

# Austrian Vision for the Trans-European Transport Network

Position Paper of the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility Innovation and Technology concerning the revision of Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013 (“TEN-T Guidelines”) and Regulation (EU) No. 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight.

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## **Background**

Based on the obligation laid down in the Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013 Art. 54, the European Commission together with the Members States and European Coordinators will assess the current legal framework accordingly until the end of 2023. The European Commission has launched this assessment process; the first step of an official consultation phase is already ongoing. Altogether, the regulation indicates the need of carrying out a review of the implementation of the core network, evaluating i.a. the compliance with the regulation's provisions, the progress of implementation, the need for amendments to the regulation, whether new sections are to be included, as well as the timelines for both comprehensive and core network. Furthermore, the European Commission stated that it seems reasonable to synchronise the review processes of Regulations (EU) No. 1315/2013 and 913/2010 where appropriate. Consequently, this position paper reflects the Austrian position generally referring to both regulations.

## **Status Quo**

### **TEN-T / RFC in Austria**

Austria as landlocked country located in Central Europe is fully embedded in the Trans-European Network and actively contributes to achieving the overall objective of an integrated and harmonised trans-continental transport network. Regarding the large-scale international transport corridors, Austria has repeatedly been able to underline the European added value of its transport projects, in particular since the establishment of the current TEN-T framework in 2013.

This resulted in remarkable shares of European co-financing via the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), especially linked to large-scale Alpine crossing rail infrastructure. Relating to the financing period 2014-2020, Austria was awarded 897 million Euro for projects in the transport segment, of which the significant majority of 758 million Euro was assigned to rail projects. Austria and Italy are together responsible for the implementation of one of the European flagship projects, the Brenner Base Tunnel. During the ongoing financing period the European Commission showed its strong commitment to this major infrastructure project linking important parts of Northern and Southern Europe by thus far allocating a total of 1.181,49 billion Euro to the BBT (the Austrian share of EU co-financing to the Austrian part of the BBT amounts to 590,745 million Euro).

Austria fully commits itself to further contribute to the TEN-T network for successfully reaching connectivity and climate-related objectives in 2030.

Since November 2015, three Rail Freight Corridors (Scan-Med RFC, Baltic-Adriatic RFC and Orient East Med RFC) going through Austria are operational. In 2018 the Alpine-Western Balkan RFC was also established and Austria took a leading role in preparing the establishment of the Rhine-Danube RFC (before operational as Czech-Slovak RFC, now extended to France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania) which will be operational in 2020 as scheduled.

### **What have we achieved since 2013?**

In large parts, the Austrian TEN-T rail network has been already realised or will be implemented by 2030. Regarding the technical parameters required for rail freight transport (such as 740m train length, 22.5 tonnes axle load or ERTMS), the core network already is or will be compliant by 2030. Annex 1 gives a graphical overview of national implementation.

In general, the minimum transport infrastructure requirements for the Austrian Danube will be fulfilled by 2030. Within its Catalogue of Measures<sup>1</sup>, Austria is currently working on the last bottlenecks, which impact cross border transport, as well as on the improvement of the good navigation status. In addition, Austria supports South-East European countries in the development of the Danube and its navigable tributaries through its active role in the EU Danube Region Strategy and by means of CEF-co-funded flagship actions such as FAIRway Danube.

The Austrian Trans-European Network regarding road is nearly completed in 2020 and the last missing links will be finished until 2030. A map of the Austrian TEN-T road network can be found in Annex 2.

Conclusion: Essential projects of the Core Network in Austria will be completed by 2030, the key parameters of the TEN-T network will be fulfilled.

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<sup>1</sup> [viadonau.org/en/company/project-database/top-aktuell/integrated-river-engineering-project-catalogue-of-measures](https://viadonau.org/en/company/project-database/top-aktuell/integrated-river-engineering-project-catalogue-of-measures)

## General observations

### TEN-T in General:

- The analyses carried out in the context of revision of the current 2012 TEN-T guidelines showed the need of fostering cross border projects, where significant deficits have been identified. In our point of view a lot of efforts and achievements have been made, however the dilemma of cross border projects is still valid: There is a high European interest, but often lower national interest. Additionally the administrative burden of cross border projects is significantly higher than pure national projects.
- The TEN-T policy and the related instruments currently mainly focus on infrastructure investments, but they do not consider operational aspects of the network sufficiently. Current TEN-T strategy is concentrating on ITS (including ETCS for rail) as an operational element of the transport network. This is no doubt important, but especially related to rail transport other operational questions and the lack of operational harmonisation have to be considered as a key factor of hindrance for efficient cross border rail transport.  
Investments in infrastructure cannot reveal the full benefits as long as these operational barriers are existing. We appreciate the Commission's efforts towards a common European railway area, there are also several Member States including Austria striving for ambitious goals in this context. However, we consider a stronger connection with the TEN-T policy, in a best way the integration into it, as an undoubtful boost factor regarding the mitigation of operational barriers in rail transport.
- The road network has improved significantly; there are no substantial operational barriers, also including mostly seamless cross border sections. This is one main reason for transport demand on rail (freight) is standing behind expectations.
- The TEN-T network is focussing on investments and on the objective of an "ideal" network. Actual network conditions and the practical availability of the network, available capacity and offered services are not at all in the focus of the TEN-T network.
- To reach the goals for the reduction of greenhouse gas within the transport sector, rail transport plays an essential role. To be able to fulfil this role effectively, the sector needs a further step towards improving the efficiency.

