



Rail Freight Corridor
North Sea – Baltic



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Rail Freight Corridor North Sea-Baltic –
Your East West Rail Bridge across Europe



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Connecting Europe Facility

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Photo on the title page: *Running along the Betuwe Route*
ProRail Stefan Verkerk

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	– Allocation Body
AG	– Advisory Group
CEF	– Connecting Europe Facility
CER	– Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies
CID	– Corridor Information Document
CIP	– Customer Information Platform
CNC	– Core Network Corridor
C-OSS	– Corridor One-Stop-Shop
EC	– European Commission
ECCO	– Efficient Cross Corridor Organization
EEIG	– European Economic Interest Grouping (EZIG in Polish),
EIM	– European Rail Infrastructure Managers
ELETA	- Electronic Exchange of ETA information
ERTMS	- European Rail Traffic Management System
ETA	– Estimated Time of Arrival
EU	– European Union
ExBo	– Executive Board
FCA	- Framework for Capacity Allocation
FTE	- Forum Train Europe
GA	– General Assembly
IM	– Infrastructure Manager
INEA	– Innovation and Networks Executive Agency
IP	– Implementation Plan
KPI	– Key Performance Indicator
MB	– Management Board
MCV	- Multi-Corridor View (functionality in Customer Information Platform)
NExBo	– Network of Executive Boards
OM	– Other Measurement
OSJD	– Organization for Cooperation between Railways
PaP	– Pre-arranged Path
PCS	– Path Coordination System
PIM	– Project Implementation Manager
PMO	– Project Management Office
PSA	- Programme Support Action
RAG	– Railway undertaking Advisory Group
RC	– Reserve Capacity
RFC	– Rail Freight Corridor
RFC NS-B	- Rail Freight Corridor North Sea - Baltic
RNE	– RailNetEurope
RFC OEM	– Rail Freight Corridor Orient/East-Med
RU	– Railway Undertaking



SCI – Study on Capacity Improvement

SERAC – Single European Railway Area Committee

TAF TSI - Telematics applications for freight service – Technical Specification for Interoperability

TAG – Terminal Advisory Group

TCCCom –Traffic Control Centres Communication

TCR - Temporary Capacity Restriction

TEN-T – Trans-European Network – Transport

TIS – Train Information System

TMS – Transport Market Study

TPM – Train Performance Management

TT – Time Table

ToR – Terms of Reference

UIC – International Union of Railways

UIRR – International Union for Road - Rail Combined Transport

WG – Working Group

FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

The Rail Freight Corridor North Sea – Baltic is working hard to become a trusted facilitator in the rail freight transport market for creating a rail alternative to other modes of transport. Handing this report to you, we would first of all like to thank our customers and particularly the Members of the Advisory Groups for their feedback and input received in 2017. Your support and trust enables us to constantly work toward improvement. We are confident that our common efforts will lead to the positive developments desired by all the rail freight sector and we are very much looking forward to continuing close exchange with you in the future. The Management Board of the Corridor will always listen carefully to customers' feedback and even though not all issues can be solved quickly we are moving forward step by step.

The year 2017 showed that there is plenty of room and need for improvement, not only in terms of capacity offered by the Corridor but also for other services our customers see as important. In order to increase the flexibility of the Corridor offer a new, improved PaP concept has been introduced on a part of the routing. We will monitor this development next year and consider if it is worth introducing on the whole Corridor. Also in 2017 the performance monitoring process with Railway Undertakings of the Corridor was initiated with the aim of improving the punctuality on the Corridor – recognising that reliability is in fact one of the key factors for rail competitiveness.

The Management Board has supported the development of the harmonized "Handbook for international contingency management" adopted by RNE as we strongly underpin the concept of a rail freight network that becomes resilient to disruptions thanks to coordinated diversionary routes.

We would also like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Executive Board for its efforts towards the development of the Corridor, which are described in chapter 1.1 of the report.

We wish you a pleasant reading.



*Oliver Sellnick
Chairman of the Management Board*



*Weronika Karbowskiak
Managing Director*

INTRODUCTION

This document presents the annual report 2017 of the RFC North Sea - Baltic which is operational since November 2015. The report provides the reader with the information on the main aspects of the development of the Corridor in the year 2017 including governance, main activities, funding and cooperation with other stakeholders.

RFC NS-B currently runs through 6 EU Member States, starting in the North Sea ports of Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven and Hamburg spreading into central Germany through Aachen, Hannover, Berlin to Warsaw, Terespol and Kaunas with a southern branch from Falkenberg to Prague and the vicinity of Katowice. It is foreseen to extend the Corridor by 2020 to Estonia, Latvia and towards the Polish – Ukrainian border in Medyka.



Running along the Betuwe Route

Photo: ProRail

The current description of RFC NS-B in number is as follows:

- Over 3.600 km of principal lines,
- Over 2.100 km of diversionary lines,
- Over 530 km of connecting lines,
- 167 terminals,

- 6 sea ports: (Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven, Hamburg).

More detailed information on the Corridor's routing and its development may be found on our website (<http://www.rfc-northsea-baltic.eu>) and in the Customer Information Platform (https://cip.rne.eu/apex/f?p=cip:65:::::P65_CORRIDOR:8).

1. GOVERNANCE

The governance structure of RFC North Sea – Baltic is divided into the following levels: the Executive Board (ExBo), the Management Board (MB) and the Advisory Groups (AGs).

The ExBo level is composed of representatives of Ministries in charge of rail transport of the cooperating Countries and is responsible for defining the general goals of the Corridor.

The MB level as the decision-making body of the Corridor consists of representatives of cooperating Infrastructure Managers and Allocation Body of the six countries involved. Since 2016 the MB has the legal form of a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG).

In 2017 representatives of the Latvian Infrastructure Manager – SJSC “Latvian railway”, Latvian Allocation Body “LatRailNet” and Estonian Infrastructure Manager - AS Eesti Raudtee, joined the Management Board as observers in order to prepare their full integration in the governance structure by the time of the extension of the Corridor in 2020.

The Advisory Group level involves on the one hand representatives of Railway Undertakings, the RAG, and on the other hand Terminal owners/operators, the TAG. Each Advisory Group serves as a platform to facilitate the exchange of information, finding solutions and mutual understanding in a non-discriminatory way. As Advisory body each Group issues opinions on decisions by the Management Board which have direct consequences to its members or issues own-initiative recommendations, which shall be taken into account by the MB.

The governance structure of the Corridor is illustrated by the below organigram.



1.1 EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board of RFC North Sea-Baltic, as referred to in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 913/2010, was established on 20th of March 2012 by its Mission Statement. Its existence was recognized by the signatory Ministers of the Agreement establishing the Executive Board of RFC North Sea-Baltic of 8th October 2014, signed on the margin of the European Transport Council held in Luxembourg.

The Executive Board takes its decisions based on mutual consent of the representatives of the authorities of the Member States. The ExBo makes legally binding and directly applicable decisions within the scope of its powers defined by the Regulation. They are signed by all members of the Executive Board and are published.

