

# ANNUAL REPORT

RFC AMBER  
2020

## TIMELINE 2020

13 January	Publication of PaP Catalogue for TT 2020/2021
13 January	Publication of CID Books for TT 2020/2021
27 February	14th Management Board meeting in Bratislava
27 March	Launching of e-Newsletter
4 June	15th Management Board meeting (online)
4 June	Adoption of new version of the Internal Rules and Procedures
1 July	Publication of the RFC Amber International Contingency Management Plan
6 July	Publication of the first RFC AMBER Annual Report for 2019
21 September	Launching of the User Satisfaction Survey
1 October	16th Management Board meeting (online)
1 October	Re-election of the: MB Chair, MB Vice-Chair, Managing Director C-OSS and Secretariat
13 October	Publication of Reserve Capacity Catalogue for TT 2020/2021
7 December	17th Management Board meeting (online)
18 December	Finalisation and approval of the Bottleneck Study

**DEAR READER,**

the year 2020 was a year which posed unprecedented challenges – on our personal lives, our work and naturally also the developments in our corridor and its governance. The COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to adapt at very short notice to a new, unforeseen and so far unexperienced situation. From February 2020 on, we had to cancel practically all physical meetings. All exchange, both internally between Members as well as with our customers and stakeholders and colleagues in other RFCs, had to rely for the rest of the year entirely on digital tools. The introduction of the RFC Amber E-Newsletter in March 2020 came well at hand in order to keep our customers and stakeholders informed about key developments. Luckily none of the staff working in RFC Amber fell victim for the pandemic, but it goes without saying that the new situation required a high level of flexibility and also extra efforts by all staff working in RFC Amber.

At the same time, we can note positively that rail freight showed a high level of resilience even under the adverse conditions of the pandemic. The strong efforts by all parties involved kept the wheels rolling and trains moving. Even along RFC Amber freight trains continued to cross borders relatively smoothly, in stark contrast to problems faced by other modes. However, we also need to be aware of, that the COVID-19 pandemic put (and continues to put) a strong economic burden on rail freight. This underlines the importance of measures improving the conditions for efficient and competitive rail freight operations. The further development of the Rail Freight Corridors, including RFC Amber, must be an important element of this.

The work of RFC Amber focused, besides maintaining the “everyday business”, such as the work of our C-OSS and in the Working Groups, on finalising key tasks under the Programme Support Action for RFC Amber. Here, the finalisation and publication of the RFC Amber Bottleneck Study deserves to be specially highlighted. This study gives a comprehensive and systematic view and analysis of the state of our corridor, identifying important issues to be tackled in our continued work; it also provides input to the national planning processes for development of the rail infrastructure. When it comes to capacity offer of RFC Amber, a certain extension of extra-long train paths deserves attention.

In 2020, the discussion and preparation of potential new, future projects started, aiming at further developing our corridor and better exploiting its market potential. This process is characterized by a close cooperation among Rail Freight Corridors in the RFC Network. RFC Amber was among the initiators of two projects, addressing market prospects in Euro-Asian traffic and exploiting potentials of technical solutions for digitalization and automation. Also, to be emphasized is, that the preparation of projects takes into account input provided by the RFC Amber RAG-TAG, demonstrating our aim to enhance customer orientation.

We would like to sincerely thank all persons working in our corridor for their dedication and our RAG-TAG and all other stakeholders for their continued commitment to RFC Amber, in spite of the exceptional and difficult circumstances in 2020. With the positive spirit of cooperation in our corridor and the experiences gathered we are laying a strong basis for the future.

We wish all of you a pleasant reading of this Annual Report.



**Dr. Gerhard Troche**  
Managing Director



**Boris Živec**  
Chair of the Executive Board



**Andrea Mosóczy**  
Chair of the Management Board

**DEAR COLLEAGUES,**

2020 was an exceptional year for all of us; we have faced serious challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this situation, we had to learn very fast how the railway operation is working from partly home office and with social distance. To keep the wheels running we all found new working methods, new ways of cooperation among employees, customers, and Railway Undertakings. Because the COVID-19 caused economical crisis, all of us were fighting with financial problems but we kept our employees because we believe in a positive future. In 2020, the International Contingency Management (ICM) went live on RFC Amber what unfortunately we could not try it in practice because of some disruptions. Fortunately, the prompt information provided by the corridor helped the Railway Undertakings to adapt their operations.

An important and welcomed achievement of RFC Amber was the Bottleneck Study, finalized at the end of 2020. RAG-TAG Members have contributed to the content and appreciated the close and constructive exchange with the Management Board and the consultants. The study contains a very thorough and valuable analysis of challenges to overcome. It indicates measures to be considered for improving both processes and infrastructure. As RAG-TAG we hope that the conclusions and recommendations of the Bottleneck Study will be taken into account in future activities and projects of the corridor. Key expectations by corridor users include a swift implementation of the TEN-T standards, in particular 740 m train length. To ensure continuity along the corridor, this must be achieved even on certain lines of the corridor currently not belonging to Core Network.

Naturally, the pandemic hindered any physical RAG-TAG-meetings in 2020 and communication had to rely on a digital exchange. We are now seeing the end of the pandemic coming closer. The RAG-TAG Members are looking forward to resuming the exchange unhampered by restrictions to develop RFC Amber; we remain available to contribute with our views and expertise.



**András Nyíri**  
RAG-TAG Spokesperson

*Working together for improving the conditions for growing, efficient, competitive, sustainable and reliable rail freight.*







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## INTRODUCTION

### ABOUT US

Rail Freight Corridor Amber is a cooperation of five railway Infrastructure Managers: SŽ-I (Slovenia), GYSEV and MÁV (Hungary), ŽSR (Slovakia) and PLK (Poland) and the Hungarian Rail Capacity Allocation Office VPE. These six partners are jointly managing and developing the Rail Freight Corridor in line with EU-Regulation 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight and Commission Implementing Decision 2017/177 with a view on meeting growing customer expectations and improving the conditions for efficient, competitive, sustainable and reliable rail freight.

RFC Amber connects the heart of Europe, a prosperous region in Central Europe comprising the dynamically and fast-growing economies of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. End-to-end the corridor has an extension of ca. 1.400 km, including different routes. The total length of principal lines is therefore almost the double and including all diversionary and connecting lines the length of the network covered by RFC Amber is more than 3.300 km.

