

ANNUAL REPORT

RFC AMBER
2023

TIMELINE 2023

9 January	Publication of PaP Catalogue for TT 2024
9 January	Publication of CID Books for TT 2024
7 February	Management Board meeting (28th) online
28 March	Management Board meeting (29th) in Budapest
9-12 May	Transport and Logistic Fair in Munich
22 May	Railway and Terminal Advisory Group meeting in Dunajská Streda
30 May	Rail Transport Day in Stockholm
21 June	Publication of the RFC Amber Annual Report for 2022
22 June	Management Board meeting (30th) online
24 August	Launching of the User Satisfaction Survey
12 September	Management Board meeting (31st) in Krakow
5 October	Joint meeting with the RFC Amber and RFC Baltic-Adriatic Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups in Rome
9 October	Publication of Reserve Capacity Catalogue for TT 2024
19 October	RFC Amber participates in Baltic-Adriatic Forum in Budapest
18 December	Management Board meeting (32nd) online

MISSION

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



FOREWORD	4
INTRODUCTION	6
About us	6
Technical Assistance	6
Corridor governance	7
MAIN ACTIVITIES	8
Corridor One-Stop-Shop	8
Capacity offer	8
Volume of capacity requests & offers	9
Reserve Capacity	9
PHOTO GALLERY	10
MAIN ACTIVITIES	12
Traffic management & Train performance monitoring	12
Commonly applicable KPIs	13
Coordination of Temporary Capacity Restrictions	14
Incident Management	14
CIP Developments	14
Update of the Transport Market Study	15
Promoting compatibility between performance schemes	15
CUSTOMER ORIENTATION	16
Marketing & Communication	16
Publicity	16
Satisfaction Survey	17
OUTLOOK	18



DEAR READER,

if there was a year in the existence of RFC Amber up till now, which could be characterized as “normal”, it was probably the year 2023. The pandemic had already been passed in the beginning of the previous year and did not any longer affect our activities in any way. There were changes looming at the horizon in form of a revision of the TEN-T-Regulation, which would have a major impact on the freight corridors in the future, but which did not yet affect our day-to-day business yet.

Nonetheless, the up-coming changes were pro-actively addressed by RFC Amber by further developing its cooperation with RFC Baltic-Adriatic with a view on a possible future merger between both corridors. This cooperation manifested itself in form of the second Joint Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups (RAG-TAG) meeting of both corridors in Rome in October 2023 and in form of a first Joint Meeting of the Management Board respectively General Assembly of the two corridors.

The exchange with railway undertakings and terminals was strengthened by arranging in total two RAG-TAG-meetings in 2023, the already mentioned joint meeting in Rome in October and a RFC Amber RAG-TAG-meeting in Dunajská Streda in Slovakia in May 2023, kindly hosted by METTRANS and combined with an interesting site-visit to the intermodal terminal at that location.

To better reach out to actual and potential users of RFC Amber, we also participated in a joint stand of RailNetEurope and all eleven RFCs at the Transport & Logistics Fair in Munich, also in May 2023. Another important event to maintain close contacts with our stakeholders, especially on the policy-side, was the EU Rail Transport Day, which took place in end of May 2023 in the Swedish capital Stockholm.

In 2023 RFC Amber also revised its corridor objectives, defining in total five objectives, covering capacity management, operations and market development. For all objectives short- and medium-term target values were defined; four of the objectives are based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) commonly agreed in the RFC Network, while a fifth objective is corridor-specific and concerns the provision of pre-arranged paths with improved parameters. The new corridor objectives are included in the updated Implementation Plan, which was elaborated in 2023 and published in January 2024.

We would like to sincerely thank the entire team working in and for RFC Amber, the Members of the Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups and their Spokesperson, Mr András Nyíri, and all other stakeholders for their continued commitment 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,

In 2023 RFC Amber reaches its fifth year of operation. Since the establishment of the corridor, it has become an integral and valued part of the network of European Rail Freight Corridors. What could not be foreseen, when the corridor was launched, were the crises, which affected railways, the economy and the society in many different, but profound ways. First there was the COVID-pandemic and – after it was overcome and we were again on a path of recovery – a war in our neighbourhood broke out, which also affected rail freight during entire 2023.

With three of four countries of RFC Amber being immediate neighbours of Ukraine, our corridor is, due to its geographic location, particularly affected by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The effects of it on rail freight were manifold, with the most important ones being the partial discontinuation and partial re-organisation of Euro-Asian rail freight flows – with several border-crossing points at the EU Eastern border losing its function for this traffic – and the sudden role, which rail had (and still continues) to play in replacing previously seaborne exports and imports from and to Ukraine with rail-based transport solutions between the Ukrainian border and destinations and seaports in the EU. Ukrainian grain exports by rail came very much into the focus of public awareness, but the range of commodities to be handled was and is much broader.

Rail freight companies – once again – proved their flexibility and responsiveness to tackle the situation and find logistical solutions to cope with new transport volumes and changed market requirements. The joining of RFC Amber to the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes helped to facilitate the exchange between rail freight operators, infrastructure managers and policy decision makers. At the same time, the practical experience with the setting up of new services also underlines the importance and urgency of effectively addressing the bottlenecks for international rail freight, which were thoroughly identified by RFC Amber. I therefore very much welcome the analysis launched by RFC Amber to investigate in-depth the situation at the Hungarian-Slovenian border crossing at Hodoš-Őriszentpéter and on its access lines (though the need for Railway Undertakings for Slovenian network access contracts to enter the border station Hodoš remains a cumbersome issue). The Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups also see positively on the measures for improvement implemented already previously at Slovak-Hungarian border crossings.

