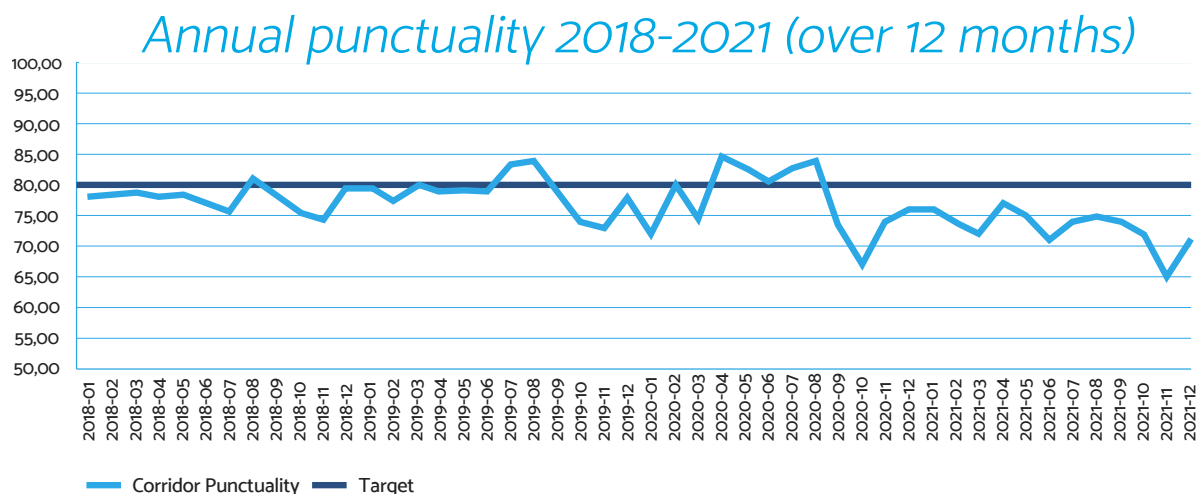


Border location names		Volume (Nb of trains) 2021	Share	Δ 21/20
ProRail	Infrabel			
Roosendaal Grens	Essen Grens	8523	23%	-9%
Infrabel	ACF CFL			
Aubange frontière LU	Rodange frontière	2229	6%	-32%
Infrabel	SNCF Réseau			
Mouscron frontière	Tourcoing frontière	4011	11%	18%
Aubange FR	Mont St Martin frontière	3013	8%	-32%
Erquelines frontière	Jeumont frontière	3200	9%	27%
Blandain frontière	Baisieux frontière	737	2%	-20%
Feignies	Quevy	2855	8%	6%
ACF CFL	SNCF Réseau			
Bettembourg frontière	Zoufftgen frontière	5966	16%	2%
SNCF Réseau	SBB			
Bâle St.-Jean	Basel St. Johann	4782	13%	-12%
Pougny Chancy	La Plaine	323	1%	8%
Channel Tunnel	SNCF Réseau			
Doolands Moor	Calais Frethun faisceau tunnel	1902	5%	-2%

The Belgian - Dutch border point remains the most active for the Corridor. However, the Benelux / Switzerland axis is a strong capacity axis for the development of the Antwerp port area, which explains the good share of traffic on the Basel and Bettembourg/Zoufftgen border points.

Punctuality

RFC North Sea – Med continues its efforts to reach the objective of 80% punctuality. For 2021, the global corridor punctuality is :



