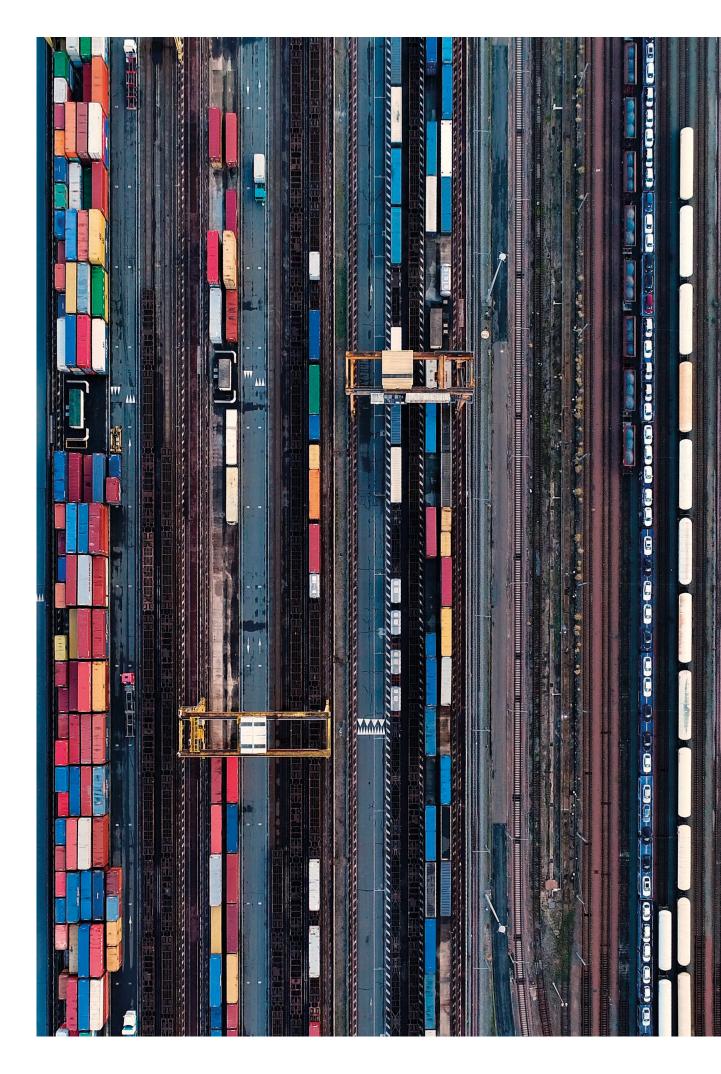


#### Easier, faster, safer

#### RFC North Sea - Med 2024 Annual Report



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#### Message from the Presidents and Managing Director

#### 2024: Paving the Way for the North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean Rail Freight Corridor

The year 2024 marks a turning point for the North Sea-Mediterranean rail freight corridor, both in terms of the projects we have completed and the structural changes we have prepared. In a rapidly changing European context, our mission remains more important than ever: to ensure an efficient and fair allocation of rail capacity for international freight.

We are proud to point out that the North Sea -Mediterranean corridor still occupies a unique position in Europe, since our infrastructure managers continue to entrust us with 100% of their international freight catalogue paths. This exceptional level of trust reflects our key role in cross-border coordination and in building a more seamless and efficient European rail freight network.

In 2024, we reached a major milestone with the completion of the Capacity Intelligence project - an innovative initiative that opens up new perspectives in capacity planning and optimisation. We had the opportunity to present the results during the Connecting Europe Days, reaffirming our commitment to pioneering smart solutions for tomorrow's rail system. This visibility further strengthened our credibility with the European institutions and all our stakeholders.

At the same time, a significant part of our efforts was devoted to preparing for the future - in particular, organising the merger with our neighbouring RFC Rhine-Alpine following the publication of the new TEN-T Regulation in June 2024. This joint effort will lead to the creation of an enlarged and strengthened Corridor: North Sea - Rhine -Mediterranean, which will officially come into operation in January 2026. However, the foundations of this future structure are already in place, as stakeholders are already actively working together in a spirit of unity and efficiency to ensure a smooth and ambitious transition.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to all the teams, infrastructure managers, Applicants and terminals, national and European authorities and our logistics partner for their unwavering commitment. Together we are building a Corridor that is more integrated, smarter and firmly focused on the future of sustainable transport in Europe.



Yann Le Floc'h Managing Director

Valérie Verzele President of the Executive board

**Michaël Dierickx** President of the Assembly

### 1.

#### About the Corridor

### 1.1. A major European rail freight route

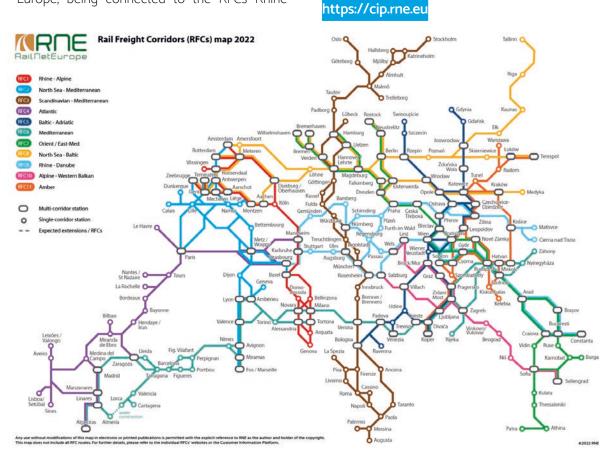
Rail Freight Corridor North Sea – Mediterranean (RFC North Sea – Med) is a freight oriented route connecting the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France and Switzerland. It links the main European ports (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Port of Antwerp-Bruges<sup>1</sup>, North Sea Port<sup>2</sup>, Dunkirk, Calais and Marseille) to the industrial zones of Western Europe and to the gatewaγs 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.