The Executive Board is composed of the following representatives of authorities of the Member States concerned:

- Valérie Verzele, for the Minister for Mobility of the Kingdom of Belgium;
- Jindřich Kušnír, for the Minister of Transport of the Czech Republic;
- Wolfgang Küpper, for the Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure of the Federal Republic of Germany;
- Paulius Martinkus, for the Minister of Transport and Communication of the Republic of Lithuania;
- Hellen Van Dongen, for the State Secretary of Infrastructure and Water Management of the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- Mateusz Urasiński, for the Minister of Infrastructure of the Republic of Poland.

The abovementioned members can be represented by their alternates or by proxies.



Executive Board and Management Board meeting in Gdańsk

Photo: Jan Spousta

In 2017, the presidency of the Executive Board by the Czech Republic continued as in 2016. This solution was agreed by the Executive Board and is in line with its Internal Rules of Procedure.

Meetings in 2017:

- March, Berlin (DE);
- July, Vilnius (LT);
- September, Gdansk (PL);
- December, Brussels (BE).

The general responsibility of the Executive Board is to monitor the implementation of the Regulation.

The key activities in 2017 were as follows:

- Preparing the Corridor extension to Latvia and Estonia;
- Submitting the CEF Programme Support Action Call application;
- Preparation of the Report according to article 22 of the Regulation;
- Participation in the establishment of the Network of Executive Boards of the RFCs (NExBo);
- Topics related to cross-border traffic.

1.1.1 EXTENSION AND CHANGE OF ROUTING OF RFC NORTH SEA - BALTIC

No decision of the Executive Board including route changes was taken in 2017. Main point in this subject in 2017 was preparation of the RFC North Sea - Baltic extension to Latvia and Estonia that is foreseen by the Regulation according to its Annex as amended by the new CEF Regulation. In order to accelerate the extension, a task force meeting with representatives of Latvia and Estonia and existing corridor partners was held in July in Vilnius. Main aim was the involvement of Latvia and Estonia in the governance of RFC NS-B in order to organise the extension process. The main result was the agreement on necessary steps and the time framework. The first step is the preparation of an update of the Transport Market Study which will include the extended routes. Based on results of the Study, the necessary Corridor documents will be updated. The extended Corridor should become operational by November 2020 at the latest, which means PaPs for the extended Corridor will be published for the first time in January 2021 for TT 2022.

The process of preparing the intended extension to Medyka on the Polish/Ukrainian border continued also in 2017. The European Commission had previously accepted the extension but the time when the extension becomes operational had to be changed. To this end a new official Letter of Intent is planned to be send within the second half of 2018.

Apart from that, a request about the possibility of joining the Corridor has been received from the Port of Ghent. The Executive Board will continue to investigate this request in 2018.

1.1.2 OTHER ISSUES

In 2017, it was decided to submit an application to the CEF Programme Support Action (PSA) Call. The goal is to obtain funding for the Executive Board activities for some ministries (primarily for the financing of the business trips and the organization of the Executive Board meetings) and for the Latvian Infrastructure Manager and Allocation Body to streamline their joining of the RFC and implement the tasks entrusted to the Corridor.

In 2017 the Network of Executive Boards (NExBo) was officially established. The main purpose of the platform is sharing good practices among RFC Executive Boards. Among others, these issues were discussed in 2017:

- strategies and rules of NExBo;
- updating Framework of Capacity Allocation;
- relation to Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) project;
- consistency of KPI's in relation to CNC;
- TEN-T parameter compliance.

With regard to the latter subject, it was agreed to hold a separate workshop in March 2018.















As one of the main reasons for establishing the RFC was facilitating cross-border traffic, related issues were discussed on the Executive Board meetings in 2017. Among others, these were topics raised during RAG/TAG meetings in 2016, as harmonization of braking sheets, information required by IMs beyond TAF TSI and communication process regarding upgrading of cross-border agreements. The list of most of related topics regarding cross-border traffic on borders on RFC North Sea - Baltic lines was compiled in 2016. Similar activity is also the so-called Issues log compiled by the European Union Agency for Railways, that is being completed with help of all RFCs. Therefore, it was suggested to choose certain topics as a pilot and try to find out appropriate solutions. A separate topic is related to the ERTMS implementation. As the whole process seems to be more complicated and delayed, the European Commission decided to launch a new separate ERTMS Deployment Action Plan. The draft of this document has been discussed in the Executive Board.

The new provisions of the German Railway Act concerning the ex-ante evaluation of PaP offer was perceived by most ExBo members as a potential threat to the attractiveness of the RFC offer. Therefore, the German Ministry and the European Commission have been asked for official statements. The German Ministry provided an explanation about the way the ex-ante regulation of the German part of RFC North Sea - Baltic PaPs will be carried out and expressed its conviction that corridor traffic will not be disturbed.

The report mentioned in article 22 of the Regulation (EU) 913/2010 shall be presented to the Commission every two years, thus for the first time for the period 2016 – 2017. The basic structure of the report was discussed in 2017. The report should be finalized in April 2018 at the latest.

1.2 MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Management Board chaired by Mr. Oliver Sellnick from DB Netz AG, is composed of the following Members representing the Infrastructure Managers and Allocation Body of the six countries of the Corridor:

GUUS DE MOL	MICHEL GEUBELLE	OLIVER SELLNICK	RADEK ČECH
			
			
MAARTEN GUTT	DONATAS KALVAITIS	GIEDRĖ IVINSKIENĖ	
			
			

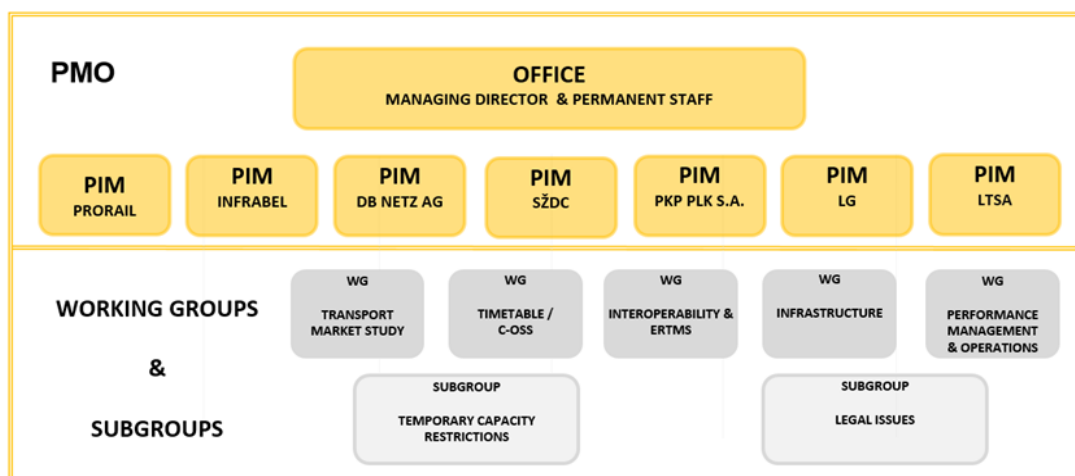
In 2017, eight Management Board meetings took place. The activities and achieved goals of the Management Board in 2017 are described more into detail in chapters 2 – 5.

The Management Board is supported by the Project Implementation Managers and the RFC Office managed by the Managing Director, Weronika Karbowskiak.



