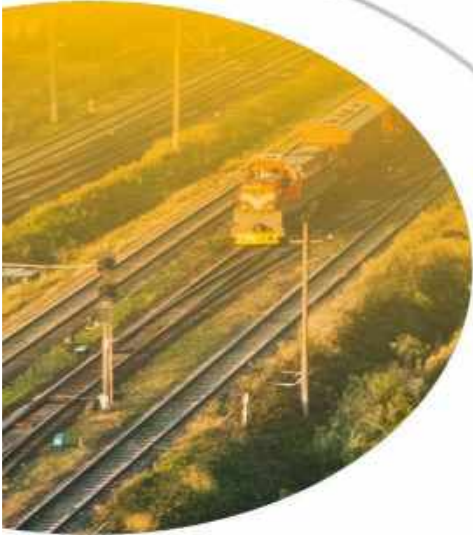




Rail Freight Corridor  
North Sea – Baltic



## Annual Report 2021



Co-financed by the Connecting Europe  
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### List of Abbreviations

AB – Allocation Body  
 AG – Advisory Group  
 CEF – Connecting Europe Facility  
 CID – Corridor Information Document  
 CINEA – European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency  
 CIP – Customer Information Platform  
 CIS - Charging Information System  
 CNC – Core Network Corridor  
 C-OSS – Corridor One-Stop-Shop  
 DG MOVE - Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport  
 EC – European Commission  
 EEIG – European Economic Interest Grouping (EZIG in Polish)  
 ERTMS - European Rail Traffic Management System  
 EU – European Union  
 ExBo – Executive Board  
 ICM – International Contingency Management  
 ILEA – Improving Links to Euro-Asian Landbridges  
 IM – Infrastructure Manager  
 KPI – Key Performance Indicator  
 MB – Management Board  
 MoT – Ministry responsible for transport  
 NExBo – Network of Executive Boards  
 PaP – Pre-arranged Path  
 PCS – Path Coordination System  
 PIM – Project Implementation Manager  
 PMO – Project Management Office  
 QCO – Quality Circle Operation  
 RAG – Railway undertaking Advisory Group  
 RB – Regulatory Body  
 RC – Reserve Capacity  
 RFC – Rail Freight Corridor  
 RFC NS-B - Rail Freight Corridor North Sea – Baltic  
 RFC OEM – Rail Freight Corridor Orient/East-Med  
 RNE – RailNetEurope  
 RU – Railway Undertaking  
 SERAC – Single European Railway Area Committee  
 TAG – Terminal Advisory Group  
 TCR - Temporary Capacity Restriction  
 TEN-T - Trans-European Transport Network  
 TIS – Train Information System  
 TT – Time Table  
 TTR – Timetabling and Capacity Redesign  
 USS - User Satisfaction Survey  
 WG – Working Group

## FOREWORD

*Dear Reader,*

*2021 will be remembered as the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic with further restrictions enforced, but for RFC North Sea – Baltic also as a year when several important milestones have been achieved. Among others we focused on the Corridor extensions to Medyka and to the Belgian and Dutch ports of Gent (Terneuzen) and Zeebrugge. Also with the extension of the Corridor to the Polish – Ukrainian border with an upgraded line we made a significant step towards connecting Ukraine with the European Union. In the pandemic we have seen that rail proves to be the most resilient and reliable mode of transport.*

*During this year we turned our attention to cross border operations, working together with all interested stakeholders in the Quality Circle Operations programme for Bad Bentheim (already launched in 2018) and Frankfurt Oder Oderbrücke, which has been launched in 2021 with the aim to enable seamless train runs across borders. We are confident that our common efforts will lead to positive developments and we are very much looking forward to continuing the close exchange within the QCO working groups in 2022. Another important task performed by the Management Board was the inclusion of the re-routing lines in Latvia and Estonia in the frame of the update of the International Contingency Management re-routing scenarios of the Corridor. Unfortunately, in July, the Corridor for the first time had to coordinate an international disruption which took place between Germany and the Czech Republic on the Bad Schandau – Děčín border crossing. The process described in the Handbook for International Contingency Management was successfully applied with the active participation of all involved railway undertakings.*

*We would like to take the opportunity to express our gratitude to all stakeholders involved in the Railway undertaking Advisory Group, in the Terminal Advisory Group, in the Working Groups of our Corridor, in the Project Management Office, in RNE, in the EU Commission and in the Executive and Management Board for the work done and contributions given.*

*We sincerely hope for further cooperation in order to achieve the ultimate success of RFC North Sea - Baltic.*

*We wish you a pleasant reading*

*Oliver Sellnick  
Chairman of the Management Board*

*Weronika Karbowskiak  
Managing Director*

## INTRODUCTION

This document presents the annual report 2021 of Rail Freight Corridor North Sea – Baltic (RFC NS-B). The report provides Corridor stakeholders with general information on activities relevant to the Corridor in the past year. RFC NS-B runs through 8 Member States of the European Union (EU): starting in the North Sea ports of Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven and Hamburg spreading into central Germany through Aachen – Hannover/Magdeburg/Berlin to Warsaw and the Polish-Belarus border in Terespol. A branch leads from Magdeburg to Prague via Falkenberg and Dresden. In Falkenberg starts the Southern branch in Poland to Wrocław and Katowice. Another branch leaves from Poznań to Kaunas and to Riga and Tallinn. Following the RFC request and after a positive decision of the European Commission (EC) the Corridor was extended to the Polish-Ukraine border at Medyka and to the ports of Gent (Terneuzen) and Zeebrugge in January 2022.

RFC NS-B current routes comprise:

- 5253 km of principal lines,
- 2552 km of diversionary lines,
- 891 km of connecting lines,
- 960 km of expected principal and diversionary lines,
- 201 terminals
- 14 seaports: Antwerp, North Sea Port<sup>1</sup>, Zeebrugge, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven, Hamburg, Riga, Ventspils, Liepāja, Paldiski, Muuga and Sillamäe.

More detailed information on the Corridor's routing and its development can be found on the [Corridor's website](#) and in the [Customer Information Platform \(CIP\)](#).



*Freight train in the port of Antwerp  
Photo: Infrabel – Thomas Baeken*

<sup>1</sup> Ports of Gent and Terneuzen are merged into North Sea Port.

## 1. GOVERNANCE

The governance structure of RFC NS-B is divided into three levels: the Executive Board, the Management Board (MB) and the Advisory Groups (AG), working together to develop the Corridor.

The Executive Board is composed of representatives of Ministries (MoTs) in charge of rail transport of the cooperating countries and is responsible for defining the general goals of the Corridor. The Management Board consists of representatives of cooperating Infrastructure Managers (IMs) and Allocation Body and serves as the decision-making body of the Corridor. The Advisory Groups, consisting of Railway undertakings (RUs) and interested applicants and Terminal owners/operators, issue opinions on any proposal by the Management Board, which has direct consequences for them or issue own-initiative opinions, which shall be taken into account by the Management Board. The governance structure of the Corridor is illustrated in the below organigram.



### 1.1 EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board of RFC NS-B, as referred to in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 913/2010 (hereinafter “the Regulation”), was established on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2012 by the Mission Statement, which was replaced by the Joint Declaration of Intent regarding the establishment of the Executive Board of RFC North Sea-Baltic on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2019.

The Executive Board is composed of the representatives of the authorities of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Poland.

Its decisions are based on mutual consent. The Executive Board takes 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 Board meets four times a year and has a rotating presidency. It was chaired in 2021 by the Belgian Federal Public Service Mobility and Transport.

## FULL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD



## STAND-IN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD





### 1.1.1 Key activities of the Executive Board

The governance of the Executive Board (ExBo) was affected, as in 2020, by the Covid-19 pandemic. The meetings were held digitally throughout the year.

The ExBo met four times, in March, June, October and December. Each meeting was followed by a common meeting with the Management Board.

The ExBo focused on the activities related to the implementation of the Regulation, with discussions related to Temporary Capacity Restriction (TCRs), border crossings and the deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), as well as the extensions of the Corridor. In this regard, a letter of Intent for the extension of the Corridor towards Daugavpils, which is currently a diversionary line, and Rēzekne as principal line was sent to the European Commission in early 2021.

The ExBo continued to work on the milestones defined during its special session in March, with discussions on the state of play and a focus on three milestones, namely long trains, ERTMS and the cross-border topics.

The ExBo also focused in particular on the quality of the Corridor, both at the level of the capacity and of the parameters offered by the Corridor. A workshop on the offer of the Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) is planned in 2022 to continue the work on this issue.

Moreover, the ExBo discussed the implementation of objectives for the Corridor. The principles of the objectives have been agreed during its last meeting of 2021. A further discussion on the details of the objectives should occur beginning of 2022.

The ExBo furthermore approved the update of the Implementation Plan, on the 16th December 2021 to take into account the extension of the Corridor to Gent/Terneuzen, Zeebrugge and Medyka.

Finally, the ExBo increased its relationship with the railway undertakings and the terminals of the Corridor through the creation of a Railway undertaking Advisory Group (RAG) Window and a Terminal Advisory Group (TAG) Window during the common meetings with the Management Board.

The RAG Window was started in March 2021 and aims at fostering the cooperation with the corridor customers. During this window, the RAG Speaker is invited to exchange views on the most critical issues expressed by the RAG. Topics such as the bottleneck in Małaszewicze, the points of view of Railway undertakings on the border crossing coordinators put in place by the Corridor and the possibilities regarding a rerouting between Germany and Poland were discussed.