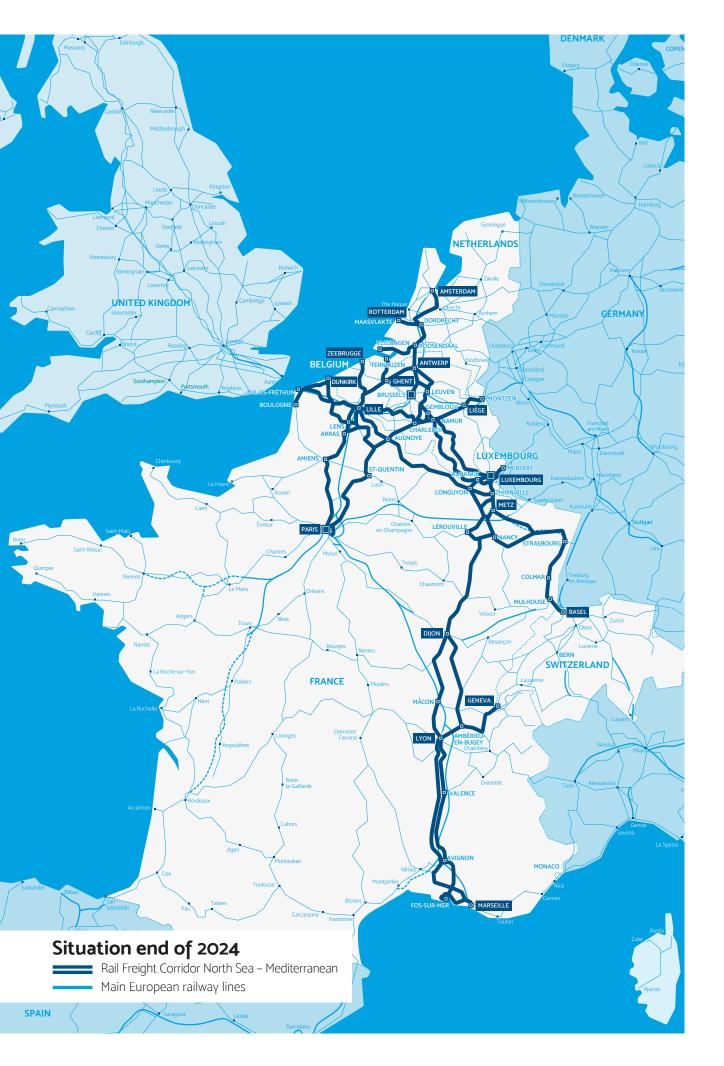
RFC North Sea – Med is one of the most promising rail freight corridors in Europe, with around 30.000 international trains per γear.

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:



 $\ensuremath{\text{1/Name}}$  of the unified port company after the merger of the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge

2/North Sea Port is the result of a merger between the ports of Vlissingen, Terneuzen and Ghent



07

#### 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 qualitγ:

- they are defined after the yearly consultation of all our customers;
- theγ are reserved for international freight traffic ahead of booking time and benefit from a specific; legal protection against cancellation;
- theγ are built on the basis of coordinated works along the Corridor;
- theγ 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 – Ke $\gamma$  activities and topics in 2024.

## **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.

and the RFCs will gradually evolve to the freight corridors in alignment with the European Transport Corridors (see Chapter 4 for more details). Preparations started to adapt to this new environment, but in 2024 the organisational structure basically remained the same.

With the publication of the revised TEN-T Regu-

lation in June, the RFC Regulation was amended

#### From CNC to ETC

The revision of the TEN-T Regulation entered into force mid-2024, defining 9 multimodal European Transport Corridors (ETC), and foreseeing the merger of the Corridors North Sea-Med and Rhine-Alpine into the North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean Corridor.

The RFC being the rail freight lines of the ETC, leads also to the merger of the two former RFCs into one.

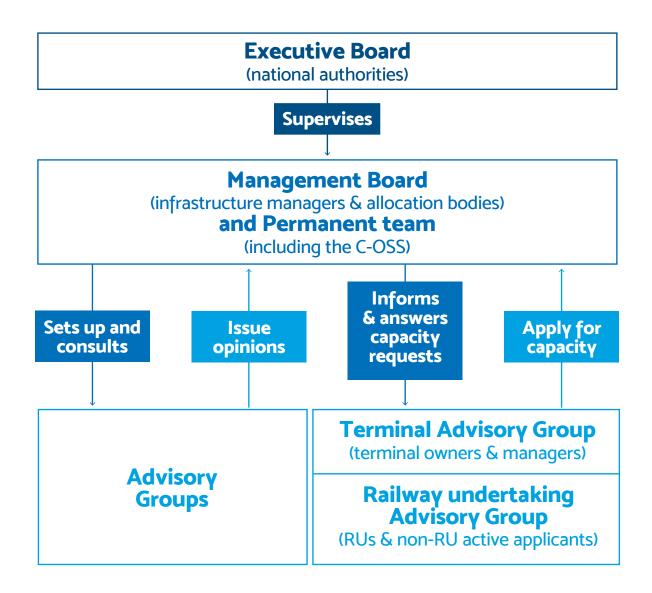
The preparation of this merger started in 2024. In 2026, the new RFC should be up and running six months after the publication of the Implementation Plan in July 2025.

