

ANNUAL REPORT

RFC AMBER
2021



EUROPEAN YEAR OF RAIL **2021**

Your vision

Our mission



Co-financed by the Connecting Europe
Facility of the European Union

TIMELINE 2021

11 January	Publication of PaP Catalogue for TT 2022
11 January	Publication of CID Books for TT 2020/2021
22 February	Publication of the Bottleneck Study
25 February	18th Management Board meeting (online)
1 June	19th Management Board meeting (online)
2 July	RFC Amber in social media
18 August	Publication of the RFC Amber Annual Report for 2020
26 August	Launching of the User Satisfaction Survey
11 September	Connecting Europe Express event in Sopron, Hungary
17 September	20th Management Board meeting (online)
23 September	RFC Amber congratulates RFC AWB to its establishment in Ljubljana
24 September	Connecting Europe Express event in Ljubljana, Slovenia
11 October	Publication of Reserve Capacity Catalogue for TT 2022
20 October	740m long TEN-T Demo Train between Sopron and Budapest
22 October	Launching of the User Satisfaction Survey of CIP
15 November	Advisory Groups meeting (hybrid)
17 November	Meeting with the RFC Amber Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups
30 November	21st Management Board meeting (online)

MISSION

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

DEAR READER,

in the beginning of 2021 all of us were hoping, that the COVID-19 pandemic would come to an end soon and that we would have the chance to return to “business as usual”. Unfortunately, this hope did not become true and instead we saw a third and fourth wave of the pandemic coming and going. At the same time, we had developed already some “routine” in tackling the challenges stemming from it, relying on online meetings and digital communication for most of the year. Thanks to a well-functioning Executive Board, Management Board, Corridor-One Stop Shop and Secretariat and stability in the Working Groups with experienced leaders and experts we succeeded to maintain a good level of activity and service even under these adverse conditions.

In spite of this situation of uncertainty, several important achievements of RFC Amber during 2021 deserve to be highlighted:

The number of path requests received rose by 140% compared to the previous year. With this development we left behind us the due to the pandemic rather low numbers during 2020 and exceeded even the numbers of our initial year of operation 2019. The number of freight trains of RFC Amber border sections also shows an increase, indicating a recovery from the mostly pandemic-related decrease in 2020; in 2021 the number of trains is even slightly higher than during the initial year 2019.

For a still rather young corridor like RFC Amber publicity is an important field of activity, in which we made some important achievements in 2021:

- The number of news releases and E-Newsletters increased to 20, after 13 in 2020 and 7 in 2019; this means, that our customers and stakeholders received news from RFC Amber in average each two to three weeks.
- In the renowned international railway magazine *Global Railway Review* a full three-page article “RFC Amber: Facilitating International rail freight in the heart of Europe” appeared in Issue 2/2021 in both the printed and online-version
- In September 2021 the Connecting Europe Express (CEE) visited all countries along RFC Amber, travelling longer distances on our corridor. RFC Amber was present with a stand at the well-visited CEE-events in Sopron and Ljubljana, providing information to stakeholders and citizens.
- Just one month after the Connecting Europe Express, RFC Amber Member GYSEV organized together with GYSEV CARGO within the Interreg-project CORCAP an International Rail Freight Workshop in Sopron and a “TEN-T Demo-Train” as the first 740 m long freight train on the line Sopron-Budapest; participants had the possibility to travel in two passenger coaches attached to it.

The changes and new challenges faced in 2021 also concerned in particular the financing of our corridor activities. The Programme Support Action (PSA) became extended until the end of September 2021, but the remaining funds under the Action were rather limited, thus only allowing a smaller portion of costs to be covered from it during the extension period. At the same time the continued financing of RFCs announced by the European Commission became delayed and connected to much uncertainty regarding the amount, form and conditions. When the call for proposals for the new Technical Assistance for RFCs finally was published just before Christmas, it became clear, that the amount allocated to our corridor in the Lump Sum Decision of July 2021 would become reduced again due to the extension of the PSA. Thus, in terms of financing, 2021 was a year, in which the work of the corridor to a higher degree than originally expected relied on the financial contributions of its Members.

Last, but not least, we would like to emphasize, that RFC Amber organized in November 2021 again its annual meeting with the Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups (RAG-TAG). Held as a hybrid-meeting in Budapest, it was the first meeting since the beginning of the pandemic, which allowed participants to join both in person and online. We would like to sincerely thank the entire team working in and for our corridor, our Spokesperson and Members of the RAG-TAG and all other stakeholders for their continued commitment and dedication to RFC Amber. We wish all of you a pleasant reading of this Annual Report.