The intensifying cooperation between RFC Amber and RFC Baltic-Adriatic paves the way for the future network of European Transport Corridors (ETCs), in which rail and rail freight must play an important role. The RAG-TAG-Members highly welcomed the organisation of the second joint RAG-TAG-meeting of RFCs Amber and Baltic-Adriatic in Rome in October 2023 and we are looking forward to the continued exchange with the corridor members and remain available to contribute with our views and expertise.

The cooperation between Rail Freight Corridors, which increased in 2022, can help to support a positive development in this regard. We therefore highly welcomed, that RFCs Amber, Baltic-Adriatic, Orient/East-Med and Rhine-Danube jointly carried out an ICM-Case Study of capacity allocation rules in case of international disruption in 2022, involving also railway undertakings in it – and hope that its conclusions will lead to a further improved international contingency management in the future. We also highly support the concept of joint RAG-TAG-meetings of RFCs Amber and Baltic-Adriatic, of which the first took place in Prague in October 2022, since both corridors share many customers, traffic flows – and challenges.

There are many areas and needs for improvement, which deserve attention, and RAG-TAG Members are looking forward to discuss them in the continued exchange with the RFC Amber Members. We remain available to contribute with our views and expertise – and hope, that we can help to jointly give stakeholders and policy-makers more positive surprises in the future.



András Nyíri
RAG-TAG Spokesperson

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 VPE Rail Capacity Allocation Nonprofit Ltd.. 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.

- 2.853 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).

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TA)

RFC Amber is a beneficiary of the **Technical Assistance (TA)** of the **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)** under the project name “Promoting an effective implementation of Regulation (EU) 913/2010 by Rail Freight Corridor Amber”, project acronym CEF-TA-Amber.

The Project Management activity is undertaken by GYSEV, as the Coordinator mandated by the Management Board for the conclusion and management of the Grant Agreement. The consortium consists of six cooperating Parties (Beneficiaries), which are the Members of the corridor. **The action runs from 1 October 2021 until 31 December 2024.** In the Grant Agreement a list of deliverables with criteria is laid down, forming the basis for the EU-funding. The corridor has prepared the following deliverables in 2023:

- D1.1 – Implementation plan [Art 9]; Lead Beneficiary: VPE
- D1.2 – Transport market study [Art 9(3)]; Lead Beneficiary: GYSEV
- D1.3-1.5 – Documents on infrastructure works [Art 12]; Lead Beneficiary: PLK
- D1.6-1.8 – Documentation on capacity needs & capacity provided / requested [Art 13 and 14]; Lead Beneficiary: PLK
- D1.9-1.11 – Register of capacity requests [Art 15]; Lead Beneficiary: PLK
- D1.12-1.14 – Corridor information document [Art 18]; Lead Beneficiary: VPE
- D1.15-1.17 – Document on performance monitoring & user satisfaction [Art 19(2) and 19(3)]; Lead Beneficiary: VPE
- D1.18 – Further documentation; Lead Beneficiary: GYSEV

Most of the Deliverables have to be produced annually while some of them (e.g. the Transport Market Study) have to be elaborated once during the duration of the action.

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:

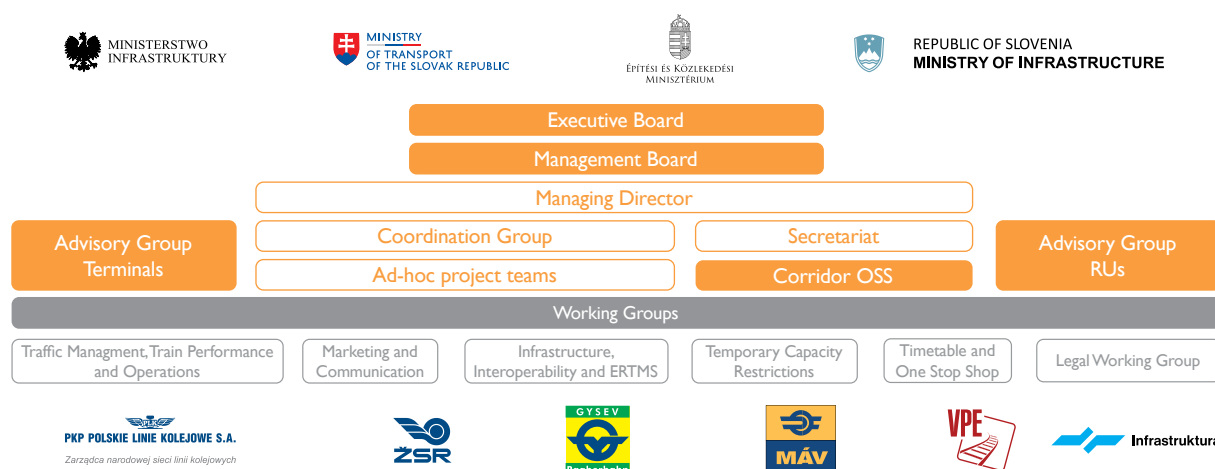
- **The Executive Board (EB)**, which is the highest-level body assigned to the corridor, is composed of representatives from the Ministries.
- **The Management Board (MB)**, which is the main body in charge of operation of RFC Amber and having the responsibility for managing and developing the corridor.

The MB held four meetings in 2023, two of them took place physically, in Budapest and Krakow. The Management Board re-elected the vice-chair of the Management Board on 12 September 2023 for the period between 1 January 2024 and 30 September 2025.

The **Coordination Group** is still focusing on the coordination of major activities and tasks not belonging to one sole Working Group (WG), but rather requiring a more complex coordination, e.g. define the budget of the corridor or project planning. 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. Regular project planning workshops were held in order to have a continuous coordination regarding the deliverables to be submitted as it is laid down in the TA requirements.

The working groups met also mostly online. Most of the WGs usually meet two times per year; the **TT&OSS WG** held two 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.

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



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 and since 2018 Mr Roman Stańczak holds the position of C-OSS Manager of RFC Amber.