Weronika Karbowskiak
Managing Director

The Project Management Office met seven times in 2017. The below organigram illustrates the structure of the Project Management Office and of the different working groups:



1.3 ADVISORY GROUPS

In 2017 the MB organized two Advisory Group meetings: on 30th of March in Berlin and on 27th of September in Gdansk. The Meeting in Gdansk was followed by a Workshop on Temporary Capacity Restrictions.

Each AG elects a spokesperson who represents the AG and acts as a contact person between MB and AG. In May 2017 Mr. Dirk Oelschläger stepped down from the position of RAG Speaker and from that moment vice Speaker Lieven Goethals from Lineas acted as a spokesperson. Simultaneously Mr. Friedrich Stuhmann from MSC Gate Bremerhaven GmbH & Co. KG replaced Mr. Jörg Schulz as TAG Speaker.

During the first RAG/TAG meeting on 30th of March in Berlin participants were provided with information on the capacity offer for TT 2018 with focus on the improvements in the PaP catalogue and ordering process made on the basis of the customer feedback. During a discussion participants shared their ideas and addressed requirements for the ordering process including the expectations regarding the role of the Corridor in the allocation of capacity and coordination of paths during running timetable. Some of the requested improvements were already taken into account, part of them demand deeper analysis. Among others several members of the RAG expressed strong need to have reliable information on temporary capacity restrictions and their impact on freight operations. During the discussion it was decided to organize a workshop dedicated to this topic, which took place after the RAG/TAG meeting in Gdansk.

Participants also received information regarding the train performance management on the Corridor and RUs were notified they would be invited to common meetings of the Train Performance Management Working Group after signing a confidentiality agreement. The goal

of TPM WG activities is to increase the punctuality of international freight trains which run on the Corridor by analysing monthly punctuality reports using data from the IT tool: Train Information System (TIS).



Marshalling yard Antwerp North

Photo: Infrabel – Johan Dehon

The second RAG/TAG meeting was held on 27th of September in Gdansk. Continuing discussions from previous AGs meeting about two documents issued during the TEN-T days in Rotterdam: Sector Statement on Rail Freight Corridors: “Boosting International Rail Freight” and Ministerial Declaration on “Rail Freight Corridors to boost international rail freight” the implementation of the 10 Sector Priorities on the Corridor was presented. The 10 sector priorities applying to 4 areas: Planning, Operations, Infrastructure Investments and Governance, were agreed upon by sector organizations which are working together in order to implement them. While elaborating on the Corridors’ view and its input to the implementation of the 10 sector priorities some juridical issues were mentioned, such as language issue on the borders and juridical obstacles to share the data in ELETA project - more details regarding the follow-up of this can be found in subchapter 2.7 of this report.

The European Commission’s representative described in detail the obligations for terminal operators stemming from the recast of the Directive (EU) 2012/34 and the implementing Regulation (EU) 2017/2177, which are broader than those set out in the Regulation (EU) 913/2010.

In 2017 a lot of attention was given to the improvement of the planning and coordination process of TCRs. A dedicated workshop regarding the topic was organized by the MB in order to fulfil the request from the RAG to strengthen its involvement in the process of track closures coordination. During the workshop impact sheets for the main TCRs on the Corridor were presented, which describe in an easy way the most important information about the restriction: section with TCR, its duration, impact on the traffic and possible alternative routes. According to the discussion and the feedback received, the Corridor will try to enhance the process of TCR coordination and RUs involvement.

2. MAIN ACTIVITIES

2.1 CORRIDOR ONE-STOP-SHOP AND CORRIDOR OFFER

The Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) facilitates train path management for international rail freight along the RFC NS-B. It serves as a single contact point allowing to request and to receive answers regarding infrastructure capacity for international freight trains along the Corridor.

Till December 2017 Mr. Florian Müller was the RFC NS-B C-OSS Manager. His responsibilities were taken over by Ms. Felicia Riedl in March 2018.



Florian Müller
C-OSS Manager
(till December 2017)

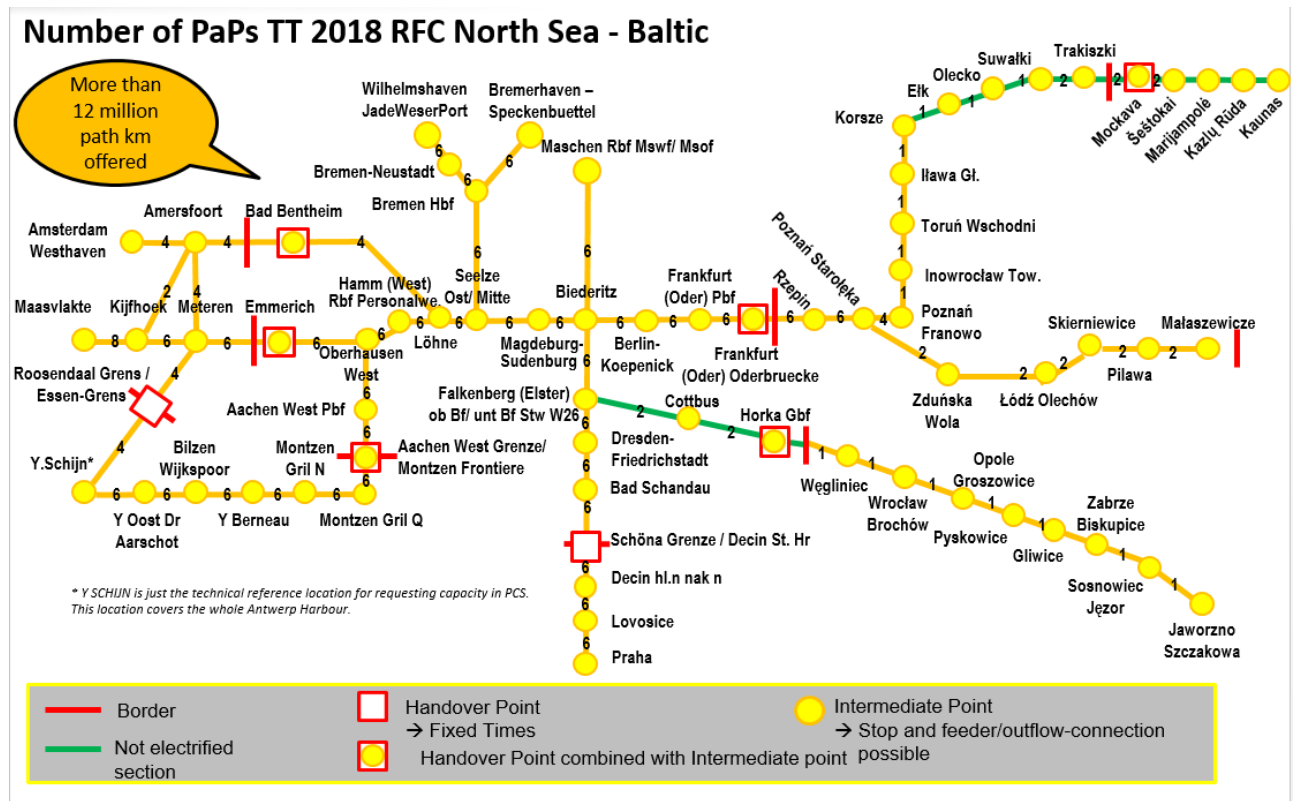
The C-OSS Manager participated in several international customer events such as: SŽDC Customer Meeting, Bilateral Customer Conference between DB Netz AG and PKP PLK S.A. and Forum Train Europe Conference (FTE) in Ljubljana. One of the most important events for the C-OSS was the PSC training organized together with RFC Rhine – Alpine and RFC Scandinavian-Mediterranean and RailNetEurope support.