Dr. Gerhard Troche
Managing Director



Igor Prinčič
For the Executive Board



Andrea Mosóczy
Chair of the Management Board

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

2021, the European Year of Rail, was still impacted by the pandemic, but luckily we had already learned to tackle this situation in our everyday work and business, not least through the use of digital communication tools. The organisation of the RFC Amber RAG-TAG-meeting in November 2021 as a hybrid-meeting is a good example for these new working methods, which helped to maintain the important exchange between the RFC Amber Members and the railway undertakings using and terminal managers located along the corridor.

In terms of traffic development, we saw in 2021 a recovery of traffic volumes after the pandemic-related downturn in 2020. This recovery is also reflected in the number of freight trains on RFC Amber border sections, which in 2021 was even slightly higher than in 2019, the year before the pandemic. At the same time the competitive pressure on railways as a transport mode remains high – and while the return of traffic undoubtedly is good news, it highlights again the importance of sufficient capacity of good and stable quality for freight trains, if we want to see this positive development to continue in the future – which must be our common goal.

One indispensable feature of a competitive rail freight system must be the capability to handle longer freight trains, as also the results of the User Satisfaction Surveys of RFC Amber and many other RFCs regularly show. We therefore highly welcomed the operation of a first 740 m long TEN-T Demo Train on the Sopron–Budapest section of the corridor in October 2021 and to create visibility for this towards high-level decision-makers through an International Rail Freight Workshop in connection with it. We express our hope that this will be followed up by a capacity offer for longer freight trains on a more regular basis and on further sections of the corridor.

The RAG-TAG Members are looking forward to continue the exchange to develop RFC Amber and remain available to contribute with our views and expertise.

Nyíri András

András Nyíri

RAG-TAG Spokesperson



INTRODUCTION	6
About us	6
Programme Support Action – Completion	6
Corridor governance	7
MAIN ACTIVITIES	8
Corridor-One Stop Shop	8
Capacity offer	8
Volume of capacity requests & offers	9
Reserve Capacity	9
Traffic management & Train performance monitoring	12
Incident Management	13
CIP Developments	13
CUSTOMER ORIENTATION	14
Marketing & Communication	14
Publicity	14
Satisfaction Survey	15
PHOTO GALLERY	16
OUTLOOK	18



INTRODUCTION

ABOUT US

Rail Freight Corridor Amber is a cooperation of the five railway Infrastructure Managers SŽ-I (Slovenia), GYSEV and MÁV (Hungary), ŽSR (Slovakia) and PLK (Poland) and the Rail Capacity Allocation Office VPE (Hungary). 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. A new rail access to the seaport of Koper is under construction and further improvements are on the way. RFC Amber provides an attractive and flat North-South route East of the Alps ideal for freight trains. Fully electrified from end to end it forms a basis for environmentally friendly green transport and sustainable low emission supply chains. 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 – COMPLETION

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, with the project title “Establishment and development of the Amber rail freight corridor”, action number 2016-PSA-RFC I I.

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 Rail Capacity Allocation Office VPE, and two Ministries from the Executive Board, namely the Ministries in charge of transport of Poland and Slovenia.

The available co-funding within the frame of the PSA was circa 1.1 million EUR and the Action was prolonged until the third quarter of 2021. Despite the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the Action with the set objectives was going quite smooth and balanced with all milestones accomplished as planned. The action was completed in 30 September 2021 and successfully closed with the handing-in of all necessary documentation to CINEA in due time. At the end of the year a new funding tool, the Technical Assistance (also from the CEF) call was published for which RFC Amber Members were immediately going for and started to prepare the application together with the other RFCs.

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 (ExBo)**, which is the highest-level body assigned to the corridor, is composed of the Ministries responsible for transport.
- The **Management Board (MaBo)**, which is the main body in charge of operation of RFC Amber and having the responsibility for managing and developing the corridor.