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 2023 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 2025

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

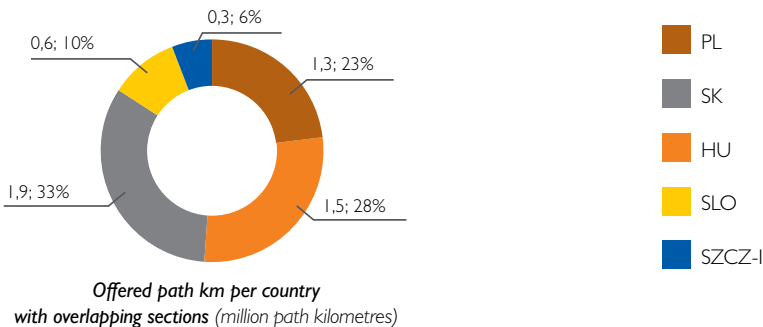
- Path Coordination System (PCS) Development
- Review of International Timetabling Process (TTR)
- Participating in the "C-OSS community" meetings gathering all C-OSS of all corridors aiming
- at finding common solutions and processes for all corridors

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

- PCS Trainings
- Forum Train Europe Conference (FTE B)

CAPACITY OFFER

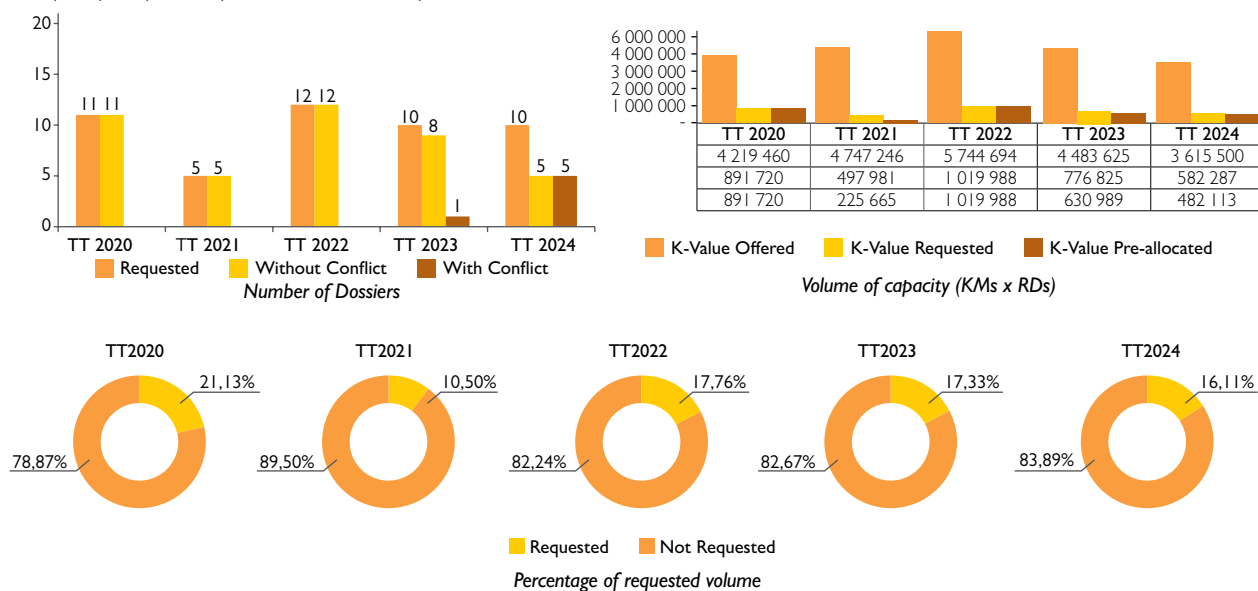
The 2024 timetable catalogue of Pre-arranged Paths was published on the **9 January 2023** offering customers around 3.6 million path kilometres for international traffic coordinated among IMs and AB, and 5.6 million path kilometers including overlapping. This dedicated capacity was offered and coordinated by the C-OSS.



Until **11th of April 2023**, which was the deadline for placing international path requests for TT2024, the C-OSS Manager of RFC Amber had received ten requests, the same as in the previous year. In total 16% of the published capacity was requested. Five requests were in conflicts. All conflicts were solved and dossiers were released to Path Elaboration in PCS. C-OSS of RFC Amber 11 pre-booked 0.48 million path km in TT2024 versus 0.63 million path km in TT2023, a drop by 23.81%.

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 TT2025. RFC Amber circulated together with all other RFCs in May 2023 a harmonized list for expression of capacity needs ("capacity wish-list") among all potential applicants, with a deadline to fill in the list by **15 August 2023**.

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 2024, the elaboration of the offer for TT 2025 started in September 2023.

The offer for TT 2025 will include among others:

- In Jaworzno, the PaP from Małaszewicze is connected with the PaP of RFC5 creating multi-corridor PaP enabling access to Česká Třebová
- In cooperation with RFC B-A the PaPs for extra long trains of 660 m from Czechowice Dziedzice to Žilina and to Bratislava are offered in TT2024. The standard maximum allowed train length on section Czechowice Dz. – Zwardoń is 360 m.
- The offer also includes a route for a 700 m train from Bratislava to Szombathely

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 2023 for publication as a PaP catalogue (DigCat) for TT 2025 in the PCS.

RESERVE CAPACITY

On **9 October 2023** RFC Amber published **Reserve Capacity (RC)** for TT 2024 through its C-OSS, offering customers 4.6 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), which applicants may request up to 30 days before a train run.. The applicants received the final offer in time.



