



Alpine-Western Balkan rail freight corridor

 Co-financed by the European Union
Connecting Europe Facility



ANNUAL REPORT 2022





DEAR READER

As we reflect on the achievements of the past year, we are proud to say that the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor has made notable strides in its mission to develop efficient, reliable, and sustainable rail freight services across Europe.

The EU has set ambitious goals to shift the transport of goods from road to rail, in the attempt to reduce emissions and congestion. The Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor has become an important part of this strategy, connecting the Balkans, the Adriatic Sea and the Danube River with the Alps, and facilitating efficient and sustainable transport of goods across the region. I am pleased to report that the Corridor has successfully fulfilled the EU requirements, including the implementation of projects to drive further progress along the route.

Looking to the future, the rail network connecting the regions along the Alpine-Western Balkans holds great potential for growth and development. The Corridor connects important ports and industrial centers in the Western Balkans with key markets in Europe while also providing a link to the Asian axis via Turkey. As the demand for efficient and sustainable transport continues to grow, the Corridor is dedicated to meet the needs of its customers and stakeholders. However, achieving full interoperability in rail freight transport remains a big challenge. The fragmentation of the European rail system and differences in technical standards and safety regulations pose significant obstacles to seamless goods transport along the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor. We recognize this challenge and strive to bring all stakeholders to the table to jointly tackle this issue, as we remain fully committed to working closely with our partners to ensure ultimate success.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all our stakeholders for their continued support and collaboration. The Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor is a vital link in the European transport network, and we continue to be committed to developing safe, reliable, and sustainable transport solutions for the benefit of our customers and society as a whole.

Helga Steinberger

[Chairwoman of the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor](#)



DEAR PARTNERS

AWB RFC was established in accordance with the requirements of Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight. The corridor includes 5 countries: Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria, connecting the eastern parts of the Balkan Peninsula to Central and Western Europe along the shortest route of the so-called Silk Road – an ancient trade route connecting China with the West.

The corridor is of particular importance, as the railway infrastructure included in the corridor carries out rail transport of freight and goods, both between the member states of the corridor and between Europe and Turkey and Asia. AWB RFC aims to promote rail freight traffic along the route of the corridor, in line with the EU policy for a stronger and competitive rail network in Europe and by switching to railway transport to reduce CO2 for a healthy environment. AWB RFC strives to facilitate customers, trying to identify difficulties in the processes of requesting and using international rail capacity, as well as identifying measures to overcome these difficulties.

Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the reasons for the realized train dwell time when crossing the borders from one railway infrastructure to another and the possibilities for their reduction. The project aiming to reduce the dwell time at the Dobova border station is expected to determine the border procedures which prolong the dwell time for trains and to identify measures to reduce that time. A large part of the results is expected to be applicable in other border stations as well.

The differences in the operational rules for ensuring safety and traffic management among the individual railway infrastructure managers are also analyzed, exploring the possibilities for their harmonization. The goal is to make the proposed rail freight services more accessible, faster and more accurate, and thus more desirable and more competitive with other transport modes.

Apostol Hristov

Deputy Chairman of the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. About us

The Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor (AWB RFC) is a cooperation of five railway Infrastructure Managers ÖBB INFRA (Austria), SŽ-I (Slovenia), HŽI (Croatia), IŽS (Serbia) and NRIC (Bulgaria). These five partners are jointly managing and developing the rail freight along the axis of the AWB RFC. Currently, the main initiatives are based on EU Regulation 913/2010 which aims at establishing a European rail network for competitive freight and the Commission Implementing Decision 2017/177 with a view to meeting the growing customer expectations and improving the conditions for efficient, competitive, sustainable and reliable rail freight transport.



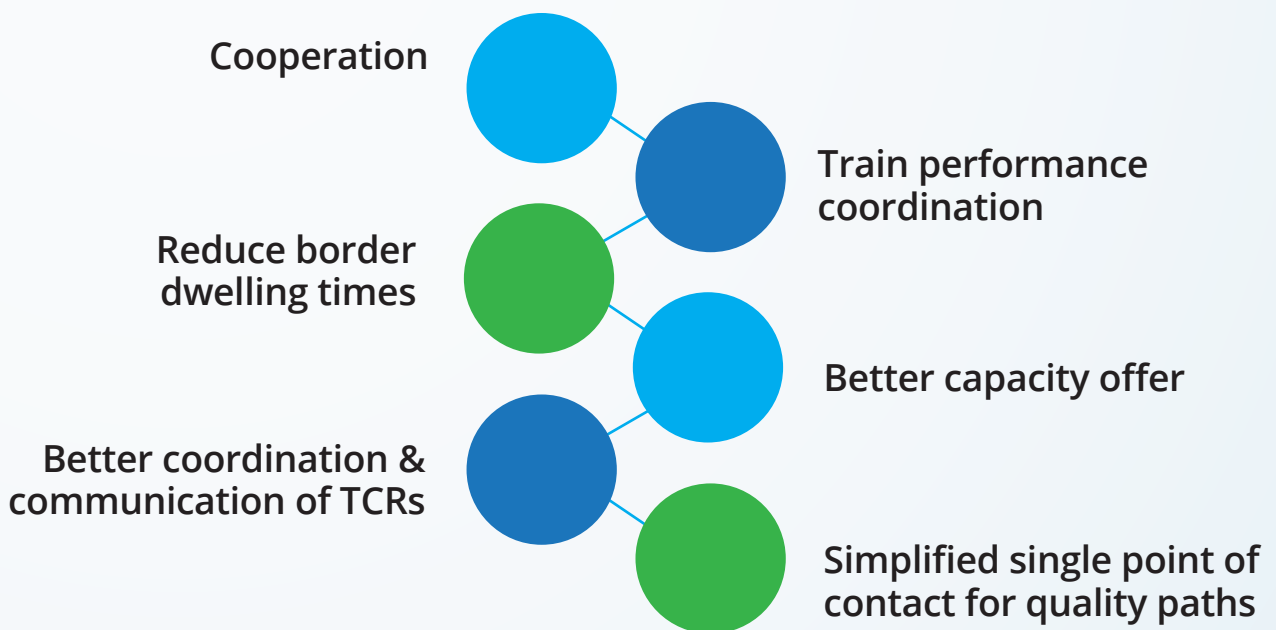
The AWB RFC currently connects five countries and aims to provide the fastest route through the Western Balkans. It will connect even more countries in the future. The revision of the TEN-T regulation will link all countries on the Balkan Peninsula right up to the borders with Turkey. The AWB RFC intends to utilize the actual cargo potential the Western Balkans area and enhance the connection with Turkey, the Middle East, and Asia.