A TAG Window was also put in place in December 2021 with the newly appointed TAG Speaker. The objective of this window is to gain additional knowledge on the terminals' perspective and foster the coordination with the Corridor. During the first TAG Window, the TAG Speaker presented his expectations regarding the terminals of the Corridor.

### 1.1.2 Cooperation at EU level

The ExBo continued to invite the Core Network Corridor (CNC) assistant to all its meetings of 2021. Moreover, the members of the ExBo contributed to the work of the Network of Executive Boards of the RFCs (NExBo), established in 2016. This informal body aims at exchanging good practices and establishing recommendations for the rail freight corridors (RFCs). As in 2020, it was chaired by Germany and Croatia during the year 2021.

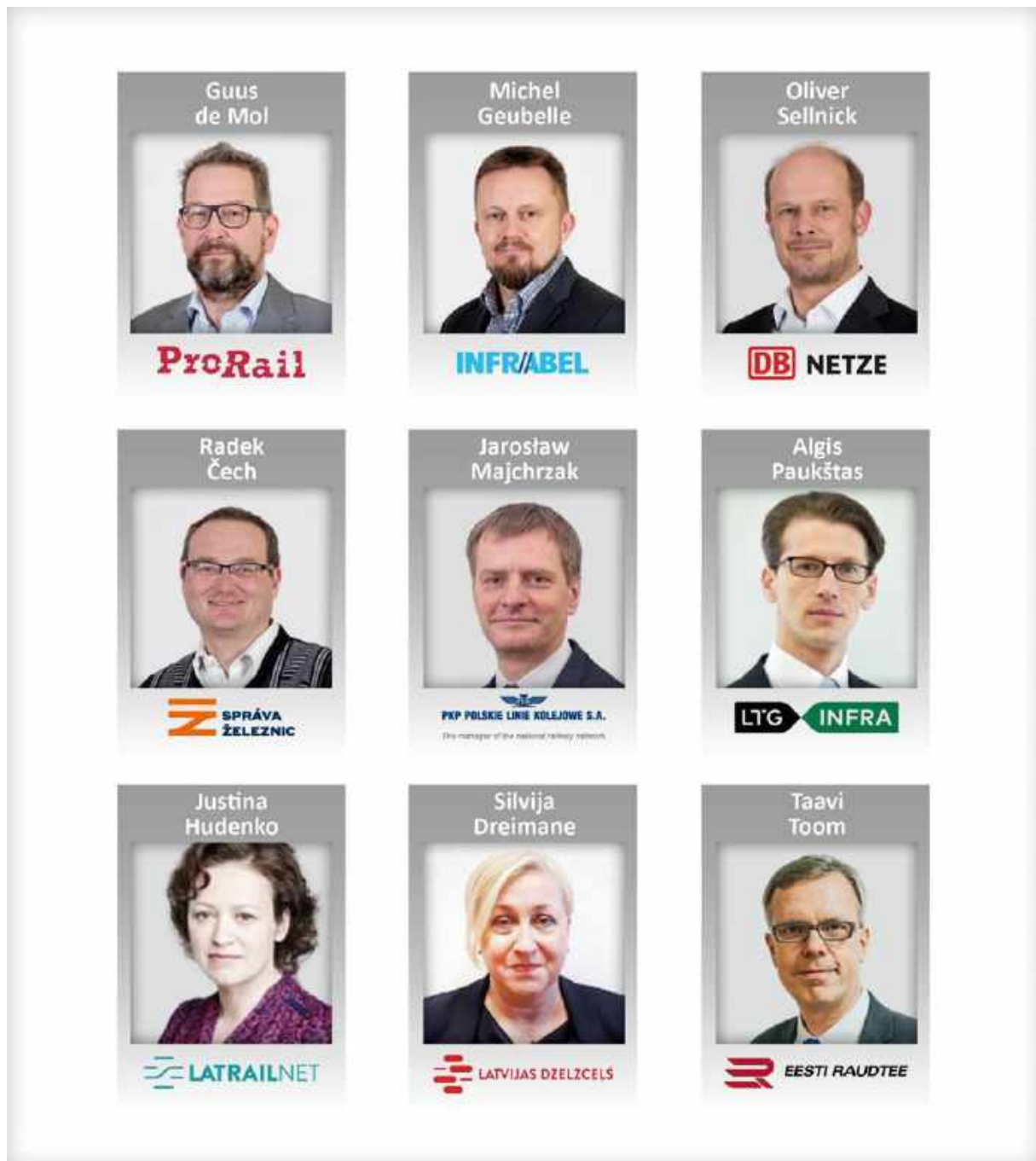
The NExBo met twice in 2021: on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June and on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. The NExBo focused on the Issues Logbook, the allocation rules, Timetabling and Capacity Redesign (TTR) and the revision of the ICM Handbook. Furthermore, the NExBo continued to encourage the exchange of good practices and initiatives from various corridors were presented.



*Railway bridge across the river Emajõgi near Tartu  
Photo: Eesti Raudtee AS*

## 1.2 MANAGEMENT BOARD

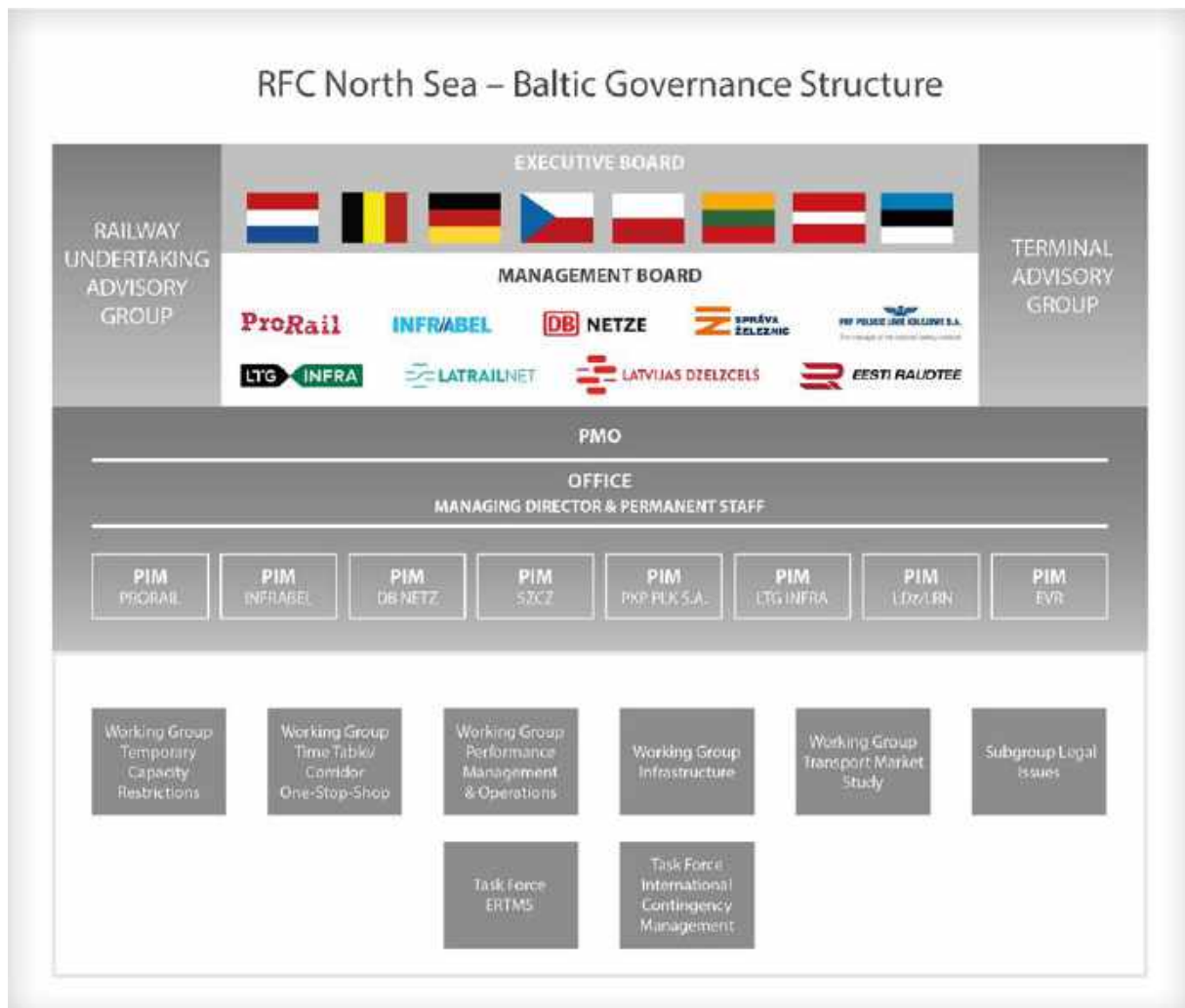
In 2021, the Management Board (MB) chaired by Mr. Oliver Sellnick from DB Netz AG held ten online meetings in total. The activities of the Management Board, carried out in 2021, are further described in chapters 2-4. Since 2016, the MB has the legal form of a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG). It is composed of the following Members representing the Infrastructure Managers and Allocation Body of the eight countries of the Corridor.