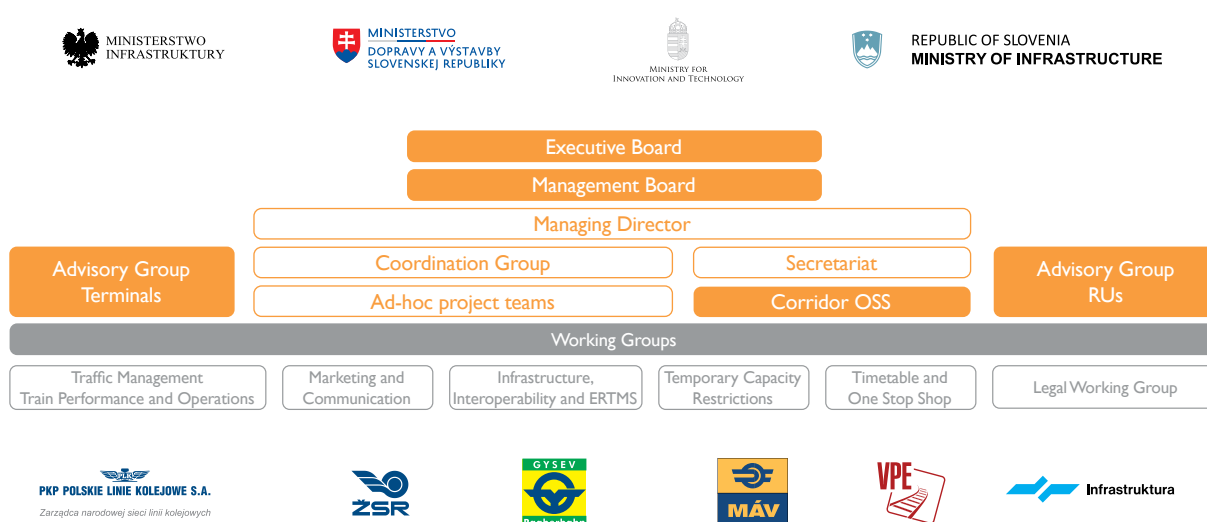
Both bodies were very active in 2021. The ExBo and the MaBo Chair and Managing Director held two joint videoconferences. On **5 May 2021**, in addition to the multi-corridor projects, the meeting focused on elements related to KPIs and funding opportunities for the next period. During the second meeting, on **14 September 2021**, the members adopted the PSA report and the Chair of the MaBo reported on the achievement of another milestone. The ExBo's quite demanding task was the elaboration of a Regulatory Body Cooperation Agreement which was finalised and entered into force on **9 September 2021**.

The MaBo held four meetings in 2021, each of them online due to the pandemic situation. The MaBo was very active also in written procedure; several written decisions were adopted of which there is a detailed register.

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 2021 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 as well as is in charge of the recruitment of foreign Partners for the project proposals.

The working groups met also mostly online. Most of the WGs usually meet two times per year; the Timetabling and One Stop Shop (TT&OSS) held two meetings. In case of the Infrastructure, Interoperability and ERTMS WG, the Temporary Capacity Restrictions (TCR) WG and the Legal WG (this WG was formerly called Legal Task Force) the work is mostly done in written form via email.

Organizational units of the RFC Amber 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 2021 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 Corridor Information Document (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 2023

The role of the C-OSS is also to follow and contribute to RNE projects related to capacity on the freight corridors:

- Path Coordination System (PCS) Development
- Review of International Timetabling Process
- Participating in the "C-OSS community" meetings gathering all C-OSS of all corridors aiming at finding common solutions and processes for all corridors

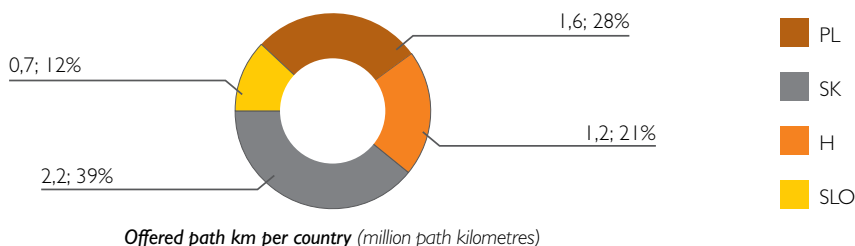
In order to intensify the close cooperation with applicants and improve the capacity offer, the C-OSS participated in the:

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

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

CAPACITY OFFER

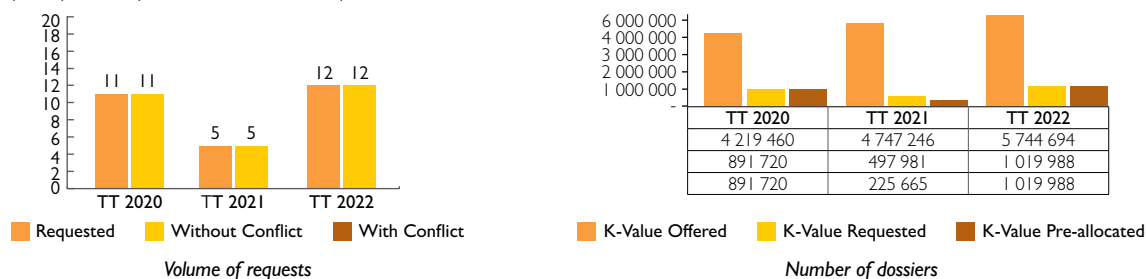
The 2022 timetable catalogue of **Pre-arranged Paths** was published on the **11 January 2021** offering customers around 5.7 million path kilometres for international traffic coordinated among IMs and AB. This dedicated capacity was offered and coordinated by the C-OSS



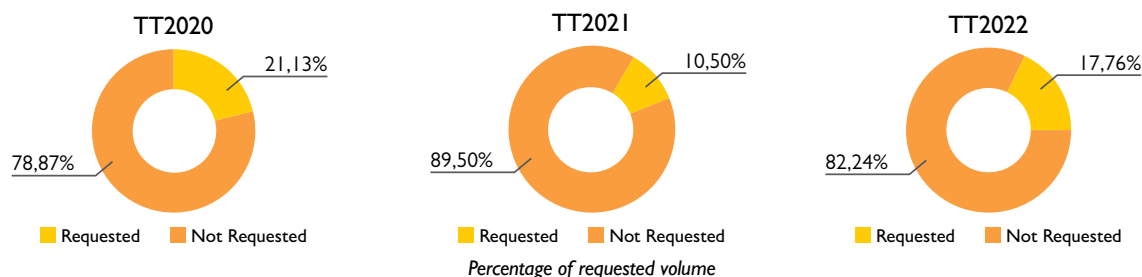
Until **12th of April 2021**, which was the deadline for placing international path requests for TT2022, the C-OSS Manager of RFC Amber had received twelve requests, up 140 percent, or 5 requests, from the same period last year. Volume of requested PaP capacity rose 104,0% for TT 2022 compared with TT2021 and was 1.02 million path km. In total 17% of the published capacity was requested. All requests were without conflicts and all of them were released to Path Elaboration in PCS. C-OSS of RFC11 pre-booked 1.02 million path km in 2021 versus 0.23 million path km in 2020, an increase of 343%. The KPIs for TT2022 are higher because the values for TT 2021, which is the reference base, were much lower.

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.



After the pre-allocation phase, the evaluation started with the goal to identify improvements to be implemented for TT2023. RFC Amber circulated together with all other RFCs in May 2021 a harmonized list for expression of capacity needs ("capacity wish-list") among all potential applicants, with a deadline to fill in the list by **18 August 2021**. Three applicants responded for RFC Amber.



Draft and final offer were provided on time for all 12 dossiers (**5 July 2021** and **23 August 2021**) respectively.

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 2021, the elaboration of the offer for TT 2023 started in September 2021.

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

In Czechowice Dziedzice PaPs from Małaszewicze have been connected to RFC Baltic-Adriatic PaPs, giving access to Mlada Boleslav (CZ).

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 2021 for publication as a PaP catalogue (DigCat) for TT 2023 in the PCS.

RESERVE CAPACITY

On **11 October 2021** RFC Amber published **Reserve Capacity** (RC) for TT 2022 through its C-OSS, offering customers 6,0 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. So far two requests for 0,13 million path kilometres had been placed for RC in TT2022. The applicants received the final offer in time.

More information about the C-OSS: https://rfc-amber.eu/contents/read/about_the_c_oss



740 m long Demo Train on the Sopron – Budapest section



TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT & TRAIN PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Our train performance team uses RailNetEurope Oracle Business Intelligence (OBI) for data gathering. The results of 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. Nonetheless, we consider the data from OBI is exact for the daily and periodical data analysis. even so System development is continuous. RNE is constantly developing its IT system and engaging in dialogue with users on this issue. Thanks to this, queries can be made, the results of which help interpretation, and they can be used well for preparing statements and reports and it is possible to measure the performance of the corridor through the **commonly applicable KPIs** defined by RailNetEurope.

Most modifications enhance data quality and help interpret situations. They give information about the real traffic circumstances and even show the data graphically. Thanks to it, the system has become better and more usable for the daily data analysis and ensures a wide range of data for the query.

Accuracy has been taken into account at departure (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, which point lists we update if it we see necessary from the continuously monitored data.