- **2853 km of principal lines (further 225 km in the future)**
- **299 km of diversionary lines**
- **206 km of connecting lines**
- **Connecting with 53 service facilities (terminals, sea ports, marshalling yards)**

RFC Amber wants to improve business opportunities and strengthen the logistical competitiveness of its customers and the countries and regions it serves. For this purpose the countries and railway infrastructure managers are continuously investing into the infrastructure of the corridor. Cooperation with other freight corridors ensures access to all major destinations in Europe.



Republic of Poland



Slovak Republic



Hungary



Republic of Slovenia

The Amber Rail Freight Corridor (RFC I I) is defined by Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2017/177 with the following Principal Route: Koper — Ljubljana —/Zalaszentiván — Sopron/Csorna —/(Hungarian-Serbian border)—Kelebia—Budapest—/—Komárom—Leopoldov/Rajka—Bratislava—Žilina—Katowice/Kraków—Warszawa/Łuków — Terespol — (Polish-Belarusian border).

### PROGRAMME SUPPORT ACTION (CO-FINANCED BY THE EU)

RFC Amber is a beneficiary of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) Programme Support Action (PSA) on the basis of the Multi-annual Work Programme 2014–2020, entitled “Establishment and development of the Amber rail freight corridor”, action number 2016-PSA-RFC I I.

The main objective of the Action was to establish the RFC Amber in line with the requirements of the RFC Regulation to support the development of rail freight business. The creation of enhanced communication channels was also a target by means of setting up the advisory groups to develop better solutions in accordance with the customers' needs. The elaboration of a Bottleneck Study was also one of the major targets of the PSA in order to facilitate decision makers to support further development of the corridor.

Beneficiaries of the PSA for RFC Amber are all Parties of the Management Board, i.e. the five Infrastructure Managers, SŽ-I, GYSEV, MÁV, ŽSR and PLK and the VPE Hungarian Rail Capacity Allocation Office, and the Ministries in charge of transport of Poland and Slovenia.

The available co-funding within the frame of the PSA is circa 1.1 million EUR and the Action is prolonged until the third quarter of 2021. Originally, the Beneficiaries should have implemented the Action until the end of 2020 but due to the pandemic crisis certain activities need further time to get realized, thus, an extension was granted by the Innovation and Network Executive Agency (INEA) until 30 September 2021. On **18 November 2020** the Agency approved the request for extension of the current PSA until the above-mentioned deadline. The amended Grant Agreement has been signed by both the Agency and GYSEV by **2 December 2020**. Thanks to the extension the postponed activities can be funded from the current program and the budget can be fully absorbed as planned.

## CORRIDOR GOVERNANCE

The Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 defines the corridor governance structure on two levels. The establishment of the RFC Amber organizational structure was a crucial measure for creating the corridor:

- The **Executive Board (EB)**, which is the highest level body assigned to the corridor; composed of representatives from the Ministries responsible for transport.
- The **Management Board (MB)**, which is the main operative body by implementing RFC Amber and having the responsibility for managing and developing the corridor.

Both bodies were very active in 2020. The EB and the MB Chair and Managing Director held three joint videoconferences in 2020, where issues such as the PSA, Bottleneck Study, the Action Plan, future funding for RFCs, Key Performance Indicators, evaluation of the RFC regulation 913/2010, issues log and organization of RAG-TAG and future meetings were discussed. An exchange in written form between the members of the EB and of the MB took place about tasks of common interest. The EB had an active role in the elaboration of the Bottleneck Study too, giving important input to this project.

The MB held four meetings in 2020 where the first one was held on **27 February 2020** in Bratislava and the three remaining ones were held online due to the pandemic situation. The MB was very active also in written procedure; several written decisions were adopted of which there is a detailed register (available upon request).

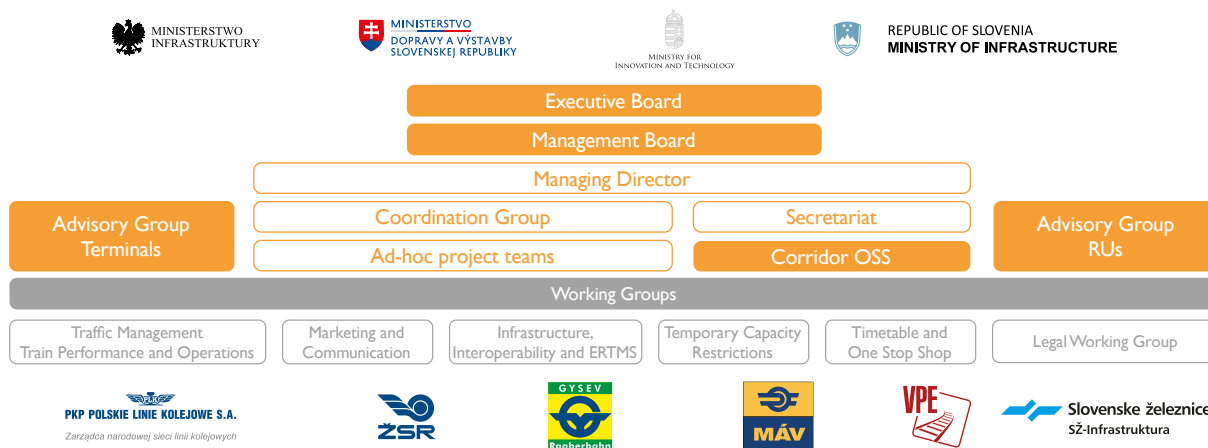
The chairmanship of the MB which is held currently by GYSEV has been extended until 31 January 2023, the current chair has been re-elected, along with the vice-chair which is being held by SŽ-I. The Managing Director (provided by GYSEV), the C-OSS (held by PLK), and the Secretariat (held by VPE) positions were also re-elected until 31 January 2023.

Following the establishment of the corridor the role of the **Coordination Group (CG)** was revised. It is now rather focused on the coordination of major activities and tasks not belonging to one sole Working Group (WG), but rather requiring a more complex coordination. During 2020 the CG held several workshops (online) to define the future budget of the corridor and defining projects for the next EU-funding calls. The Managing Director leads these meetings and elaborates the project proposals.

In 2020 the working groups mostly met online, but the TT&OSS WG still managed to have a physical meeting in February. The other WGs usually meet two times per year; the TT&OSS WG held four physical meetings. In case of the Infrastructure, Interoperability and ERTMS WG, the Temporary Capacity Restrictions WG and the Legal WG (this WG was formerly called Legal Task Force) the work is mostly done in written form via email. An ad hoc WG has been established by the MB for the works of the Bottleneck Study until the end of 2020 (end of the project) which held online meetings in the reporting period. Most of the work hereby is also being carried out via email and on Microsoft SharePoint which is an online platform to facilitate the work in the project (created by the Consultants).