The MB is supported by the Project Implementation Managers (PIMs) and the RFC Office with its permanent staff and Managing Director, Weronika Karbowskiak, which form together the Project Management Office (PMO).

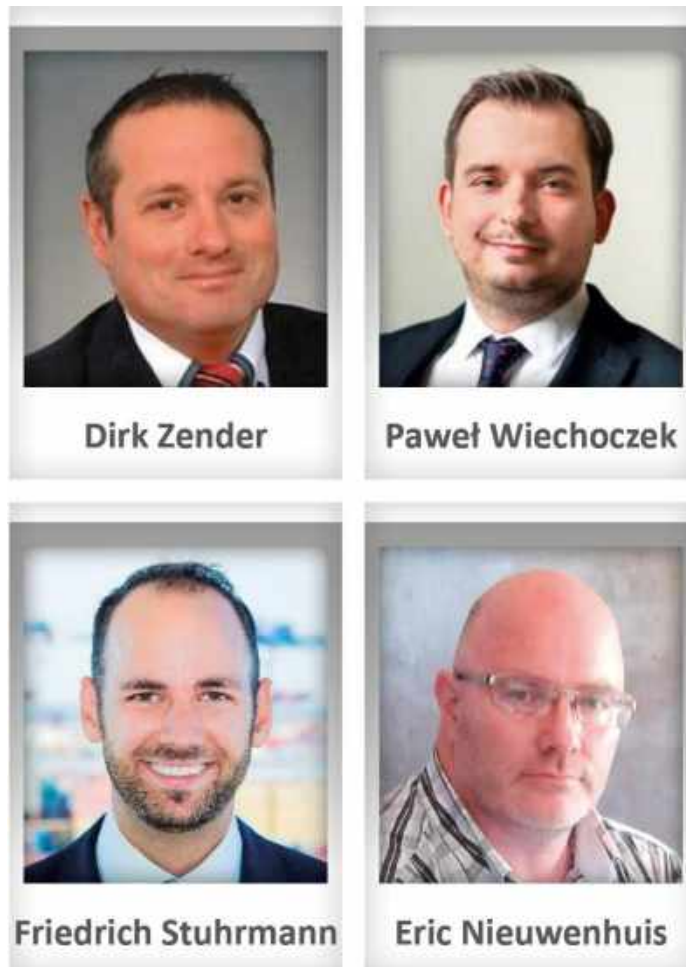


The PMO met in 10 online meetings in 2021. The structure of the PMO and the different working groups, subgroup and task forces is shown below.



### 1.3 ADVISORY GROUPS

Each Advisory Group (AG) 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.



Each AG is chaired by a Speaker, who acts as the contact person between the MB and the AG members. In 2021 the TAG was chaired by Mr. Friedrich Stuhmann from MSC Gate Bremerhaven GmbH & Co. KG. and the RAG by Mr. Dirk Zender from DB Cargo AG. In October 2021, elections took place during the RAG/TAG online meeting and Mr Eric Nieuwenhuis from Railterminal Rzepin was elected as new TAG Speaker and Mr. Paweł Wiechoczek from DB Cargo Polska as new RAG Speaker. The Management Board of RFC North Sea – Baltic would like to thank former and current Speakers for their commitment and cooperation.

Two Advisory Group online meetings were held in 2021 with representatives of Railway Undertakings, Terminals, Infrastructure Managers, Ministries, Regulatory Bodies, DG MOVE representatives and invited guests:

- 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2021
- 13<sup>th</sup> of October 2021.

Both meetings were attended by in total more than 40 participants each. During the first RAG/TAG meeting a presentation by the two new Members on RFC NS-B was given: Gundars Ābols representing Latvian Railways and Taavi Toom for Estonian Railways gave information about the infrastructure and traffic on the Latvian and Estonian networks. The participants were informed about the future extensions as the Management Board and Executive Board decided on 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 to officially extend the Corridor in January 2022 to the ports of Gent (Terneuzen), Zeebrugge and Medyka. During the first meeting the C-OSS Manager informed participants about the offer published in January 2021, pointing out improvements in the offer.



*Loading of piggybacks in the Rzepin rail terminal  
Photo: Railterminal Rzepin*

Continuing the discussion, during the second AGs meeting in October the C-OSS Manager presented the latest results of the PaP allocation including next steps to be taken. Participants were also presented with the state of play regarding the border crossing projects, focusing on the Quality Circle Operation programme in Bad Bentheim and the launch of this format for the Frankfurt Oder Oderbrücke – Rzepin border crossing. Additionally the International Contingency Management (ICM) on the Corridor was presented including information that the ICM rerouting scenarios would be updated in 2021 to include information for Latvia and Estonia.

## 2. MAIN ACTIVITIES

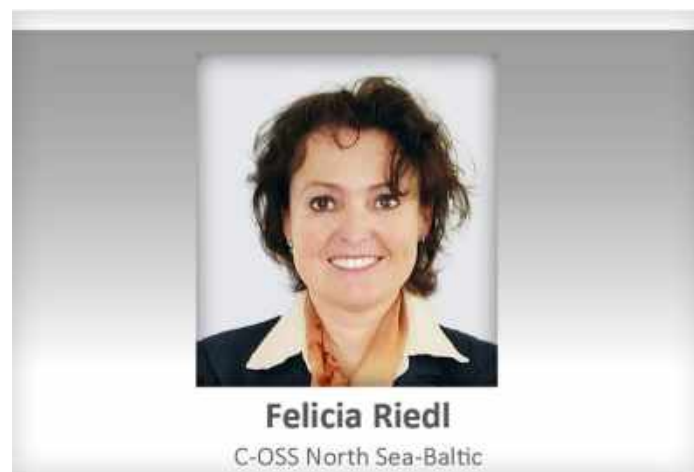
### 2.1 EXTENSION TO MEDYKA, ZEEBRUGGE AND GENT (TERNEUZEN)

At the end of 2020, the European Commission issued its Implementing Decision (EU) 2020/2168 on the compliance of the request of RFC NS-B to extend the Corridor to Medyka and to the Belgian and Dutch ports of Gent (Terneuzen) and Zeebrugge. Throughout 2021, the MB worked on the tasks to make those extensions operational. Main milestones achieved were the agreement on the Corridor routing, the update of the Implementation Plan and the preparation of the capacity offer that was published on 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2022. From this date on, the Corridor is officially extended to Medyka (Poland) and the ports of Gent and Zeebrugge (Belgium) as a principal line and to the port of Terneuzen (The Netherlands) as a connecting line.

More information can be found in the Implementation Plan which was updated and consulted with the RAG/TAG members and other stakeholders and approved by the ExBo (see also chapter 1.1.1).

### 2.2 CORRIDOR ONE-STOP-SHOP AND CORRIDOR OFFER

The Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) is the joint body of the IMs/Allocation Body (AB) involved in RFC NS-B and the single point of access providing the Corridor capacity products to all rail freight applicants. Felicia Riedl is the C-OSS manager on behalf of RFC NS-B.



RFC NS-B is highly committed to offer capacity products that comply with the market demand and the expectations of applicants regardless if they are RU or non-RU applicants.

To achieve the aim to be a customer and service oriented Corridor with fitting capacity products, the applicants are asked for direct and indirect feedback that supports the C-OSS Manager to shape the capacity portfolio constantly.

In order to intensify the close cooperation with applicants and improve the capacity offer, the C-OSS Manager participated in the:

- Online Forum Train Europe Conferences B and D

- RailNetEurope (RNE) working group for the further development of the Path Coordination System (PCS) with applicant’s involvement
- C-OSS Community working group.