RFC Amber was present at the Transport&Logistics fair in a joint stand of RailNetEurope and the RFC Network
(Munich, 9-12 May 2023)



RFC Amber held its first Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups meeting in 2023 hosted by METRANS at its premises
(Dunajská Streda, 18 May 2023)



RFC Amber was present on the European Rail Transport Day organized by RailNetEurope in cooperation with the EU Commission (Stockholm, 30 May 2023)



RFC Amber and RFC Baltic-Adriatic held their second joint meeting with the Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups of both corridors (Rome, 5 October 2023)

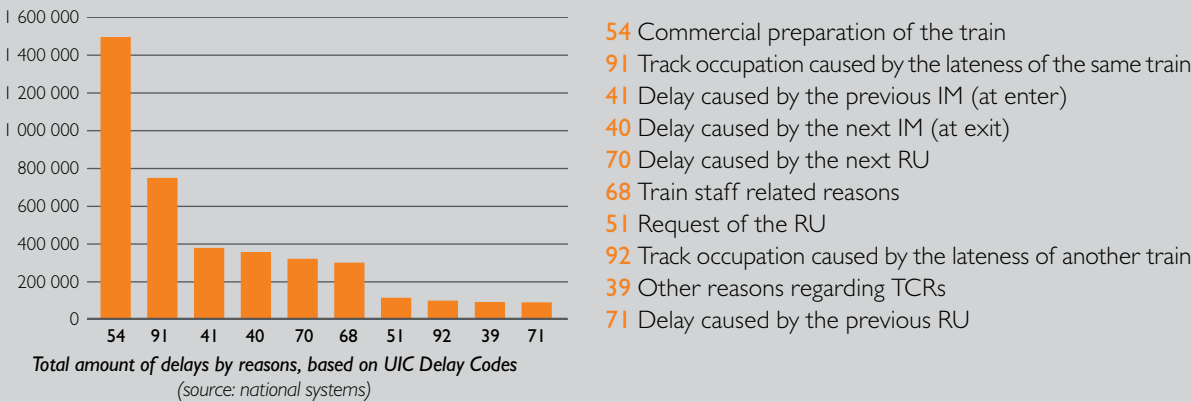
TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT & TRAIN PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The activity of the Working Group was fairly intense also in 2023. Beside the analysis of the newly introduced KPIs, a deep investigation of the punctuality reasons was carried out.

A thorough examination was conducted regarding the usage of delay codes on the MÁV network. It focused on how often a delay code was used and how much delay was attributed to each code. This investigation provided insights into where and why delays occur on sections of the MÁV network under the jurisdiction of RFC Amber.

By far, the highest amount of delay was recorded for **code 54**, namely commercial preparation of the train. This code is primarily used at the origin to explain delays before the 'train ready' statement has been made by the Railway Undertakings. Consequently, the responsible stakeholder is the RU. However, this code is not very informative, as there can be several reasons why an international freight train cannot depart on time from the origin, such as late arrival of the train driver, last-minute changes to train composition, or delays in train loading.

The captions on the maps represent bigger stations, marshalling yards and handover stations. The location with the highest amount of recorded delay for this delay code was Soroksári út rendező which serves two main functions: managing train movements between the station and both the Port of Csepel and the Metrans Terminal. However, the condition of the infrastructure is very poor in these sections, and although this alone cannot explain the huge amount of recorded delay under this delay code, the slow track speed connections to the marshalling yard may further amplify the existing issues at the Port of Csepel and Metrans Terminal.



Among the secondary delay codes, the usage of **code 91** is prominent. This code is used when an already delayed international freight train is stopped for example to allow a passenger train to pass. The amount of delay recorded for this code is approximately half that of **code 54**. On the Hungarian part of the RFC Amber network, this code is primarily used on the double-track line between Budapest and Hegyeshalom. It is a frequent occurrence on this line for an international freight train to be stopped to allow one or more passenger trains to pass. According to national rules, passenger trains have priority over freight trains. This code can also be used during planned reconstruction works. For example, when there is a nightly total closure preventing a late freight train from continuing its journey until morning. **Code 92** refers to track occupation caused by the lateness of another train. It is used in the same situations as the previous one, except that freight trains running on-time should not encounter planned total closures. When this code is used to explain delays the freight train that had to be stopped (because of another train) was running as scheduled.

We can draw the conclusion that most international freight trains are not running in their allocated time slots. This is because most of the delays arose at the Origin, and as a result most of the international freight trains are already late when they depart from their Origin.

Among the delay codes for which the Infrastructure Manager is the responsible stakeholder, **code 39** was the most frequently used. In 2023, this code typically referred to delays primarily caused by urgent reconstruction works on the Budapest-Hegyeshalom line between Biatorbágy and Szárliget stations.

If it hadn't been for these reconstruction works, the most commonly used delay code for which the Infrastructure Manager (IM) is responsible would have been **code 32**, delay caused by temporary speed restrictions. It is very important to note that delays caused by temporary speed restrictions introduced due to bad weather conditions or rail track fractures are not included in this delay code.

The delay code most frequently used to explain delays caused by external factors was **code 40**. This code indicates delays arising because the neighboring Infrastructure Manager did not grant permission for the train to enter their network. The station where this code was most frequently used to explain delays was Óriszentpéter. This was largely attributable to track capacity issues in Hodoš, which is the handover station at this border crossing.

Since the amount of delay attributed to different UIC delay codes varies significantly, and some codes are encoded with orders of magnitude more delay than others, a bar chart that shows the distribution of the amount of delays by cause could provide further insights into what is happening with the international freight trains.

The prominence of delay **code 54** is noteworthy, with most delays occurring at the origin. This indicates that Railway Undertakings can do significantly more to enhance the predictability of freight traffic than the Infrastructure Managers. After departing from the origin, international freight trains can accumulate significant additional delays due to passenger trains being prioritized over freight trains.

