

Easier, faster, safer



RFC North Sea - Med 2023 Annual Report



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Content

Message from the Presidents and Managing Director	04
1. About the Corridor	06
1.1 A major European rail freight route	06
1.2 Easier, Faster, Safer	08
1.3. An initiative of the European Commission	09
2. The governance of the Corridor, an ambitious collaborative approach	10
2.1. The Executive Board	11
2.2 The Management Board	15
2.3. The Advisory Groups	22
3. Cooperation with stakeholders	26
3.1. The European Commission	26
3.2. The Rail Freight Corridors Network	27
3.3. The Core Network Corridor	27
3.4. The Regulatory bodies	27
3.5. RailNetEurope	28
4. Key activities and topics in 2023	29
4.1. Activities of the Executive Board	29
4.2. Activities of the Management Board	32
4.3. Capacity and Temporary Capacity Restrictions	34
4.4. Train Performance and Traffic Management	41
4.5. Information to the customers	38
5. Performance of the Corridor and User Satisfaction Survey	39
5.1. Performance of the Corridor	39
5.2. User Satisfaction Survey 2023	44
6. Events	45
7. Finance	47

Message from the Presidents and Managing Director

In the current uncertain economic context, RFC North Sea-Med commits to deliver

In an uncertain economic context, Rail Freight Corridor North Sea - Med continues to deliver capacity for all international freight traffic. Thanks to the commitment of our members and the coordination provided by our C-OSS, we have successfully increased the volume of requested PaPs by 22% in 2023, despite the slightly lower offer for TimeTable 2024 (TT2024). Also the overall punctuality on the Corridor increased by 2 % from 74% to 76% in 2023. Despite these positive results, we unfortunately did not manage to turn around the negative trend regarding the number of trains using our Corridor. .

But, we will continue to focus on our customers by offering an even larger PaP catalogue for TT2025, by far the largest catalogue of the 11 Rail Freight Corridors.

Thanks to the help of the C-OSS, our customers can more easily submit their requests in PCS. The rest of the Permanent Team is also dedicated to this customer-focus approach and assists our customers.

Furthermore, the Corridor elaborated and developed the concept of «Capacity Intelligence». More than an analysis of the capacity situation of five hundred pages on the most heavily used lines of the Corridor, it is, above all, a methodology to be shared with as many people as possible. This study establishes a more rational and transparent

approach to capacity. This approach should improve dialogue with all stakeholders and decision-makers. We invite everyone to download it from our website.

Of course, we cannot talk about 2023 without mentioning the publication of the proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area published by the European Commission in July 2023. Over the next few years, it will completely transform the landscape of capacity allocation within the Union. With our RFC's unparalleled expertise, we are confident that we can ensure a seamless transition for all customers and partners.

Before that the changes brought by the Proposal will occur in the coming years, we will first be turning the page of RFC North Sea - Med, with the merge with the Rhine -Alpine. The North Sea - Rhine - Mediterranean Rail Freight Corridor will be created, following the expected publication of the new TEN-T Regulation by June 2024. The potential options and approaches are under discussion between the Management Boards and Executive Boards of both Corridors to realise this merger and comply with the new TEN-T Regulation. Until then, the Executive Board, the Management Board and the Permanent Team will remain mobilised to ensure that RFC North Sea - Med remains a key player in the sector.



As Robert Schuman - a great and convinced European - pointed out : “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity”.

In any case, in 2024, just like in previous years, we are thrilled to continue meeting with you to better meet your needs and work together to improve the performance of the trains running on our Corridor.

Yann Le Floc’h
Managing Director

A blue ink signature of Yann Le Floc’h, consisting of a stylized 'Y' and 'L' followed by a horizontal line.

Valérie Verzele
President of the Executive board

A blue ink signature of Valérie Verzele, featuring a complex, circular scribble.

Michaël Dierickx
President of the Assembly

A blue ink signature of Michaël Dierickx, showing a stylized 'M' and 'D' with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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, the Port of Antwerp-Bruges¹, North Sea Port², Dunkirk, Calais and Marseille) to the industrial zones of Western Europe and to the gateways of Southern Europe, with almost 5000 kilometres of lines.

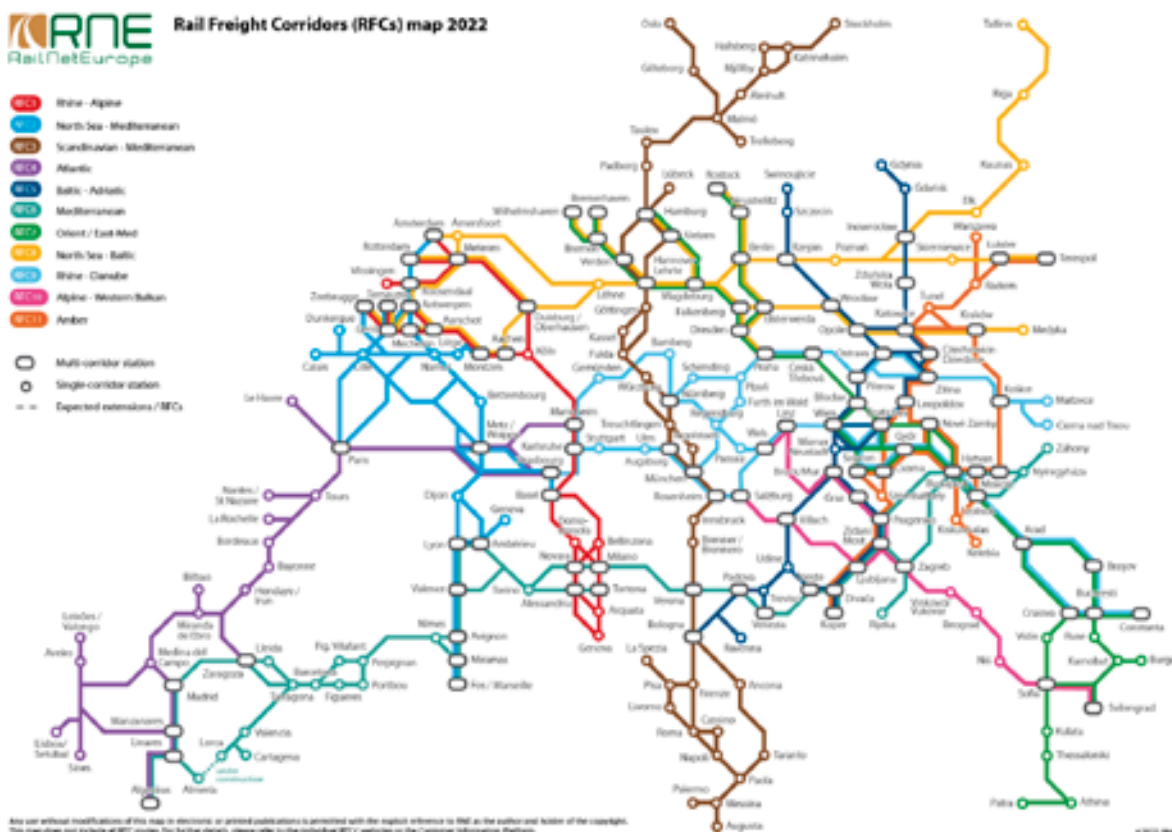
The Corridor is also an access to the rest of Europe, being connected to the RFCs Rhine-

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 around 30.000 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>





1.2. Easier, Faster, Safer

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

Railway undertakings and other applicants, 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, 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 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 ongoing.