At the MB meeting of **1 October 2020** the Secretariat, held by VPE was re-elected and has been promoted to a full-time position for one person due to the increased amount of tasks of the Corridor. Also, the C-OSS was re-elected until 31 January 2023 and it is hosted by PLK as it has been since the beginning. The C-OSS contract has been revised, adapted and approved by the MB meeting of **17 December 2020**.

Organizational units of the Amber RFC are illustrated in the following schematic graphic:



## MAIN ACTIVITIES

### CORRIDOR-ONE STOP SHOP (C-OSS)

The Corridor-One Stop Shop (C-OSS) facilitates train path management for international rail freight along RFC Amber. It is a single contact point to receive information about the use of the corridor and allowing customers to request and receive answers regarding infrastructure capacity for international freight trains along the corridor. For RFC Amber PLK acts as C-OSS since 2018.

All Infrastructure Managers and one Allocation Body along RFC Amber is following a joint process for the provision of dedicated capacity in form of Pre-arranged Paths (PaPs) and Reserve Capacity (RC), based on the already existing and harmonized international rules and using the harmonised documents elaborated by RailNetEurope (RNE).

The C-OSS of RFC Amber works in continuous cooperation with a team of experts (forming the Timetabling and One Stop Shop Working Group) appointed by each Member of the Corridor and is also in closely cooperating with the C-OSSs of other corridors (C-OSS Community).

#### The main topics dealt with by the C-OSS in 2020 were:

- Consulting RUs for preparation of Annual PaP offer (so-called Capacity Wish List)
- Constructing and harmonizing offers for Annual Requests, Late Path Requests and Reserve Capacity Requests
- Elaborating the chapter 4 of the CID with the support of all contributing IMs and AB
- Coordinating and supporting RUs and IMs during the paths ordering phase
- Collecting and analysing customers' international capacity wishes and needs for the annual timetable 2022

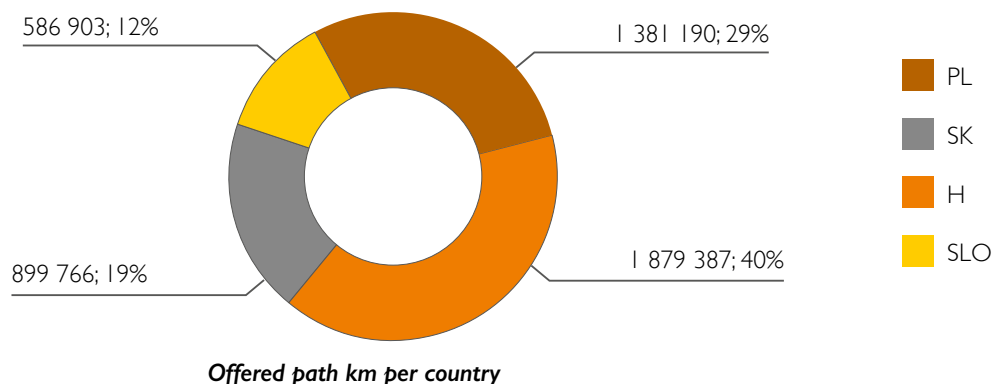
In order to intensify the close cooperation with applicants and improve the capacity offer, the C-OSS participated in the:

- PCS Trainings in Budapest and Warsaw
- Forum Train Europe Conference (FTE B)

Due to restrictions in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all events took place online.

### CAPACITY OFFER

The 2021 timetable catalogue of **Pre-arranged Paths** was published on the **13 January 2020** offering customers around 4.7 million path kilometres for international traffic coordinated among IMs and AB. This dedicated capacity was offered and coordinated by the C-OSS.



Despite the fact that the Pre-arranged Paths were improved according to the needs expressed by customers during the last RAG-TAG meeting, namely

- the PaP from Kelebia (HU) to Koper has been divided into two separate PaPs (Koper–Ferencváros and Kelebia–Štúrovo),
  - the PaP from Małaszewicze (PL) has been extended to Koper,
  - the PaP for extra-long trains of 662 m from Czechowice Dziedzice (PL) to Žilina (SK) has been offered,
  - and the PaP from Čaňa (SK) to Szolnok (HU) (which is connected with RFC OEM for transport to Romania)
- only 3 RUs requested PaPs on RFC Amber for TT2021.

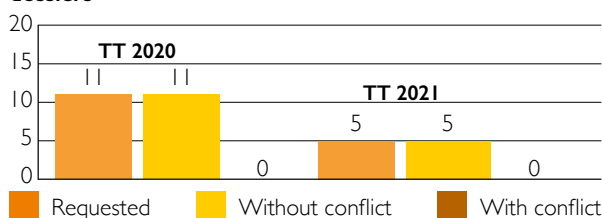
Until **14 of April 2020**, which was the deadline for placing international path requests for TT2021, the C-OSS Manager of RFC Amber had received five requests, down 54.5%, for 0.5 mio path km (days&km), down 43.8% compared with TT 2020. In total 10.5% of the published capacity was requested. All requests were without conflicts and three of them were released to Path Elaboration in PCS. The C-OSS of RFC I pre-booked 0.23 mio path km (days& m), down 74.1% compared with the same TT period a year ago.



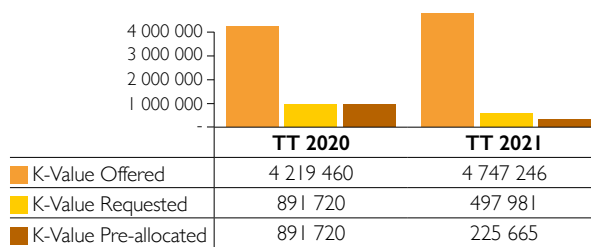
## VOLUME OF CAPACITY REQUESTS & OFFERS

The graphs below show the comparison of the volume of capacity offered, of capacity requested and of pre-allocated capacity respectively the number of requested dossiers.