Following the European Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 500/2018 and the European Commission Regulation 913/2010, the Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor has been established on the route Salzburg - Villach - Ljubljana - Wels/Linz - Graz - Maribor - Zagreb - Vinkovci/Vukovar - Tovarnik - Beograd - Sofia - Svilengrad (Bulgarian - Turkish border).



The AWB RFC is dedicated to enhancing business opportunities and strengthening the rail freight business of its customers and connected countries in the region. With this goal in mind, the governments and railway infrastructure managers continuously invest in and improve the corridor's infrastructure.

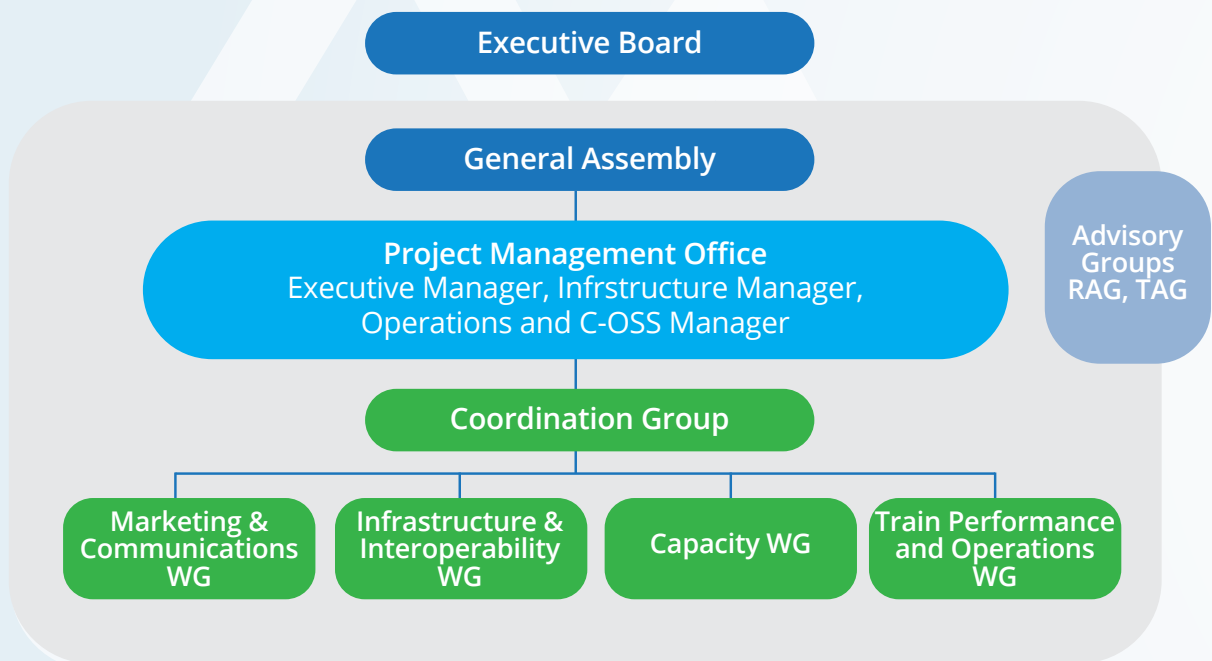
Our focus



1.2. Governance

Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 defines the corridor governance structure on two levels.

1. The Executive Board (ExBo), the highest-level body assigned to the corridor, is composed of representatives from the Ministries.
2. The General Assembly (GA), the primary body in charge, is responsible for supervising and developing the corridor, while the daily business, projects, and activities are carried out by the Project Management Office team.



The General Assembly serves as the decision-making body of the corridor and is comprised of the legal representatives of its members. Helga Steinberger, from ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG, Austria, now presides as the Chairwoman of the GA, succeeding Harald Hotz. Apostol Hristov, representing National Railway Infrastructure Company, Bulgaria, has been elected as the Deputy Chairman. In 2022, there were notable changes in the Project Management Office (PMO). Miloš Rovšnik, an Executive Manager, completed his mandate in July 2022 and Saša Jerele succeeded him. Biserka Keller, the Infrastructure Manager, also finished her term and was succeeded by Tihomir Španić. C-OSS activities were handed over from Milan Šegan to Dino Džafo. The Project Management Office is located in Ljubljana.