More information on these topics can be found under Chapter 4 – Key activities and topics in 2023.

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 1316/2013³ 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, impacting both the CNC and RFC. Discussions on the proposed revision continued in 2023.

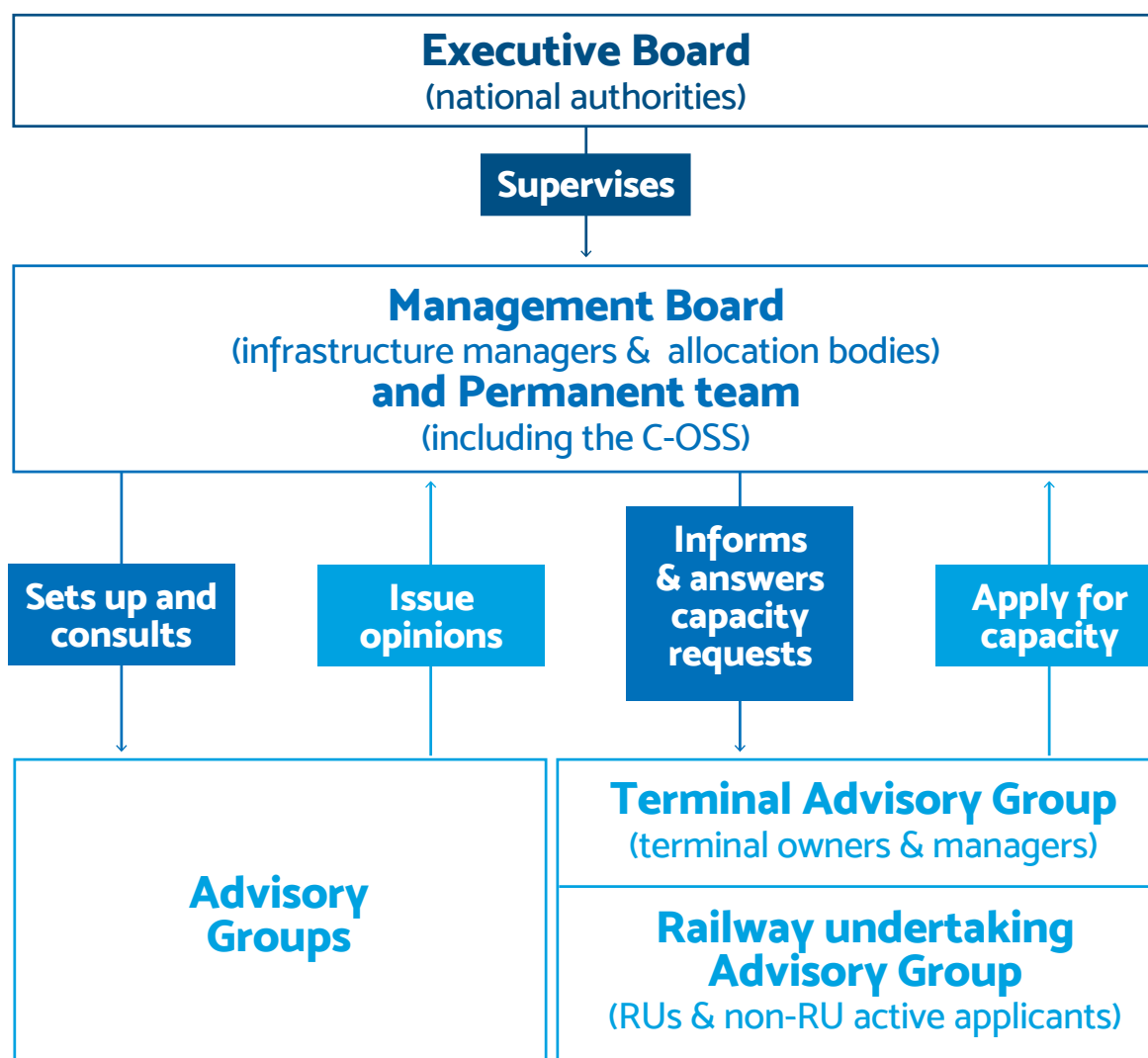
More in Chapter 4 – Key activities and topics in 2023.



^{3/} 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 and Switzerland.

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 2023.

FULL REPRESENTATIVES



Valérie Verzele

Director General
Federal Public
Service Mobility
and Transport of
Belgium



Raphael Zumsteeg

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



Ebru Akdag

Head of department safety
and goods – public transport
and rail directorate,
Ministry of Infrastructure and
Water Management of
The Netherlands



Delphine Chabalier

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



Pierre-André Meyrat

Deputy Director
Federal Office of
Transport of
Switzerland
(Retired in 2023)



We would like to thank
Pierre-André for his active
engagement and partici-
pation in the Executive
Board, and this from the
begin days of the RFC.

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
(Became full representative
in 2023)



Marcel Tijs

Ministry of
Infrastructure and
Water Management
of The Netherlands
(From end of 2023 on)



Bert van Laar

Ministry of
Infrastructure and
Water Management
of The Netherlands
(Succeeded end of 2023)



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 member or partner.

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 four times per year, and from 2022 a monthly informal exchange online was introduced.



Michaël Dierickx

President of the Assembly

ASSEMBLY REPRESENTATIVES



John Voppen
President Director
ProRail



Benoît Gilson
CEO,
Infrabel



Marc Wengler
General Director,
CFL



Matthieu Chabanel
President SNCF Réseau



Peter Kummer
Head of
SBB Infrastructure



Thomas Isenmann
Managing Director,
TVS



Claude Mahowald
Director,
ACF

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



Tenzin Norgay
International Affairs Specialist SBB
Infrastructure (temporarily replaced in 2023 by
Elmar Baumgartner during maternity leave)



Kathleen Pelte
Head of Path Division,
ACF



Floraine Stauffer
Regulatory Analysis &
Freight Corridors Specialist
TVS

THE PERMANENT TEAM

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.