### Rail Freight Corridors:

- We consider the rail freight corridors an important tool for improvements for rail freight, especially in

- developing of a network between customers, mainly railway undertakings (RU) and infrastructure managers (IM) and
  - improving the technical cooperation between the different IMs.
- Several initiatives for improved services and improvements on cross border aspects can be highlighted as a benefit of the RFC; however the following shortcomings can be identified as potential for future improvements:
    - Especially at their initial phase, self-administrative matters with no value for the market have bound many resources.
    - Their key product – the pre-arranged paths – does not meet the needs of the market, which might result in inefficient off-market production.
    - A segmentation of the transport network into single corridors is not in line with market needs. Thus, we need certain decisions and definitions that are valid for all corridors. In this sense, a clear legal framework for decisions should be institutionalised across all corridors.
    - Overlapping sections in the RFC network might increase administration burden without attracting more rail transport necessarily.
    - Key Performance Indicators on RFC level for measuring and improving international rail freight performance should be further developed and harmonised across all RFCs.
    - RFCs should work and function more user-friendly including a clear focus on actual market needs without additional administrative burdens. TTR is a good example of striving for user-friendly operational flexibility.
    - Standoff situations in decision-making processes might be addressed to the Executive Board in order to identify solutions faster (e.g. automatic involvement of Executive Board if issue could not be solved for xx months).
    - Cooperation between RFCs and CNCs on market requirements should be enhanced, e.g. regarding investment decisions. RFCs should somehow be involved in CNCs' elaboration of investment and project lists, contributing the perspective of market needs and overall increase of rail freight efficiency.
    - Stronger involvement of the European Coordinator, especially in cases where national political support is needed.

## Our Vision for the future development of TEN-T network and services

First of all: In our point of view, the consideration of the TEN-T network alone – as the infrastructural backbone of the transport system – is not enough. If the TEN-T network should create benefits for all citizens, economy and environment, a more integrated view on infrastructure, operational rules and services is necessary to ensure functionality of the network. Thus we propose a

### Holistic cross border approach

- The existing focus on cross border projects in co-financing should be continued and further developed. The cross border infrastructure should be kept as one important (but not the only one) pillar ensuring infrastructural interoperability and overcoming bottlenecks.
- In addition to the infrastructure aspects, a new functional definition of “cross border Projects” should include seamless cross border operations and adequate cross border services in both passenger and freight dimensions.
- Considering rail transport, it is obvious that this holistic view on cross border projects brings additional challenges to the already existing ones of cross border infrastructure projects: it needs compatible cross border operational rules and other types of cooperation beyond pure infrastructural interoperability. This means in concrete terms:
  - No technical stops at borders,
  - cross border disposition of trains and
  - cross border information on train runs and expected time of arrival (ETA).
  - Harmonized border control procedures of vessels, cargo, crew and passengers on inland waterways.

The label “cross border project” – with the benefits of higher European co-financing rates and therefore strongly targeted by Member States – should be linked to such a “holistic” cross border view<sup>2</sup>.

- Projects along a corridor should be embedded in a coordinated cross-border plan, as the positive impact of an individual project only fully materializes in a transnational

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<sup>2</sup> Austria would welcome a pilot exercise for such a holistic cross border approach formulated in a Commission Implementing Decision for the Brenner Corridor.

context. Therefore, projects should not be evaluated on an individual basis, but rather in the context of the whole corridor, i.e. adopting a corridor approach.