The new Project Management Office team



1.3. Programme Support Action co-financed by the EU

The Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor is a beneficiary of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), CEF-T-2021-TAGENE, project number 21-SI-TG-AWB RFC TA - Technical Assistance Rail Freight Corridors.

In December 2021, a call for a new funding period as CEF 2 Call for technical assistance was published. The available co-funding for the period 2022-2024 within the frame of the TA was 496,284.00 Euro. The PMO, in cooperation with the management bodies of the AWB RFC, prepared all the necessary activities and in October 2022 the Grant Agreement for the Technical Assistance was signed.



RAG & TAG meeting in Ljubljana – 10th November 2022

2 ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1. Corridor One-Stop-Shop

The Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) facilitates train path management for international rail freight along the AWB RFC.

The C-OSS serves as a single contact or entry point for rail freight customers on the corridor. It allows customers to check, request and get clarifications and answers about the infrastructure capacity for international freight trains along the route. The C-OSS offers Pre-arranged Paths (PaP).

Capacity offer for Timetable 2022/2023

The PaP Catalogue for Timetable (TT) 2023 was published on 10th January 2022 on the AWB RFC's website and was also accessible in the RNE Path Coordination System (PCS) for orders.

Ten Pre-arranged Paths on eight routes were offered for the timetable period 2022/2023

PaP ID	PATH NR				
	ÖBB-I	SZ-I	HZ-I	IŽS	NRIC
C10NPSALjM1	81421	60107			
C10NPLjMSA2	81422	60106			
C10NPSALjM3	81423	60107			
C10NPLjMSA4	81424	60106			
C10NPSAZA5	81425	60105	70913		
C10NPZASA6	81426	60104	70912		
C10NPWEDO7	82401	60103			
C10NPDOWE8	82400	60102			
C10NPLjZSV9		60101	70911	73000	10011
C10NPSVLjZ10		60100	70910	73001	10012

Overview of offered PaPs with routes and running days for TT 2022/2023

Direction	TT 2022/2023							
	Route	P	U	S	Č	P	S	N
S - N	LJUBLJANA MOSTE - SALZBURG Hbf		X	X	X	X	X	X
	ZAGREB RK - SALZBURG Gningl		X	X	X	X	X	
	DOBOVA - WELS Hbf		X	X	X	X	X	
	SVILENGRAD - LJUBLJANA ZALOG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
N - S	SALZBURG Hbf - LJUBLJANA MOSTE		X	X	X	X	X	
	SALZBURG Gningl - ZAGREB RK		X	X	X	X	X	
	WELS Hbf - DOBOVA	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	LJUBLJANA ZALOG - SVILENGRAD	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Geographical overview of offered PaPs for TT 2022/2023



PaP requests for Timetable 2022/2023

Eight requests for train paths on the AWB RFC were submitted in April 2022

Requested route for TT 2022/2023	No. of running days
Wels - Spielfeld - Maribor Tezno	6
Maribor Tezno - Spielfeld - Wels	5
Beograd - Šid - Dobova - Ljubljana Zalog	3
Ljubljana Zalog - Dobova - Šid - Beograd	5
Reinhausen - Salzburg - Jesenice	1
Reinhausen - Salzburg - Jesenice - Ljubljana Moste	4
Ljubljana Moste - Jesenice - Salzburg Gnigl	1
Ljubljana Moste - Jesenice - Salzburg Hbf - Reinhausen	4

Reserve Capacity

Reserve Capacity (RC) on AWB RFC 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 prior to a train run. On 10th October 2022 AWB RFC published Reserve Capacity for TT 2022/2023 as a guaranteed contingent of capacity slots and international freight paths.

Six Reserve Capacity train paths were offered for the timetable period 2022/2023

PaP ID				
	SZ-I	HZ-I	IŽS	NRIC
C10LjZBRRc1	60101	70911	73001	
C10BRLjZRC2	60100	70910	73000	
C10MTDORC3	60103			
C10DOMTRC4	60102			
C10BRsvRC5			73001	10011
C10SVBRRc6			73000	10012

Route of RC for TT 2022/2023	No. of running days
Svilengrad - Beograd Ranžirna	7
Beograd Ranžirna - Ljubljana Zalog	4
Dobova - Maribor Tezno	5
Ljubljana Zalog - Beograd Ranžirna	2
Beograd Ranžirna - Svilengrad	7
Maribor Tezno - Dobova	6

2.2. Infrastructure documents

The Corridor Information Document (CID) and Implementation Plan update, as an Annex to the CID, for the timetable period 2022/2023 considered the new common structure and the harmonized common text prepared and harmonized by the RNE Working Group Network Statement & Corridor Information Document ((WG NS & CID).

The CID, as well as the Implementation Plan update, for the TT period 2022/2023, were published on the AWB RFC's website on 10th January 2022 and can be found at the following link: <https://www.rfc-awb.eu/documents/>. These documents are also published on the Customer Information Platform (CIP) on RNE's website and can be found at the following link: <https://cip-online.rne.eu>.