Yann Le Floc'h
Managing Director



Matthieu Maeselle
Communication & Finance
Manager, Advisory Groups



Jean Quaeyhaegens
Corridor one-stop shop
leader, Capacity Manager



Sibel Ozcan
(From January 2023)
Operations & Investments
manager, ERTMS coordinator

Working Groups and Committee

C-OSS WG	WG Temporary Capacity Restrictions	TPM* WG
Leader Jean Quaeyhaegens	Leader Jean Quaeyhaegens	Leader Sibel Ozcan
Communication WG	Corridor Information Document WG	Legal WG
Leader Matthieu Maeselle	Leader Matthieu Maeselle	Leader Yann Le Floc'h
CIP** WG	ERTMS Committee	Marketing WG
Leader Matthieu Maeselle	Leader Sibel Ozcan	Leader Sibel Ozcan

* Train performance management

**Customer Information Platform

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 2023.



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 (both RU and non-RU).

The RAG is chaired by **Lieven Goethals** (Lineas). Vice-Chairman of the RAG is **Paul Hodgson** (CFL Cargo).



“ 2023 was once more a challenging year for the vast majority of Rail Freight undertakings in Europe, with a combination of high energy prices and slowing economies putting pressure on our business models. At the same time, the European Commission published its Greening Freight Package, with the aim of improving the competitiveness of rail freight in Europe, a positive step which, combined with the new TEN-T regulation, aims to help to improve Europe’s environmental performance, by shifting more freight to rail.

We look forward to continuing to work with the (future joint) Corridor Team during the coming years as the new regulatory frameworks come into effect, whilst keeping the focus on improving operational performance. It is vital that, as a sector, we continue to work together to both prepare the future and to ensure that we offer our customers a safe, reliable and cost-effective service each and every day.

Alone that could and alone than we have a chance to - convince them to modal shift (more), and althus realising our challenge to double the share of railfreight by 2030!”.

Lieven Goethals, Chairman of the RAG • **Paul Hodgson**, Vice-Chairman of the RAG

Two RAG meetings were organised in 2023, each preceded by a pre-RAG between Railway undertakings. Also, a joint RAG part with RFC Rhine-Alpine was foreseen on both meeting days:



On the 19th of April, in Basel, with following topics:

- State of play of the traffic on the Corridor;
- Update of the Implementation Plan;
- State of play PaP Catalogue TT2024 + TCRs;
- State of Play Rastatt Closure 2024 by RUs;
- State of Play QCO Lyon - Bettembourg;
- First discussions on the merger RFC Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Med.

During the joint RAG part, the focus topic of Digital Automatic Coupling was presented and discussed.

On the 18th of October in Munich, with following topics:

- News of the Corridor;
- Input Update Implementation Plan;
- State of play allocation TT2024 and catalogue TT2025;
- State of Rastatt Closure 2024;
- Revised TEN-T Regulation;
- Average speed on International O/D's: Analysis requested by the RUs.

A RAG webinar about the 'Train Composition Message' by RNE was held in the first quarter of 2023.



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 nominated a TAG Chair, **Paul Kronenberger**, and 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 as speaker of the TAG community of RFC North Sea – Med.



Frédéric Buyse

BMC-T
Vice-Chair of the TAG community

Paul Kronenberger

Head of Freight
CFL-MultiModal
Chair of the TAG community

"As mentioned last year, the sector is facing a wide range of challenges (e.g. corridor renovation in Germany). The expected consequences, such as detours, will increase costs and further exacerbate the staff shortage.

We also need to keep a close eye on the impact of the 'Weights and Dimensions Directive' proposal".

Paul Kronenberger, Chairman of the TAG

The joint TAG meeting with RFC Rhine-Alpine took place in Liège, on the 21st of June :

As in the previous years, the TAG was organised together with RFC Rhine-Alpine.

During the meeting updates on the development and performance of the corridor traffic were presented and discussed. Topics presented to the participants included the project on Rail Collaborative Decision Making that is under development at RNE with assistance of both RFCs, as well as the results of the User Satisfaction Survey conducted in the previous year.

The TAG meeting also included a visit to the airport of Liège and different terminals in the port of Liège.

In addition to the TAG meeting, three webinars were held that informed about the Rail Facilities Portal, organised by the RFC Network and UIRR.



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 the dialogue with the other ministries, infrastructure managers and regulatory bodies involved in the rail freight corridors.

The European Commission published in 2021 a proposal for the revision of the TEN-T Regulation, which is under negotiation. One important point for RFC North Sea - Med is its proposed merger with RFC Rhine - Alpine.

The combination of the two north-south directed rail freight corridors should further strengthen the already strong interoperable rail freight axis in Europe.

In July 2023, the European Commission published its long-awaited proposal for a regulation on the use of the railway infrastructure capacity.



3.2. The Rail Freight Corridors Network

The RFC Network is a platform for cooperation of all Rail Freight Corridors. It consists of the Managing Directors and Chairpersons of the Management Board of the RFCs with RNE representatives invited to participate as observers. The RFC Network is supported by the RFC Network Assistant, Nuria Pérez Brandón. In 2023, six online and one physical RFC Network

meetings were organized in which RFC North Sea-Med participated. Among the topics, which RFCs worked on were the CEF II Technical Assistance deliverables.

The C-OSS Community topics were also discussed.

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 holds once a year a dedicated meeting with the CNC Coordinator.

More information on the activities of 2023 is provided in chapter 4.1.

Two CNC Fora were organised in which RFC North Sea-Med participated:

- On 7th of June;
- On 15th of November.

Among other topics, the TEN-T revision, CEF II calls and a state of play of the TEN-T CNC study and the new workplan, were discussed.

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 57 of Directive 2012/34/EU. In general, the Belgian Regulatory body represents all regulatory bodies at the Executive Board

meetings of the Corridor. Representatives of the Regulatory bodies also participate in the Advisory Group meetings.

No dedicated meeting with the C-OSS was requested by the Regulatory bodies in 2023.

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) and the Network Statement and Corridor Information platform (NCI).

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 2023:

- 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;
- Transport Market Study working group.



4. Key activities and topics in 2023

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 and updated in 2019, which specify the policy goals of the ExBo. The main strategic objectives remain the temporary restrictions, the capacity management along the Corridor and the quality of the offer.

Regular topics addressed

Two particular topics were specifically discussed within the meetings of the ExBo in the course of 2023.

Firstly, the revision of the so-called TEN-T Regulation and its impact on the future of the RFC, including the merger of RFC Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean, was discussed at Executive Board level with stakeholders, as well as the European Coordinator for CNC North Sea-Med. The TEN-T Regulation, which will enter into force in 2024, foresees 18 months for the merger of both Corridors.

Secondly, the European Commission published in July 2023 its proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area. This new proposal suggests to abolish the Rail Freight Corridors in 2029 and foresees a new allocation process throughout the Union. The consequences on the Corridor, as well as its imbrication with the revision of the TEN-T Regulation were therefore heavily discussed, and the discussion will continue in 2024.

The ExBo also discussed further topics regarding the capacity management.