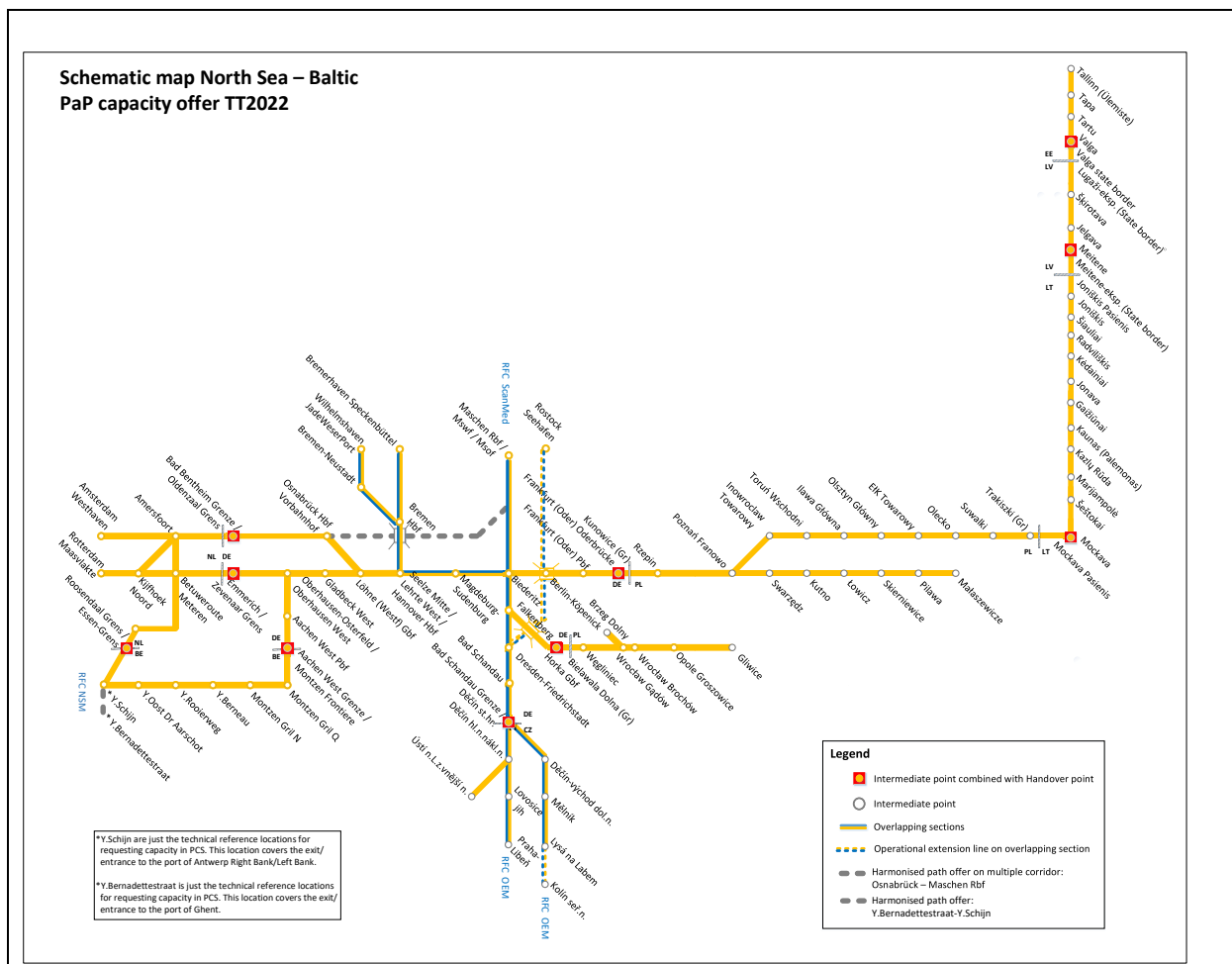
Besides that, the C-OSS participated in several RNE meetings to advice on international processes and working methods in cooperation with applicants and IMs.

Moreover, the C-OSS Manager was acting as the leader of the RFC NS-B working group TT/C-OSS. Based on the knowledge of national developments in rail freight transport and deep understanding of the market needs this working group is deriving essential insights for capacity-related issues and further developments of the Corridor.

Throughout customer events and individual meetings organized by the C-OSS, applicants were trained in using the Path Coordination System (PCS), the ordering system to request international paths in one step and in a single operation.

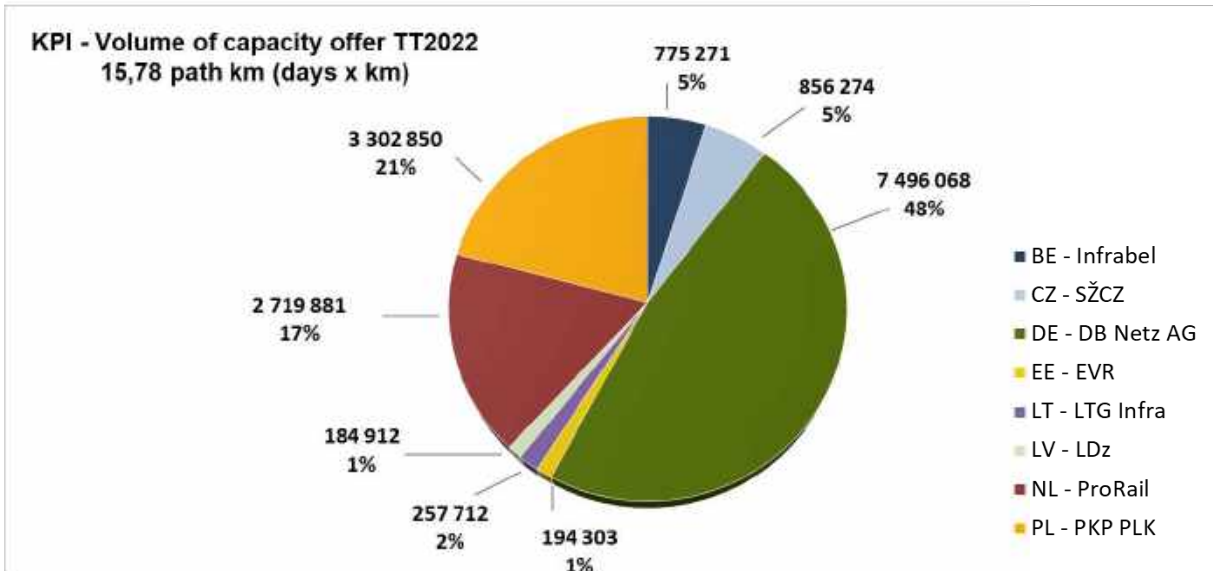
### 2.2.1 Pre-arranged Paths

The 2022 TimeTable catalogue of Pre-arranged Paths (PaPs) was published on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 2021 for the sections indicated in the schematic map below:





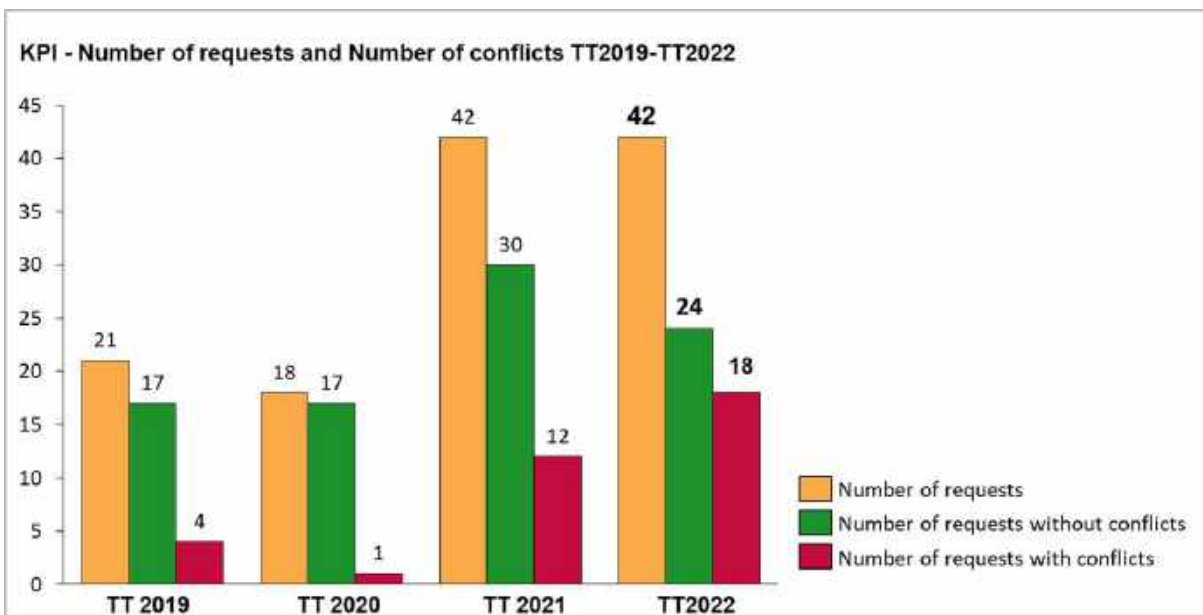
With the integration of the routes from Kaunas in Lithuania via Latvia to Tallinn (Ülemiste) in Estonia, the volume of the PaP capacity offer on RFC NS-B has consequently increased for Time Table (TT) 2022.



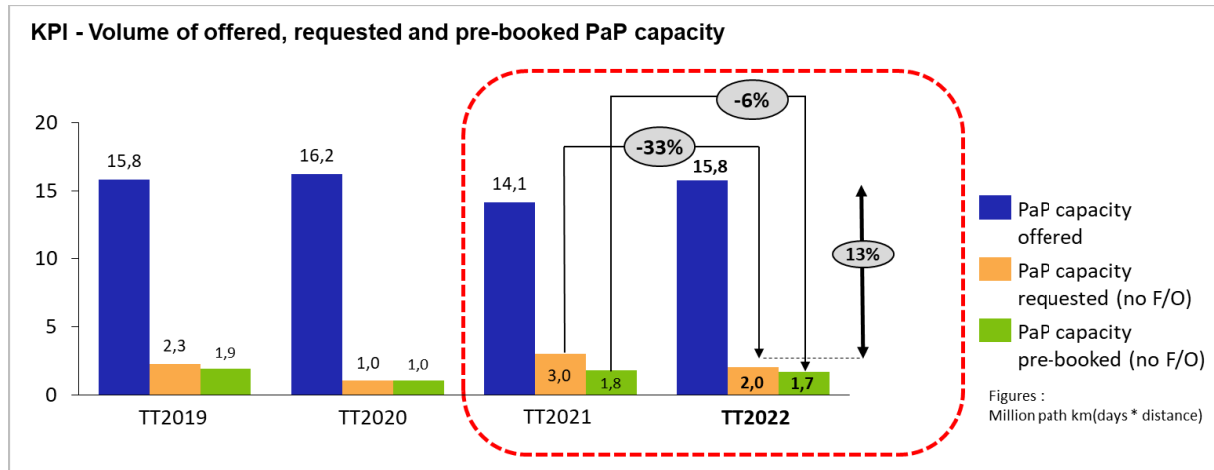
15,78 mio path km were constructed as PaPs and offered to the European applicants to request for their individual international traffics until the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 for TT2022.