For the first time, the Temporary Capacity Restrictions (TCR) have been published as one document, which contains the overview of the TCRs along the AWB RFC for the period 2022-2024. Such a document should certainly help our customers better plan railway transport.

Customers can also find the main characteristics of the corridor on the CIP, such as line properties, nodes, terminals, ETCS deployment and other informative documents, including Capacity Offers, Re-routing scenarios in case of incidents (ICMs), Temporary Capacity Restrictions, etc.

2.3. International Contingency Management (ICM) Case Study

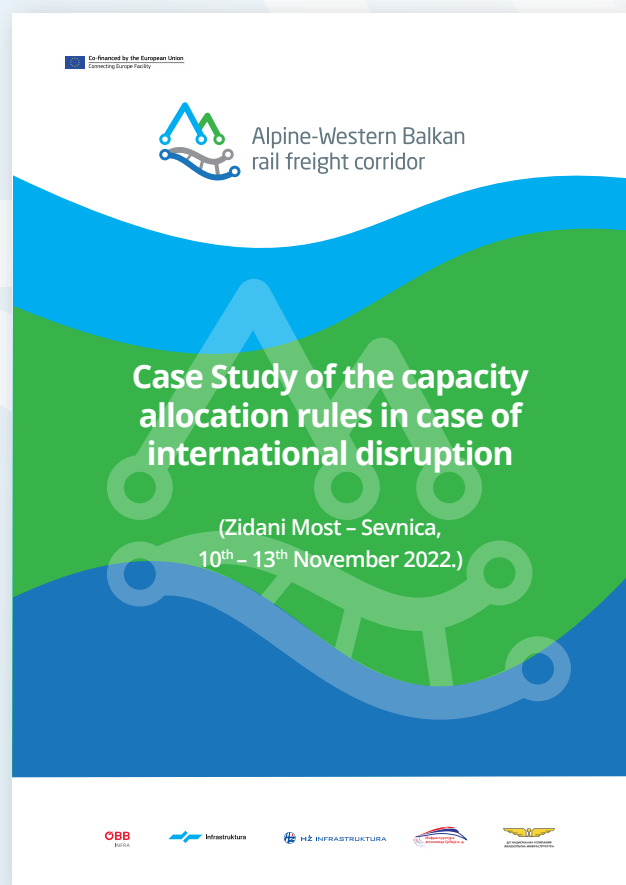
The Network of Executive Boards (NExBo) Task Force proposed to conduct several case studies on the Rail Freight Corridors (RFCs) to support the in-depth analysis of the legal framework and the RNE ICM Handbook with regard to the capacity allocation rules in case of international disruptions recommended in the Handbook. Those case studies will help the NExBo members to gain experience and additional insight on this matter.

The goal of the case study was to understand the complexity of a case – international disruption, in the most complete way possible and define recommendations and/or actions not only for the case, but also for the participating stakeholders on how to improve. The preparation of the case study followed the steps below:

- Identifying an international disruption.
- Focusing on analysis:
 - Key problem(s) identification;
 - Impact on the participants concerned (RFCs, IMs, RUs);
 - Impact on the processes concerned.
- Proposing potential solutions, including a recommendation on legislation process update if needed; along with an implementation plan.

Once the case study was conducted, the participating RFCs were invited to present the results to the NExBO Task Force and the NExBO Task Force generated a final report to the NExBo and the stakeholders.

The AWB RFC conducted a simulation of a flooded double track line in Slovenia, which caused more than three days of line closure, as an ICM.



The conclusions drawn from this case study are as follows

- The primary aim of this simulation was to provide clarity and establish a common understanding of the procedures outlined in the ICM Handbook among the three participating IMs.
- The involvement of bus transport as a mitigation measure proved to be a positive and essential solution, benefiting both passenger and freight railway undertakings.
- Several weaknesses were identified in the re-routing lines, encompassing issues related to capacity, infrastructure characteristics, construction work, and parking limitations.

Furthermore, there is an opportunity for improvement in future simulations, particularly in the area of cross-border international capacity coordination and the utilization of the TIS ICM Tool.

2.4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

According to Article 19 (2) of Regulation (EU) 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight, the Management Board has to monitor the performance of rail freight services and publish the results once a year.

To facilitate the fulfilment of this obligation, RNE developed a first set of KPIs that are commonly applicable to all RFCs. These KPIs were included in the RNE Guidelines for Performance Indicators of Rail Freight Corridors.