### dossiers



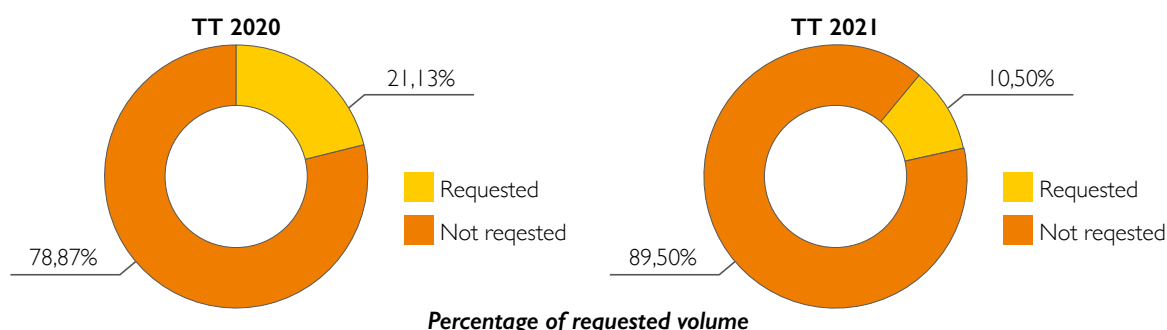
Volume of requests



Number of dossiers

After the pre-allocation phase, the evaluation started with the goal to identify improvements to be implemented for TT2022. RFC Amber circulated together with all other RFCs in June 2020 a harmonized list for expression of capacity needs (**“capacity wish-list”**) among all potential applicants, with a deadline to fill in the list by **28 August 2020**. Two applicants responded for RFC Amber.

Due to the recent situation only a limited sales activity could have been carried out and the lack of personal contact and physical customer meetings (such as FTE-D conference or RAG-TAG meeting) left its impact on the number of PaP request.



Percentage of requested volume

On the basis of the experiences obtained from the previous years, and from the information provided in the expression of capacity needs and the analysis of the requests submitted for TT 2020, the elaboration of the offer for TT 2022 started in September 2020.

Some of the improvements and novelties which have been introduced and may bring a positive effect on the short-term development are the following:

- A **new PaP** from Tarnów (PL) via Ferencváros (HU), Szombathely to Celje (SI) has been introduced.
- In Czechowice Dziedzice (PL) PaPs from Małaszewicze (PL) have been connected to RFC Baltic-Adriatic PaPs giving access to Mlada Boleslav (CZ).
- The PaP from Czechowice Dziedzice to Žilina (SK) allows for **extra-long trains** of 662 m (compared to 360 m usually allowed) in TT 2022 are offered on overlapping sections of RFC Amber and RFC Baltic-Adriatic between Czechowice Dziedzice and Bratislava

Applicants have the possibility to request adjustment of the running times of the published PaP according to their individual needs within a certain bandwidth. The PaP construction was completed on time in December 2020 and the PaP catalogue (DigCat) for TT 2022 was published in PCS on 11 January 2021.

## RESERVE CAPACITY

On **12 October 2020** RFC Amber published **Reserve Capacity (RC)** for TT 2021 through its C-OSS, offering customers 4,27 million path-kilometres of ad hoc paths. The offer was published in PCS and also as an overview of the available capacity on the corridor website.

Reserve Capacity on RFC Amber was offered as a guaranteed contingent of “capacity slots” and international freight paths per day and section (flexible RC approach) in Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and as PaPs in Hungary, which applicants may request up to 30 days before a train run. Two requests had been placed so far, for 0.05 million path kilometres. The applicants received the final offer in time.

More information about the C-OSS: [rfc-amber.eu/contents/read/about\\_the\\_c\\_oss](https://rfc-amber.eu/contents/read/about_the_c_oss)









# Amber

Rail Freight Corridor





## MAIN ACTIVITIES

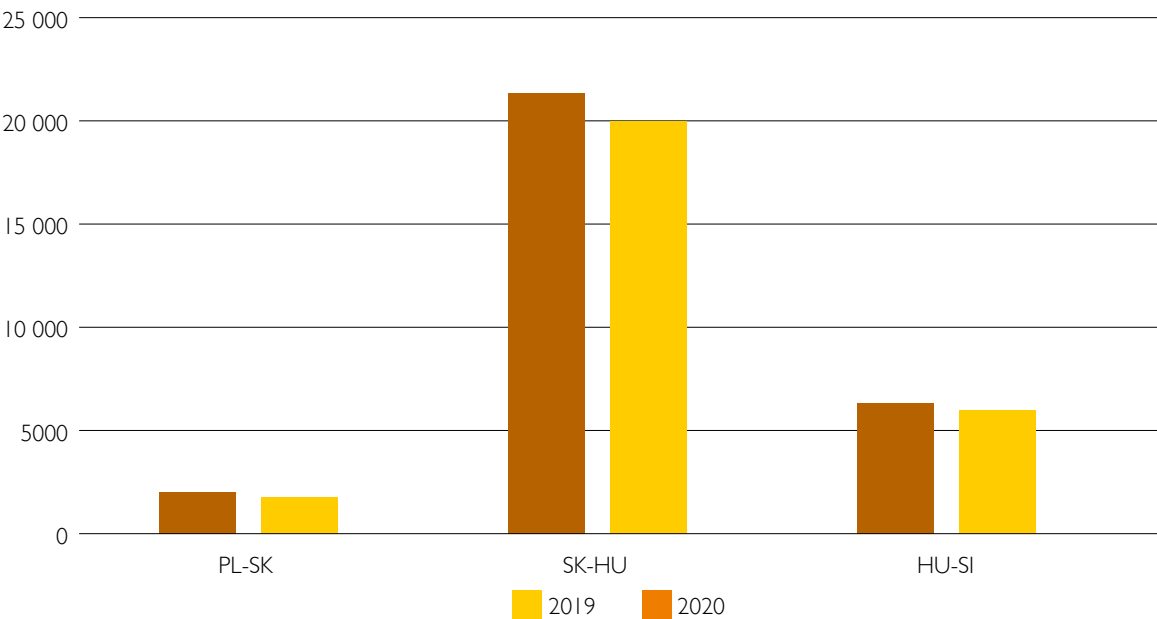
### TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT & TRAIN PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In 2020 the RFC Amber Traffic Management, Train Performance and Operations Working Group prepared RFC Amber's **"TPM Rules of Procedure"**. This document describes the operation of train performance management and the method of monitoring trains. It is based on RNE's 'Guidelines for Train Performance Management on Rail Freight Corridors'. It was approved by the RFC Amber Management Board on **4 June 2020**. In Annex 2 of the document point lists were listed which were necessary for reporting and sent to RNE for establishing reports in the reporting tool Oracle Business Intelligence (OBI). These **point lists** are: Basic point list, Detailed point list, Reporting point list(s) and Border point list. Since RNE was migrating reports from old TIS to new TIS during 2020, the first reports available for RFC Amber were downloaded in November. Since then 'management summary' of the punctuality report is uploaded to the Corridor's website and to CIP every month. With this achievement train performance monitoring on RFC Amber could start and the working group started to analyse the first reports which continues in the next year.