**Allocation of PaPs for TT 2022**

Eighteen applicants were involved in requesting paths for international freight traffic along the Corridor. All requests were placed in time in PCS. The graph below presents the comparison of the number of requests, where the RFC NS-B C-OSS was in the lead and the number of conflicts, which could all be solved.



The graph below presents the comparison of the volume of PaP capacity offered, requested and pre-booked, where the C-OSS Manager of RFC NS-B was in the lead.



Looking at the results more in detail, the offered capacity increased by 12% due to the extended routes from Kaunas to Tallinn (Ülemiste), but the requested and pre-booked capacity decreased. Nonetheless, the PaP capacity sales rate of TT2022 can hardly be compared to the PaP sales rate of TT2021, as no PaPs were requested for the extended routes in Lithuania, Latvia & Estonia. All subsequent process steps were successfully completed, as the final offers were provided in time and the requests reached the active timetable to conclude the contracts for the train run starting with the timetable change on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

### 2.2.2 Reserve Capacity

Reserve Capacity (RC) on RFC NS-B is the capacity product for the running timetable to provide applicants with an internationally harmonized path offer for new traffic needs during the year. RC is offered as a guaranteed contingent of “capacity slots” for international freight paths per day, direction and section on RFC NS-B lines. For TT2021, RFC NS-B offered 4,5 million path kilometres and one slot per day and direction. The capacity contingent of RC is allocated on the “first come, first served” principle. The TT2021 catalogue for the RC slots was published on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October 2020. RC was not requested for TT2021.

### 2.2.3 Cooperation with other Corridors

The extension of RFC Orient/East-Med (RFC OEM) to Germany in 2018 as required by the amended Regulation (EU) 913/2010 led to long overlapping sections with RFC NS-B. 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 oversees the capacity offer north of Prague and Kolín, while the C-OSS of RFC OEM manages the capacity offer south of Prague and Kolín including the section Prague and Kolín. To enable this solution, an operational extension to Rostock and Kolín has been implemented. Besides that, PaP offers in cooperation with RFC Rhine-Alpine, North Sea – Mediterranean and Scan-Med have been harmonized jointly.

### 2.3 USER SATISFACTION SURVEY

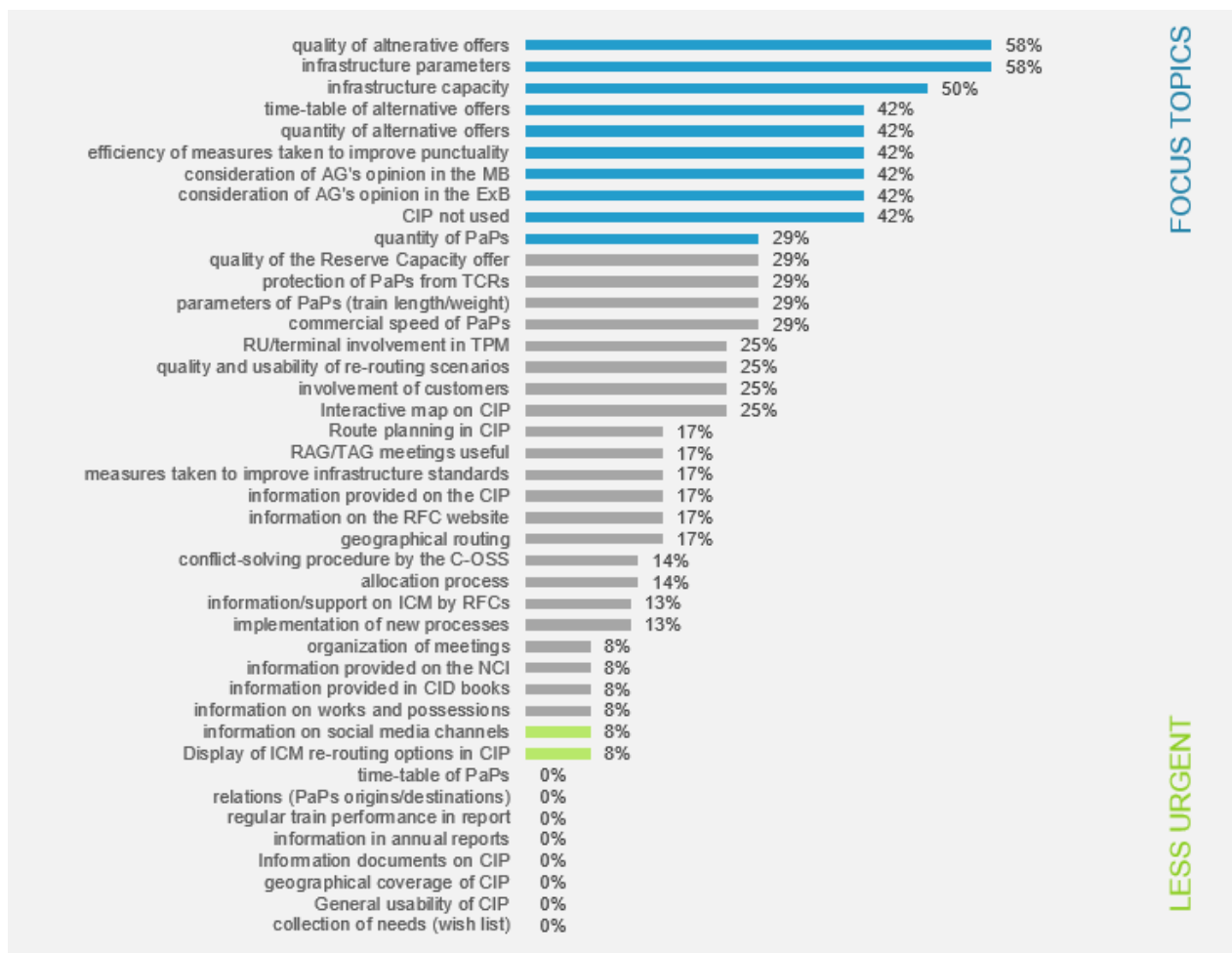
In 2021, for the sixth time in a row, the Corridor conducted a User Satisfaction Survey (USS) under the RailNetEurope umbrella. Based on the feedback given in the past years by the participants, the survey was improved and questions were adapted to focus on concrete proposals for improvement. Out of 43 invitations sent by and on behalf of RFC NS-B, 12 respondents took part in the survey. The MB appreciates all the efforts participants put into completing the survey.



*The train „Mazovia”, DB Cargo Polska  
Photo: Bartłomiej Banaszak*

The highest appreciation from the customers in 2021 was earned again by the C-OSS Manager performance on: collection of needs (wish list), relations (PaPs origins/destinations) and timetable of PaPs. CIP, the development of which RFC NS-B actively participates in since a few years, got also high rates in terms of general usability, geographical coverage and information documents in CIP. USS 2021 participants also rated high the regular train performance in reports and information in the annual report.

The topics RFC NS-B should put more focus on were quality, quantity and timetable of alternative offers during TCRs, and infrastructure parameters and capacity. In 2021 RFC NS-B continued to work on providing stability and reliability in the capacity offer in case of TCRs in the PaP offer, but the efforts will continue. Moreover in order to improve the consideration of AG's opinions in the ExBo and MB, the MB proposed closer cooperation with AGs to the ExBo and among other improvements such as workshops for customers, encouraged RAG and TAG Speakers to participate in the ExBo meetings during dedicated slots as was the case already for several years for the MB meetings. Additionally the results of the USS 2021 also showed higher rates for support on ICM which was caused by actions taken by the RFC which are described in the dedicated subchapter 2.5 International Contingency Management.



### Summary of the USS 2021 – wish for improvement

## 2.4 CORRIDOR PERFORMANCE

According to Article 19 (2) of the Regulation the MB 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 2021, the Performance Report of RFC NS-B for the year 2020 was published on the Corridor's website: <http://rfc8.eu/customer/corridor-performance/>.

The results for the year 2021 will be published in the first half of 2022, but some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are already included here. Basis is the commonly agreed KPIs as described in the RNE KPI Guidelines, where the KPIs are divided in 3 categories: Operations, Capacity Management and Market Development.