These KPIs were developed by RNE and are divided into three groups

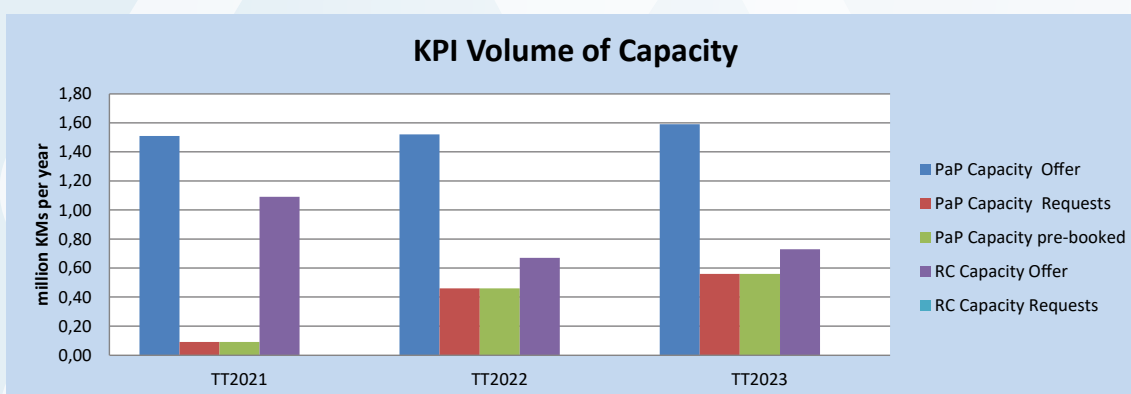
- Capacity management (volume of PaP's offered, requested, pre-booked, allocated RFC, average planned speed)
- Operations punctuality origin, at destination, total number of trains on the RFC
- Market development (total number of freight trains, per border and ratio between allocated trains via C-OSS and total allocated trains on RFC)

The AWB RFC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for TT 2022/2023

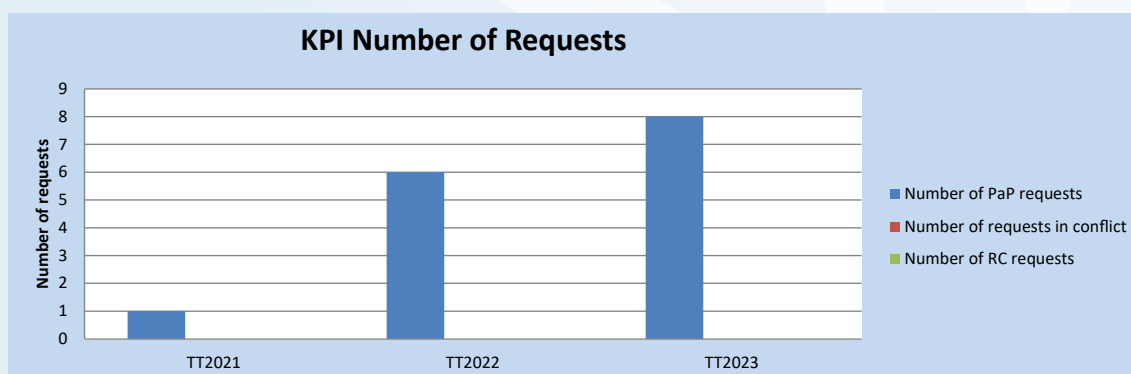
- PaP Capacity Offer 1.59 million path km
- PaP Capacity Requests 0.56 million path km
- PaP Capacity pre-booked 0.56 million path km
- Number of PaP requests 8

The AWB RFC Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for TT 2022/2023 are available on the RNE website

RFC10	TT2015	TT2016	TT2017	TT2018	TT2019	TT2020	TT2021	TT2022	TT2023
PaP Capacity Offer							1,51	1,52	1,59
PaP Capacity Requests							0,09	0,46	0,56
PaP Capacity pre-booked							0,09	0,46	0,56
RC Capacity Offer							1,09	0,67	0,73
RC Capacity Requests							0,00	0,00	



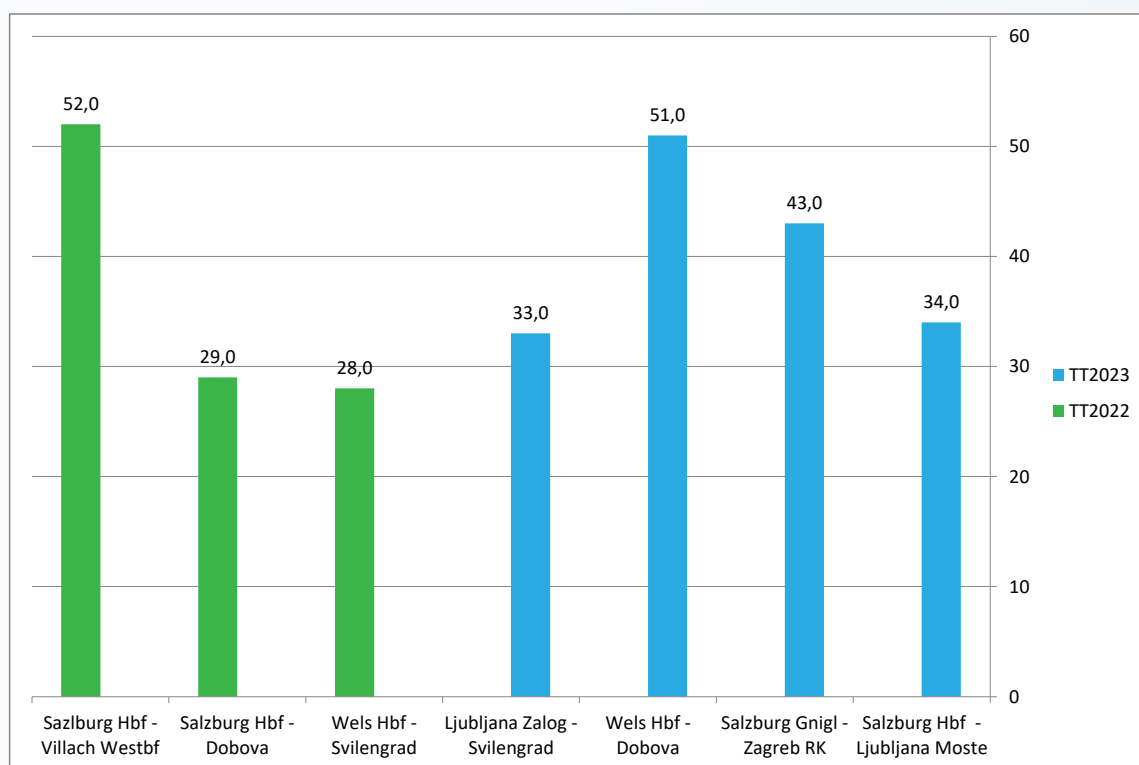
RFC10	TT2015	TT2016	TT2017	TT2018	TT2019	TT2020	TT2021	TT2022	TT2023
Number of PaP requests							1	6	8
Number of requests in conflict							0	0	0
Ratio of pre-booked Capacity							6,0%	30,3%	35,2%
Number of RC requests							0	0	