More in Chapter 4 – Keγ activities and topics in 2024.



# 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:



#### 2.1. The Executive Board



#### **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 anγ matter relating to the smooth functioning of the Corridor;
- to ensure that the extensions of the RFC North Sea Med are dulγ 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 Capacitγ 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 anγ 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 bγ the European Commission;
- to work together, where necessarγ, with the European institutions and organisations, the National Safetγ Authorities and the Regulatorγ 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.

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.

It is composed of representatives of the authorities

#### The Executive Board meets four times a γear. 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 Agencγ (CINEA);
- a representative of the Regulatorγ bodies for the railwaγ sector in the countries concerned.

#### And on invitation:

- the European Coordinators for TEN-T;
- the representative(s) of the National Safetγ Authorities of the countries concerned;
- the representative(s) of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA);
- the Speakers of the Advisorγ 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 2024

#### FULL REPRESENTATIVES



Valérie Verzele Director General Federal Public Service Mobilitγ and Transport of Belgium



**Raphael Zumsteeg** Principal Inspector Ministrγ of Mobilitγ and Public works, Grand Duchγ of Luxembourg



**Ebru van Schie - Akdağ** Head of department safetγ and freight – Public transport and Railwaγs directorate, Ministrγ of Infrastructure and Water Management of The Netherlands



**Delphine Chabalier** Head of unit, National railwaγ network unit, Ministrγ for the Ecological Transition of France

Matthias Wagner Deputγ Director Federal Office of Transport of Switzerland

#### STAND-IN REPRESENTATIVES



**Pierre Bodiaux** Federal Public Service Mobilitγ and Transport of Belgium



**André Bissen** Ministrγ of Mobilitγ and Public works, Grand Duchγ of Luxembourg



Yoann Carnal Federal Office of Transport of Switzerland



**Hinne Groot** Ministrγ of Infrastructure and Water Management of The Netherlands



**Milena Kobler** Ministrγ 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 qualitγ 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: **INFR/ABEL** Infrabel France: SM SCNF Réseau RÉSEAU Luxembourg: CFL CFL Partners Luxembourg: 💐 ACF ACF TVS SAS SAT 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 (Infrabel).

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.

#### 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 Norgaγ International Affairs Specialist, SBB Infrastructure



Kathleen Pelte Head of Path Division, ACF



**Floraine Stauffer** Regulatory Analysis & Freight Corridors Specialist TVS

#### THE PERMANANENT 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.





**Matthieu Maeselle** Communication & Finance Manager, Advisory Groups



Jean Quaeγhaegens Corridor one-stop shop leader, Capacitγ Manager



Sibel Ozcan Operations & Investments manager, ERTMS coordinator

#### Working Groups and Committee

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

\* Train performance management

Matthieu

Maeselle

\*\* Customer Information Platform

\*\*\* Replaced by the RAN group led by the concerned IM's

The activities of the Management Board, including the Permanent Team and the Working groups and Committee are described in Chapter 4 - Keγ activities and topics in 2024.

Sibel

Ozcan

Sibel

Ozcan



#### 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 bγ Lieven Goethals (Lineas). Vice-Chairman of the RAG is Paul Hodgson (CFL Cargo). In 2024, theγ switched their roles, Paul Hodgson became chair and Lieven Goethals Vice-Chair of the RAG.



"As we move into a new era with the merger of the two corridors North Sea Mediterranean and Rhine Alpine, we would like to thank all those who have been involved in the North Sea Mediterranean corridor since its inception. The Railway Advisory Group has provided a forum for direct exchange between different stakeholders, where we, as RAG Speakers, have tried to convey the interests of our customers, with the aim of building a shared vision for the development of rail freight along our corridor. With the push towards Greener Freight Transport, supported by the European Commission, more and more logistics operators are looking to rail as a sustainable solution, especially in the Intermodal sector. As railway undertakings we are ready to rise to this challenge – but to achieve the quality levels expected by the market we need to be able to count upon safe, reliable and better and more accessible railway infrastructure, in a now larger geographic scope hopefully bringing more flexibile routings when needed. We look forward to continuing our work to achieve this as part of the newly created North Sea Rhine Mediterranean corridor."

Paul Hodgson, Chairman of the RAG · Lieven Goethals, Vice-Chairman of the RAG



Two RAG meetings were organised in 2024, each preceded by a pre-RAG between Railway undertakings.

- The first RAG meeting was a phγsical meeting on 14th of March in Bern, with a separate timeslot for RFC Rhine-Alpine, a common timeslot, and a RFC North Sea-Med timeslot.
- The second meeting, in Brussels on the 10th of October

While the main discussions on the Corridor were also reflected in the RAG, a few topics stood out. A continuous topic of the RAG meetings in 2024 were the Temporary Capacity Restrictions, especially the newly introduced construction regime in Germany. Specifically, the total closure of the Rhine Valley and the operational handling of the corridor trains via France was highlighted as a challenging but nevertheless a best practice during the year. Due to a three-week closure at Rastatt on the Karlsruhe-Basel line and low capacity on re-routing, an innovative solution was needed to minimise the cancellation of freight trains. Using a re-routing via the Wörth (Rhine) - Lauterbourg -Strasbourg - Kehl route to rejoin the Rhine Valley Railway in Offenburg, 427 freight trains were run in the three-week span, equivalent to 16,000 truckloads. As a potential example for the future, the project is now being evaluated by the participating RUs and IMs to gain insights for possible future crossborder re-routings. Looking into the future, a total closure of the Rhine Valley in 2027 was again focal point of the discussion in the RAG.

