

## Rail Freight Corridor Rhine-Alpine – Tasks and Challenges

The Rail Freight Corridor (RFC) Rhine-Alpine runs along one of the most important European transport axes. The corridor's northern section is characterized by back country traffics from the largest European ports in Rotterdam and Antwerp to the densely populated centers of Rhine-Ruhr and Rhine-Main/Rhine-Neckar. The corridor's southern section is dominated by the politically subsidized rail transit through the Alps and the industrial centers of northern Italy as points of departure and destination of many traffics. The majority of the rail freight traffic along the RFC Rhine-Alpine is intermodal traffic, with a peak in international traffic at the Swiss-German border at Basle with approx. 55,000 trains annually or an average of 150 trains a day, in either direction.

The RFC Rhine-Alpine officially went into operation in 2013, which included the marketing and sale of internationally synchronized train path products. In fact, a majority of the partners had already entered into a collaboration as far back as in 2006, when the focus was on the ERTMS extension in Corridor A.

The main goal of the RFC Rhine-Alpine is to support the growth of international rail freight traffic. Consequently, in 2016, the Management Board determined the following priorities regarding the advancement and improvement of the offering:

- Streamlining of order conditions, processes, etc. relating to railway infrastructure companies (EIUs) and railway undertakings (EVUs);
- International capacity offering;
- Punctuality of international rail freight traffic;
- International construction work planning and associated customer information;
- Infrastructure quality and capacity, and support for ERTMS extension.

These priorities are developed further by eight Corridor Working Groups, the Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) and the management. In doing so, we increasingly engage customers in specific topics via workshops. Furthermore, there are a number of binational and trinational agreements of EIUs at borders concerning timetable-related and operating issues that are included in the work on the Corridor.

As a major transport axis with a long-established cooperation, the RFC Rhine-Alpine often plays a special role when corridor matters are discussed. For instance, we are often used and requested as a pilot corridor. In connection with the opening of the Gotthard Tunnel and the full utilization of the effect from 2020/2021 onwards, the RFC Rhine-Alpine has become a particular focus of our Swiss partners. During a three-day trip along the Corridor in March 2017, the management of SBB-Infrastruktur looked in depth at the challenges of international rail freight traffic and has since assured us of their full support. At the International Transport Forum in Leipzig in late May 2017, the transport ministers of the RFC Rhine-Alpine countries will meet with numerous representatives of EVUs, EIUs and other players. We trust that this meeting will lead to an increased support from the Ministries of Transport (MoTs), which could be decisive in matters of infrastructure construction and the streamlining of regulation.

The members of the management organization EEIG Corridor Rhine-Alpine EWIV are all infrastructure operators and regulatory authorities along the Corridor: Infrabel, ProRail, DB Netz, SBB Infrastruktur, BLS, Trasse Schweiz, and RFI. They are all represented on the Management Board as the principal decision-making body. The management organization's tasks include coordinating the



ongoing work of the working groups, driving the synchronization matters, and preparing committee meetings, i.e. besides the Management Board meetings also those of advisory groups with the EVUs and the Terminals, the Executive Board with representatives of the MoTs along the Corridor, and other committees such as the RFC Network. Furthermore, the RFC Rhine-Alpine schedules an annual meeting with the CEOs of all members. Our work as the management team is clocked accordingly – the moment we have finalized preparations for one important meeting, the next one is already in the pipeline.

The Rail Freight Corridors follow a principle established in EU Directive 913/2010, which makes perfect sense but may at times lead to long-winded discussions, namely that decisions have to be unanimous. This obligation ensures that all members stand behind a decision made. But obviously, it can sometimes take a little longer until a good solution has been found in the working groups.

Usually improvements require many small steps taken between all bodies involved. In this context, it is often impossible to develop topics exclusively within one corridor; in these situations, a joint effort of all corridors and EIUs in Europe is crucial. This is why the Rail Freight Corridors hold periodical meetings and are actively supported in many subject matters by RailNetEurope, the umbrella organization of the European EIUs. These meetings often demonstrate how different goals and activities are, especially between eastern and western Europe.

It takes a lot of stamina and persistence to work for a European Rail Freight Corridor. To be able to drive topics, one must deal with highly complex issues, many strong interests which differ by country, and a large number of stakeholders involved in the process. Our major advantage as a Rail Freight Corridor is that, as a quasi-institution, we have periodical meetings with all parties, both from the industry and the ministries or other authorities. Often enough, an important first step is to create transparency. This is why, for instance, our website lists information on the status of the ERTMS planning or on regulations and responsibilities in local border traffic (buzzword: cross-border interoperability).

For more information about the successful implementation of corridor projects, the latest reports and access to our Customer Information Platform (CIP), visit our website: [www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu](http://www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu). If you have any further questions, please contact me or my team.





Dr. Christiane Warnecke is the Managing Director of EEIG Corridor Rhine-Alpine. She has been working in the field of European Rail Freight Corridors since 2014. Previously, she held a position in DB Passenger Traffic, shaping strategy development, offer planning at the interface of local and long-distance traffic, and international long-distance traffic. As a corporate consultant specialising in the traffic sector, she advised a great number of European rail freight and passenger companies. Dr. Warnecke has a master's degree in business administration as well as a PhD. Her doctoral thesis focused on different aspects of competition in commercial rail passenger traffic in Europe.