### **Service oriented network**

While currently the definition of the TEN-T network as well as the monitoring of its implementation is relating to infrastructure parameters, we consider it as essential to add more service related parameters and features in the future. This could include:

- **Availability, quality and reliability of the network:**  
The capacity of the network should be available for a significant part of the year, necessary maintenance works should be planned in advance and coordinated along corridors. The topic of “Temporary Capacity Restrictions” (TCR) is well identified and discussed by the stakeholders; however, due to lack of obligation the step from discussion and awareness to real improvements is missing. The TEN-T guidelines would be the appropriate tool to create such obligations and to monitor them. Prerequisite is the multi-year financing of the infrastructure managers through member states, which enables long-term planning of maintenance and expansion activities and thus stable construction work schedules. This provides reliable information for railway operators and their customers, as well as allows for better international coordination of construction works. The legal basis for implementing multi-year financing is Directive 2012/34/EU. In the perspective of striving for coordinated and stable financing instruments across Europe, the European Commission should further monitor the implementation of the above mentioned basis.
- The quality of the rail network has to ensure a minimum speed in practice. In principle current TEN-T guidelines define rather general a minimum speed of 100 km/h for freight trains at the core network. A more precise definition of the speed parameter (but also for other parameters) including operational aspects would be needed<sup>3</sup>. For inland waterways, the current TEN-T Guidelines sets out minimum requirements on draught (at minimum 2,50 m) respectively on the minimum height under bridges (at minimum 5,25 m) also for free-flowing rivers, irrespective of the water discharge (throughout the year). A more precise definition of the Good Navigation Status concept is currently under development under the lead of the European Commission.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g.: average travelling speed for freight or passenger trains that can be reached in 250 days per year.

- Minimum and coordinated offer of cross border train services<sup>4</sup> (e.g. minimum interval and/or average speed of long distance trains between international nodes) seems highly reasonable. If the market will not provide such services from itself, public authorities should consider to provide them via PSO contracts. Additionally, a cross border coordination of providing capacities for long distance passenger services will be necessary to enable integrated timetable offers and an efficient use of capacity. We would like to refer to the *NL initiative of a European agenda on international rail passenger transport* in this context, which we support.
- Comparable Key Performance Indicators for measuring and improving international rail freight performance should be implemented on RFC level.
- Clearly noticeable benefits for customers are required in order to promote RFC use, e.g. by linking the RFC use to business advantages.

### **Improved and formalised cooperation between RFC and CNC**

The tasks described above need a strong cooperation of bodies dealing with infrastructural and operational questions. On EU-level, the key bodies in this context are the CNC and the RFC. We see the need of a more precise definition of the responsibilities and the cooperation between both bodies. (Here we also refer to the letter of DG MOVE Director Ms. Werner 08/05/2019). Well-defined and harmonized interfaces for reporting and coordination would increase the efficient cooperation of both bodies.

We would see a benefit to set the RFC formally under the umbrella of the European Coordinators and the TEN-T policy, however without changing the main responsibilities of Member States and Infrastructure manager in the current RFC structures (Executive Boards and Management Boards). A precondition of such an approach would be to harmonise the geographical scope of both policies.

Additionally, it might make sense to enlarge the tasks of the RFC to all aspects of the border crossing coordination of operational aspects within the corridor. In addition, passenger services could benefit from such an approach.

RFC Management Board and Executive Board must have clear roles, competencies and responsibilities. Especially the Executive Board should be empowered to set clear targets and milestones to be achieved by the RFCs. Members of the Management Board shall

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<sup>4</sup> To be defined on a bilateral basis.

have a clear mandate to take decisions on behalf of their companies. The role of the European Coordinator should be strengthened in the RFC/CNC cooperation context.

### **Coordination Structure between corridors (both RFC and CNC)**

The segmentation of the network into corridors (both CNC and RFC) in general makes sense to simplify a coordinated implementation of the TEN-T network, a better coordination of operational aspects and easy access to the network. We understood the motivation for the implementation of corridors in the current TEN-T guidelines exactly in this way.

It might be the case that benchmarking between corridors can be seen as a motivation for better performance. However, the corridor approach should not lead to a competition between corridors. Lately the Rastatt incident revealed that a strong cooperation between corridors is a main factor of success of an efficient network. On the level of the RFC, key objectives have to be harmonised between corridors, in order to avoid a negative segregation of the market. Both for the customers of the RFC, for Member States and Infrastructure Managers affected by more than one corridor, harmonised rules and institutionalised cooperation between corridors are essential.

However, there is no legal binding structure for a formal trans-corridor harmonisation of decision. With the Network of Executive Boards, Member States have created a platform of coordination. Due to its non-binding nature, the process of achieving harmonised rules in all corridors (e.g. the recommendations issued by the Nexbo) is not efficient. A modification of the legal framework would be strongly welcomed to allow network - and not only corridor - relevant decisions.

### **Common Basics for the Planning of CNC, RFC and MS**

Currently, each RFC is conducting independently its market study, in many cases based on a transport forecast. Also at CNC level in some cases, transport forecasts for the corridor are carried out as well. Member States need national transport forecasts to elaborate national investment schemes and CBAs. Cross border projects need a harmonised view on the expected development of transport demand, which should not be in contradiction to the national forecasts from Member States concerned. Currently Germany, Austria and Italy in cooperation with the EC are carrying out such an exercise for the Brenner corridor in the framework of the Brenner Corridor Platform. The European Court of Auditors claimed the lack of a harmonised forecast for the corridor.