After the first operational year it became possible to measure the performance of the corridor through the **commonly applicable KPIs** defined by RailNetEurope. The initial results of "operation" and "market development" related indicators showed that some of the values might be somewhat lower than the real performance due to the current level of data quality in the reporting systems.

The **punctuality** is considered for origin (RFC entry) and destination (RFC exit), however; the origin does not necessarily mean the station of departure, but the first measuring point of the RFC based on the above mentioned point lists. International freight trains crossing a border of an RFC are considered as RFC trains in the calculation. The calculation is done both with 30-minute and 15-minute punctuality thresholds where RFC Amber applied the 30-minute threshold. Based on these criteria, the reporting tool OBI resulted a punctuality of **45% at origin** and **30% at destination**. It is important to emphasise that this indicator is influenced by many different factors, like interoperability, border controls, technical conditions or language issues which might differ in each border section in the network of RFCs.

The **"overall number of trains on the RFC"** as a single value shows the total number of train runs having a running advice on selected pairs of border points. All international freight trains crossing a border of an RFC are considered as RFC trains in the calculation. Due to data quality issues, it was proposed to keep this data for RFC internal use for the time being. At the same time, the indicator **"overall number of trains per border"** shows real traffic data which are stemming from the IMs national systems. Nevertheless, the total sum of the figures per border does not correspond to the figure of the KPI Overall Number of RFC Trains due to, among other reasons, the potential double counting of trains if crossing more than one border. Figures can be, however, illustrated per border sections (included more border crossing points) in a consolidated way. These border figures are calculated for calendar year:



The general rail freight traffic volume (number of trains) at the border sections of RFC Amber shows a quite stable trend in the past two years. The slight decrease of the traffic flow also derives from the reduced volume of transported goods, which was resulted by the recent epidemiological period.

RFC Amber's ICM Handbook was also approved by the Corridor's Management Board on **4 June 2020**. The document was prepared according to RNE's 'Handbook for International Contingency Management' and includes all the relevant information which are necessary in case of an incident, e.g. **availability** of RFC Coordinator and IM Incident managers, **re-routing scenarios** and **technical parameters** of re-routing lines etc.

On 1 November 2020 (after 137 days) the whole line section was put back into operation.

- There were 2 different stone collapse, the 1st one did not affect ICM
- The 2nd collapse caused immediately total closure on the tracks and met the conditions of ICM
- Possibility to offer a re-routing alternative to the RUs from the very beginning
- All trains were able to run
- Traffic could be maintained, no dominant increase of transit times
- Regular contact with the IMs, RUs involved (ŽSR, GYSEV, RUs) and on RFC level
- Followed the recommendations described in the ICM Handbook



Learn more about the ICM under [rfc-amber.eu/assets/downloads/traffic\\_management/rfc\\_Amber\\_icm\\_handbook.pdf](http://rfc-amber.eu/assets/downloads/traffic_management/rfc_Amber_icm_handbook.pdf)

The coordination and publication of Temporary Capacity Restrictions (TCRs) in RFC Amber is delegated to the TCR Working Group, headed by PLK. The plan of TCRs is built on a yearly basis including the works foreseen by each of the RFC Amber Infrastructure Managers. The aim is to reduce the impact of works to a minimum and to find alternative train path or an alternative route in case of planned line closures or capacity restrictions so that freight traffic can keep moving. The TCR Working Group coordinates TCRs along the corridor and exchanges experiences and best practice in the field of TCRs between its Members.

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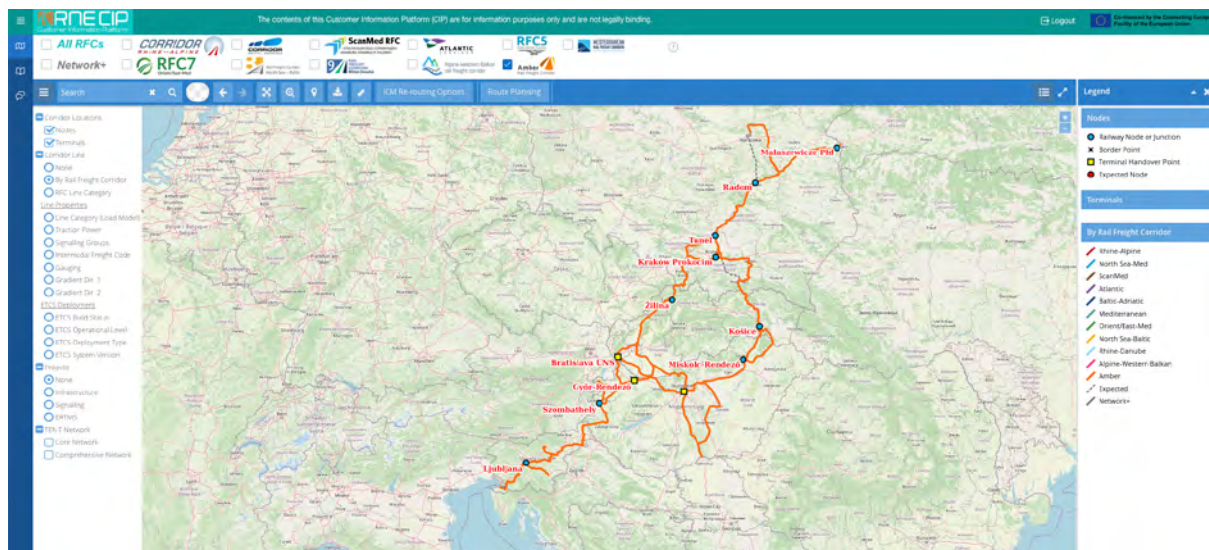
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## FURTHER ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

### RFC AMBER ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

The **Customer Information Platform (CIP)** is an interactive, internet-based information tool, in which all operational RFCs participate. It displays harmonised corridor information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on railway infrastructure in 18 European countries covering the network of nine RFCs, including RFC Amber.



The implementation has been accomplished and is continuously being pursued due to the fact that RFC Amber was active in the respective WGs even prior to the roll-out of CIP and remained active in 2020 as well. The Secretariat plays an important role to keep the corridor related information up-to-date.