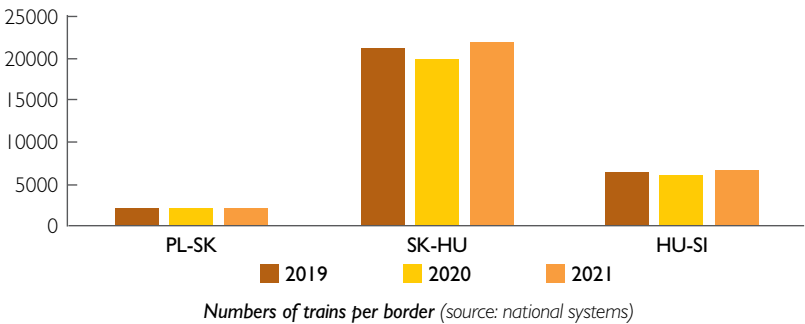
International freight trains crossing a border of an RFC are considered as RFC trains in the calculation. The calculation is done both with 30-minute and 15-minute punctuality thresholds where RFC Amber applied the 30-minute threshold.

Based on these conditions, the reporting tool OBI indicated a **punctuality** of 38% at departure (RFC entry) and 20% at destination (RFC exit). It is important to note that this indicator is influenced by many different factors, like interoperability, border controls, weather circumstances, technical conditions or language issues in the border sections in the network of RFCs. The working group is also continuously working on finding the reason how these values could be developed while the methodology used by RNE is also constantly improving.

The **“overall number of trains on the RFC”** as a value shows the total number of train runs - on selected pairs of border points. As we mentioned above, international freight trains crossing a border of an RFC are considered as RFC trains in the calculation.

At the same time, this indicator shows real traffic data which stem 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.

To overcome this computational problem, a development aimed at automating train linking at border sections is also in progress. The figures can be, however, illustrated per border sections (included more border crossing points) in a consolidated way. These border section figures are calculated for calendar year.



The rail freight traffic volume (number of trains) on the RFC Amber at the border sections shows a quite balanced picture in the past years. The slight decrease of the traffic flow in 2020 also derives from the reduced volume of transported goods, which resulted from the recent epidemiological period that has negatively affected the entire world economy. However, the growth in 2021 shows that the economy – and with it the transport sector – is starting to recover from the critical stage and this trend will hopefully continue in the coming years.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

There was a train accident on Saturday, 25 September 2021, in the afternoon at Siladice station (Galanta–Leopoldov line) in Slovakia. Eleven wagons of a freight train were derailed, damaging the infrastructure. Due to the incident, the derailed train caused damage of approximately 1 200 meters of track. All traffic were suspended on the section between Sereď and Leopoldov. Due to the possibility of a simple re-routing and due to the fact that traffic passing through this section is lower, the impact on traffic was not significant. Based on this, no international contingency management (ICM) procedure was initiated; however, all stakeholders were kept updated via various fora. The section was closed from 29 September 2021 to 8 October 2021. After this period, single line operation was launched and from 16 December 2021 both tracks are available for rail traffic.

Also, the re-routing overview of RFC Amber has been elaborated and published in accordance with the new structural requirements approved by RNE.

 Learn more about ICM under rfc-Amber.eu/assets/downloads/traffic_management/rfc_Amber_Re-Router-Overview-2022_Infra_Parameters_final.xlsx

CIP DEVELOPMENTS

The entire network already mapped in Customer Information Platform (CIP) has been extended in order to cover all IMs involved in at least one RFC mapped in CIP (as the previous version of the overview covered just the IMs with at least two RFCs mapped in CIP).



Likewise in line with the CIP CCB's decision, the map theme 'By Infrastructure Manager' has been made available in the public CIP map. Ahead of the publication of this map theme, the formerly randomly selected colour codes of individual IMs were adjusted to better match the colours used in the logos of these IMs.

The additional lines properties 'Number of Tracks', 'Maximum Train Length', 'Maximum Speed' and 'Usage' have been converted into standard ones in terms of their management on internal users' back-end as well as in terms of their display in CIPs' front-end and finally enabled for a public display as of 3 September 2021. By the time of their public display, the data collection for these line properties had been mostly completed with some local issues still to be addressed with the RFCs concerned (mainly North Sea-Mediterranean and North Sea-Baltic).

In addition to the above, the additional line property 'Track Gauge' has been implemented in CIP's database, on internal users' back-end and public display in CIPs' front-end. This quick implementation was feasible due to the actual values applicable for this new line property being already known for most of the countries / IMs represented in CIP and the remaining ones (mainly in Spain) being provided to CIP on short notice.

