

**CZECH–SLOVAK RAIL FREIGHT CORRIDOR**

**RFC 9**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**REPORT OF THE RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION  
ARTICLE 22 OF REGULATION (EU) NO 913/2010**

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# 1 Introduction and Background

The CS Corridor known as Rail Freight Corridor No 9 or the Czech-Slovak Corridor has been in operation since November 2013 together with a bunch of other five rail freight corridors. With only 972 km it is the shortest corridor among all the rail freight corridors defined in the Regulation (EU) No 913/2010. It links only two member states – the Czech Republic and Slovakia – what makes it also a bit special. Moreover, this corridor connects countries which used to be a single state for 75 years so there could be found a lot of similarities which play a role in its performance, regime applied and its organizational structure.

Comprehensive information about the corridor and its functional organization as well as performance and knowledge learned from its implementation was provided in the last Executive Board report published in November 2015. Now, in line with the requirements of the Article 22 of the Regulation (EU) No 913/2010, the updated report is provided with the updated information on the extended experience of RFC 9 to the European Commission and European Parliament about the progress reached on RFC 9. The extent of this report is in comparison with the last issue more moderate and focussed primarily on qualitative assessment of the Executive Board.



Figure 1: Czech-Slovak Corridor map with lines and terminals.

## 2 Corridor Products and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Despite the very limited length of the RFC 9 and its very good interoperability (based not only on technical unity stemming from the former common state and usage of the same systems but also very good understanding of both Czech and Slovak languages mutually) which make the traditional way of railway infrastructure capacity management (including management of requests as well as allocation process) very easy, the RFC 9 has succeeded in both capacity offer adjustments and paths allocation process as well during the past years extraordinarily. The requests of the key product – pre-arranged paths (PaPs) have risen significantly since 2015, even though the traditional way of capacity offer still represents the most common, proved and well known procedure.

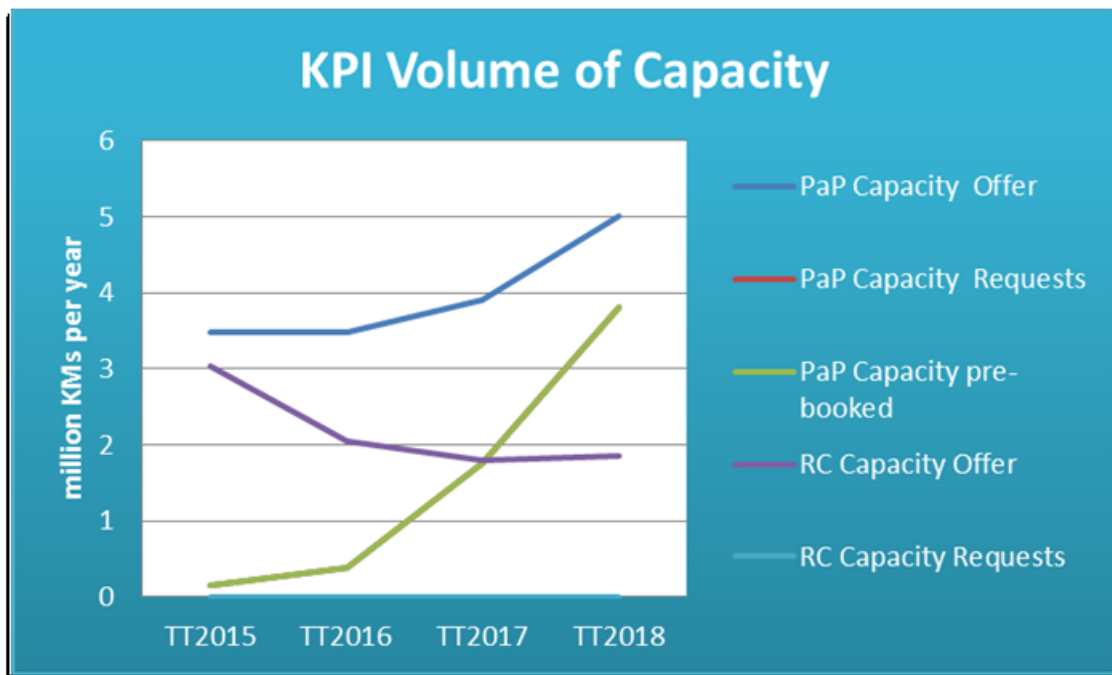


Figure 2: Corridor KPI: Volume of capacity.