5.2. User Satisfaction Survey 2021

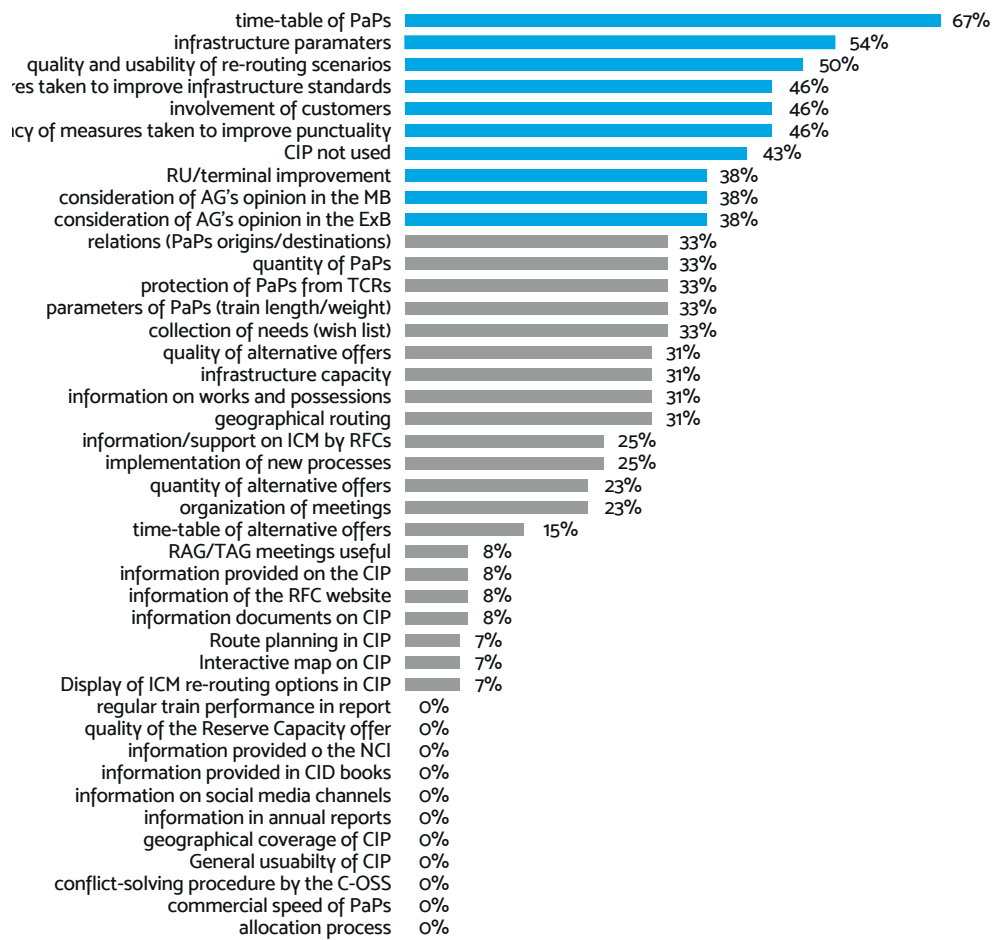
The User Satisfaction Survey 2021 was prepared and conducted jointly with all eleven rail freight corridors. The survey was conducted between September and October 2021 and the results were published on the website.

The overall satisfaction of users with RFC North Sea-Med increased by 11%, reaching 92% of overall satisfaction.

There was a positive feedback on the team's commitment, even if there is still room for improvement according to the survey.



The topics on which improvements are most needed according to the respondents are summarised below.



FOCUS TOPICS

LESS URGENT

All details can be found in the full report published on the Corridor's website:

https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/sites/rfc2.eu/files/telechargements/RFC_USS_2021_RFC2_NSM_report.pdf



6. Events

The year 2021 was proclaimed as the European Year of Rail by the European Commission. Unfortunately, due to the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, major events related to this or recurring events, were cancelled or held online.

However, the RFC Network participated in the **Connecting Europe Express** which ran through Europe in celebration of the European Year of Rail 2021. The RFC Network introduced itself with the video which can be found by clicking on following link:

https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/sites/rfc2.eu/files/telechargements/RFC%2006%202021_small.mp4

The President of our Assembly, Michaël Dierickx, and our Managing Director, Yann Le Floch, were invited on the Connecting Europe Express, and participate in the events of Antwerp, Brussels and Bettembourg.

All participants agreed that rail freight in Europe should be more seamless, more flexible, more reliable, easier and faster in order to realise the wanted modal shift from road to rail.

In 2021 for the first time the RFC Network in cooperation with RNE organized three sessions in the frame of the European Year of Rail:

- 1st Session (18th of June): Cross-border
 - 2nd Session (16th of September): International Contingency Management
 - 3rd Session (14th October): Time-Table Redesign.
- All sessions were held via MS Teams in an interactive way giving participants the possibility to ask questions and participate in discussions. There was a great interest in these sessions in 2021, therefore the RFC Network decided to continue and organize these sessions also in 2022. All sessions are available on the RFC Network YouTube channel.

Antwerp, Monday 4th of October:



On the train to Brussels:





Event in Luxembourg-Bettembourg on the 5th of October:





7. Finance

The financial resources available for RFC North Sea-Med come from contributions from its members and partners and European subsidies received.

In 2020, the PSA funded Action “Long-term development, governance and support to the harmonisation process of Rail Freight Corridor North Sea-Mediterranean within the European rail freight network” (Action nr. 2016-PSA-RFC02) ended. The final payment request was introduced by the end of March 2021 and has been settled before the summer break of 2021. We are grate-

ful to the EU for this support and hope to benefit from further co-financing in the future.

In that regard, the European Commission committed for future financing of all RFCs in the framework of a ‘Technical Assistance’ financing. The conditions of financing will be settled in 2022.



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ProRail

INFRABEL

SNCF
RÉSEAU

 **SBB CFF FFS**

 **ACF**

 **TVS
SAS
SAT**

CFL



Co-financed by the Connecting Europe
Facility of the European Union