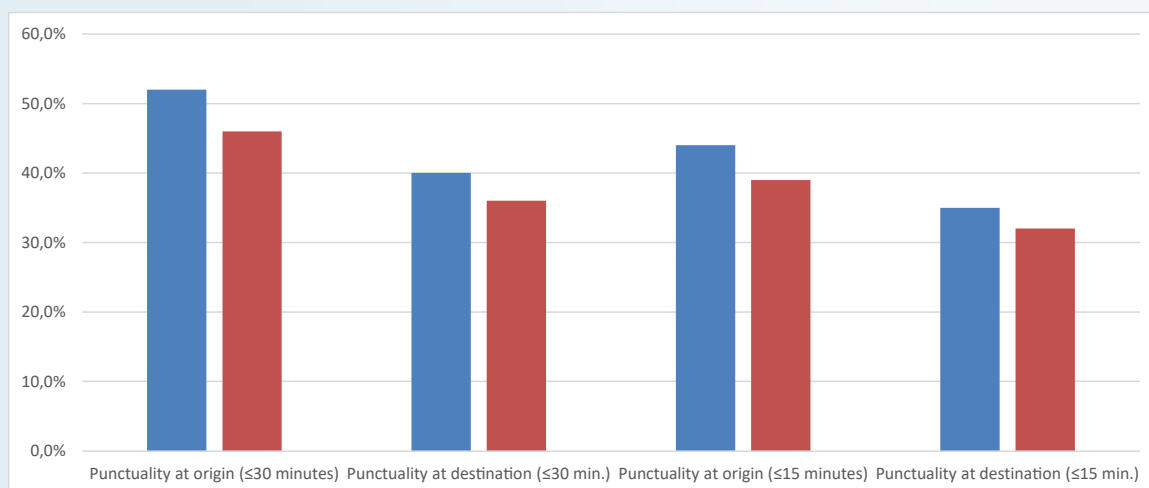
The average commercial speed of the PaPs for Timetable 2022/2023

RFC10 section	Distance (km)	Countries involved	TT2019	TT2020	TT2021	TT2022	TT2023
Salzburg Hbf - Ljubljana Moste	294,6	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	34,0
Salzburg Gnigl - Zagreb RK	438,9	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	43,0
Wels Hbf - Dobova	464,7	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	51,0
Ljubljana Zalog - Svilenograd	1266,7	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	33,0
Wels Hbf - Svilenograd	1626,8	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	28,0	N/A
Salzburg Hbf - Dobova	406,5	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	29,0	N/A
Salzburg Hbf - Villach Westbf	181,6	1	N/A	N/A	80,0	52,0	N/A

Graphical display of the average commercial speed of the PaPs for Timetable 2022/2023



RFC10 Alpine-Western Balkan	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Punctuality at origin (≤30 minutes)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	52,0%	46,0%
Punctuality at destination (≤30 min.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	40,0%	36,0%
Punctuality at origin (≤15 minutes)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	44,0%	39,0%
Punctuality at destination (≤15 min.)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35,0%	32,0%
Number of trains crossing a border along	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.404	18.383



Number of trains per border

RFC10 Alpine-Western Balkan	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Trains per border: Total AT - SI	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.316	14.718	18.296
Trains per border: Total SI - HR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.300	7.161	7.058
Trains per border: Total HR - RS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.848	3.816	4.638
Trains per border: Total RS - BG	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.274	3.368	4.090