In 2020 the following information documents were published:

- Corridor Information Documents
- Capacity Offer
- Temporary Capacity Restrictions
- ICM re-routing scenarios
- Corridor Performance Indicators
- Annual Reports
- Border Documents



The elaboration of the digital PaP catalogue (**DigiCat**) started also at the end of 2020.

 CIP is available at [cip.rne.eu](http://cip.rne.eu) website.

### CORRIDOR INFORMATION DOCUMENTS

Regulation (EU) 913/2010 requires the corridor to elaborate a Corridor Information Document providing information to customers and all those interested in the corridor. This obligation is met by publishing a set of documents – so-called CID-Books – which are regularly updated. The relevant information contained in the network statements was collected into the CID Book 2 (Network Statement Excerpts) by using the common template (elaborated by RNE and the RFCs). The elaboration of the CID Book 3 has been accomplished where the description and contacts of the relevant terminals along RFC Amber have been included. The update of the CID Book 4 has been accomplished where all relevant information concerning the procedures regarding C-OSS, capacity allocation procedures to freight trains, authorized applicants and also traffic management procedures and the coordination of temporary capacity restrictions are laid down. The revised common structure of RNE was used by RFC Amber. The Books were adopted by the MB on **17 December 2020**.

The CID Books 1-5 have all been prepared, approved by the MB and duly published on the corridor website on **13 January 2020**.

After this period the preparation of CID Books for TT2022 took place based on the new structure (CID Chapters 1–4 and the Implementation Plan as an annex).

 CID Books of RFC Amber are available at [rfc-amber.eu/downloads/grp/corridor\\_information\\_document](http://rfc-amber.eu/downloads/grp/corridor_information_document)

## MARKETING & PR

Notwithstanding the pandemic situation, RFC Amber made use of the “quiet” times to produce long-lasting promotional products instead of the regular purchase of the promotional gadgets. RFC Amber purchased 440 pieces of **promotional mugs** which have been fabricated by a European potter artist. The design of the mug reflects the identity of the Member States concerned in Amber RFC. The mugs have been presented to the Agency also and their design was approved, the reference to the Union Funding is clearly visible.

In 2020 the corridor prepared also its first Annual Report under the lead of the Marketing WG and this was the first year also when the corridor started to issue electronic **Newsletters** informing customers and stakeholders about important achievements. The first electronic newsletter was issued on **27 March 2020**. In 2020 altogether five e-Newsletters have been dispatched to Customers, all RAG-TAG members, Executive and Management Board Members and further stakeholders of the corridor.



## COMMUNICATION

The **website** follows a distinctive visual identity with the corridor logotype, ensuring good brand recognition among customers and stakeholders. The content of the website is defined and is continuously updated by the relevant WGs.

**Press releases** were continuously prepared in case of achievements which contribute to the successful implementation of the Action and providing information about the development of the corridor (for ex. the progress with the Action Plan of the corridor). Customer information and pop-up messages on the website also promoted the publication of the PaP-offer for TT2021 as well. The media releases are usually sent to sector organizations (such as CER) as well. Also, visibility of the corridor and the Action has been increasing during the reporting period in various fora, such as the RFC Network, ECCO or C-OSS Community.

## PUBLICITY

No physical TEN-T Days or Rail Freight Day took place in 2020, however, the Rail Freight Day was organised online whereby RFC Amber was also represented at panel discussions.

With the participation of the Managing Director as Speaker and Roundtable participant at the European Silk Road Summit 2020, taking place as an online-event in September, RFC Amber reached a broad international public. Subject of the presentation by RFC Amber was the role of Rail Freight Corridors in linking Europe to Euro-Asian rail land-bridges.

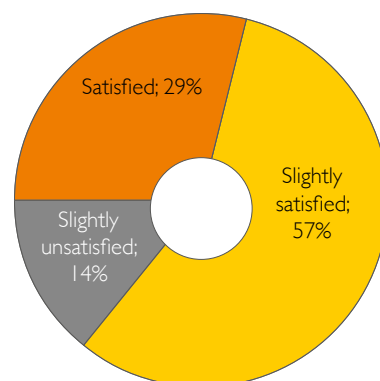
## SATISFACTION SURVEY

Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 requires Rail Freight Corridors' (RFC) Management Boards to gauge the satisfaction level of their users yearly and to publish the results of the survey. RNE created a common research platform of User Satisfaction Survey (USS) for all RFCs willing to participate, which was launched in 2014. The study underwent a major transformation in 2020: the main orientations were simplification and done in house with the assistance of RNE (instead of by an external company, as previously). All RFCs have joined the new research, which was a very positive development and a strong message, that RFCs act together as one network.

RFC Amber, as a new corridor had to reckon with two important factors influencing the responses: overlapping and novelty. Because of the overlaps with other RFCs, and of the shorter real experience of customers with RFC Amber some responses may not address the corridor itself, but could be rather seen as a projection of a general opinion about RFCs. However, we can state with high confidence that RFC Amber results indicate a good general impression, which was confirmed by the overall satisfaction mark, where a clear majority of the respondents were rather satisfied. The most important areas to focus on are the following: Infrastructure, Customer orientation, Information, Communication and Cooperation.

The offer of paths for extended train length on RFC Amber and the planned actions reflect well identified customer needs. RFC Amber initiatives appear to be relevant and appreciated by the users. This customer-oriented attitude, which strongly characterizes RFC Amber, can be an important advantage on the future development as well.

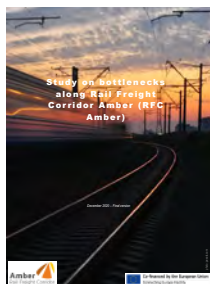
The majority of the respondents were generally satisfied also with the support they received related to pandemic situation. The suspended cancellation fee was highlighted specifically. However, it also arose that some of the customers did not perceive any support in connection with COVID-19 crisis.



More details under [rfc-amber.eu/assets/downloads/other\\_public\\_documents/Summary\\_RFC\\_Amber\\_USS\\_2020.pdf](https://rfc-amber.eu/assets/downloads/other_public_documents/Summary_RFC_Amber_USS_2020.pdf)

### MAIN FINDINGS OF THE BOTTLENECK STUDY

The elaboration of a comprehensive “Study on bottlenecks along RFC Amber No.11” was one of the main activities in the RFC Amber Programme Support Action. The implementation of this activity was expected to give an in-depth understanding of the compliance of the corridor infrastructure with TEN-T minimum requirements, TSI line performance parameters, of bottlenecks in terms of capacity and line standard, and of potential measures for infrastructure and operational improvements for efficient rail freight operations along the network of RFC Amber. The Study shall provide decision support for future investment in **infrastructure, operational, administrative** and **capacity-related** measures and improved cross-border cooperation along RFC Amber. The Study was carried out by Kontúr Csoport Ltd. as Contractor, Trenecon Ltd. as Subcontractor and GYSEV as Contracting Authority on the side of RFC Amber.