The ExBo continued to monitor the temporary capacity restrictions (TCRs) on the lines part of

the RFC and the potential impact of TCRs located outside of the geographical scope of the RFC, to better anticipate the impact on the traffic of the Corridor and increase its reliability. The closure of a major itinerary of RFC Rhine-Alpine was an attention point of the discussions.

The ExBo also continued to discuss the ERTMS deployment along the Corridor, and invited the ERTMS Coordinator to exchange on this topic.

Furthermore, the development of the other parameters along the corridor was still a point for a close monitoring. The Executive Board noted the progress made in Belgium to lift restrictions on 740 meter long trains in Belgium, on the discussions to finance projects for 740 meter trains in the Netherlands and on the studies on loading gauge in France co-financed by a CEF grant.

Also, the updated Implementation Plan was approved by the Executive Board at the end of 2023.

Finally, the pilot project between Bettembourg and Lyon was also on the agenda of the ExBo meetings, with its potential extension to other terminals.

European Cooperation



Cooperation with the CNC

The Executive Board met the CNC Coordinator, Pr. Peter Balázs, on the 29th of June 2023 to have an even closer cooperation between the RFC and the CNC.

The status of implementation of current requirements and the upcoming requirements from the revised TEN-T Regulation were addressed. The importance of funding to address shortcomings and complete the ongoing projects was raised.

Cooperation with the ERTMS Coordinator

The Executive Board also invited the ERTMS Coordinator, Mr. Ruete, to participate in its meeting on the 12th of October 2023.

The progress in the implementation of ERTMS, both at the level of the Corridor and Union-wide, was discussed, as well as the issue of costs and the need for a stable financing and forecast of the specifications.

Joint Executive Board meeting RFC NSM - RALP

A joint meeting between the ExBo RFC Rhine-Alpine and the ExBo RFC North Sea-Mediterranean took place on 24 October 2023. The meeting was

dedicated to the merger of RFC Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean, especially regarding its implication on the governance structure and on the customers. The transitional period was also addressed. These items will be further addressed in 2024.

Network of Executive Boards of RFCs

The Executive Board participated again to the Network of Executive Boards of RFCs meetings on the 8th of June and the 22nd of November.

The activities were related to TTR, the feasibility study for a European Transport Market Study, the revision of the TEN-T Regulation and the proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area. KPIs and the allocation rules were also discussed.

Furthermore, the NExBo continued to encourage the exchange of good practices and initiatives from various corridors were presented. A dedicated discussion took also place on the proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, through a dedicated workshop between the Ministries and the Commission.





Railway undertakings and terminals cooperation

The Executive Board decided to pursue its closer cooperation with TAG representatives during the ExBo meetings.

During these exchanges with the TAG Speaker, the TAG Speaker presented the point of view of the terminals on the revision of the TEN-T regulation and on the proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area. The awareness of the terminals on their obligation related to the implementation of TAF TSI was also discussed, and a representative of the ExBo brought the topic during a TAG meeting.

The RAG speaker was also invited during the ExBo meetings, as it is the case since 2017.

Thanks to this exchange of views, various issues for the RUs were brought to the Ministries' attention and provided some insight views on how the market works and their challenges, e.g. on the price competitiveness of rail comparing to road transport. The impact of major TCRs in 2024, loading gauge, long trains, the proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area and reciprocal KPIs between infrastructure managers and railway undertakings were discussed.

The cooperation with RAG and TAG representatives will continue in 2024, with a RAG Window during each ExBo meeting, and a TAG Window twice a year.

4.2. Activities of the Management Board

In 2023, the Management Board met 4 times to handle the official agenda with decision points. Also, a monthly online meeting was organised, to discuss and exchange on non-decisional points and topics where an exchange among its members and partners was considered as useful.

In the light of the potential merger between RFCs Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Med, and to discuss topics of common interest, a common Management Board meeting was organised in Vienna, on the 20th of September.

Also, the drop in traffic on RFC North Sea – Med, leading to a sixth year of decline in train numbers, drew the full attention of the Management Board, who asked the Permanent Team to further analyse the situation and come with proposals to reverse this negative trend. In that regard, the ‘Marketing

Working Group’ established in 2022 continued in 2023 to investigate the reasons behind this drop. The findings of the Marketing WG are expected in 2024.

Also in 2023, an update of the Implementation Plan was performed by the Management Board. The update included amongst others the investment plan, the ERTMS deployment along the Corridor and the setting of new targets for some of the objectives.

The updated Implementation Plan was approved by the Executive Board in December 2023 and was published on the website:

[Implementation Plan PDF](#)

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



Deployment of ETCS on the Corridor

Sylvain Mosmann

ERTMS technical advisor



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 2023 the cooperation on RFC level continued as planned. The ERTMS committee will continue its work in 2024.

Following topics have been discussed in 2023:

- State of play of the deployment per country
- Speed limits on international traffic relative to the ETCS train categories
- Revision of the TSI CCS



4.3. Capacity and Temporary Capacity Restrictions

Capacity management

2023 started with the publication of the Pre-arranged Path catalogue for timetable (TT) 2024, and ended with the finalisation of the catalogue for TT2025.

The results of the allocation process for TT2024 (capacity KPIs) and the evolution over the years can be found in the Performance Report 2023 published on the website under the following link:

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

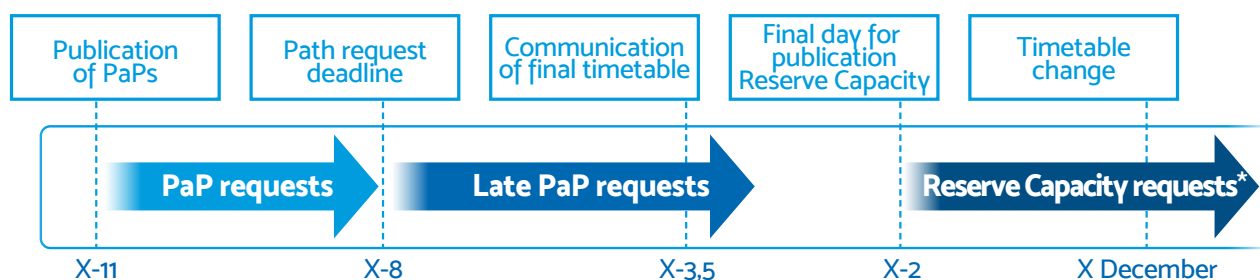
In 2023, the process of allocating Rolling Planning paths in the frame of the TTR pilot between Amsterdam and Brussels continued. ProRail and Infrabel, together with the Railway undertakings

running on these lines, opted for the C-OSS as the single source for Rolling Planning capacity.

Also in 2023, our C-OSS did a specific stakeholder survey regarding the process of capacity allocation together with the C-OSS of RFC Rhine-Alpine.