On top of these common meetings in 2017, customer meetings were organized by the C-OSS Manager with 8 individual customers, where RUs were informed about the RFC NS-B capacity offer and shared their needs. Such approach ensured an enhanced and customer-oriented PaP offer in terms of quantity and quality.

2.1.1 PRE-ARRANGED PATHS

Publication of the offer for TT 2018

On 9th of January 2017 the catalogue of Pre-arranged Paths for timetable 2018 was published, offering applicants around 12 million path kilometres of among IMs coordinated and dedicated paths for international traffic.



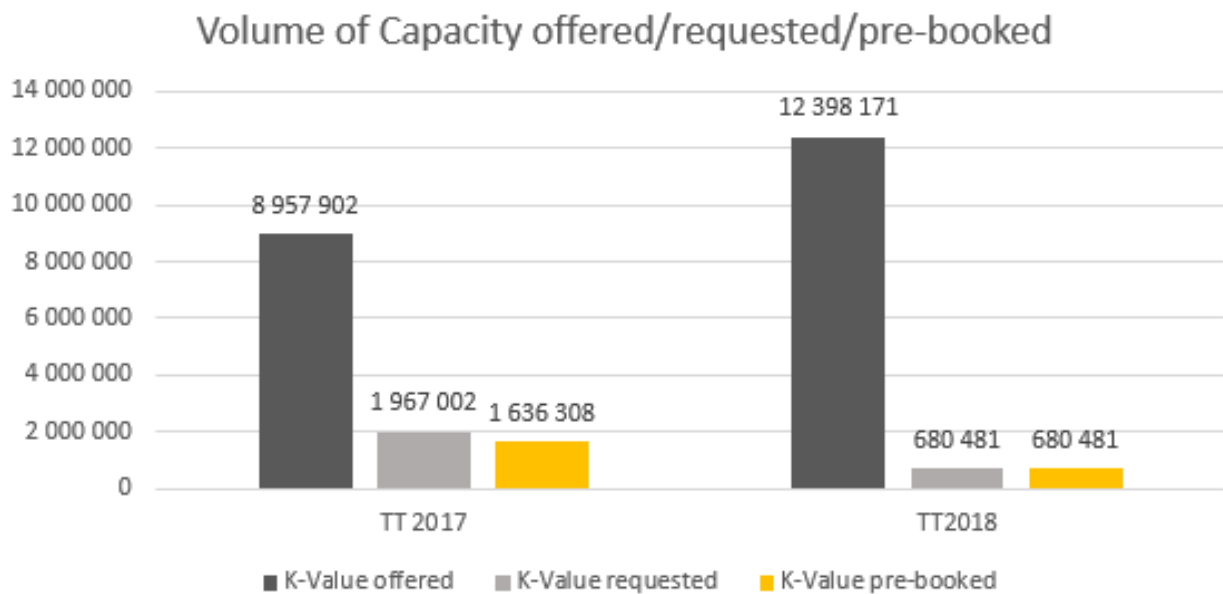
Before the publication of PaPs for TT 2018 a consultation process with potential applicants took place during different meetings in order to make sure that the offer would meet the market needs to the highest possible extent. The outcome of these preliminary consultations is the following innovations implemented in the offer for TT 2018:

- offering PaPs via Bad Bentheim;
- acceptance of the Terms and Conditions directly in PCS;
- longer stopping time in Frankfurt (Oder) Oderbrücke;
- separate offer on overlapping section with RFC Rhine - Alpine;
- new Handover Point between SŽDC and DB Netz (Decin st.hr/Bad Schandau Grenze);
- harmonization of PaP Catalogue (Print out) for most RFCs.

Allocation of PaPs for TT 2018

Until 10th of April 2017, which was the deadline for placing international path requests, the C-OSS Manager had received only 8 requests, which is a considerable decrease in comparison to 63 requests placed for TT 2017. In total only around 5% of the published capacity was requested.

The graph below presents the comparison of the volume of capacity offered/requested and pre-allocated for requests where RFC NS-B C-OSS Manager was in the lead.



Preparation of the PaP offer for TT 2019

Immediately after the pre-allocation phase the evaluation process started with the goal to identify the reasons behind the low interest in the TT 2018 offer. Most crucial improvements to be implemented recognized are enhancement of the TCRs planning and coordination process, as well as communication with RUs, and further development of IT Tools. Some steps toward improvement in these fields have been already made and the Corridor will continue to work on and cooperate with other stakeholders on these issues, but due to the complexity of those topics the improvement may be seen in medium to long term. At the same time other improvements and novelties have been introduced which may bring a positive short term development:

- **Improved Flex PaP concept**

Seeking to develop the PaP product for TT 2019 the “Improved flex PaP” was approved to be offered on part of the Corridor. The concept should give more flexibility to the applicants and

provide them the possibility to adjust the running times of the published PaP according to their individual needs within a certain bandwidth. That means applicants will be able to change times at each station up to 60 minutes. The most important change is that also “handover times” may be adjusted by applicants.



Loading Coilwagons

Photo: ProRail

- **Expression of capacity needs**

In order to provide applicants a PaP offer which is more suitable to their needs, 2017 was the first year in which RFC NS-B together with all other RFCs circulated a harmonized capacity survey among all potential applicants to collect their capacity needs. Each C-OSS Manager has sent the document at the beginning of May 2017 to applicants with the deadline to fill out this list by 1st of August 2017. On the RFC NS-B only few applicants reacted, but those who did, provided detailed expectations.

In general the initiative received positive feedback from the customers, thus C-OSS Community decided to continue this approach in 2018.

On the basis of the experiences obtained from the individual customer visits and RAG/TAG meetings, information provided in the expression of capacity needs and the analysis of the requests submitted for TT 2018 the elaboration of the offer for TT 2019 started in September 2017. The PaP construction was completed in December 2017 and the PaP catalogue for TT 2019 was published on 8th of January 2018.