A main topic was also the future merger of RFC Rhine-Alpine and RFC North Sea – Mediterranean as well as the added responsibilities of the RAG in the amended Regulation 913/2010.

As a first step, the decision was taken to only hold joint RAG meetings between the two Corridors ahead of the formal merger for the first time in October. The RAG speakers of RFC North Sea – Med and the RAG Speakers of RFC Rhine-Alpine (Sandra Kuhlmann & Annik Jeiziner) agreed to jointly represent the new RAG on the RFC North Sea-Rhine-Mediterranean during the merger process.

The RAG did take the opportunity to informally merge quickly and drew up a draft Memorandum of Understanding describing how the new RAG intends to work together internally as well as the exchange with the Management Board and Executive Board of the new Corridor.

#### 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 γards - 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 γearlγ TAG meeting organised bγ 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 bγ the European Commission as speaker of the TAG communitγ of RFC North Sea – Med.



BMC-T Vice-Chair of the TAG communitγ

Head of Freight CFL-MultiModal Chair of the TAG community

" The erratic trade policies of the USA and geopolitical conflicts cause disruptions in supply chains and might impact the expected volumes in intermodal transport. These challenges must be overcome. "

Paul Kronenberger, Chairman of the TAG

#### The joint TAG meeting with RFC Rhine-Alpine took place in Duisburg, on the 11th of September :

As in the previous year, the TAG was organised together with RFC Rhine-Alpine. During the meeting in Duisburg on the 11th of September 2024, updates on the development and performance of the corridor traffic were presented and discussed. Topics presented were also the new construction regime in Germany as well as the

amended regulations on the European level. A discussion of how to organize the TAG to fulfil the new role as foreseen in the Regulation 913/2010 will continue in 2025. The TAG meeting was concluded with an extensive and insightful site visit of the Duisport premises.















### **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. Nevertheless, no SERAC meetings were organised in 2024.

In July 2023, the European Commission published its proposal for a regulation on the use of the railway infrastructure capacity (see also Chapter 4). In 2024, discussions and exchanges within the European institutions and the railway sector continued. The trilogues between the Commission, Parliament and the Coucil are expected to start in 2025.



### 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 2024, five online and one physical meeting

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.** From CNC to ETC

After the publication of the new TEN-T regulation, the coordination between the former CNC and the RFC will continue in the frame of the new ETC.

Seen the specific context of the revised TEN-T regulation and the merger of the RFCs, no specific meeting was organised in 2024 with the actual coordinator.

More information on the activities of 2024 is provided in chapter 4.1.

### **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 2024.

### 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 system (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 2024:

- Traffic management;
- C-OSS Communitγ;
- Capacitγ working group:
  - Temporary Capacity Restrictions (TCR) coordination;
  - PCS;
- Train performance management;
- RNE/RFC KPI coordination working group;
- International Contingencγ Management (ICM);
- Customer Information Document (CID) & Network Statement (NS) working group;
- User Satisfaction Surveγ working group;
- Customer Information Platform (CIP) Change Control Board;
- Data qualitγ working group;
- Transport Market Studγ working group.



### 4. Key activities and topics in 2024

### 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 2021, which specify the policy goals of the ExBo. The main strategic objectives remain the temporary capacity restrictions, the capacity management along the Corridor, and the quality of the offer.

#### Regular topics addressed

One particular topic was specifically discussed within the meetings of the ExBo in the course of 2024.

The revision of the so-called TEN-T regulation (Regulation (EU) 2024/1679) and in particular the merger of RFCs Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Mediterranean into the new RFC North Sea – Rhine - Mediterranean, was heavily discussed at Executive Board level.

The revised TEN-T regulation also stipulates that the rail freight corridors (referred to as "rail freight governance" in the regulation) should address two new operational objectives, linked to the dwelling time at the borders of the countries of the European Union and to the punctuality at arrival. The ExBo therefore discussed the introduction of these two objectives in the framework of RFC North Sea - Med and the one of the new RFC North Sea - Rhine – Mediterranean.

The ExBo further discussed how to smoothly transition to the new framework foreseen by the proposed regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, which foresees the abrogation of the

rail freight corridors in favour of a new EU-wide allocation process.

The ExBo also discussed other topics related to 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 ExBo also continued to address concerns raised by the ERTMS deployment along the Corridor.

Furthermore, the development of the other parameters along the Corridor continued to be closely monitored. The Executive Board noted the progress made 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.

#### **European Cooperation**

#### Cooperation with the ETC

Following the entry into force of the revised TEN-T Regulation, the European Commission nominated new Coordinators for the newly defined European Transport Corridors. Pr. Paweł Wojciechowski was appointed European Coordinator for the North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean Corridor in September 2024.

Due to this specific context, as well as the planned merger of RFC North Sea - Med and RFC Rhine-Alpine, the ExBo did not meet with the Coordinator in 2024.

The ExBo would like to thank Pr. Peter Balázs for the collaboration with the RFC North Sea -Med over the past years, and welcomes the appointment of Pr. Paweł Wojciechowski in the context of the new corridor.

#### Cooperation with the ERTMS Coordinator

The Executive Board did not have the opportunity to meet with Mr. Ruete in 2024. The collaboration with the ERTMS Coordinator will however be renewed under the new RFC North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean, starting in 2025.