The collection of necessary information was done via the WGs, Coordination Group and MB of the corridor, facilitated through a so-called ad hoc project team set up by the Contractor, coordinating the tasks stemming from the project. During the data collection phase already available information about the corridor published in the Implementation Plan, Transport Market Study and further Corridor Information Documents were taken into account. Where necessary, the documents were updated by the project team to be able to obtain the most recent data.

The internal consultations and reviewing of draft and final reports by the corridor members were accomplished in 2020. The Consultants worked strongly together with the Contractor and the ad hoc project team. All outputs were consulted with the project team. An online platform for the project had been created (on Microsoft SharePoint) in order to make the interactions smooth and facilitate the sharing and review of large files. The Consultants agreed with the ad hoc WG and with the Contracting Authority the timeline to follow. According to that by **30 September 2020** the full draft of the Bottleneck Study was elaborated and submitted to the Contracting Authority and the ad hoc WG. Until **30 October 2020**, comments on the draft were submitted. Until **18 November 2020** the comments were assessed, bilateral discussions were held between the Consultant and the relevant Members to clarify the comments. The start of the elaboration of the summary presentation also started by that time. Both the Executive and the Management Board liked the coherence and complexity of the study. All final materials were submitted to the MB on **4 December 2020** for consideration until the final approval. The delivery of the final outputs i.e. the Final Study and Presentation was achieved by **18 December 2020** as laid down in the contract. Following the MB approval on **17 December 2020** the closure of the project took place, the Consultants delivered the necessary outputs both on a hard copy printout and on CD as well. The Management Board approved both the Final Study and the Power Point Presentation at its meeting of 17 December 2020. An (online) presentation for the EB and MB was held on 4 February 2021.

The main conclusions regarding the operational and administrative bottlenecks are summarized below.

#### Infrastructure and capacity bottlenecks, interventions

- Most critical sections for the functionality of RFC Amber are those where current capacity is already insufficient.
- Infrastructure developments should focus on elimination of significant restrictions (axle load, speed, train length primarily)
- Interventions at nodes should focus on capacity for long freight train handling and supporting seamless traffic flow along the lines; triangle tracks at various nodes can avoid time-consuming and repeated changes of travelling direction.
- Line bottlenecks are interlinked to problems at nodes and vice versa (e.g. punctuality, uncertain ETA at the border influences the unnecessary waiting time and RU efficiency, organisation)
- Relative priority of sections in each member states are set in the study to support decision making

#### Operational and administrative issues, measures

- Note the limited operational experience of RFC Amber
- Theoretical order of measures – many have been long in the forefront of the sector (RNE)
- Operational and administrative issues often specific to different places; solutions cannot always be applied uniformly to all member states, IMs or hand-over points
- Most of the identified issues have been addressed; efforts, have been made for improvement at EU/ RNE level or at other RFCs;
- At EU/RNE level guidelines, IT support have been developed – they need to be adopted in RFC Amber management processes

The elaboration of the Bottleneck Study as a significant project was one of the main activities in the RFC Amber Programme Support Action (PSA) aiming to support the future development of the corridor. Thanks to the strong support of the Executive Board, Management Board and RAG-TAG members and to all involved colleagues who have contributed to the elaboration of the study whose final outcome generated a high satisfaction among all. However, there is a lot of hard work ahead of everyone to put the outcomes into practice.

Download the study at [rfc-amber.eu/assets/downloads/other\\_public\\_documents/RFCAmber\\_bottleneck\\_study\\_final.pdf](https://rfc-amber.eu/assets/downloads/other_public_documents/RFCAmber_bottleneck_study_final.pdf)

## EU-LEVEL ACTIVITIES

Overall, EU activities were strongly hampered by the pandemic, which hindered cross-border travel and personal physical meetings with partners and stakeholders. Nonetheless, through the extensive use of online meetings, key activities on EU level continued even in 2020.

RFC Amber participated actively in the RFC Network. The Managing Director attended the regular meetings and workshops of the RFC Network, in total 12 during the year; most of them online. The scope of issues tackled by the RFC Network is growing, which is reflected by an increased number of additional meetings. An important activity starting up on network level in 2020 was the joint elaboration of ideas for multi-corridor projects, which could be subject to future applications for EU-funding. RFC Amber contributed concrete suggestions, which were received positively by other Members of the RFC Network and which in autumn of 2020 entered a phase of more concrete project preparation. Representatives of RFC Amber were also actively participating in the RNE Working Groups concerning RFCs.



RFC Amber also attended the Single European Railway Area Committee (SERAC) RFC Working Group meeting and joint sessions with the Network of Executive Boards (NExBo), which tackled a wide range of issues. An important topic discussed during 2020 was the future funding of RFC activities, as well as the evaluation of the RFC Regulation (EU) 913/2010. RFC Amber provided written input – both directly and via sector organisations, such as CER – to consultations by the Commission concerning the evaluation of the RFC-Regulation and of the TEN-T Guidelines (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013). RFC Amber also joined common lobbying activities together with other RFCs, such as the sending of letters to the Commission (in particular concerning the future financing of RFCs).





## OUTLOOK

2020 was a challenging year due to the pandemic situation, as many processes were necessary to change in order to adapt to the situation and try to keep up a progress. Unfortunately, the virus situation kept us from personal meetings and discussions within the corridor governance, meetings with customers, our planned study visit at the Polish-Belarus border and from organizing international meetings and fora. The planned implementation of the Action also faced some obstacles, which was signalled to the Agency on time, resulting in an extension of the current Programme Support Action until 30 September 2021 in order to be able to still fulfil the targets which needed to be postponed. The corridor management assessed all the activities still necessary to get organized within the frame of the current PSA in order to be able to develop the corridor in terms of service, customer orientation and efficiency.