2.1.2 RESERVE CAPACITY

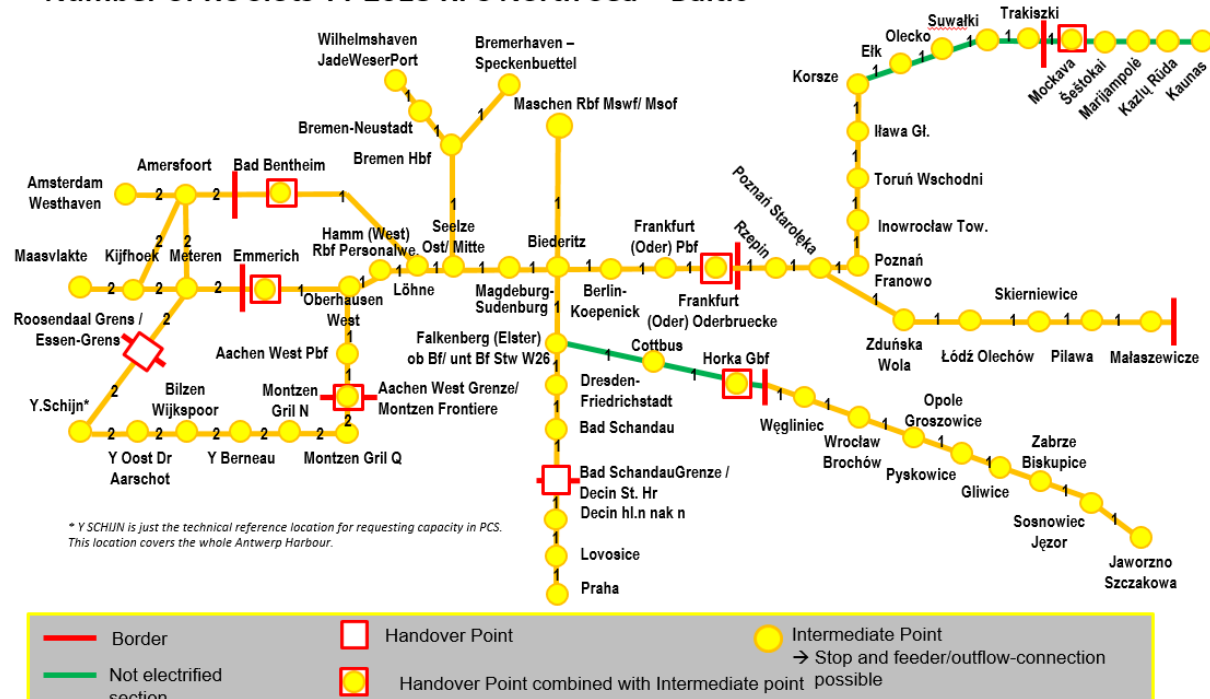
Reserve Capacity on RFC NS-B is published as a flexible approach, in the form of capacity slots per day and direction which applicants may request up to 30 days before train run. The offer for TT 2017 was available for applicants to request until the beginning of November 2017, but with no requests being placed.

In October 2017 around 3.4 million path kilometers were offered for TT 2018 with the same approach (0.3 million path kilometers more than in 2016), no requests have been made so far.

The feedback from the customers demonstrated that the deadline of 30 days before train run does not meet market needs and RUs operational scenarios. RFC NS-B is closely following the pilots being held on a number of corridors with the aim to drastically shorten the deadline and after the evaluation being done, will apply the most suitable solution enabling placing requests on a short notice.

The number of slots for each section looked as follows:

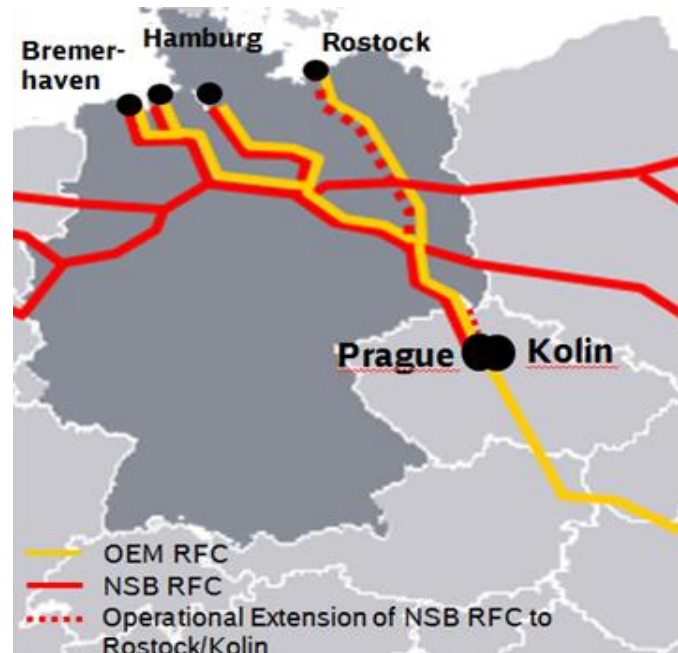
Number of RC Slots TT 2018 RFC North Sea – Baltic



2.1.3 COOPERATION WITH RFC ORIENT/EAST-MED CORRIDOR

The extension of RFC Orient/East-Med (RFC OEM) to Germany in 2018 which is required by the amendment of the Regulation leads to long overlapping sections with RFC NS-B. In order to optimize the usage of the scarce capacity in the bottleneck sections and to avoid negative competition between the corridors, a collaborative model was chosen to regulate the workflow of both C-OSS Managers: the C-OSS of RFC NS-B will be in charge of the capacity

offer north of Prague and Kolin, while the C-OSS of RFC OEM will manage the capacity offer south of Prague and Kolin including section Prague – Kolin. To enable this solution, it was decided to define an operational extension of RFC NS-B to Rostock and to Kolin.



The model is designed to provide applicants with the best possible support and optimize capacity allocation between both RFCs. Applicants will still experience a single point of contact as both C-OSS Managers work strongly together.

2.2 TRANSPORT MARKET STUDY

According to the Regulation, a Transport Market Study (TMS) has to be conducted and updated periodically to investigate the observed and expected changes of the traffic on the freight corridor. The essential elements of the study should be included in the implementation plan of the Corridor. The executive summary of the first TMS of RFC NS-B was published in 2015 and the Management Board had foreseen its update already in 2016, mainly due to the requirement of extending the Corridor to Latvia, Estonia and to the Polish – Ukrainian border (Medyka).

In addition to extended Corridor routing to Latvia, Estonia and Medyka, the TMS will also include the operational extension of the Corridor to Rostock and Kolin which resulted from the cooperation with RFC OEM, as described in 2.1.3.

After the tendering documents will be accepted by the Management Board the tender of the study will be launched in 2018. In order to involve RAG/TAG in the process of study elaboration

the information was provided about the planned scope of the study during RAG/TAG meeting, and it is also considered to organize a meeting with the consultant of the TMS.