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

Four joint Executive Board meetings have been held in 2024, in March, July, September and November. The objective of those increased meetings was to organise the merging of both Executive Boards into the new RFC North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean.

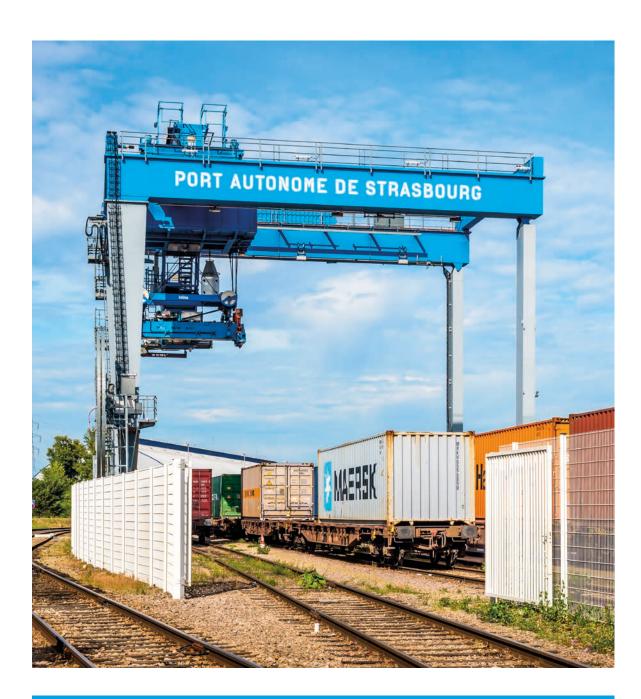
The November meeting was held back to back with the last meeting of the two ExBo North Sea -Med and Rhine-Alpine. Following this meeting, a joint declaration of intent has been signed by the responsible Ministers to create the new ExBo of RFC North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean.

#### Network of Executive Boards of RFCs

The Executive Board participated again in the Network of Executive Boards of RFCs (NExBo) meetings on the 11th of June and the 12th of December 2024.

The activities were related to the RNE, IRG-Rail and DG MOVE activities, as well as to the proposal for a Regulation on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area. KPIs were also discussed.





#### Railway undertakings and terminals cooperation

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

Both representatives were invited to exchange views with the ExBo during dedicated windows. The  $\gamma$  were also invited to participate in each other's windows. The TAG windows only took place twice during the  $\gamma$ ear, on request of the TAG speaker.

During the exchanges with the RAG and TAG Speakers, various issues were brought to the Ministries' attention and provided some insight views on how the market works and their challenges. The issue of transport of fresh food by rail was brough up and a draft of a Memorandum of Understanding among the RAG members of all rail freight corridors was presented.

The merger between RFC North Sea - Med and RFC Rhine-Alpine was a topic for both RAG and TAG representatives. They also underlined the challenges linked to various proposals currently discussed at EU level (Combined transport Directive; Weights and Dimensions Directive; Rail Capacity Regulation).

#### 4.2. Activities of the Management Board

In 2024, 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 merger between RFC Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Med, and to discuss topics of common interest, several common Management Board meetings were organised to prepare the merger.

Also, the drop in traffic on RFC North Sea – Med, leading to a seventh 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 and 2024 to investigate the reasons behind this drop.

In 2024, the Marketing Working Group came to following conclusion: The data indicates that infrastructure limitations and macroeconomic factors have significantly impacted traffic on the Corridor, with a sharp decline in single wagonload traffic, stable conventional traffic, and growing combined traffic primarily benefiting RFC Rhine-Alpine due to constraints in France.

More details on the performance 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 2024 the cooperation on RFC level continued as planned. The ERTMS committee will continue its work in 2025.

#### Following topics have been discussed in 2024:

- State of plaγ of the deploγment per countrγ
- 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

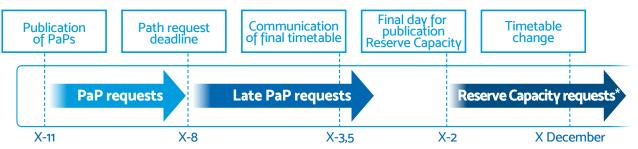
2024 started with the publication of the Pre-arranged Path catalogue for timetable (TT) 2025, and ended with the finalisation of the catalogue for TT2026.

The results of the allocation process for TT2025 (capacity management KPIs) and the evolution over the years can be found in the Performance Report 2024 published on the website under the following link:

https://www.rfc-northsea-med.eu/en/page/ figures-performance-corridor Also in 2024, the C-OSS carried out for the second time a specific stakeholder survey regarding the process of capacity allocation together with the C-OSS of RFC Rhine- Alpine. One of the main conclusions is that the way the catalogue is constructed is highly influenced by the main IM on the respective two RFC's.

The Permanent Team members also held bilateral meetings with some of the RUs running on the Corridor to have an open exchange about business running and potential future business opportunities.

#### Capacity allocation calendar in 2024



\* continues in following γear until 30 daγs before train run



#### MVP 'Capacity Intelligence 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.

The aim is to 'industrialise' and 'anchor' this capacity visualisation and Intelligence approach into the set of tools that are provided by RNE to the Rail Freight Corridors.