The Permanent team members also did bilateral meetings with some of our RU's running on our RFC to have an open exchange about business running and potential future business opportunities.

Capacity allocation calendar in 2023



* continues in following year until 30 days before train run



MVP ‘Capacity visualisation study’

After the successful PoC (Proof of concept) of ‘Capacity visualisation’, the work done resulted in a continuation study launched in 2022, in a consortium with RNE, where the Corridor awarded a tender in January 2023 to SMA for a MVP (Minimum Viable Product) continuation study of this capacity visualisation.

As a reminder, the motivation for the launch of this study was to reflect on how to support the ambitious 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 TCRs, 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 the Management Board, RFC North Sea - Med initiated an innovative approach, 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.

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

The 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.

This study is co-financed by CEF funding under the umbrella and coordination of RNE.

The results of the continuation study performed in 2023 are published on the website:

[Capacity Intelligence](#)

Temporary Capacity Restrictions

In the frame of the coordination of the Rastatt closure in 2024, a dedicated Working Group RAN (Rhine-Alp-North Sea) was established, at the same time taking over the tasks of the TCR WG. RFC North Sea-Med still takes part at the discussions, with following IMs participating: Infrabel, ACF/CFL, SNCF Réseau, SBB Infra and DB Netz.

All high-impact TCR, with impact on international trains in 2026 have been coordinated. Goal of the RAN WG is to make sure that there is always a diversionary route available on the RFC.

On the 22nd of November, for the first time, an international presentation of 2026 coordination has been made to RUs and non-RU applicants as well as other stakeholders.

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

<https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/en/page/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. They met four times in 2023.

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.

The 'Quality Circle Operation' (QCO) Lyon-Bettembourg continued in 2023, and 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 a local governance to ensure continuous improvement needed to drive change.

Also, in 2023, the QCO was taken by RNE as a pilot in their R-CDM project.

Seen the good results, the aim in 2024 is to extend the used methodology to other terminals on the RFC North Sea-Med network.

International Contingency Management

In 2023, there was one case where the International Contingency Management process was launched on RFC Rhine-Alpine that impacted the traffic on RFC North Sea-Med. On 10 August, a freight train derailed on its journey through the Gotthard Base Tunnel and severely damaged the tunnel infrastructure.

Following the accident, the International Contingency Management was launched by SBB Infra with the participation of the Corridor to inform all Infrastructure Managers of the Corridor and other

neighbouring countries and to evaluate possible effects on the Corridor lines.

Also, an incident in the Maurienne valley impacted the traffic on our Corridor.

Additionally, a ICM scenario was prepared in 2023 and will be tested in 2024 including an update of the re-routing overview. These are published on our website:

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



4.5. Information to the customers

Corridor Information Document

All necessary information for using the Corridor is provided in the Corridor Information Document (CID), which is published on the Corridor website. This document gives corridor-scale information regarding TCRs, access conditions, capacity and ICM, performance and traffic management on the Corridor.

A full harmonization among the Corridors of the CID was accomplished in the last years.

Moreover, the digitalisation project of the CID, called NCI portal (Network statement and Corridor Information) was further improved in 2023.

Customer Information Platform (CIP)

The Customer Information Platform (CIP) was further developed and improved in 2023 under the lead of RNE

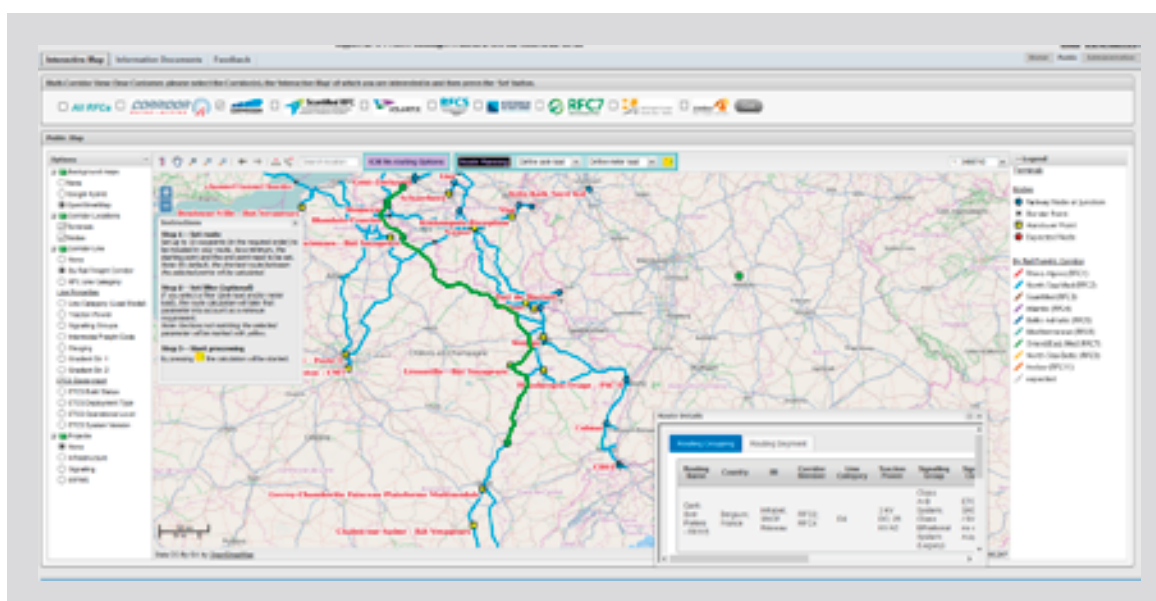
The main achievements were:

- Several developments to improve the user friendliness and an update of the graphical user interface
- General improvements regarding completeness of information on properties and projects
- Update of the Terminal list and technical parameters in the margin of the update of the Implementation Plan
- Start of the work on a common database for RNE applications called Railway Infrastructure System (RIS)



Nicolas Gatez of Infrabel is improving the quality of the system as implementation manager for RFC North Sea - Med.

Further improvements, developments and integration with other RNE tools are foreseen in 2024, mainly linked to the new RIS project steered by RNE.



5. Performance of the Corridor and User Satisfaction Survey

5.1. Performance of the Corridor

As required 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 on KPIs.