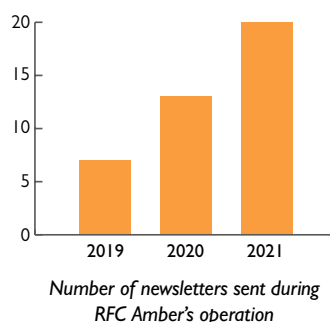
The actual state of play of the Digital Infrastructure Information System (Big Data 2.0)

- For the time being, the project was in a preparation phase, meaning a feasibility study was being conducted by RNE Joint Office in consultation with several RNE members;
- Main triggers for launching of the project were the reduction of complexity and costs;
- Once the project is implemented, the back-end of the involved IT tools would be simplified while the front-end would either stay the same or be updated, depending on the decision of relevant Change Control Board (CCB) (which is of course invited to submit its proposals and / or join the project);
- The project has been submitted for approval to RNE GA in December 2021 after which a Europe-wide tender for the supplier is foreseen in 2022;
- It is anticipated that the existing budget of Rail Facilities Portal and potentially also the expected Technical Assistance could be used to cover the implementation cost;
- The principal concept is that following the implementation Big Data would contain all the information which will be shown in the front-end of CIP and that Big Data would be collecting this information on an automated basis either from IM systems or from Register of Infrastructure (RINF). One of the tasks for 2022 required for achieving this overall goal would be finding a smart way for achieving this overall goal also in case of some individual countries for which there is no direct link between RINF and Central Reference Database (CRD).
- During the implementation, all individual IT applications (CIP, CRD, etc.) would be kept in parallel operation until the relevant CCB would give a green light for migration

 CIP is available at cip.rne.eu website.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

In 2021 the corridor prepared also its second Annual Report under the lead of the Marketing WG Issuing of electronic **newsletters** was also carried out regularly, informing customers and stakeholders about important achievements. In 2021 altogether nine e-Newsletters have been dispatched to Customers, all RAG-TAG members, Executive and Management Board Members and further stakeholders of the corridor. This is almost double the previous year's volume. **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. The number of launched newsletters has also been grown steadily.



Connecting Europe Express in Sopron

PUBLICITY

For the April-Issue of the internationally renowned railway publication **Global Railway Review** the Managing Director was offered to provide a three-page article about RFC Amber, which appeared in both the printed and the online version.

<https://www.globalrailwayreview.com/article/120511/rfc-Amber-gerhard-troche/>

The Connecting Europe Express in later summer created European-wide visibility for rail both to stakeholders and the general public. On its tour through Europe the Connecting Europe Express reached Sopron on the morning of **11 September 2021**, coming from Bratislava, where has entered RFC Amber tracks already the day before. On the welcome event RFC Amber had a stand, staffed by our Secretariat, providing its latest Annual Report 2020 as well as information brochures about the corridor and answering questions. A well visible RFC Amber roll-up displayed a map of the corridor and gave further information to many visitors. In the station and VIP-room the promotional video of RFC Amber as well as the video about the RFC Network was shown. The exhibition coaches of the train highlighted many important TEN-T projects and provided information about CINEA and rail innovation under the Shift2Rail-initiative. The well-visited event gave good visibility of RFC Amber to stakeholders and spread knowledge about the corridor to many citizens, strengthening the regional identification with the corridor. During its tour, the Connecting Europe Express visited all countries of RFC Amber.

On **23 September 2021** the **Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor (RFC AWB)** hold its **Inauguration Event** in the Slovenian capital Ljubljana. The Chair of the RFC Amber Management Board and its Managing Director, Mrs. Andrea Mosóczi and Dr. Gerhard Troche, were present at the event and congratulated the corridor to its establishment. The Inauguration Event provided the opportunity to exchange in a pleasant atmosphere with Members and many stakeholders of both corridors. RFC Amber is looking forward to a continued close and fruitful collaboration with RFC Alpine-Western Balkan and both Directors agreed to regular exchange and seek cooperation in various fields of common interest. The day following the Inauguration Event the Connecting Europe Express visited Ljubljana, meaning that the train has now visited all countries of RFC Amber. Even in Ljubljana RFC Amber was present at the Welcome Event with brochures and information material, gaining the interest of many sector stakeholders as well as citizens.