### Operations

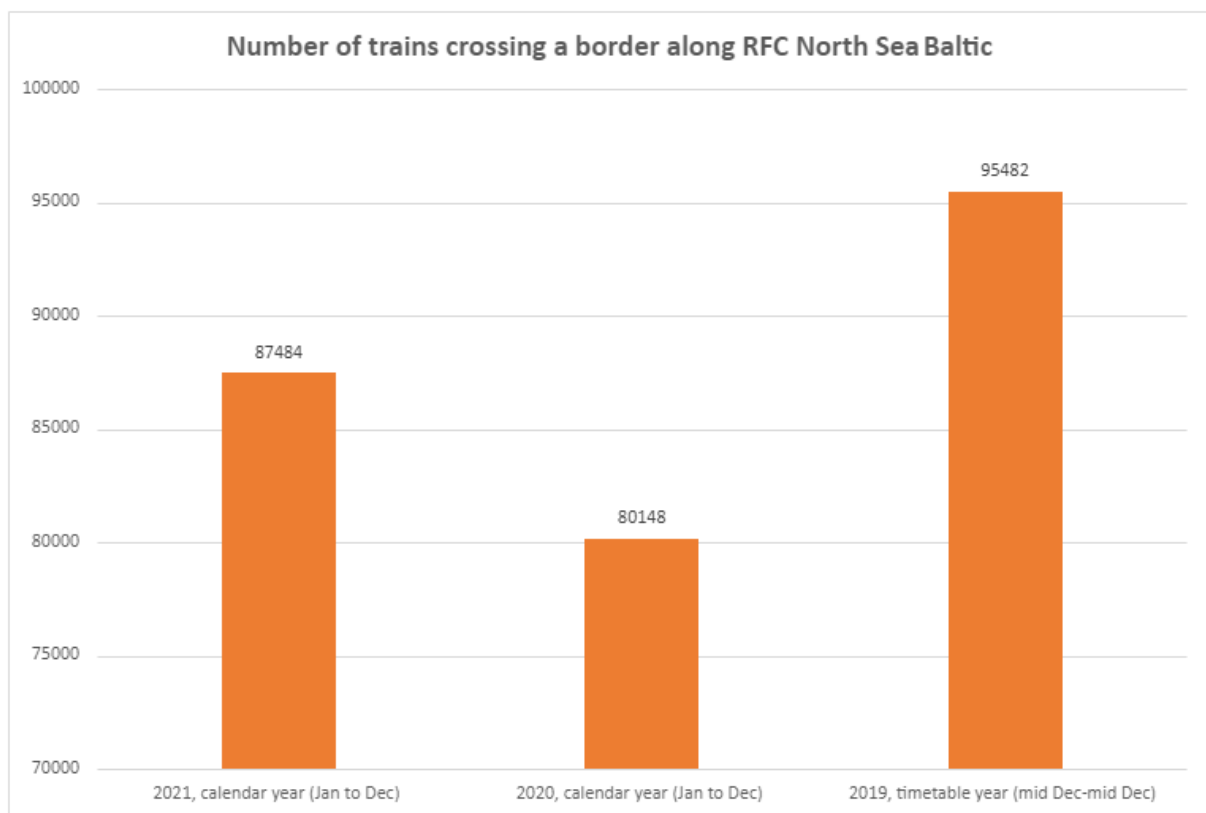
Under this category, two KPIs are published here:

- 1) Number of trains crossing a border along the RFC
- 2) Punctuality (at origin / destination).

The KPI “Number of trains crossing a border along the RFC” as shown in the graph below displays the number of all international trains running on RFC North Sea–Baltic infrastructure, crossing at least one border on the Corridor.

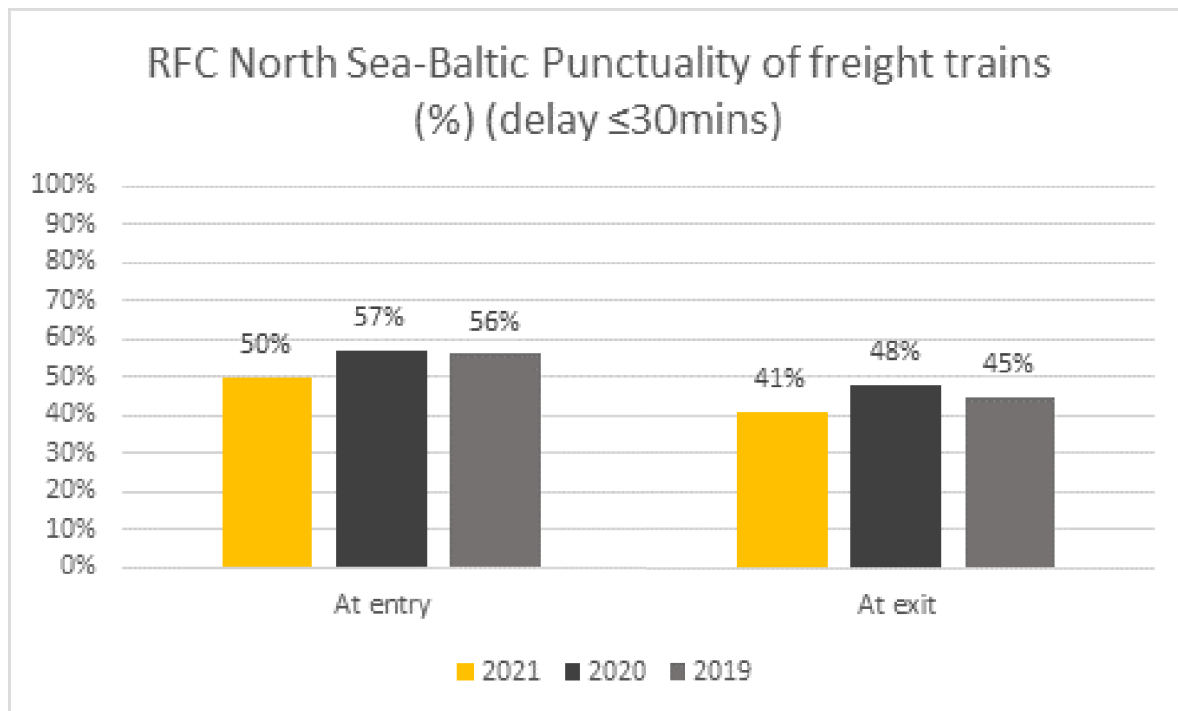
The total amount of trains for 2021 was 87.484.

There is an increase in the number of trains of 9.15% compared to 2020. Despite signs of a post-pandemic recovery the total number of trains in 2021 was also impacted by extreme weather conditions such as heavy snowfall in February and enormous rainfall leading to floods in July 2021. Trade and supply chain disruptions led amongst other things to a decrease of train runs in the automotive business due to the shortage of microchips.



*\* For 2021 the figures no longer include trains from Venlo-Kaldenkirchen as these no longer belong to RFC North Sea-Baltic*

*\*\*For 2021, trains from Estonia and Latvia are not included as these members are not yet using Train Information System (TIS). This applies also for Lithuania since the start of the corridor.*



The second KPI as shown in the graph above 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 the Train Information System. Punctuality for 2021 at entry is 50% and at exit 41%.

After an improvement in 2020, the punctuality figures dropped again in 2021, caused mainly by works, strikes and weather conditions. More detailed information regarding the delay reasons specifically on each IM's network can be found here below in "General comments on punctuality".

RFC NS-B also publishes [Monthly Punctuality Reports](#) on the Corridor's website where information on the punctuality development is provided for a period of 12 months accompanied by the amount of delay minutes and distribution of delays. These reports are the basis for possible bilateral discussions with the customers on the measures needed for the improvement of the performance.

### General comments on punctuality

#### The Netherlands

In 2021 during the winter there were problems with snow and ice on the entire ProRail network, but this was extreme on the Rotterdam Harbour line. This situation began on February 7 and on February 12 most problems were solved. A lot of freight trains were cancelled or were running with a huge amount of delay.

During the year there were some longer periods of total closure of the German railway between Emmerich and Oberhausen. During these periods freight trains from and to Germany had to run via the border stations Oldenzaal (Bentheim route) and Venlo (Brabantroute). These are both routes with

not only freight traffic but also with heavy passenger traffic. Punctuality of the freight trains running via these routes is always lower as on the dedicated freight train route Betuweroute.

During the year there were also some infrastructural disruptions on the Rotterdam Harbour line and the Betuweroute affecting the punctuality on RFC North Sea-Baltic

### **Belgium**

Due to the exceptional weather in July (heavy rainfall between 13th and 15th), causing floods and damages which triggered an ICM case, there were high delays and many cancellations. Because of the cancellations this was not reflected in the top 10 causes for delay on the network. The problem was aggravated by an ICM case in France on the artery Nord-Est.

The biggest causes of delay on the network were exceptional weather, technical breakdowns, train driver mistake, incidents involving a person/car and delays from the neighbouring IM causing a total delay of 34813 minutes for freight traffic.

- There were two incidents where exceptional weather conditions led to a delay for freight traffic. The total number accrued was 12.288, caused by sudden winter weather and a tree on the tracks.
- Technical breakdowns led to 9.465 minutes of delay in two instances, there was a malfunctioning of the foam installation in the Antigoon tunnel and the breakdown of a switch.
- Mistake by a train driver was responsible for 3.122 delay to the freight traffic
- There were 3 instances where an incident involving a person/car was the cause of delay, which added up to 6.291 minutes of delay for freight in total.
- In two instances the delay from the neighbouring IM was responsible for a total of 3.647 minutes of delay for freight traffic.

### **Germany**

Challenging events in Germany in 2021 were the snowstorm in February, the flood catastrophe in July and the strikes in August and September. Also, the ongoing pandemic had effects on the rail traffic. Due to subsidies of the German government against the effects of the pandemic in May the number of express train paths increased drastically. Major disruptions regarding RFC North Sea-Baltic were ICM cases in the Elbe valley in July due to storm and in Recklinghausen due to a damaged bridge in November and December.

### **Czech Republic**

The punctuality in 2021 was influenced by capacity restrictions as consequences of the flood in July and August 2021 and TCRs due to reconstruction works on the cross-border line during the year.