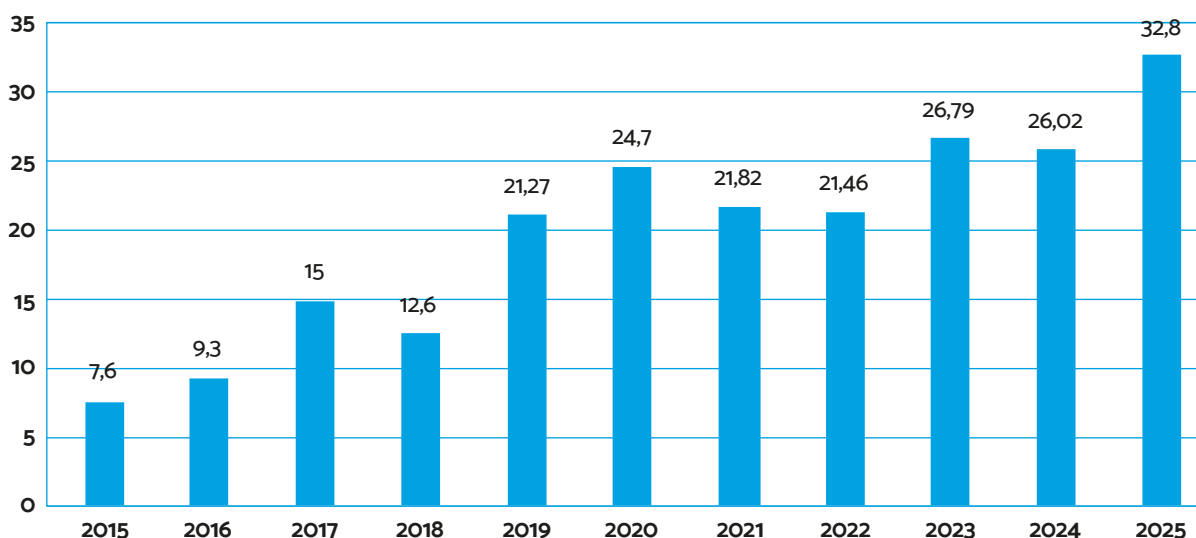
Below we present some of the results. The full report can be found on the Corridor website under the following link:

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

Volume of offered capacity (PaPs)

This graph displays the volume of PaPs that have been published by the C-OSS in January 2014 to 2024 for the timetables 2015 to 2025.

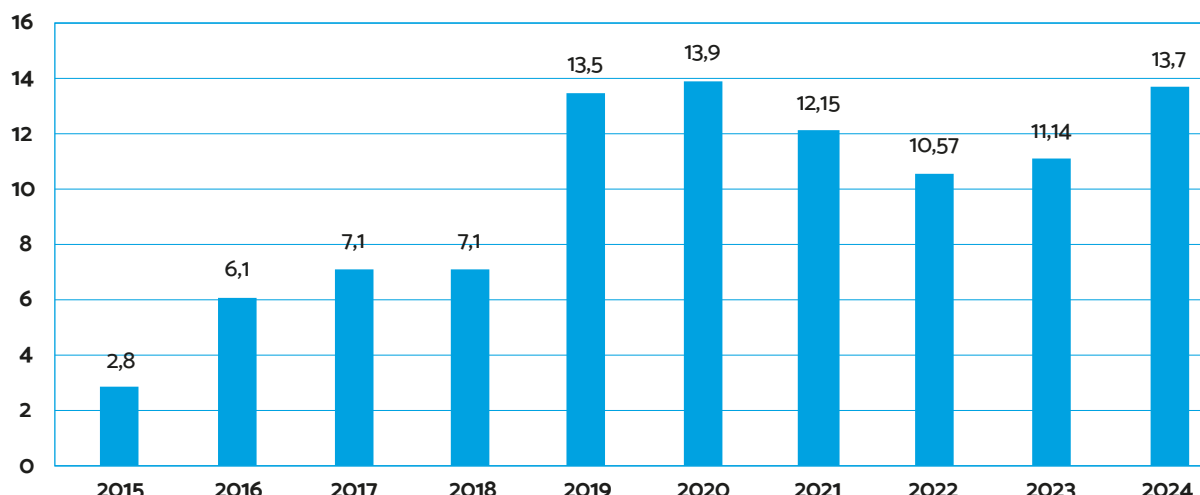
A total of **32,8 million KMs** were published as PaPs for TT2025 (+26% compared to TT2024)



Volume of requested capacity (PaPs)

This KPI displays the volume of requested PaPs that have been received by the C-OSS for the annual timetables 2015 to 2024. Feeder and outflow sections as well as overlapping sections (with other RFCs) are not included. Measured annual timetables 2015 to 2024 at the deadline for submitting path requests = X-8

An increase of **22%** is noticeable, compared to TT2023



Number of trains crossing a border along the RFC

For this KPI, 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.

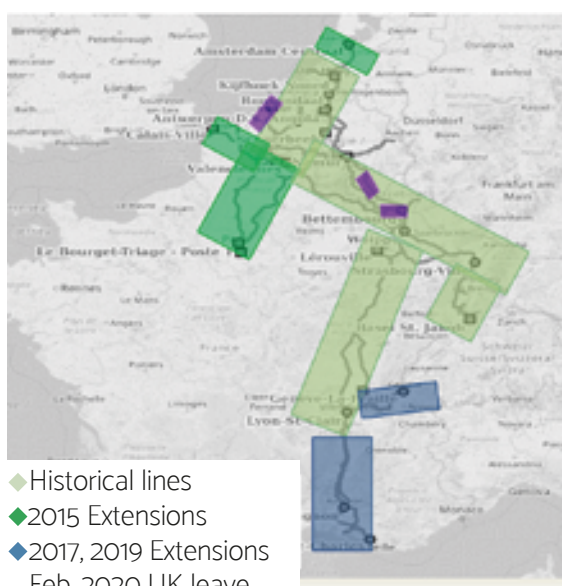
The graph on the opposite page shows the trend of the Corridor for the last six years.

The information on the number of trains is provided by the IM's and is related to the border points on the Corridor.

The train volumes on the Corridor have been steadily declining since 2018, with a 6,5% decline compared to 2022.

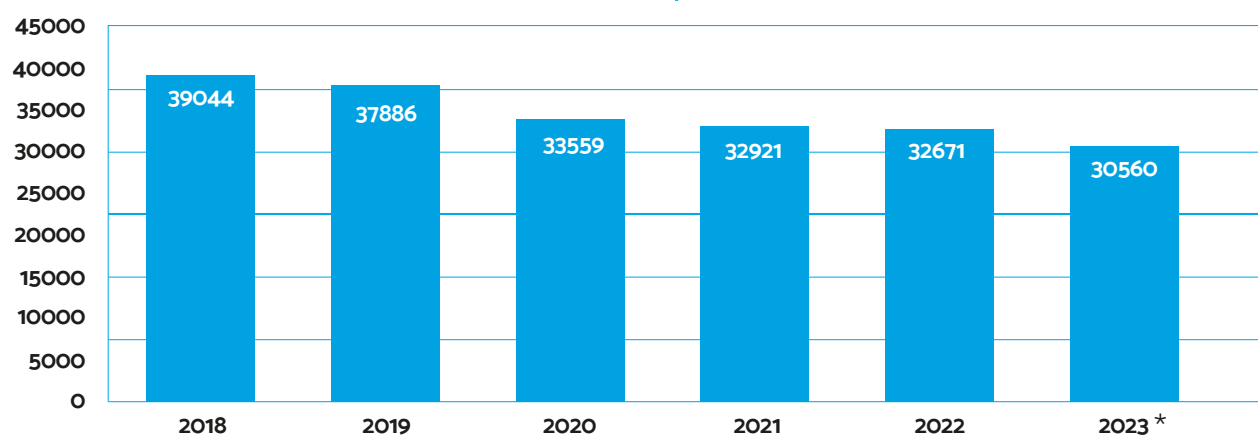
This decline can be mainly explained by the overall economical situation, the Ukraine crisis, the subsequent inflation, and diminished demand especially regarding the combined traffic mainly due to a drop in the ports activity.