On **20 October 2021** freight train operator GYSEV CARGO operated the **first 740 m long Demo Train on the Sopron – Budapest section** of RFC Amber in the framework of the international CORCAP-project. Stakeholders of the corridor, including Representatives of the European Commission, the Hungarian Ministry for Innovation and Technology and from cooperating Rail Freight Corridors and project partners were able to accompany the train in two passenger coaches attached to it. The TEN-T Demo-Train was the first 740 m long freight train on the 216 km long Sopron – Budapest line, promoting the TEN-T target standard for freight lines of the TEN-T network. The line Sopron – Budapest belongs to Rail Freight Corridors RFC Amber, RFC Orient/East-Med and RFC Rhine-Danube, reflecting its importance for international rail transport. The experiences gathered from the TEN-T Demo-Train will feed into further analyses by the parties concerned. The aim is to provide better conditions for more efficient and competitive rail freight on key routes for freight, with a particular focus on enabling the operation of longer trains.



Connecting Europe Express in Ljubljana

On **15 November 2021** RFC Amber held a **meeting with the Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups** (RAG-TAG) of the corridor. The meeting was organised as a hybrid-meeting, allowing participants to attend both in person and online to discuss various topics of importance for the attractiveness of the corridor to customers.

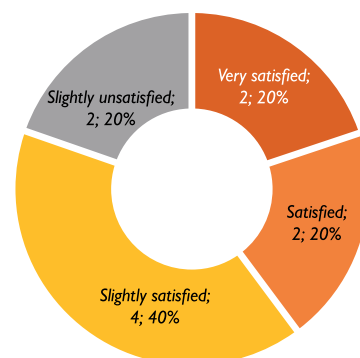
SATISFACTION SURVEY

During the RFC Network February 2020, the issue of the new system elaboration arose in the course of shortening the survey and compiling it in an in-house manner (without an external company). The new survey was elaborated by RNE Network Assistant and RFC representatives in User Satisfaction WG, based on majority decisions. The new research launched in 2020, in the very year when RFC Amber joined to the research platform. In the new system, the target population has remained the same, namely the users of corridor lines (both having and not having corridor capacity).

The interviews took place between **26 August 2021 and 8 October, 2021**. RFC Amber could increase the number of its evaluations compared to 2020, from 7 to 10, which is a relatively big step forward. However, it is a very small sample size; therefore, we should analyse it carefully keeping in mind its limits. As an operating corridor, RFC Amber faced more practical issues in 2021 than in 2020, which influenced the most important areas for improvement, namely the Capacity Restrictions, Infrastructure and Train Performance Management.

RFC Amber's initiatives are relevant, they reflect well-identified market needs confirmed by users' opinion, thus they can determine the future actions. Based on the results, RFC Amber's professional effort, activity plans, developments and customer-oriented approach are perceived and appreciated by the partners. This is also articulated in stronger emotions in the overall impression of RFC Amber, where the convincing majority of the respondents were satisfied.

Based on the results, RFC Amber closed a good year in 2021. We can see the areas where we have improved and also where more focus is still needed, but RFC Amber has made great progress in 2021.



More details under rfc-Amber.eu/assets/downloads/other_public_documents/Summary_RFC_Amber_USS_2021.pdf



RFC Amber was represented on the welcome events of the Connecting Europe Express
(Sopron, 11 September 2021; Ljubljana, 24 September 2021)



RFC Amber was present at the opening event of RFC Alpine-Western Balkan and congratulated the corridor to its establishment (Ljubljana, 23 September 2021)



Participants of the first 740 m long Demo-Train on the Sopron–Budapest section of RFC Amber in the framework of the international CORCAP-project (Sopron, 20 October 2021)



Meeting with the RFC Amber Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups (Budapest, 15 November 2021)

At the end of 2021 RFC Amber had reached important milestones in its development: It had accomplished its third year of operation, having become an active and renowned Member of the RFC Network, it had adapted working methods to allow smooth operation and management of the corridor even under pandemic conditions, resumed the exchange with the Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups and it had successfully implemented and finalised its (prolonged) Programme Support Action (PSA). Also, our corridor had been well present at European Year-of-Rail-events – during the visits of the Connecting Europe Express in Sopron and Ljubljana and in connection with an International Rail Freight Workshop and TEN-T Demo-Train in Sopron – , events, which gave good visibility of our corridor to European and national policy- and decision-makers and to the general public.