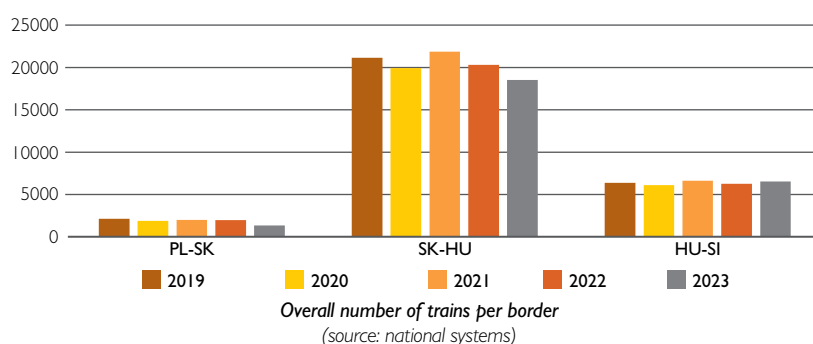
In summary, it can be said that in 2023, the distribution of delays among the codes was influenced by the urgent reconstruction works on the Budapest-Hegyeshalom line, because under normal circumstances, **code 39** is rarely used. Typically, the most commonly used delay code for which the IM is responsible is 32 – temporary speed restrictions. Almost 11.000 minutes of delay was recorded under this delay reason.

COMMONLY APPLICABLE KPIs

The continuous measuring and monitoring of the operations and market development KPIs is also a regular task of the working group. The punctuality was **37% at departure** (RFC entry) and **26% at destination** (RFC exit), calculated by 30 minutes threshold.

The KPI **“number of trains crossing a border along the RFC”** as a single value shows the total number of international train runs on selected pairs of border points. International freight trains crossing a border of an RFC are considered as RFC trains in the calculation. The report management tool of RNE indicated a value of **18 484 trains** in the report of 2023.

Concerning the border figures, the only possibility right now to do thorough investigations is still using the data available in the national systems, but these systems cannot provide the RFCs with reports that cover the whole corridor. Border section figures called “number of trains per border” are still stemming from national systems, calculated for calendar year.

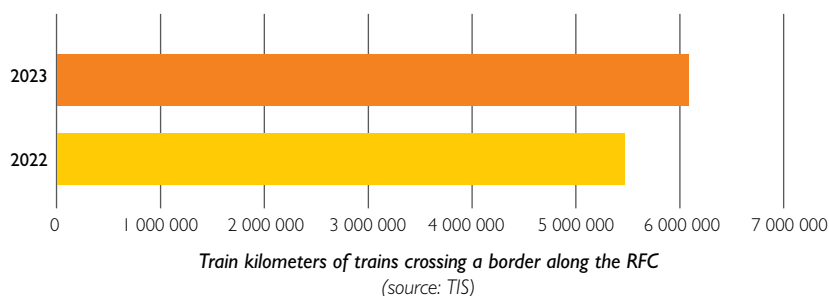


The rail freight traffic volume (“number of trains per border”) on the RFC Amber at the border sections shows a quite balanced picture in the past years.

The **“train kilometers of trains crossing a border along the RFC”** is calculated as the sum of real distances between origin and destination of all trains crossing a border along the RFC. Based on the analysis of the results, RFC Amber decided

MAIN ACTIVITIES

to publish this value compared to previous year's one as well. The calculation of this KPI is based on data in RNE's TIS. International freight trains crossing a border of an RFC are considered in the calculation. The presented data might differ from the data gathered in the national systems due to data quality differences between individual IMs.



Continuous monitoring of the different types of **dwell times** and their calculation methods at the border sections took also place, however, the exact definition is still under elaboration. Till that time, IMs used partly their own national systems and partly the TIS for the determination of the dwelling times.

[Detailed KPI reports are available under rne.eu/corridor-management/rfc-kpis/](https://rne.eu/corridor-management/rfc-kpis/)

COORDINATION OF TEMPORARY CAPACITY RESTRICTIONS

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.

In accordance with the Regulation (EU) 913/2010 and RNE Guidelines for Coordination/Publication of Planned Temporary Capacity Restrictions RFC Amber publishes a single document which contains the overview of Temporary Capacity Restrictions on the Corridor. So far, TCR WG updated the coordinated TCRs at least twice a year in August and January, however, **in 2023 RFC Amber set up an objective to provide more up-to-date information through increased frequency of publication.** Until switching to the TCR tool, as a draft solution, a so-called **“rolling publication”** was introduced, meaning a publication “at any time”, i.e. as soon as an IM has information about a TCR. Railway and Terminal Advisory Group Members were invited to express their expectations regarding the TCR publication and to issue an opinion about the published documents.

[Learn more about the TCRs under rfc-Amber.eu/contents/read/capacity_restrictions](https://rne.eu/contents/read/capacity_restrictions)

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

Severe weather conditions in Slovenia interrupted rail freight traffic from **4 August 2023**. Due to the consequences of storms and the rise of watercourses and torrents, railway traffic was already obstructed on some routes, and some local roads were also closed, which made impossible to carry out alternative road transport. There were complete and unexpected traffic interruptions on individual sections of the tracks and also the closure of individual lines and tracks.

All the listed emergencies affected the implementation of the operational timetable and occupancy infrastructure capacities. The competent services of the operator tried to eliminate emergencies in the shortest possible time. RFC Amber was in contact with the partner corridors in order to tackle the situation in the prescribed manner.

CIP DEVELOPMENTS

The **Customer Information Platform (CIP)** is an interactive, internet-based information tool utilised by internal users such as Rail Freight Corridors, Infrastructure Managers, as well as public users. It provides essential information on routing, terminals, track properties, infrastructure investment projects, and more.



RailNetEurope (RNE) and the Corridor Network were pleased to announce the launch of the new layout of the Customer Information Platform (CIP), which marks a significant advancement in terms of comprehensiveness, synergies, and accessibility of information. The new CIP system offers enhanced capabilities for adding further functionalities and improvements in the future. The new modernised and user-friendly layout and user interface will offer both internal and external users a better opportunity to create synergies and access data more efficiently.