Betuwe Route connecting to direction Emmerich near Zevenaar

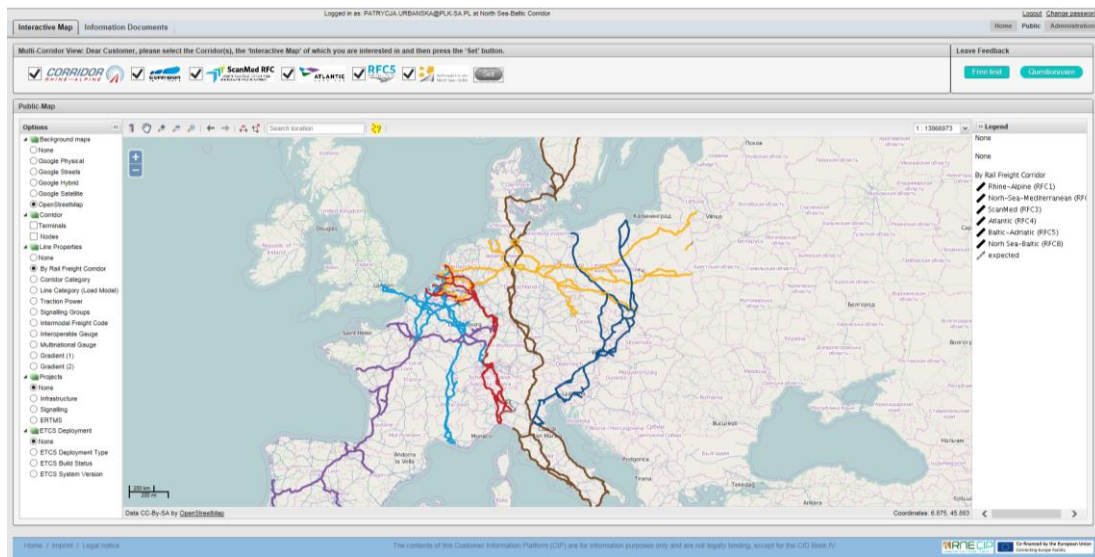
Photo: ProRail

2.3 CUSTOMER INFORMATION PLATFORM

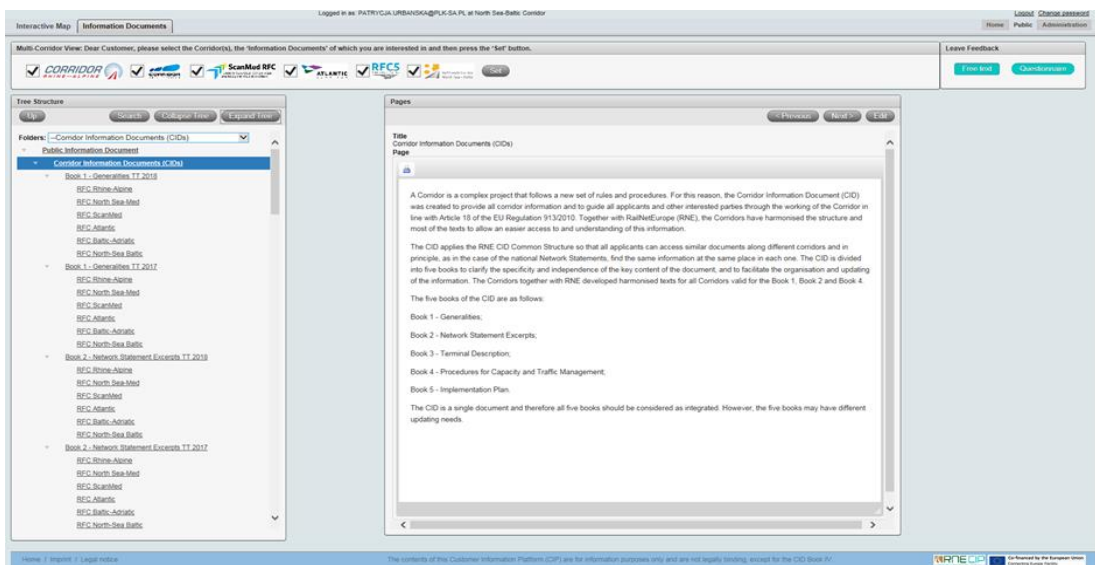
The Customer Information Platform (CIP) is an interactive, internet-based tool which provides customers and users of the Corridor with information about the corridor routing and basic track properties. At the end of 2017 CIP displayed information on railway infrastructure in 18 European countries covering the network of 6 RFCs: Rhine-Alpine (RFC 1), North Sea – Mediterranean (RFC 2), Scandinavian – Mediterranean (RFC 3), Atlantic (RFC 4), Baltic – Adriatic (RFC 5) and North Sea – Baltic (RFC 8).

RFC NS-B together with other RFCs in cooperation with RNE are working on the development of new functionalities in CIP. One of them, the multi-corridor view functionality, was implemented in 2017. This functionality makes it possible to display information for several RFCs at the same time. The multi-corridor view contains two main elements of CIP:

1. The Interactive Map, delivers inter alia information on the routing, nodes, terminals and track properties as far as these data are available:



2. The Information Documents, provide all essential corridor-related information documents, such as CID, capacity offer and temporary capacity restrictions (TCRs) as far as data are available:



CIP can be accessed via the RFC NS-B website: www.rfc-northsea-baltic.eu.

2.4 USER SATISFACTION SURVEY 2017

In 2017 the User Satisfaction Survey was conducted for the second time on the RFC North Sea - Baltic. As in 2016, the RFCs decided to cooperate under the RailNetEurope umbrella with the MarketMind consultant responsible for performing one, joint User Satisfaction Survey in

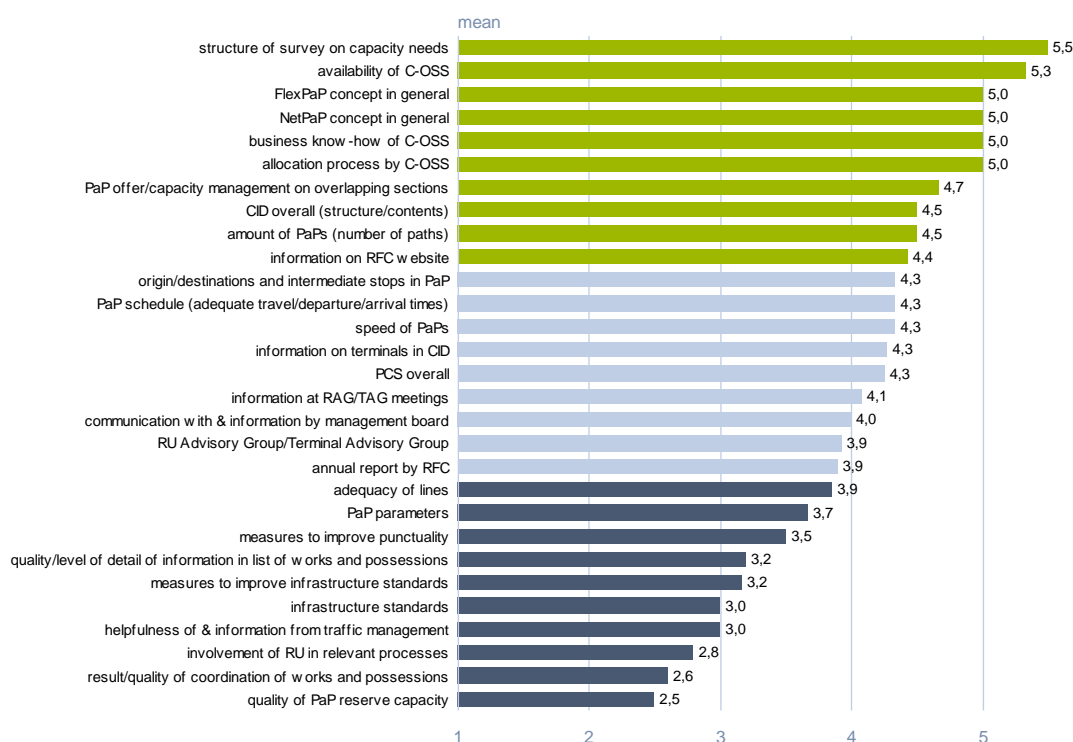
order to avoid multiple surveys being sent. Out of 44 invitations sent on behalf of RFC NS-B, 15 respondents took part in the survey.