The main delay reason is formation of trains by Railway undertakings (late Train ready message at origin - handover at origin, loading problems, late loading). The other not so significant reasons, which affect punctuality on the Corridor are capacity restrictions due to maintenance works and constructions, bad weather conditions, infrastructure failures and rolling stock problems.

### **Poland**

There were no specific delays concerning the freight traffic in 2021 on the railway lines of RFC NS-B. The average punctuality of freight trains was at the same level as in previous years. The main delay reasons for international freight traffic at PKP PLK S.A network were related to occupancy of station tracks, rolling stock transfer to another train, rolling stock failure and late notification of readiness for

departure. PKP PLK S.A. as an infrastructure manager was responsible for rather minor delays, mainly related to emergency closure of route or station tracks.

### **Lithuania**

Overall, the punctuality of the traffic has decreased, and the time of delay has increased. Most of these changes can be attributed to extreme weather situations – throughout the summer there have been upwards of 15 days when the weather surpassed 30 degrees (Celsius) that caused the deformation of the tracks and resulted in slower speeds and there have been a few storms that affected punctuality or in some cases the cancellation of some trains.

Talking about the borders – Turmantas and Kurčums had the least activity and had quite low punctuality because of the works that are carried out. Joniškis – Meitenė usually had two trains a day and had very high punctuality. Trakiszki and Mockava had the highest number of trains throughout the year concerning the Lithuanian borders. There may have been some issues with the performance throughout the summer period.

### **Latvia**

Overall, the punctuality is good as most of the sections on the Latvian railways have good capacity for freight trains. Some sections on the network have the trains running on actual time (dispatchers command) rather than on the planned timetable. This allows them to run without delay on the actual plan. Lugazi-Valga has few delays per month and these are mainly due to locomotive malfunction and in December there was heavy snowfall. At Joniškis – Meitenė there is not a great volume of traffic, with only 2 or 3 trains a day and the trains run on ad-hoc basis. Also, this section is serviced by Latvian and Lithuanian locomotives in turn. Turmantas - Kurčums rarely have freight trains running on this section and mainly when there are works being done on the Lithuanian railway. In total there are 17 trains in 2021 which do arrive with delays on the scheduled plan due to the re-routing.

### **Estonia**

The biggest cause of delay on the Valga-Lugazi border was due to breakdowns of vehicles. The second major reason for delays was problems with control devices. Also, very wintery weather conditions in the end of 2021 caused delays in both freight and passenger train traffic. Freight trains can be late because the passenger trains always have priority in the traffic. Despite the issues mentioned the overall number of late trains is less than 10% and in general the punctuality at the Valga-Lugazi border is very good.

## **2.5 INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT**

RFC NS-B updated the re-routing scenarios to include information about the networks of Latvia and Estonia and adopted changes resulting from the update of the ICM Handbook in 2021.

During the year, several ICM cases were declared on the Corridor.

### **Germany and Czech Republic**

Due to heavy rainfalls during the weekend of 17/18th of July 2021 a local flooding affected the rail section between Děčín and Bad Schandau. As a result a bridge on the Czech section was damaged. Additionally, on the German side one track had been flooded. Due to the cumulative effects on international traffic, SZCZ qualified the impact as an international disruption as defined in the ICM Handbook. The Corridor initiated an international coordination conference informing that passenger trains could continue to run on one track with speed restrictions but for freight traffic several



re-routing options were indicated. The operations continued to be restricted to one track until August 2021.

### Germany

Due to a damaged bridge in Recklinghausen there were restrictions with international implications for rail freight transport on the DB Netz network starting on 19th of November 2021. The damaged bridge between Recklinghausen Blumenthal and Recklinghausen Ost will be repaired by 28 February 2022. Until that time, trains have to be diverted to other routes in the network timetable, and several minor construction works had to be cancelled.

### Belgium

Extreme rainfall during several days forced Infrabel on the 15th of July 2021 to interrupt the traffic on large parts of the network in Wallonia for safety reasons. The resulting floods led to huge damages to the railway infrastructure, which triggered an ICM case on the next day.

Given the vast scope of the damages (25 lines were concerned) and the simultaneous impact on the 3 rail freight corridors running through Belgium, it was decided that the coordination of this incident would be led by Infrabel's account management team. For several weeks regular teleconference were held among IMs and between IM and RUs to inform them about the operational capacity in the flooded region and to give updates on the planning for the gradual re-opening of the network. Additional stakeholders were informed via the rail freight corridors, mainly RFC North Sea – Mediterranean, the most heavily impacted corridor (both principal line and diversionary line blocked).



*Damaged bridge during the floods in Belgium in July 2021  
Photo: Infrabel – Benjamin Brolet*

The impact on RFC Rhine-Alpine and RFC NS-B was rather limited since the Montzenroute (L 24) going to the German border could already be taken into service again on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. The concerned lines on RFC North Sea – Med were partly open again on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August (Athus – Meuse). Less than 6

weeks after the damaging floods only 3 sections were still to be restored. All lines of the corridor were fully operational again on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2021.



*Electrification works on the line between Mol and Hamont  
Photo: Infrabel – Benjamin Brolet*

## 2.6 CROSS BORDER PROJECTS

RFC NS-B continued work on cross-border improvements in the Quality Circle Operation format for the Bad Bentheim border, implementing in 2021 several measures. Task force members meet regularly every month to improve the communication at the border and monitor the implementation of the check-in process of the advance train information to the dispatcher at Bad Bentheim station. This process has been consulted with all stakeholders involved.

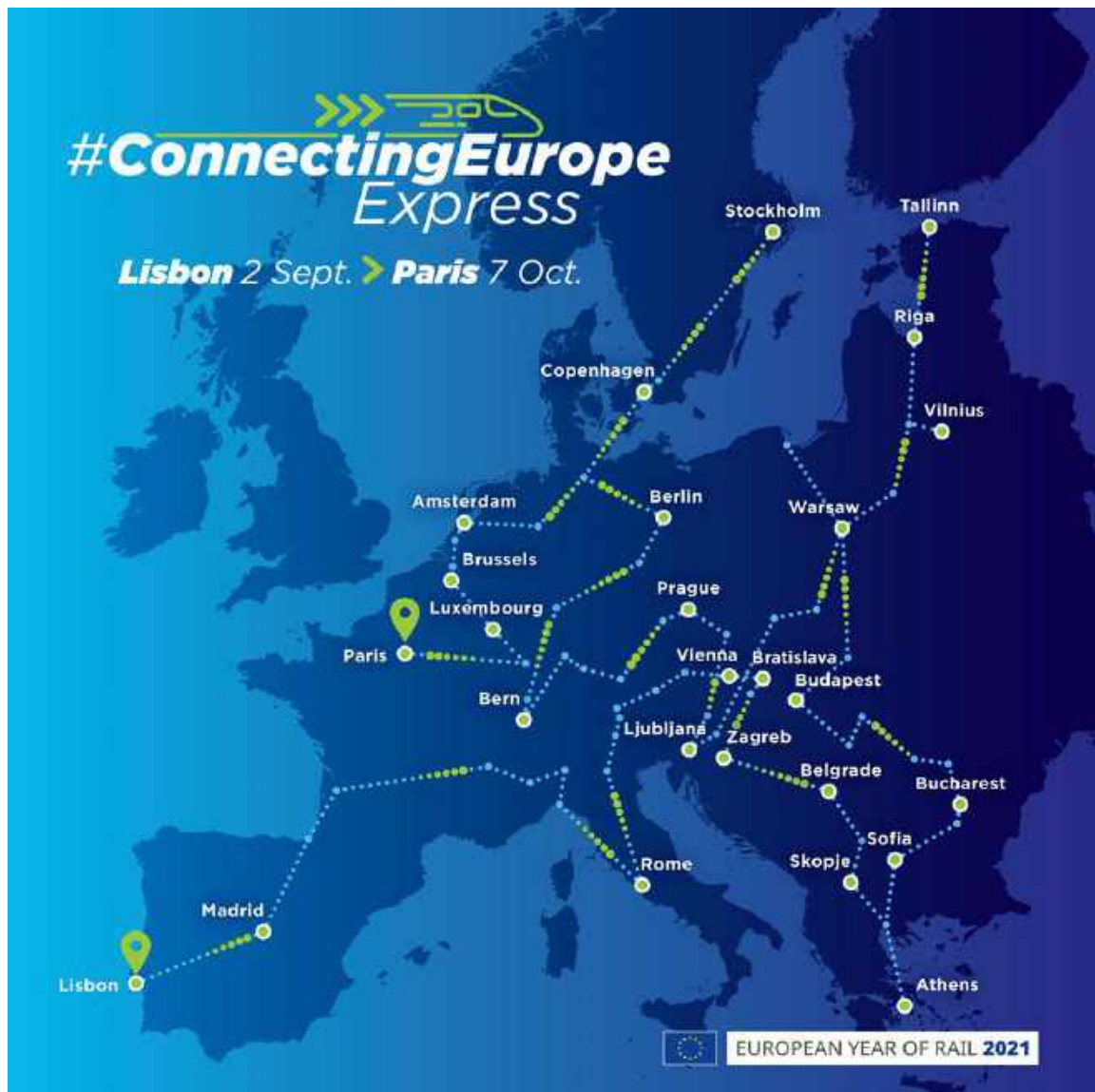
Upon the RUs request the Quality Circle Operation Frankfurt Oder Oderbrücke programme has been launched with the first workshop with customers organized on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Customers were invited to share issues identified in advance or during the workshop, which will be further worked on in 2022.