In orange: Figures obtained from national system

In green: Figures obtained from TIS

The ratio of capacity allocated by C-OSS for Timetable 2022/2023

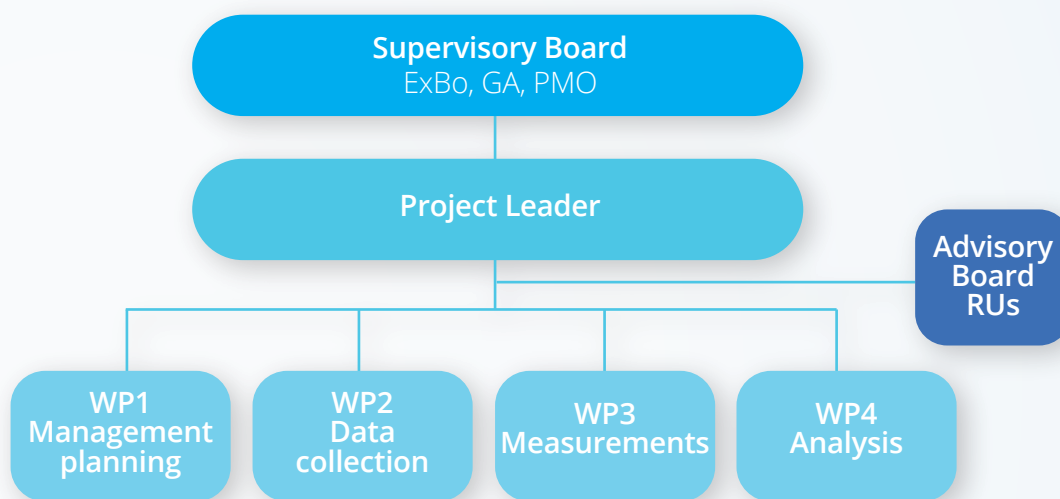
The ratio of allocated trains by the C-OSS compared to all allocated trains on the Alpine - Western Balkan corridor

Between member states		Between operational points		RFC(s) Involved	Allocated by C-OSS 2019	Allocated by C-OSS 2020	Allocated by C-OSS 2021	Allocated by C-OSS 2022 (for TT 2023)
Austria	Slovenia	Rosenbach	Jesenice	RFC 10 Alpine-Western Balkan	N/A	0,0%	0,0%	4,4%
Austria	Slovenia	Spielfeld-Sträß	Šentilj	RFC 5 Baltic-Adriatic	6,4%	8,0%	10,7%	9,8%
				RFC 10 Alpine-Western Balkan				
Serbia	Bulgaria	Dimitrovgrad	Kalotina Zapad	RFC 10 Alpine-Western Balkan	N/A	0,0%	0,0	0,0%
Slovenia	Croatia	Dobova	Savski Marof	RFC 6 Mediterranean	6,0%	25,0%	22,0%	15,0%
				RFC 10 Alpine-Western Balkan				
Croatia	Serbia	Tovarnik	Šid	RFC 10 Alpine-Western Balkan	N/A	3,6%	2,8	2,0%

2.5. AWB RFC project “Reducing the border dwelling times”, Pilot project Dobova

Based on the approval of the General Assembly of the AWB RFC in March 2021, a project management plan for the project "Reducing the dwelling time at the borders" has been prepared in the form of a pilot project for the Dobova border station between Slovenia and Croatia.

Project organization:



The project plan was introduced during a joint meeting of the AWB RFC GA and the AWB RFC ExBo, which took place in Ljubljana on September 23, 2021. Following this presentation, Matic Tržan from SŽ-I was appointed by the GA to lead the project. Together with the AWB RFC PMO, they embarked on the task of crafting a comprehensive project plan that outlined the timeline of activities for 2022 and the subsequent period.

This pilot project is geared towards identifying a multitude of factors that impede the swift border crossing of freight trains. These factors encompass locomotive changes, track conditions, and the quality of communication between Infrastructure Managers (IMs) and Railway Undertakings (RUs). The overarching objective is to enhance the efficiency of border crossings and ideally establish a benchmark that can be applied to other border crossings.

The initial project report was presented at the GA meeting in March 2022. Work package 1 “Management Planning” and Work package 2 “Data collection” has been successfully completed. The project team has now begun the process of developing concrete measures for improvement.