Regarding the set of activities still to be accomplished or aimed at under the Action i.a. the following ones must be highlighted:

- If feasible, organisation of a study-visit to the transshipment terminals at the Polish-Belarus border for Members, customers and stakeholders of RFC Amber in Malaszewicze/Terespol/Kobylany by the Polish Ministry of Transport (MI). The visit was originally planned for March 2020, then postponed due to the virus situation.
- Organisation of minimum one physical RAG-TAG meeting, if possible. The planned physical meetings with the Railway and Terminal Advisory Group (RAG-TAG) had to be cancelled during 2020 due to COVID-19. These meetings were originally planned to take place on 30 March 2020 in Dunajska Streda. Further, the corridor's participation together with the other RFCs of the Network was also foreseen at the TEN-T Days and the Rail Freight Days of 2020 falling under the obligations of PSA, which events have also been postponed.
- Keeping the regular workflow of the Executive Board, which was not able to hold its physical meetings for which they have primarily planned their budget.
- Regarding the implementation of the Customer Information Platform (CIP), the Beneficiaries planned with higher development costs for 2020 but RNE has not charged for the CIP development in 2020. The Beneficiaries aim to shift the remaining amount planned for this Activity to 2021 in order to finance the maintenance, operation and hosting of CIP by RNE.

Besides the above enumerated major activities, the continuity of day-to-day operations will be ensured according to the RFC Regulation. This includes also the publication of further annual reports, the participation in further joint RFC cooperation fora such as the RFC Network, TEN-T Days or other publicity events.

With the successful extension of the current PSA until 30 September 2021 the corridor management expects a full implementation of the planned activities – provided that the pandemic situation allows doing so – within the frame of the program and thus, aims to make good use and complete absorption of the available EU-funding.

RFC Amber became officially part of the RFC Network and will support its activities i.a. by providing financing to the RFC Network Assistant and by actively participating in its meetings and the RNE Working Groups.

A major task for RFC Amber will be to define and prepare, often in close collaboration with other partner RFCs, joint multi-corridor projects aiming at strengthening the attractiveness of RFC Amber for our customers and demonstrating the ambition of its Members to develop and improve the corridor in line with market needs. In the definition of these projects, we take into account the activities envisaged under the RFC Amber Action Plan. The extensive coordination work for these projects has started up in summer 2020 and will intensify during 2021. RFC Amber is among the initiators and leaders of several projects and activities.

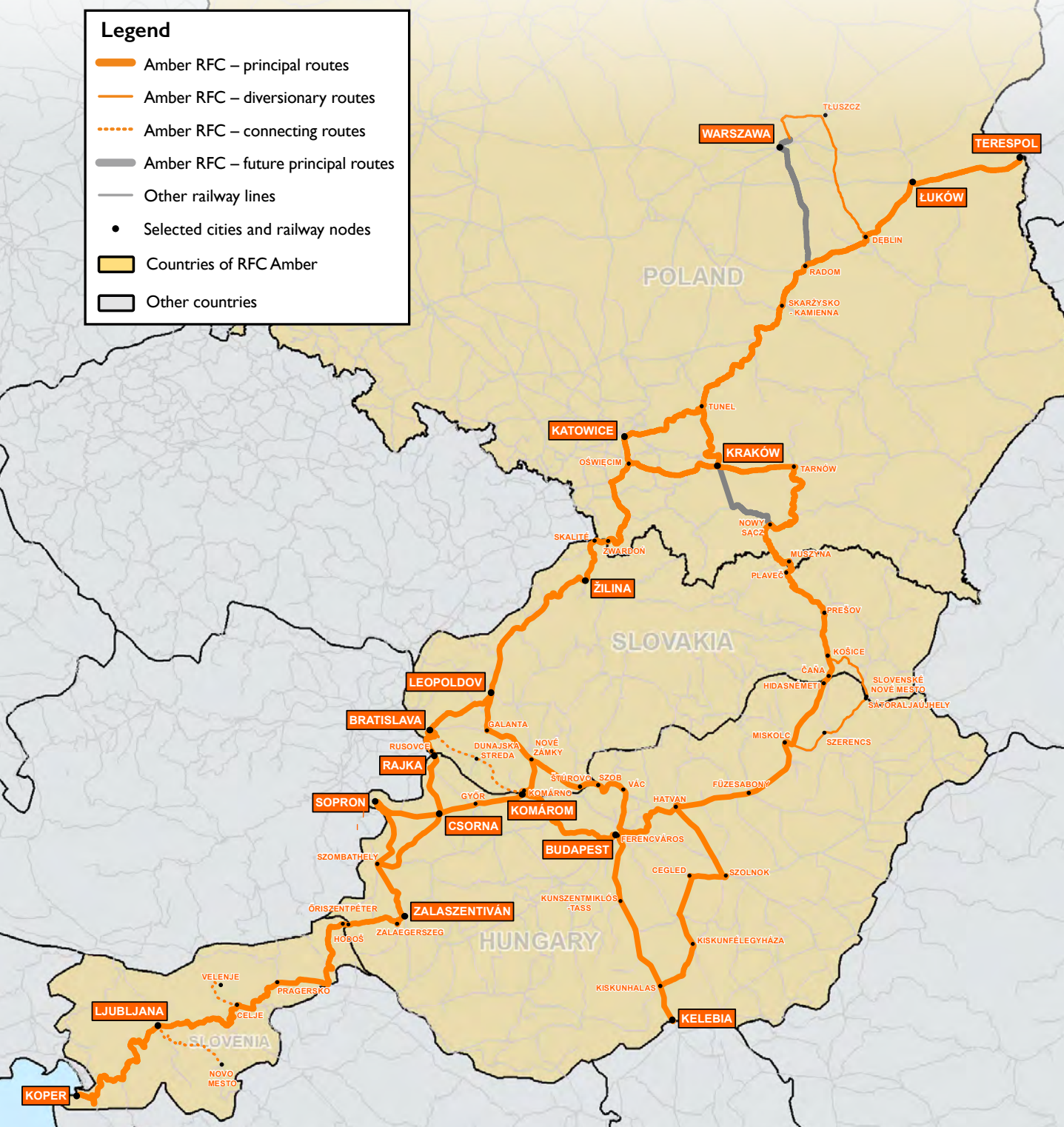




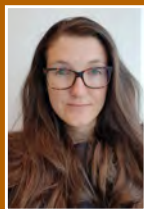
# Connecting the Heart of Europe

## Legend

- Amber RFC – principal routes
- - - Amber RFC – diversionary routes
- · · · · Amber RFC – connecting routes
- Amber RFC – future principal routes
- Other railway lines
- Selected cities and railway nodes
- Countries of RFC Amber
- Other countries



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