The Management Board of RFC NS-B appreciates all the effort participants put in order to complete the survey. In comparison with last year's study the overall satisfaction increased from 3,3 to 3,6 for a possible maximum of 6.

In 2017 the C-OSS Managers' performance once more earned the highest appreciation from the customers, who expressed their satisfaction by giving the highest rates to the following actions: availability of the C-OSS, structure of the survey on capacity needs, result of allocation process and business know-how of the C-OSS.

In terms of improving the quality of PaP, RC and coordination of works and possessions, the RFC NS-B took actions already by opening the dialogue with Advisory Groups how the offer can be improved and organising the Temporary Capacity Restrictions Workshop. This line of activities will therefore be continued. The results and comments of the USS 2017 will be analysed and will serve as the basis for the Corridor's improvement in 2018 and further.

The RFC NS-B satisfaction ratings are displayed below (marks are from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 6 (very satisfied)):



The full results can be found on the RFC NS-B website:

<http://rfc8.eu/corridor/customer/customer-satisfaction-survey/>.

2.5 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016

According to article 19 (2) of the Regulation the Management Board of RFC NS–B monitors the performance of rail freight services on the freight corridor and publishes the results of this monitoring once a year.

In 2017 the Performance Report of RFC NS-B for the year 2016 was published for the first time on the Corridor website:

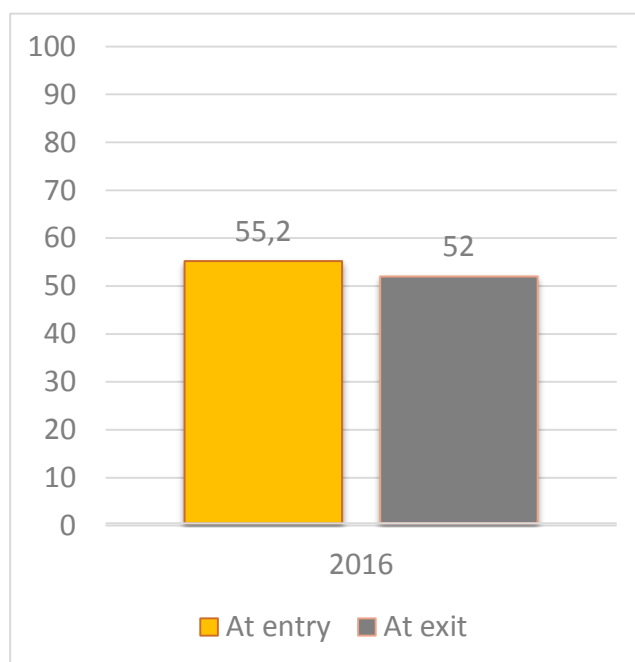
http://rfc8.eu/files/public/Key_Performance_Indicators/Performance_Monitoring_NSB_2016.pdf.

The report provides information on the Corridor Key Performance Indicators in terms of train performance and capacity. In 2016, 5 KPIs for Corridor Capacity, 2 KPIs for Corridor traffic and additionally 1 Other Measurement (OM) – Traffic Volume per Corridor border were measured.

The KPI Total Corridor traffic displays the number of trains running on RFC NS-B, where all international trains running on the corridor infrastructure are being calculated. The total amount of trains for 2016 was 103.047.

Punctuality was also measured for the first time for RFC NS-B. It represents the average punctuality of trains running on the Corridor at entry and exit of the Corridor (or departure/arrival if this is a point on the Corridor). Calculation is based on the data from TIS.

Punctuality of freight trains (%)
(delay \leq 30 minutes)



Although the capacity KPIs were published for the first time in the Performance Report 2016 they were measured from the moment of Corridor being operational and presented during various meetings. The development of capacity KPIs is displayed on the graph in chapter 2.1.1.

The Performance Report for 2017 will be published on the Corridor website in mid-2018.

2.6 FOLLOW UP OF THE 10 SECTOR PRIORITIES AND THE SECTOR DECLARATION

During the TEN-T Days in Rotterdam in 2016 two important documents for rail freight sector were officially published:

- Sector Statement on Rail Freight Corridors: “Boosting International Rail Freight”
- Ministerial Declaration on “Rail Freight Corridors to boost international rail freight” followed by 10 priorities extracted from the Sector Declaration of Rotterdam.

In order to implement one of the sector priorities in terms of capacity improvement the MB has taken steps in strengthening the capacity offer by the implementation of improved flex PaP concept between Germany, Czech Republic, Poland and Lithuania for TT 2019 with the aim to give more flexibility to applicants. The evaluation of the concept is foreseen for TT 2020.

The priority of improving the coordination of TCR, with better involvement of Railway Undertakings in the process, was also tackled by RFC NS-B: a list of coordinated TCRs is updated on the corridor website twice a year. Additionally, answering to the customers’ wishes, the MB organized the TCR Workshop on 27th of September 2017 in Gdansk for all interested RUs of the corridor (see above).

In 2017 great effort was put to answer the request coming from the sector on a set of new KPIs for RFCs, during constructive discussions with RUs in various workshops being coordinated by RNE. The final solutions were developed which resulted in the updated Guidelines on Key Performance Indicators of Rail Freight Corridors which were approved by RNE General Assembly and may be found under the link: http://www.rne.eu/rneinhalt/uploads/RNE_Guidelines_KPIs_of_RFCs.pdf. KPIs for RFC NS-B are published in the Performance Report and on the RNE website under the link <http://www.rne.eu/rail-freight-corridors/rfc-kpis/>.

The CID harmonization was also already achieved in 2017, as CID Books 1, 2, and 4 were harmonized in terms of structure and common content. Only parts describing the Corridor specifics are described in separate boxes. The work has also started to simplify the content of the Implementation Plan (Book 5).

2.7 MEETING WITH REGULATORY BODIES

A meeting with the regulatory bodies was organized by RFC North Sea – Baltic and RFC Rhine-Alpine upon the request of the regulatory bodies along both RFCs which took place on the 22nd of September 2017 in Frankfurt am Main. During the meeting the C-OSS Manager

provided information about the results of the allocation process for TT 2018 and about planning of the capacity offer for TT 2019, but the discussion focused mainly on the new German law provisions allowing German Regulatory Body to perform ex-ante checks of PaPs.

2.8 EVENTS

2.8.1 CROSS CORRIDOR STRATEGY WORKSHOP

The Cross Corridor Strategy Workshop was jointly organized by all RFCs and took place in Frankfurt am Main on 21st of February 2017 with participation of Infrastructure Managers, Railway Undertakings, Terminal owners and end customers. The Workshop concluded on three lines of action to be implemented by the network of RFCs:

1. Privilege a business-driven over a political driven development;
2. Harmonize the operational environment of international rail freight;
3. Make international rail freight reliable and predictable.

The meeting was a great opportunity to conduct a dialogue and to identify the issues arising in the whole logistics chain.