In this context, the Marketing WG is further analysing the reasons of this decrease and explain the fall in corridor volume over the last years.

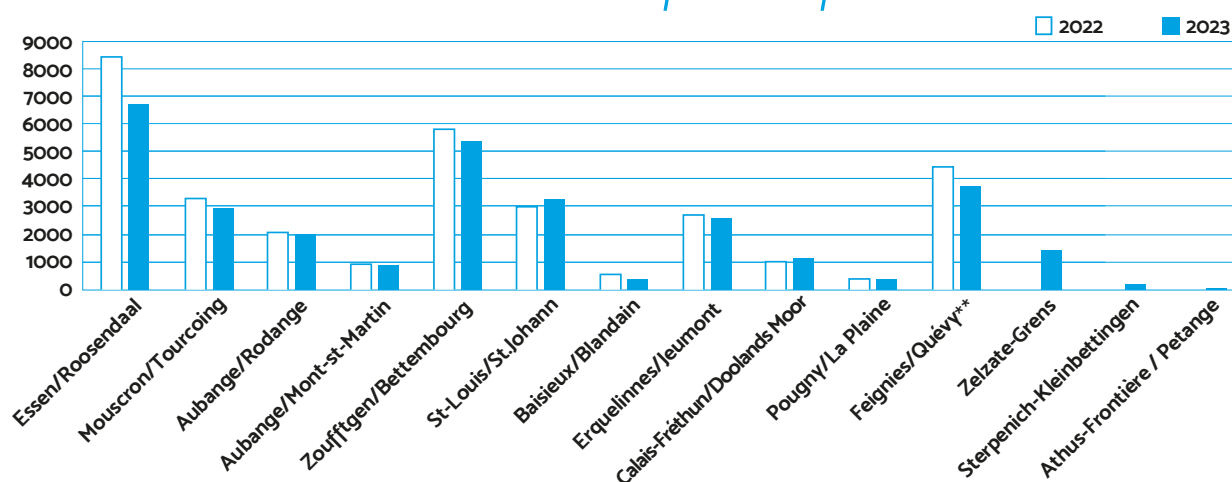




Annual number of trains 2018 - 2023



Annual number of trains per border



* Sas van Gent - Zelzate is included for the first year, as well as 2 existing border points on diversionary lines of the RFC.

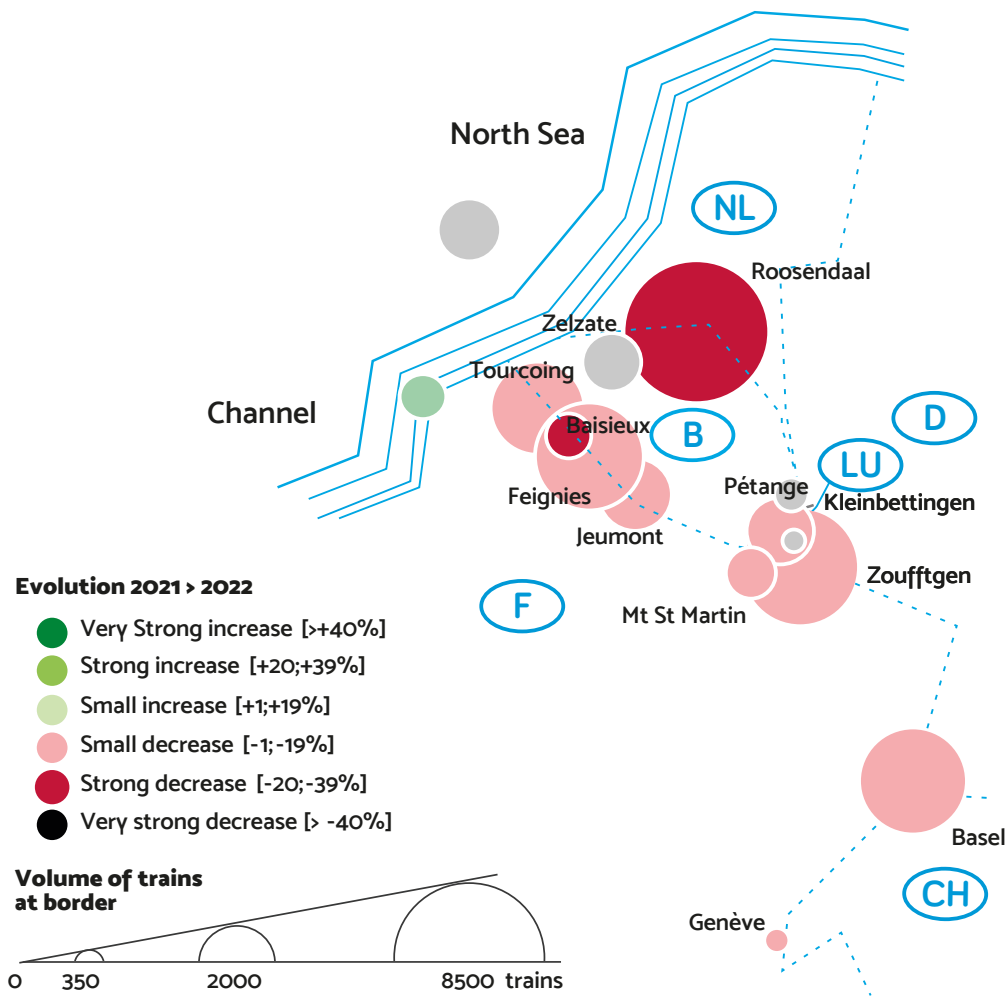
**Not an official RFC NSM border point.