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

The results of the continuation study performed in 2023 were published in 2024 on the website:

Capacity Intelligence

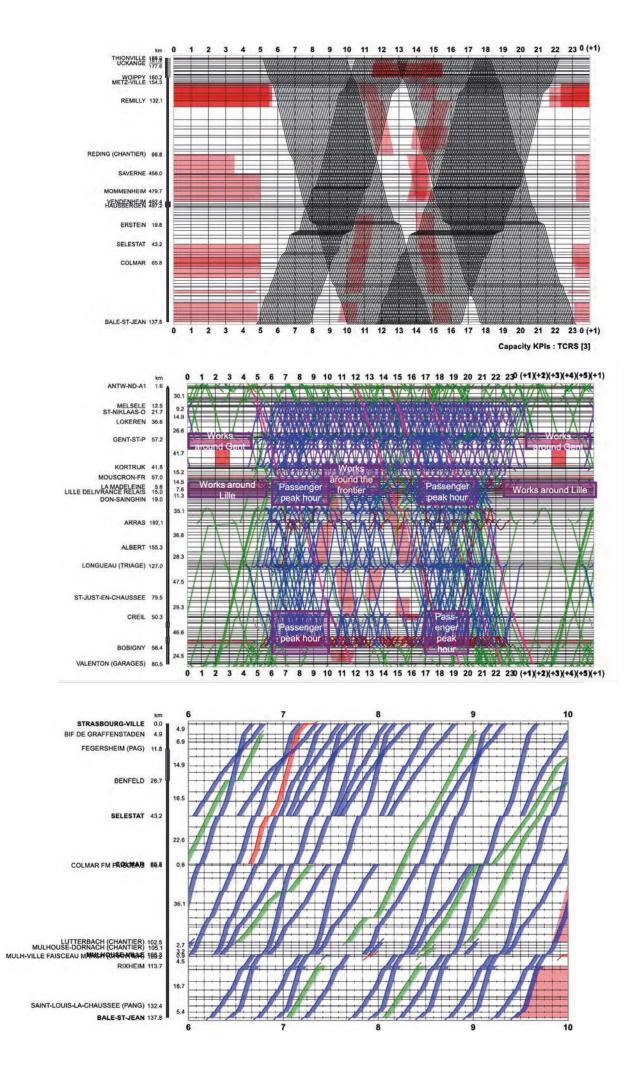
#### Temporary Capacity Restrictions

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

All high-impact TCRs, with impact on international trains in 2027 have been coordinated. Goal of the RAN WG is to make sure that there is always a diversionary route available on the RFC.

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 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 2024.

High-quality data in TIS is a precondition for effective reporting, and one of our main goals is to improve the quality of IM data. Under the umbrella of RNE,

work on the Data Quality project is ongoing, with the aim of defining common standards for TPM reports and enhancing monitoring through the automatic linking of trains.

The 'Quality Circle Operation' (QCO) Lyon-Bettembourg continued in 2024, and aims at establishing certain standards to improve train punctuality, in particular a mapping of the predeparture 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 and continued in 2024.

#### International Contingency Management

In 2024, there were no International Contingency Management (ICM) cases declared on the Corridor. However, the RFC participated in ICM calls organized by RFC Rhine-Alpine and RFC Mediterranean.

Additionally, an ICM simulation was prepared and tested in 2024. The scenario was submitted in TIS, and a teleconference bridge was set up with the concerned Infrastructure Managers to test the

scenario. The ICM Handbook was also updated during the  $\ensuremath{\gamma \rm ear.}$ 

The ICM Corridor Coordinator took part as an observer in the simulation conducted by RFC Rhine-Alpine, and SNCF-R also participated, in view of the future merger.

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 γears.

Moreover, the digitalisation project of the CID, called NCI system (Network statement and Corridor Information) was further improved in 2024.

#### **Customer Information Platform (CIP)**

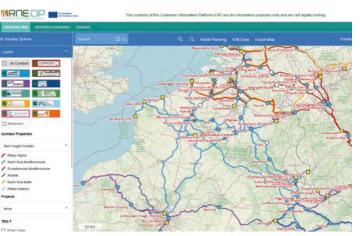
The Customer Information Platform (CIP) was further developed and improved in 2024 under the lead of RNE

#### The main achievements were:

- The new CIP platform, integrated in the common database for RNE applications called RIS (Railway Infrastructure System) that was implemented in spring 2024
- General improvements regarding completeness of information on properties and projects.



Nicolas Gatez (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 2025, mainly linked to the newly implemented RIS.







# 5. Performance of the Corridor and User Satisfaction Survey

## 5.1. Performance of the Corridor

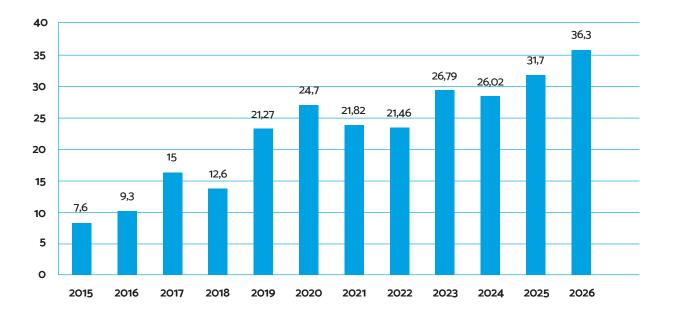
As required by the Regulation (EU) 913/2010, RFC North Sea – Med publishes every year its Performance Report. It contains information on KPIs related to capacity management, operations and market development that are monitored by all RFCs according to the RNE guidelines on KPIs. Below we present some 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) (in million PaP-km)

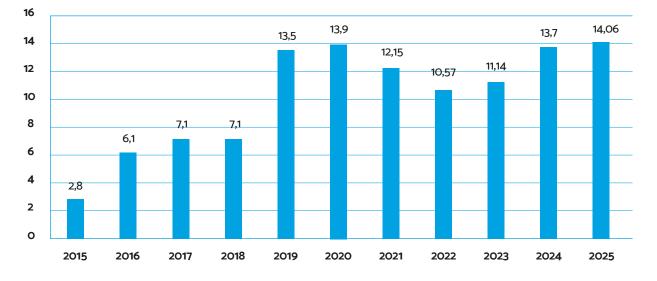
This KPI displays the volume of PaPs that has been published by the C-OSS in January 2014 to 2025 for the timetables 2015 to 2026.