## 2.7 EVENTS

### 2.7.1 European Year of Rail

2021 was declared the European Year of Rail by the European Commission. A variety of activities put rail in the spotlight throughout 2021 across Europe in order to encourage the use of rail by passengers and freight as contribution to the EU Green Deal goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2050.

As part of the initiative, the Connecting Europe Express was launched. A special EU train criss-crossed the continent from 2<sup>nd</sup> of September to 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, stopping in over 100 cities in 26 countries, completing 20 000 kilometres of journey, passing through 33 border crossings. The project was accomplished as a result of the cooperation between 40 partners.



RFC NS-B, in cooperation with the RFC Network and RNE, participated in the Connecting Europe Express via a RFC Network promotional video that was shown on board of the train and in the RFC Network RNE sessions (see 4.2.1). Moreover on September 21 a Connecting Europe Baltic Express for the first time departed on the route Tallinn - Tartu - Riga – Vilnius – Kaunas. Special events were organized in Tallinn, Tartu, Sigulda, Vilnius and Kaunas.

### 3. EUROPEAN FUNDING

RFC NS-B has been benefiting from European co-financing for several years. The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) project 2014-EU-TM-0217-S for the period 2015-2020, ended in December 2020. In 2021, the EEIG settled the project submitting the Final Report to the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).

At the end of 2021, the invitation was published for the CEF II programme – Technical Assistance for the years 2021-2024 for which the RFC NS-B applied.

#### 4. COOPERATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

##### 4.1 RAILNETEUROPE

RFC NS-B is an associate member of RNE and continued to cooperate closely with other RFCs in view of the harmonization and development of services under the RNE umbrella. RFC NS-B applies RNE services and guidelines as well as the RNE IT tools: PCS, TIS, CIP and Charging Information System (CIS).

In 2021, RFC NS-B representatives participated in two RNE General Assembly meetings and two RFC/RNE High Level Meetings. RFC NS-B was also actively engaged in a number of RNE initiatives:

- Further harmonisation and digitalization of the Customer Information Document (CID);
- Further development of PCS;
- Improvement of traffic and train performance management;
- Participation and coordination of the USS;
- Further development of CIP and the CIP strategy;
- Development and improvement of the NCI;
- Participation in the RNE/RFC KPI Coordination Working Group (WG);
- Update of the International Contingency Management Handbook.

##### 4.1.1 Customer Information Platform

The Customer Information Platform (CIP) is an interactive, Internet-based tool, which provides customers and users of the Corridor with information on railway infrastructure in 26 European countries, covering the complete network of all 11 RFCs. RFC Rhine-Danube implemented CIP in the first semester of 2021. As in previous years RFC NS-B together with other RFCs under coordination of RNE was working on the development of the existing and new functionalities in CIP. Among others, update on converting the additional line properties into standard ones, simplification of the common document structure, enhanced display of ICM re-routing options developments were finalized in CIP. The information of the new members, that joined the RFC NS-B in 2020 was fully included in CIP in 2021, such as the data of all Latvian terminals by Latvijas dzelzceļš. In 2021 the CIP User Satisfaction Survey was conducted online again; 36 respondents participated in the survey. The results will enable RNE along with the RFCs to further improve CIP. Furthermore, the CIP user interface has been reviewed and improved in the first quarter of 2021. Additionally a promotion campaign featuring a series of short videos was developed and is available on the [RNE CIP information subpage](#) and [RFC Network LinkedIn account](#).

##### 4.1.2 Network and Corridor Information Platform (NCI)

In 2021 the work continued on the [Network and Corridor Information \(NCI\) Platform](#), which is a digital solution to provide information on Network Statements and Corridor Information Documents. Further improvements of the platform are foreseen in 2022.

#### 4.2 RFC 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. In 2021 eleven

RFC Network online meetings were organized in which RFC North Sea-Baltic participated. Among the topics which RFCs worked on were the revision of the ICM Handbook – re-routing scenarios and ICM Functionality in the TIS Incident Management Tool, planned revision of the Regulation, further harmonization of common activities and exchange on best practices. In 2021, the RFC Network continued to work on joint RFC Network projects to be performed in the coming years with the support of EU funding. RFC NS-B representatives have been involved in the elaboration of several projects, among others the ILEA project focusing on the landbridge to Asia. In cooperation with other involved Corridors, RFC NS-B will work in 2022 on further development of the projects and its maturity for EU funding. Additionally in 2021 the RFC Network launched the joint [RFC Network LinkedIn account](#) and [RFC Network YouTube channel](#).

#### 4.2.1 RFC Network RNE sessions 2021

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

- 1<sup>st</sup> Session 18<sup>th</sup> of June: Cross-border
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Session 16<sup>th</sup> of September: International Contingency Management
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Session 14<sup>th</sup> October: Time-Table Redesign

All sessions were held via MS Teams in an interactive way giving participants the possibility to ask questions and participate in discussions. There was a great interest in these sessions in 2021, therefore the RFC Network decided to continue and organize these sessions also in 2022. All sessions are available on [RFC Network YouTube channel](#).

#### 4.3 DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

The European Commission organises the Single European Railway Area Committee (SERAC) Working Group on Rail Freight Corridors, which aims at facilitating exchange of views with all ministries, infrastructure managers and other stakeholders involved in all RFCs. In 2021 only one online meeting took place on 28<sup>th</sup> of October due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The following topics were addressed during the meeting:

- Capacity for cross-border rail freight
- International contingency management
- EU co-financing for rail freight under CEF II.

Additionally an update from DG MOVE about the evaluation and revision of Regulation (EU) 913/2010 was provided to the participants, after the evaluation report had been published on the 2nd of June 2021.

#### 4.4 NORTH SEA-BALTIC CORE NETWORK CORRIDOR

RFC North Sea-Baltic continued to work with its corresponding North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridor (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.

Two online meetings of the North Sea-Baltic CNC Forum took place on 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 and 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2021. The main subjects discussed were the TEN-T CNC study, the report on recent Working Groups of the North Sea-Baltic CNC Corridor Forum, 5G Corridors, Rail Baltica, EU funding

opportunities in 2021-2027 and reporting on the Connecting Europe Facility Grant Agreements. During the second meeting Ms Catherine Trautmann, CNC Coordinator, outlined the priorities of the new 5<sup>th</sup> Work Plan and presented her activities as a Coordinator during the year.

With the publication of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 establishing the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for the period 2021-2027 on 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, the North Sea-Baltic Core Network Corridor was officially extended to Sweden.



*The train „Silesia“ during maneuvers at the Zabrze Biskupice station, DB Cargo Polska  
Photo: Oliver Lang*

#### **4.4.1 Rail Baltica project implementation**

Rail Baltica is a European Flagship Infrastructure project of common interest with the goal of advancing the integration of the Baltic States into the Trans-European Transport Network via a new fully electrified, ERTMS-equipped 1435mm gauge double-track fast conventional railway line and related infrastructure. Rail Baltica is a major missing link on the North Sea – Baltic Core Network Corridor and is expected to play a crucial role in ensuring the functioning of this corridor with an interoperable and efficient connection of the Baltic States with Poland and on to Finland, as well as multimodal connections between sea, rail and road transport.

In 2021, the Rail Baltica project has come closer to the completion of the design phase and continued to advance into the construction phase:

- construction works were ongoing and further tenders for large-scale construction works were launched in all three Baltic States;
- design of local facilities (stations, terminals, depots) have steadily progressed;
- preparatory works for regional stations have started in all three Baltic States;

- commercial freight traffic has started on the Rail Baltica corridor Lithuanian section;
- implementation of a unified and coordinated Rail Baltica infrastructure management model has commenced.

#### **4.5 REGULATORY BODIES**

The annual meeting with the Regulatory Bodies (RB) of the Corridor took place online on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October. During this meeting, the C-OSS Manager provided information about the results of the allocation process for TT2022 as well as the preparation of the capacity offer for TT2023. The RBs were informed about the handling process of the capacity wish list and analysis of the offer for TT 2022. RFC NS-B provided information regarding the KPIs TT 2022, User Satisfactory Survey, as well as border crossing projects on the Corridor. Additionally feedback from RBs on issues related to capacity and non-discrimination on RFC NS-B were provided and the topic of terminal connections via PaPs was presented by the Regulatory Body of the Czech Republic.

### **5. OUTLOOK 2022**

#### **5.1 REVISION OF THE REGULATION 913/2010**

On 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 the Commission published its proposal to revise the TEN-T Guidelines, as part of the [‘efficient and green mobility package’](#).

This proposal includes already a first step in the Revision of the Regulation 913/2010. On top of that the proposal foresees the merge of the 9 CNC and the 11 RFCs into 9 European Transport Corridors. The impact of this on the RFC NS-B will be analysed as well as the second step of the revision of the RFC Regulation foreseen in 2022.

#### **5.2 INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT SIMULATION**

According to the new procedures included in the revised ICM Handbook a simulation is planned for 2022. First simulation will focus on the internal Infrastructure Managers procedure and the usage of the ICM tool; next simulations may be planned with customers’ participation. The Corridor will also perform an analysis of the application of the allocation principles described in the Handbook upon the request of the NExBo.