As there is constantly growing interest in the RFC 9 pre-arranged paths, Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) offers increasing volume of capacity each year. On the other hand there is unfortunately no demand from customers for reserve capacity so far, nevertheless C-OSS still keeps certain capacity volume offering. Amount of capacity pre-booked and allocated by RFC 9 increased more than several times compared to previous years, especially due to better communication with customers during PaPs preparation phase. However customers wish to have more advantages during active timetable otherwise status of corridor train brings almost no added value for them. The reasons of this successful recent development might be found in the change of approach of communication of RFC and its offer adjustments as well.

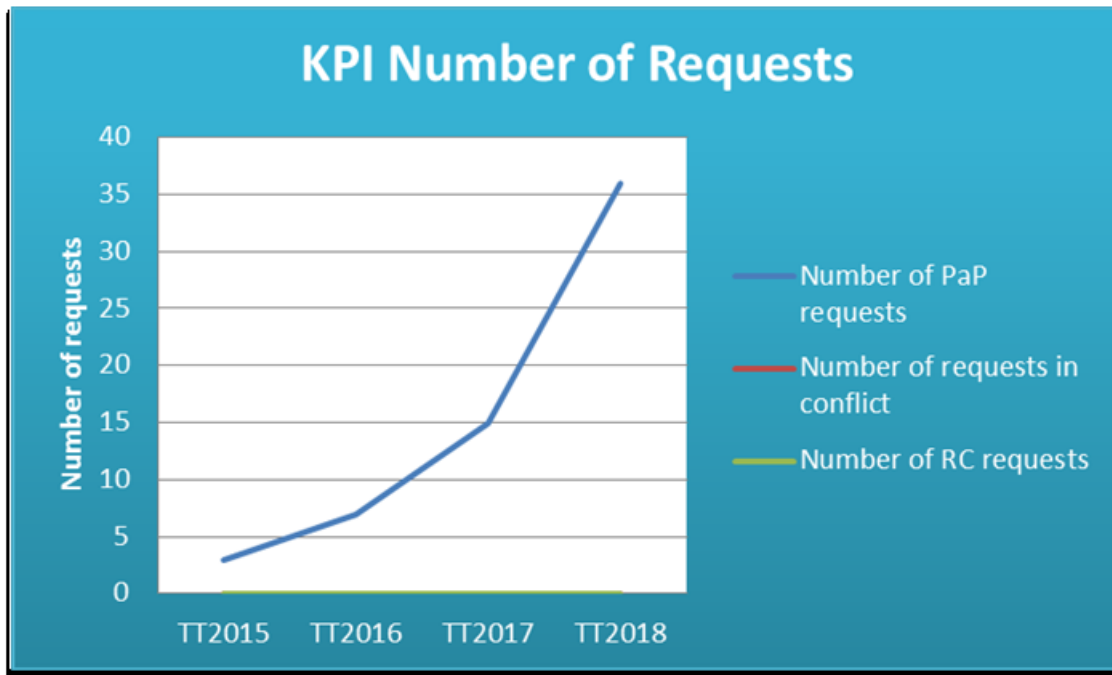


Figure 3: Corridor KPI: Number of requests.

### 3 Corridor Strategic Approach

Whereas we stated already in our last report there are some relevant factors positively contributing to the improving efficiency of the CS Corridor and could lead to its higher performance in the remaining period of its “independent existence”. These factors are e.g. higher flexibility stemming from the limited number of cooperating partners as only two countries are involved as well as lingual and technical interoperability of both countries as the legacy of the former common state. Newly the role of the most relevant stimulator has played a new format of communication with customers.