The new CIP is a part of the **Railway Infrastructure System (RIS)**, where data and functionalities of other infrastructure-based sector registers, including ERA's **Registers of Infrastructure (RINF)**, are merged to create an even more comprehensive and complete tool. This will establish an accessible environment for anybody seeking Rail Freight Corridors information and will serve as a foundation for interaction between stakeholders.

 CIP is available at cip.rne.eu website.

UPDATE OF THE TRANSPORT MARKET STUDY

Still in 2022, RailNetEurope (RNE) managed a scoping and feasibility study for a European Transport Market Study for rail freight transport. Building on the outcomes of that study, RNE has launched an extension in order to put an equal focus also on the passenger transport. This extension of the feasibility study is being undertaken by TRT Trasporti e Territorio Srl (IT) and Hacon Ingenieurgesellschaft mbH (DE) on behalf of RNE.

After concluding the tendering process and evaluating the received offers, the winning bid from the consultant consortium consisting of Tplan and Panteia was well below the required budget cap. With the commitment of all of the RFCs to conduct a joint (basis for) updating of their individual Transport Market Studies with the agreed budget, RNE Joint Office has prepared the service contract to be concluded between RNE and the RFCs.

The project has three phases:

- Phase 1 (inception phase) – analysis of current transport markets, finalized end 2023
- Phase 2 (analysis and update) – analysis of the future transport markets and execution of the corridor specific TMS updates.
- Phase 3 (validation & final report) – consists of consultation with RFCs and producing final reports;

The outcome of the Inception phase was the Inception report, which was presented to the RNE Corridor Management and the four Project Sponsors in early August 2023. The main deliverable of the Phase 1, **the interim report**, was originally planned for September but its finalisation was adjusted to October. This has, however, not affected the overall timeline and later stages of the project.

The data on geographical alignment of RFCs' routes and the existing line parameters was extracted from CIP and provided to the supplier of the joint RFCs' TMS update based on the actual state in CIP production as of **2 August 2023**. Furthermore, an updated list of projects (for the analysis of the future market) was extracted from CIP and provided to the consultant consortium of RFCs' TMS update based on the actual state in CIP production in early December 2023. During the process of analysing both current and future transport markets until 2030, the contractor made also updates for CIP data until December of 2023, which is the final date to integrate any CIP data in the TMS project. To this end, members of the CIP Development Group have committed to safeguard the updating of their investment plans in CIP within the timeframe outlined above.

PROMOTING COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN THE PERFORMANCE SCHEMES

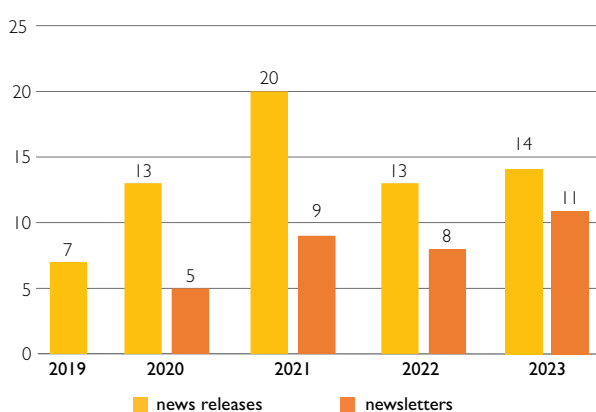
Art. 19 of the Regulation (EU) 913/2010 refers a task for rail freight corridors regarding performance schemes. Based on the first point of this article, the Management Board of the freight corridor shall promote compatibility between the performance schemes along the freight corridor, as referred to in Article 11 of Directive 2001/14/EC. **This was also a requirement of the current CEF TA project.**

The MB reviewed the currently applicable performance schemes (timetable year 2023/24) at MÁV, GYSEV, VPE, SŽ-I, PLK, ZSR, and set up a comparison table.

According to the first evaluation, the main differences are of the monetary values, which is a very sensitive issue for all member states. There might be a room for harmonization in those aspects which are definitely in scope of the IMs and just 1 or maximum 2 IM diverge from the earliest available common value / level to be reached. Performance scheme to be applied for corridor trains might be a potential step for further harmonization.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

In 2023 the corridor prepared also its fourth 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 2023 altogether eleven 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.



Number of launched newsletters and news releases

PUBLICITY

RFC Amber was present at the **Transport&Logistics fair in Munich from 9 to 12 of May** in a joint stand of RailNetEurope and the RFC Network. The presence on this biannual fair, one of Europe's biggest meeting places of the freight transport and logistics sector, allowed meeting customers and stakeholders of the corridor and gave also many new contacts. The stand attracted many visitors, even from companies, which had not come into contact with the rail freight corridors before. The presence of RFC Amber in the fair was seen very positively by customers and stakeholders and the RFC Amber Management Board will follow up the contacts made and feedback received during the fair.

On **18 May 2023** RFC Amber held its first meeting in 2023 of the **Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups**, kindly hosted by METRANS at its premises in Dunajská Streda. During the meeting many important issues and possible approaches to improvements were discussed. RAG-TAG Spokesperson Mr. András Nyíri gave insights into challenges and difficulties experienced by customers in the usage of the corridor, highlighting i.a. problems with formal requirements imposed on railway undertakings when crossing the Slovenian-Hungarian border, challenges in rerouting of trains during closure of the Budapest–Kelebia line and shortcomings in the future TEN-T network with regard to the connection to Malaszewicze at the Polish eastern border.

Another important topic was the update of the corridor's Implementation Plan, one of the major tasks of the corridor during 2023. Dr. Gerhard Troche complemented with a presentation of the draft new corridor objectives, which will be laid down in the Implementation Plan. Also improvements in the frequency of TCR publication were discussed.