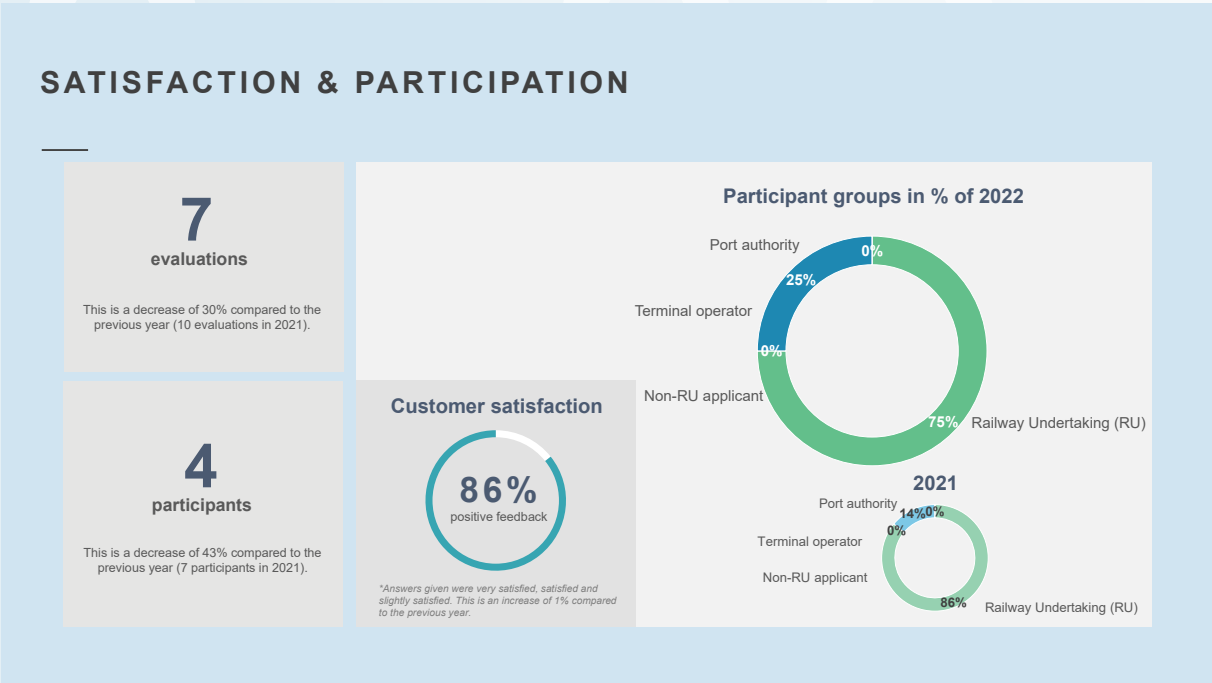
Project timeline

PROJECT TIMELIN		Months											
Steps	Activiti												
1	Planning of activities	March 2022											
2	Identification of problems	April 2022											
3	Analysing and assessment of collected data	April 2022 - May 2022											
4	Representing and alignment of analysed data to Croatian IM	May 2022											
6	Preparation of the analysis for members of board of AWB RFC	May - June 2022											
7	Preparation of the analysis and of project plan for members of General Assembly	June 2022 - September 2022											
8	Planning of accurate measurements							October 2022 - December 2023					
9	Measurement on station							January 2023 - February 2023					
10	Analysing collected data							February 2023 - May 2023					
11	Representing and alignment of results with Croatian IM and finding solutions							June - July 2023					
12	Representing and alignment of results with RU and finding solutions							August 2023 - October 2023					
13	Representing and alignment of results with national authorities and finding solutions							October 2023 - December 2023					
14	Preparation of results and solutions							January 2024 - April 2024					
15	Preparation of the final document							May 2024 - September 2024					
16	Representing results and solutions to board of AWB RFC							September 2024 - October 2024					

2.6. User Satisfaction Survey (USS) 2022

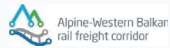
The AWB RFC participated for the third time in the User Satisfaction Survey (USS) for 2022 under the umbrella of the RFC Network. The results of the survey were published in December 2022.

Overall satisfaction of the customers is shown in the following pictures



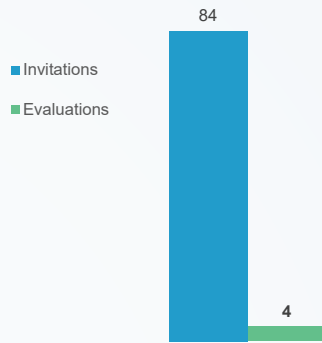
RESPONSE RATE

Compared to the previous year

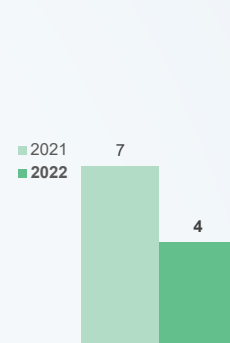


Total	4	(-3)
RUs/non-Rus	3	
Terminals/Ports	1	
Invitations sent	84	(+25)
Response rate overall	5%	(-7%)

Invitations vs. Evaluations ratio



Number of responses 2021 vs. 2022



From the conducted survey the following results can be highlighted

- Decrease of evaluations compared to the previous year (43 % participants less)
- Positive feedback was received from 86 % of customers
- Feedback concerning specific topics shows the need for attention in the following areas: infrastructure capacity and parameters, parameters and quantity of PaPs.

Annex: List of abbreviations

AWB RFC	Alpine-Western Balkan Rail Freight Corridor
CEF	Connecting Europe Facility
CID	Corridor Information Document
CA	Capacity Allocation
CIP	Customer Information Platform
C-OSS	Corridor One-Stop-Shop
EIG	Economic Interest Grouping
ExBo	Executive Board
GA	General Assembly
HŽI	HŽ Infrastruktura d.o.o
ICM	International Contingency Management
IM	Infrastructure Manager
IŽS	Infrastruktura železnice Srbije a.d.
IP	Implementation Plan
MB	Management Board
NExBo	Network of Executive Boards
NRIC	National Railway Infrastructure Company
ÖBB INFRA	ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG
PaPs	Pre-arranged Paths
PCS	Path Coordination System
PMO	Project Management Office
PSA	Programme Support Action
RAG	Railway Undertaking Advisory Group
RC	Reserve Capacity
Regulation	Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight
RFCs	Rail Freight Corridors
RNE	Rail Net Europe
SŽI	Slovenske železnice – Infrastruktura d.o.o.
TAG	Terminal Advisory Group
TIS	Train Information System
TT	Timetable
USS	User Satisfaction Survey
WGs	Working Groups
TAG	Terminal Advisory Group
TIS	Train Information System
TT	Timetable
USS	User Satisfaction Survey
WGs	Working Groups



Alpine-Western Balkan rail freight corridor

Alpine- Western Balkan RFC Project Management Office:
Location: Zaloška cesta 214 b, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
<https://www.rfc-awb.eu/>