One of the crucial features is the cost-efficient administration and management procedures. The Management Board (MaBo) decided – already at the RFC 9 launching moment – that no legal form or separate office would be established for the corridor. In the execution of the C-OSS function, experts of both infrastructure managers alternate each year based on the rotation principle. The high level executive decisions are discussed and taken at the regular ministerial bilateral meetings, which enables to coordinate them with other major projects and actions, rather than organising separate Executive Board (ExBo) meetings. The corridor strategy consists of three pillars: a pro-customer approach, an efficient way to manage a corridor, a unified approach of creating common procedures and rules on all RFC corridors.

## 4 Advisory Groups

Both infrastructure managers – SŽDC and ŽSR – agreed to merge traditional national customer meetings with Advisory Groups meetings covered solely by the CS Corridor brand. The new joined CZ-SK seminars for customers exist as the extended platform of previously national focused meetings based on direct face to face communication with the audience of all RUs operating their freight business in CZ and SK. Moreover, all the tasks related to RFCs are only a part of the programme as the meetings do cover also other relevant topics (e.g. new Network Statement, capacity restrictions etc.) because most of the RUs do operate only on network belonging to any of RFCs but also on other railway lines. This solution allowed us to promote and communicate the idea of RFCs in a much better and efficient way.



Figure 4: Marshalling yard Žilina-Teplička.

This communication turn is, according to the information obtained from both IMs, the most relevant factor that reflects the increasing demand for the capacity on the CS Corridor during the last 2 years. The advantage of this format brings also a possibility to get some additional information that would normally not be mentioned so strictly. Among the most frequent complains mentioned during seminars is a claim that corridors do not offer any special added value and equal results can be reached by the traditional forms of capacity orders, particularly as majority of requested paths originates or terminates outside the corridor.

## 5 User Satisfaction Surveys

The Czech-Slovak Corridor organises its User Satisfaction Surveys (USS) regularly even separately – differently from other corridors. The face-to-face interviews with users have become the most efficient and successful method as it enables not only to answer questions but also gives space for individual comments and feedback. Thankful to this method, the response rate exceeds 50 per cent. The results of recently carried survey indicate rather high customers’ satisfaction with the C-OSS work and Path Coordination System (73 %). Roughly a half of users (46 %) is satisfied with information provided in the Corridor documents and IT tools for requests for capacity allocation. On the contrary, the current RFC system as a whole is considered as unsatisfactory and not very users-friendly particularly because of language problem (see the high satisfaction of C-OSS speaking the Czech or Slovak language which are understood by the entire population), PaPs and offered capacity are not beneficial for users and the whole system is not considered as motivating freight customers to shift from road to rail mode. With respect to the potential improvement, users emphasise better harmonisation of conditions on the RFC Network with a potential creation of a single coordination centre providing access throughout all corridors in the future, increase of short-term offers and reduction of administrative paperwork in the rail system generally. One of the common comments is the reduction of the number of temporary capacity restrictions accompanied with priority treatment of the RFC trains as such scheme could attract customers.

## 6 Conclusion: RFC Rhine–Danube

Despite the fact that the existing Czech-Slovak Corridor will expire in a few years, both the national ministries and infrastructure managers pay attention to its further improvement and provide all necessary steps for its smooth incorporation to the RFC Rhine–Danube that has already started preparations for being operational in the year 2020.



Finally it is needed to be emphasized that Czech–Slovak Corridor has fully fulfilled all formal obligations and liabilities specified by the Regulation (EU) No 913/2010. In the operational phase the corridor governance entities address the continuous workload on a daily basis. Both ExBo and MaBo are active members of corridor platforms (NExBo, RFC Network etc.) and many times bring new ideas for further development and support to the whole European rail freight sector. Further information is available on the corridor website [www.rfc9.eu](http://www.rfc9.eu).