A total of 36,3 million PaP-km were published for TT2026 (+14,5% compared to TT2025).



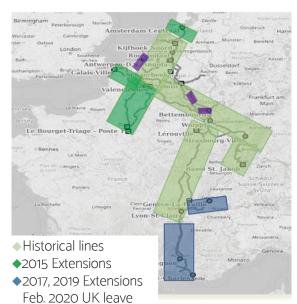
#### Volume of requested capacity (PaPs) (in million PaP-km)

This KPI displays the volume of requested PaPs at the deadline for submitting path requests (X-8) to the C-OSS for the annual timetables 2015 to 2025. Feeder and outflow sections as well as overlapping sections (with other RFCs) are not included.



#### Number of trains on RFC North Sea - Med

In 2024, all RFCs approved a new definition to identify RFC trains, based on an algorithm that includes national sections.



New borders taken into account in 2023

The graph on the opposite page, shows a steady decline in train volumes since 2018.

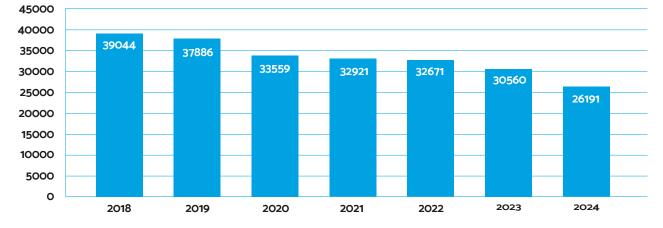
This trend is closely linked to the macroeconomic situation in the Corridor regions.

However, it is important to note that figures prior to 2024 were based on data provided by the Infrastructure Managers, whereas from 2024 onwards, they are based on the Train Information System (TIS) data. As a result, the data sets are not directly comparable.

It is important to highlight that, without the application of the new train definition, the overall trend would have shown stability rather than decline.



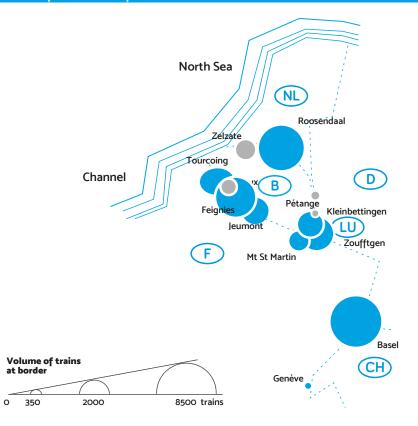
#### Annual number of trains 2018 - 2024



Border location names		Volume (Nb of trains) 2024	Share
ProRail	Infrabel		
Roosendaal Grens	Essen Grens	5880	19%
Sas van Gent	Zelzate Grens	1731	6%
Infrabel	ACF / CFL		
Aubange frontière LU	Pétange	1758	6%
Arlon	Kleinbettingen	63	0%
Athus-Frontière	Pétange	56	0%
Infrabel	SNCF Réseau		
Mouscron frontière	Tourcoing frontière	3251	11%
Aubange FR LU	Mont St Martin frontière	983	3%
Erquelines frontière	Jeumont frontière	2367	8%
Blandain frontière	Baisieux frontière	352	1%
Feignies*	Quevy*	4014	13%
ACF/CFL	SNCF Réseau		
Bettembourg frontière	Zoufftgen frontière	3517	11%
SNCF Réseau	CFF Infra		
Bâle StJean	Basel St. Johann	6247	20%
Pougny Chancy	La Plaine	391	1%

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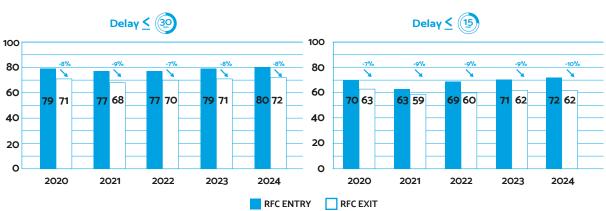
#### Number of trains per border



The number of trains per border gives an indication of the geographical spread of the traffic on the Corridor. Although the border point between Belgium and the Netherlands Essen-Roosendaal used to be the most active for this Corridor over the last 2 years, it has recently been overtaken by the Benelux/ Switzerland axis. The high-capacity Benelux/Switzerland route supports the development of the Antwerp port area, which explains the importance of traffic at Bâle St Jean /Basel St Johann border point

#### Punctuality

RFC North Sea – Med continues its efforts to achieve the target of 80% punctuality. The current average punctuality stands at 76%, confirming the stable trend observed on the Corridor over the past four years.



#### Punctuality loss between RFC Entry and Exit

## 5.2. User Satisfaction Survey 2024

The User Satisfaction Survey 2024 was conducted jointly with all eleven rail freight corridors between September and October 2024.