Border location names		Volume (Nb of trains) 2023*	Share	Δ 23/22*	
ProRail	Infrabel				
Roosendaal Grens	Essen Grens	6720	20%	-21%	↗
Sas van Gent	Zelzate Grens	1510	5%		
Infrabel	ACF / CFL				
Aubange frontière LU	Rodange frontière	2002	6%	-3%	↗
Sterpenich	Kleinbettingen	138	0%	-3%	↗
Athus-Frontière	Pétange	50	0%	-39%	↗
Infrabel	SNCF Réseau				
Mouscron frontière	Tourcoing frontière	2943	9%	-11%	↗
Aubange FR LU	Mont St Martin frontière	920	3%	-2%	↗
Erquelines frontière	Jeumont frontière	2574	8%	-4%	↗
Blandain frontière	Baisieux frontière	365	1%	-33%	↗
Feignies**	Quevy**	3784	12%	-9%	↗
ACF/CFL	SNCF Réseau				
Bettembourg frontière	Zoufftgen frontière	5394	16%	-8%	↗
SNCF Réseau	CFF Infra				
Bâle St.-Jean	Basel St. Johann	4965	15%	-6%	↗
Pougny Chancy	La Plaine	357	1%	-2%	↗
Eurotunnel	SNCF Réseau				
Doolands Moor	Calais Fréthun faisceau tunnel	1136	3%	+12%	↘

* Sas van Gent - Zelzate is included for the first year, as well as 2 existing border points on diversionary lines of the RFC.

**Not an official RFC NSM border point.

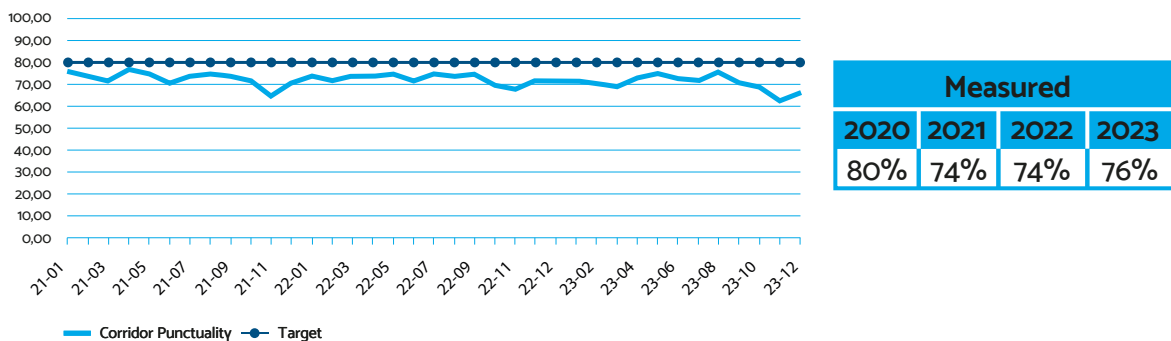
Number of trains per border



Punctuality

RFC North Sea –Med continues its efforts to reach the objective of 80% punctuality. For 2023, the global corridor punctuality is at 76% (30minutes threshold), which presents an increase of 2% compared to 2022.

Punctuality 2021-2023 (over 12 months)



5.2. User Satisfaction Survey 2023

The User Satisfaction Survey 2023 was prepared and conducted jointly with all eleven rail freight corridors. Between September and October 2023.

In 2023 also, the possibility was offered to the respondents to have an online interview instead of answering the online survey.

The overall satisfaction of users with RFC North Sea-Med stayed stable in 2023, at 75% of overall satisfaction.

The respondents expressed the wish to review the way of surveying. The dedicated working group will work on this request in 2024.

Due to the limited number of respondents, the figures of the survey cannot be considered as representative.

All details can be found in the full report that is published on the website

https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/sites/rfc2.eu/files/telechargements/RFC_USS_2023_RFC_NSM.pdf

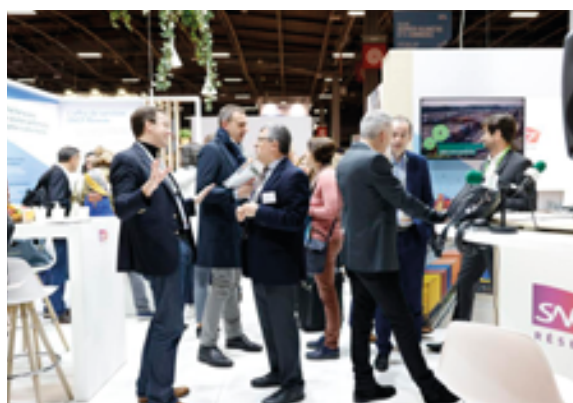


6. Events

SITL Fair in Paris - 30th of March

RFC North Sea-Med, together with RFC Atlantic and RFC Mediterranean, and in kind cooperation and hosted by SNCF Réseau, organized in the

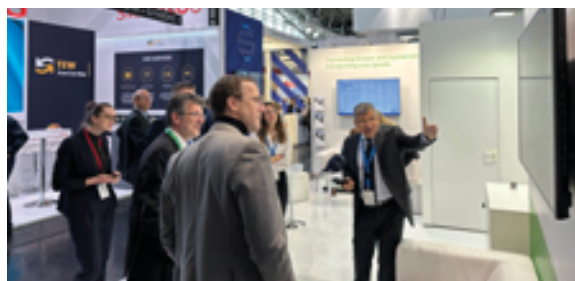
frame of SITL a “Journée du Fret Ferroviaire”, a special “Rail Freight Corridors coffee & viennoiseries”, at the SNCF Réseau booth.



Transport Logistic Fair in Munich - 9 to 12 May

RFC North Sea-Med took part in the Transport Logistic fair in Munich from the 9th until the 12th of May, together with the RFC Network and RNE. The joint stand attracted many visitors, including customers, stakeholders and colleagues.

A good representation emphasising the role of rail freight corridors in the modal shift and many good discussions at our stand made the fair a successful networking event for our Corridor and the RFC Network.



Rail Transport Day in Stockholm - 30th of May

RFC North Sea - Med was also represented during the Rail Transport day on the 30th of May Stockholm, jointly organised by the European

Commission, RNE, Trafikverket and Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking



7. Finance

The financial resources available to RFC North Sea-Med come from contributions from its members and from EU financing.

The European Commission committed to a further financing of all RFCs in the framework of a 'Technical Assistance' financing under the CEF II Transport call 2021. The Grant Agreement was signed in 2022. This 'Technical Assistance' safeguards the financing and functioning of the RFC and covers the period from 2021 till 2024. Also, a CEF II financing was granted for the MVP 'Capacity Visualisation' study, at a financing level of 50%.

Moreover, the Management Board and Executive Board signed support letters to support the applications from the members of the Corridor to the 2022 CEF II Transport Call and the 2023 Military Mobility Call.



Office of the corridor one-stop-shop /

Postal & visiting address

10-31 Corridor 2 • Place Marcel Broodthaers 2
B-1060 Brussels • Belgium
E-mail: oss@rfc-northsea-med.eu

Head office /

Administrative address

EEIG RFC North Sea - Med • 9 Place de la gare
L-1616 Luxembourg

Website

www.rfc-northsea-med.eu

Pictures: Infrabel- Benjamin Brolet • Dphotography.be • Matthieu Maeselle
Design: fabian@sanguinetti.be

ProRail

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