The meeting gathered around 20 participants from all four countries of the corridor, including representatives of the Ministries in charge of transport of Slovakia and Hungary. A visit to the intermodal terminal of METRANS concluded the meeting.

On **30 May 2023** RailNetEurope organized in Stockholm in cooperation with the EU Commission the **Rail Transport Day 2023**. The European Rail Transport Day is the successor of the Rail Freight Day, which in past years traditionally took place in December in Vienna. The change of name marks a widened thematical scope of the event, which now includes even passenger traffic and a strengthened focus on rail innovation. RFC Amber team was also present at the event, consisting of the Managing Director, the Leader of the Marketing Working Group, and the Secretariat, used the occasion to exchange with stakeholders of the corridor, with policy decision makers and with colleagues from connecting freight corridors.

On **5 October 2023** RFC Amber and RFC Baltic-Adriatic held their second **joint meeting with the Railway and Terminal Advisory Groups** of both corridors in the Italian capital Rome. The meeting was well-attended, gathering more than 60 participants from all countries of the two corridors. The EU-Coordinator for the Baltic-Adriatic Core Network Corridor, Ms. Anne E. Jensen, held the keynote speech for the event, highlighting the role of the Trans-European Networks for Transport (TEN-T) for strengthening the competitiveness of European rail freight and underlined the importance of cooperation. Mr. Szabolcs Tál, Leader of the Train Performance Monitoring Working Group, also gave an insight into the multitude of methodological challenges in measuring train punctuality. Representatives from the International Union of Railways (UIC) and RailNetEurope (RNE) gave a presentation about the Translate4Rail project

pilots and demonstrated the solution to tackle language barriers at borders with the tool based on voice and language recognition. Two Representatives of the EU Commission, Mr. Siamak Jalali and (via video-link) Mr. Reinhard Haller, informed about the on-going revision of the TEN-T-Guidelines and about the integration of Rail Freight Corridors into the future European Transport Corridors (ETC).

On **19 October 2023** the **Baltic-Adriatic Forum** took for the first time place in the Hungarian capital Budapest. Dr. Gerhard Troche, Managing Director of RFC Amber, gave a speech about the contribution of the corridor to the Baltic-Adriatic transport axis and participated in a Roundtable on Hungary's role in the TEN-T transport corridors and international supply chains. Dr. Troche presented the genesis of RFC Amber, explaining the ambition to close gaps in the network of rail freight corridors and addressing freight flows in the Baltic-Adriatic transport axis, which had not been covered before. He also highlighted important achievements, like the provision of international train paths for longer freight trains and presented the positive traffic development on the Western Hungarian North-South axis after electrification of the route, making it today one of RFC Amber's most dynamically growing corridor sections and Hungary's second-most important rail freight route in terms of traffic volume. He also emphasized the close cooperation with RFC Baltic-Adriatic with a view on the future setting-up of the ETC Baltic-Adriatic.



In the Roundtable discussion Dr. Troche highlighted, that a key contribution of RFC Amber to the future ETC Baltic-Adriatic will be additional capacity, increased resilience by providing alternative routes and a widening of the geographical market served by the new ETC.

On the day after the Forum participants had the possibility to join a study visit to the Port of Győr-Gönyű at the Danube in Western Hungary, which is also rail-connected and located on RFC Amber.

SATISFACTION SURVEY

In 2023 the survey was redesigned based on former research experience. The hybrid version methodology was kept (online platform or personal interview), as well as clearer wording (to what extent are you satisfied with?) was applied, where we switched to a 4-point scaling evaluation method. The interviews took place between **24 August** and **12 October 2023**.

An unfavourable tendency can be observed in the number of evaluations, and the sample size already strongly limits the possibility of conclusions: 2020 (7), 2021 (10), 2022 (7), 2023 (5). The decrease might

indicate that the novelty effect has already gone but the business interest effect has not formed entirely yet.

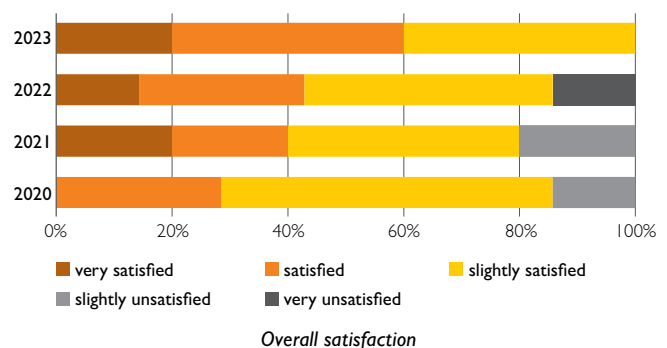
Those who evaluated RFC Amber's work perceived and appreciated the initiatives and efforts: relatively high level of satisfaction can be observed in every item asked. Top strengths: C-OSS and information provided by the corridor.

The overall satisfaction scores show a very favourable picture: every respondent was satisfied on some level. The indicative average increased from 4,1 to 4,8.

The real problem is that it happened with shrinking number of respondents, which is clearly visible from 2021.

The word cloud of RFC Amber is colourful and includes lot of bright colours further on.

Based on the 2023 results one of the main tasks of RFC Amber should be the rising of its business visibility for the partners.



OUTLOOK

During 2023 the content of a revised TEN-T Regulation became more and more concrete, clearly indicating that there are changes ahead, which in the coming years will have a major impact on the Rail Freight Corridors in general and RFC Amber in particular. The alignments of RFC Amber and RFC Baltic-Adriatic will jointly form the backbone of one of the new European Transport Corridors (ETCs) and include an extension to Croatia.