At the same time also new challenges arose during 2021. After funding under the PSA expired, we actively explored new options to seek EU-funding. After assessing various options, RFC Amber opted for seeking funding under the new Technical Assistance for RFCs, which the Commission had announced already since a while. The call was published in December 2021 and still in the end of the year preparation of a funding proposal started. We expect signing of the Grant Agreement in 2022, entering again into a more stable phase of financing – though with a lower level of EU-funding than earlier. Also, the funding format under the TA will be fundamentally different from the earlier PSA, implying both simplifications in terms of reporting while also leading to new obligations to be fulfilled. RFC Amber will certainly be open to consider additional EU-funding options, e.g. in multi-corridor-projects under the CEF, where appropriate.

In 2022 and beyond we can expect further changes for the Rail Freight Corridors, including RFC Amber. The proposal for a revised TEN-T Regulation (EU) 1315/2015 foresees the introduction of a new concept of European Transport Corridors (ETCs), replacing the current Core Network Corridors and with the governance structures of the current RFCs becoming an integral element. The proposal also includes certain geographical changes to the corridors. Further, in 2022 a proposal for a revised RFC-Regulation (EU) 913/2010 is expected to be published by the Commission, possibly re-defining the tasks and obligations of the RFC governance structures resp. future rail governance of the future ETCs. Without wanting to anticipate the result of these revisions of the legal framework we need to prepare for a phase of transition from the current RFCs to the new ETCs. According to the Commission proposal of December 2021 for a revised TEN-T Regulation the setting up of a new European Transport Corridor (ETC) oriented at the alignments of the current RFCs Amber and Baltic-Adriatic is foreseen.

With the above having said, it is important that we do not lose the focus on our customers – but rather strengthen our customer orientation. This means also, that any changes to the RFCs, whether it concerns their funding sources or their likely integration into the new ETCs – in terms of geography or governance – , must not lead to a standstill or, even worse, interruption of our service to customers. Important challenges for the railway undertakings using our corridor and for terminals located along our corridor remain – our RFC Amber Bottleneck Study from 2020 has thoroughly analyzed several of them. Also, in 2022 new and unforeseen challenges arose with major changes in the geopolitical environment for European rail freight and for RFC Amber in particular. It is therefore important, that we continue our relentless efforts for improving the conditions for international rail freight.

Rail has by far not exploited its full market potential yet. If the important and ambitious objectives of the European Green Deal are to be achieved, rail freight will necessarily need to play a stronger role on the transport market. This means, that even RFC Amber needs to be able to accommodate more freight traffic on its lines. With good cooperation and joint efforts of railway undertakings, infrastructure managers, allocation bodies, terminals and other stakeholders involved we are confident, that we can make important progress. In 2021 we could celebrate the European Year of Rail, but we are aware of, that also long-term perspective is needed. Therefore, RFC Amber and its Members are willing to contribute to making the 2020-ies to a "Decade of Rail".

Legend

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



CONTACT DETAILS



Andrea Mosóczy
Chair of the Management Board
+36 30 248 5813
amosoczy@gysev.eu



Dr. Gerhard Troche
Managing Director
+36 30 604 4512
director@rfc-amber.eu



András Nyíri
RAG-TAG Spokesperson
andras.nyiri@railcargo.com



Roman Stańczak
C-OSS manager
+48 22 473 3469
c-oss@rfc-amber.eu



Eszter Boglárka Gádos
Secretariat
+36 30 184 7884
secretariat@rfc-amber.eu

WE WORK TOGETHER

PLK | PKP Polskie Linie Kolejowe S.A.
PKP Polskie Linie Kolejowe Spółka Akcyjna | IM, Republic of Poland
info@plk-sa.pl

ŽSR | Railways of the Slovak Republic
Železnice Slovenskej republiky | IM, Slovak Republic
hovorca@zsr.sk

MÁV | MÁV Hungarian State Railways Company Limited by Shares
MÁV Magyar Államvasutak Zrt. | IM, Hungary
forgalom.palyavasut@mav.hu

GYSEV | Győr–Sopron–Ebenfurti Vasút Zrt.
Raab–Oedenburg–Ebenfurter Eisenbahn AG | IM, Hungary & Austria
gysev@gysev.hu

VPE | Rail Capacity Allocation Office, VPE Ltd.
VPE Vasúti Pályakapacitás-elosztó Kft. | AB, Hungary
vpe@vpe.hu

SŽ-I | Slovenian Railways – Infrastructure Ltd.
Slovenske železnice – Infrastruktura, d.o.o. | IM, Republic of Slovenia
vposta.infra@slo-zeleznice.si