2.8.2. EU RAIL FREIGHT DAY 2017

On 7th of December 2017 RFC North Sea - Baltic participated in the 4th Rail Freight Day, a conference organized by the European Commission and RNE which took place in Vienna. The Keynote speech was delivered by Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport.



Violeta Bulc, European Commissioner for Transport

Photo: Rail Freight Day 2017 Stephan Doleschal, RNE

The conference involved DG MOVE, Ministries, RNE, Infrastructure Managers, Rail Freight Corridors, Railway Undertakings and many other association and stakeholder representatives. At the conference the RFC NS-B was represented by the Management Board and the Managing Director.

The Programme was divided between six panel sessions:

- Rotterdam Ministerial Declaration and Sector Statement: Where do we stand with the sector priorities,
- Interoperability in rail freight,
- Lessons learnt from the Rastatt incident,
- Rail freight capacity issues,
- Train Tracking and Tracing - Estimated Time of Arrival,
- Rail Freight Corridors: The way forward.

The Rail Freight Day was a great opportunity to promote the RFC concept through fruitful exchange of points of view for international rail freight transport between the stakeholders of European rail freight and the European Commission.

3. EUROPEAN FUNDING - CONNECTING EUROPE FACILITY (CEF)

In 2017 RFC North Sea - Baltic continued the implementation of the CEF action Establishment of Rail Freight Corridor „North Sea-Baltic“ and its further development aiming at improving conditions for international rail freight transport (2014-EU-TM-0217-S). The action progressed according to schedule. In March 2017 the Action Status Report (ASR) for 2016 was delivered to INEA and the first Interim Financial Statement was submitted in August 2017.

In 2017 the Grant Agreement was amended making the EEIG the sole beneficiary. The amendment was signed in October 2017 with effect on 1st of January 2017.

4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

4.1. RAILNETEUROPE

As an associated member of RNE, RFC NS-B continued in 2017 to cooperate closely with other RFCs in view of harmonization and development of services under RNE umbrella. RFC NS-B applies RNE services and guidelines as well as the RNE IT tools: PCS (Path Coordination System), TIS (Train Information System) and CIP (Corridor Information Platform). In 2017, RFC NS-B representatives participated in two RNE General Assembly meetings and 2 RFC/RNE High Level Meetings. RFC NS-B was also actively engaged in a number of RNE initiatives:

- Further harmonisation of CID;
- Development of the Path Coordination System:
 - Empty Envelope Concept elaboration to be introduced;

- Improvement of traffic and train performance management:
 - update of Key Performance Indicators Guidelines for traffic and train performance monitoring common for all RFCs;
- Participation and coordination of the User Satisfaction Survey;
- Development of the Customer Information Platform:
 - implementation of multi - corridor view functionality;
 - harmonisation of CIP between RFCs.

4.2 RFC NETWORK – COOPERATION OF RAIL FREIGHT CORRIDORS

The RFC Network (renamed from RFC Talks) is a platform for cooperation of all Rail Freight Corridors. It consists of the Managing Directors and Chairpersons of the Management Board of RFCs with RNE representatives invited to participate as observers. In 2017 4 RFC Network meetings were organized in which RFC NS-B participated. From June till November 2017 the RFC Network was chaired by RFC North Sea – Baltic as rotating chair. Among the topics which RFCs worked on in 2017 were Handbook of international contingency management, elaboration of common RFCs position on the ERTMS Deployment Action Plan, coordination of PSA call.

4.3 EUROPEAN COMMISSION - DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

In 2017 two SERAC (Single European Railway Area Committee) Working Group meetings on RFCs were organized by the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) supporting the dialogue between RFCs, Ministries, Infrastructure Managers, Allocation and Regulatory bodies. During these meetings special attention was put on the following the implementation of 10 sector priorities and activities taken after the Rastatt incident.

4.4. EUROPEAN COMMISSION - NORTH SEA-BALTIC CORE NETWORK CORRIDOR

In 2017 RFC NS-B continued to work with its corresponding North Sea-Baltic CNC in the framework of the model for cooperation between Rail Freight Corridors and TEN-T Core Network Corridors. This model ensures achievement of the objectives of both the RFCs and CNCs and avoiding duplication of work through effective exchanges of information and consultations.

In 2017 the representatives of RFC NS-B attended 2 meetings of the North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridor Forum. Recent developments on RFC NS-B were presented during the 10th CNC meeting in Brussels on 13th of June 2017 by the Managing Director. The main subjects discussed during both meetings were the update of the project list, the third Work Plan and the Rail Baltica project in the Baltic States and Poland.



Modernisation of Rail Baltica line in Poland

Photo: PKP PLK S.A.

4.4.1. RAIL BALTICA PROJECT IN LITHUANIA

The "Rail Baltica" line is an integral part of the North Sea - Baltic Core Network Corridor and in the future RFC NS-B as well. Already today, the connection of the European standard (1435 mm) railway between Poland (and via Poland with other EU countries) and Lithuania is ensured, both cargo and passengers are transported there. By 2020 the European standard gauge will be connected to the Kaunas (Palemonas) Intermodal Terminal, and by 2026, the whole "Rail Baltica" project is planned to be completed.

In 2017 construction works in Kaunas node (Jiesia - Rokai - Palemonas, Palemonas - Kaunas) on section Jiesia – Rokai started (Kaunas bypass for major freight flows) was ongoing. A part of the preparatory works for the construction of 1435 mm railway from Kaunas towards Latvian border was carried out. Feasibility study for the connection of Vilnius, as an integral part of the „Rail Baltica“ Project, to the „Rail Baltica“ line started.

5. ECCO

A meeting organised between ECCO (Efficient Cross Corridor Organisation, a working group of UIC) and the RFCs in 2017 focused on the cooperation between the RFCs and the RAGs (RAG Framework proposed), PCS enhancement, the role of the C-OSS and the improvement of TCR coordination and consultation process.

6. ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE

6.1 OPERATIONAL WORKSHOP

As there is an apparent and growing need for harmonisation and improvement of the cross-border interoperability, the MB welcomed the ExBo initiative to organize a workshop to tackle the operational issues on the border Oldenzaal - Bad Bentheim between the Netherlands and Germany. The workshop with various stakeholders is planned to take place in 2018. Results will be shared during upcoming RAG/TAG meetings.



Moresnet Viaduct

Photo: Infrabel – Benjamin Brolet

6.2 HARMONIZATION OF CANCELLATION DEADLINES

In 2017 RFC NS-B started to investigate if a harmonization of cancellation deadlines was possible. One of the first steps taken was the creation of a task force, which will further deal with this topic.

6.3 STUDY ON CAPACITY IMPROVEMENT

It was decided by the MB in 2016 already to carry out a Study on Capacity Improvement (SCI) which was a logical continuation of the “Study on the Corridor's infrastructure characteristics” conducted and finalized by the Working Group Infrastructure in 2014. The MB approved in 2017 the Terms of Reference for the study and at the end of 2017, the EEIG launched the tender.



6.4 INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT

After the approval of the International Contingency Management Handbook by the General Assembly of RNE, the RFC NS-B will start the implementation of this handbook on the Corridor by amongst others establishing a contact list and by elaborating a re-routing overview. A consultation with the Railway Undertakings will also take place in 2018.