The strategic importance of the joining of Hungary to the Baltic-Adriatic corridor was highlighted by the fact, that the Baltic-Adriatic Forum, a recurrent event organized by the Association of Polish Regions of the Baltic-Adriatic Transport Corridor, chose for its 10th Forum, taking place in October 2023, Budapest as place of the event. Partners of the meeting were the Consulate General of Hungary in Gdansk and the Urban Mobility Initiative of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT).

At the forum, the Managing Director of RFC Amber, Dr. Gerhard Troche, had the opportunity to give a speech and participate in a Roundtable, explaining the genesis and achievements of RFC Amber and its contributions to the future ETC Baltic-Adriatic in form of additional capacity and routes, increased resilience and a widening of the geographical market served by the new ETC. With the Western Hungarian North-South route, a key route of RFC Amber in Hungary, one of RFC Amber's most dynamically growing corridor sections and Hungary's second-most important rail freight route in terms of traffic volume will be added to the Baltic-Adriatic corridor. He also emphasized the close cooperation with RFC Baltic-Adriatic to facilitate the future setting-up of the ETC Baltic-Adriatic.

The establishment of the ETCs encourages us to further develop RFC Amber until it will form part of the new corridors, so that its routes will become a valuable and well-functioning part of the new ETCs. This concerns first and foremost the lines, which will become part of the Baltic-Adriatic ETC (which is the clear majority of our lines), but also the eastern sections of RFC Amber in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, which will be incorporated into the Baltic Sea-Black Sea-Aegean Sea ("3-Seas")-ETC.

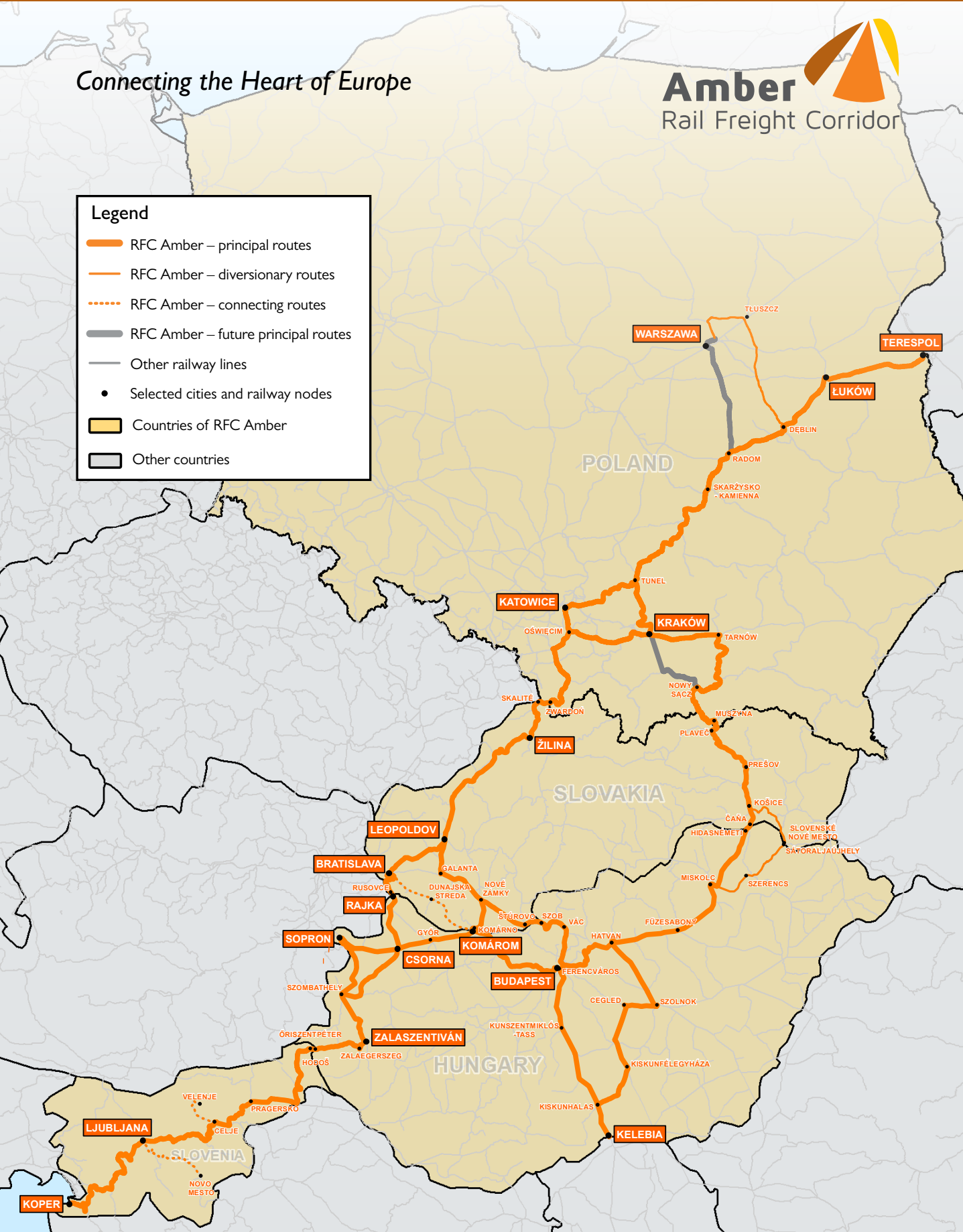
We are looking forward to continue our cooperation with you and remain committed to make progress with joint efforts of Rail Freight Corridors under the umbrella of the RFC Network, but also with you as railway undertakings, terminals, infrastructure managers, allocation bodies and other stakeholders to facilitate and strengthen international rail freight.



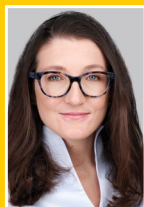
Connecting the Heart of Europe

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



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