In 2024 also, the possibility was offered to the respondents to have an online interview instead of answering the online survey. Nevertheless, there were no interviews on RFC North Sea-Med.

The overall satisfaction of users with RFC North Sea-Med raised in 2024 to 100% of overall satisfaction, but due to the very limited number of

respondents, this result 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%20 USS\_2024\_RFC\_NSM-FINAL-20241220.pdf



### 6.

## **Events**

#### Connecting Europe Days – 2 to 5 of April

In 2024, RFC North Sea-Med took part in the Connecting Europe Days, held from April 2 to 5 in Brussels with a common stand of the RFC Network. During the event, our RFC took the opportunity to present the Capacity visualization study finalized in the beginning of 2024 (See chapter 4.3). Also, Professor Paweł Wojciechowski the European Coordinator introduced the new ETC North Sea – Rhine – Mediterranean, in an informal meeting of the future ETC. During that occasion, Professor Balasz was thanked for his efforts as coordinator of the former CNC North Sea-Med. The discussions covered important topics such as strengthening the TEN-T governance, exploring future financing options, and the role of European Coordinators in shaping the future of transportation in Europe. These discussions were well-received by both panellists and the audience, sparking meaningful conversations about the future of transport.

Alongside EU's presentation, RFC North Sea - Med, together with the RFC Network also hosted a workshop on the results of the Capacity Intelligence study. During the session, we shared updates on current initiatives aimed at improving cross-border rail freight.



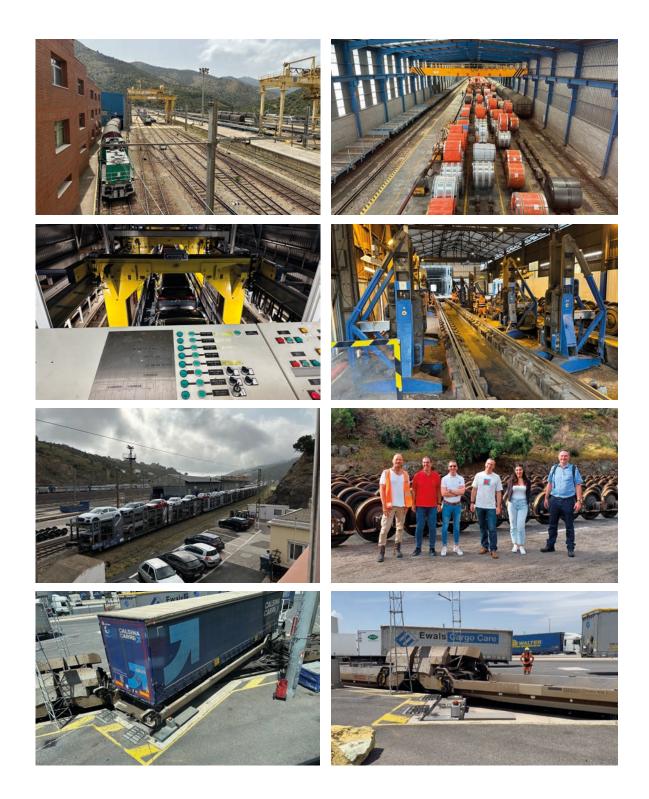
## 7. Finance

#### Summer seminar visits - 18 and 19 June

The Permanent team of RFC North Sea – Med went on a Summer seminar in the south of France on 18 and 19th of June 2024.

At this occasion, on the 18th of June, the team visited the intermodal terminal of VIIA in Le Boulou. On the 19th of June, a visit to the site of Transfesa in Cerbère took place, where the wheel axle change between the UIC and Iberic gauge is done in their workshop.

We would like to thank both site managers and their colleagues for their welcome and  $ver\gamma$  interesting explanations.



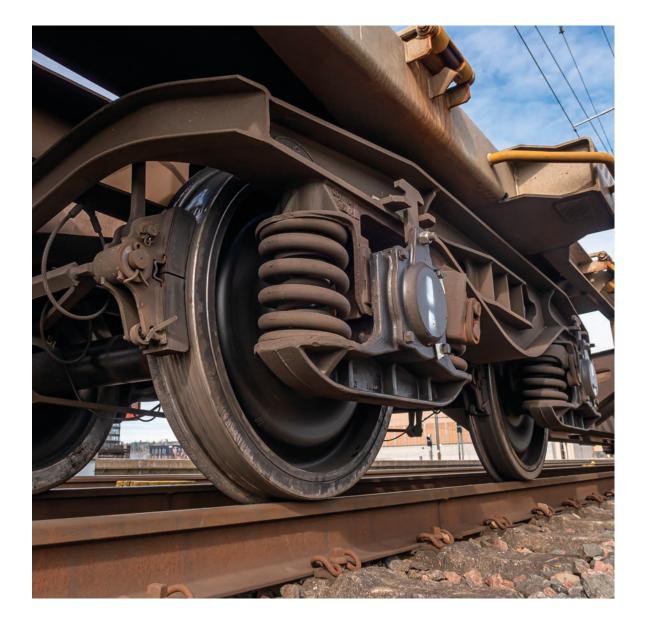
## 7. Finance

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

The European Commission committed to a further financing of all RFCs in the framework of a 'Technical Assistance' funding 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 co-financing was granted for the MVP 'Capacity Intelligence' study, at a financing level of 50%.

Both CEF II projects ended by the end of 2024, the final reports and closing of the grant are foreseen in 2025.

At the moment, no new EU co-financing is foreseen for the future.





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