Austria would see a significant European benefit and an overall increase of efficiency by a harmonised European approach:

In coordination and cooperation with Member States, the European Commission should carry out a European reference transport forecast. This forecast should include the main data to describe the trans-national transport flows and relevant structural data in order to allow Member States and corridors to implement their more detailed individual studies, however, based on a common European framework. This top – down approach would be more efficient and allow harmonised results. The TEN-T guidelines should give the mandate (and the budget) to the Commission to implement this approach; the involvement of MS should be defined as well.

### **Safe, sustainable and customer focused Road Network**

After nearly completing the physical TEN road network in Austria by 2019 (map in annex 1) new challenges occur which should be addressed on European level to ensure safe, smooth and sustainable mobility. Concerning TEN the most important challenges which needs coordinated action and European support are:

- Harmonised implementation of Intelligent Transport Systems (multimodal cross border traffic information services, Corporate Intelligent Transport Systems – C-ITS, road automation, Mobility as a Service – MaaS [this aspect might refer to a multimodal approach as well])
- Greening Transport (alternative propulsion systems and necessary roadside infrastructure)
- Linking the different modes of transport (road – rail – inland navigation) to make best use of existing capacities for passenger transport and freight logistics; Mobility as a service
- Improved customer service (customer oriented resting areas – safe and secure parking)

### **Development of the network**

Infrastructure development is a long-term process, therefore we consider continuity in the planning process as a main pillar of success. Thus, the revision of the TEN-T network should strongly continue the approach leading to the TEN-T Guidelines 2013.

- The 2-Level structure of the network should be kept and as well in principle the deadlines for its implementation 2030 / 2050.

- It might make sense to introduce an intermediate layer for additional Core Network (CN) links. These links should be added to the CN, they should fulfil the same parameter that the other CN, however with extended dates of implementations, e.g. 2040.
  - To add new links to the CN should be an exception, the main structure and the main density of the CN should remain unchanged.
  - Modifications of the network should be justified by the method applied in 2012.
  - Completion of existing CN shall be the focus. That means if the completion of the existing CN is not realistic until 2030 in a MS, additional CN elements would need very strong arguments.
- There should be a harmonisation of the overall alignment of CNC and RFC.
- The number of corridors should not (significantly) increase– e.g. a maximum of nine corridors for Europe turns out to be a suitable number. In view to the larger number of existing RFCs and wishes for additional corridors as discussed in some fora, we see the need for a bundling of corridors related to similar MS and / or similar markets and transport relations.
- However, there is a concrete case to be relevant as an additional element to the CN, the Alpine – Western – Balkan rail freight corridor, which is not part of the CN yet. We are aware that both from Austrian regions and neighbouring countries (e.g. as expressed within the discussion of the Danube Strategy) there is a strong interest for establishing a CNC adequate to the Alpine Western Balkan corridor crossing the Alps via Schober / Pyhrn and Tauern corridor. Assuming an extended implementation horizon and no significant change in infrastructure requirements, Austria can assure to fulfil TEN-T requirements for road and passenger rail via the Tauern route (Ljubljana – Salzburg – Munich) and for rail freight via Schober / Pyhrn route (Maribor – Graz – Linz – Passau/Salzburg) by 2040. Taking into account these preconditions, we are supporting the initiative of adding RFC 10 to the core network, which will generate additional European<sup>5</sup> benefit.
- In addition, we want to highlight the importance of including the terminal Villach-Fürnitz in Carinthia, Austria to the Core Network. Based on its location at the Rail Freight Corridors 5 and 10, as well as its geographical proximity to the port of Trieste, the terminal receives a crucial node function, which justifies the status as Core Node. This

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to: Plattform Tauern/Pyhrn-Schober Achse der Länder Kärnten, Oberösterreich, Salzburg, Steiermark (2018): Die Tauern-Pyhrn/Schober-Achse (TPSA) im europäischen Kontext. Ein Argumentarium zur Aufnahme in das Transeuropäische Kernnetz.

should also be seen in the light of increasing amounts of goods, which continue to arrive at European ports like Trieste as result of the Chinese One Belt One Road initiative.

- Currently EU funds are focused on new and expansion projects. However, for such expansion or new construction projects to be effective, the existing network has to be in good condition. Hence, the EC should open the cohesion envelope of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to urgently needed funds for reinvestment projects and infrastructure maintenance on the existing network in cohesion Member States, specifically for all Rail Freight Corridors.

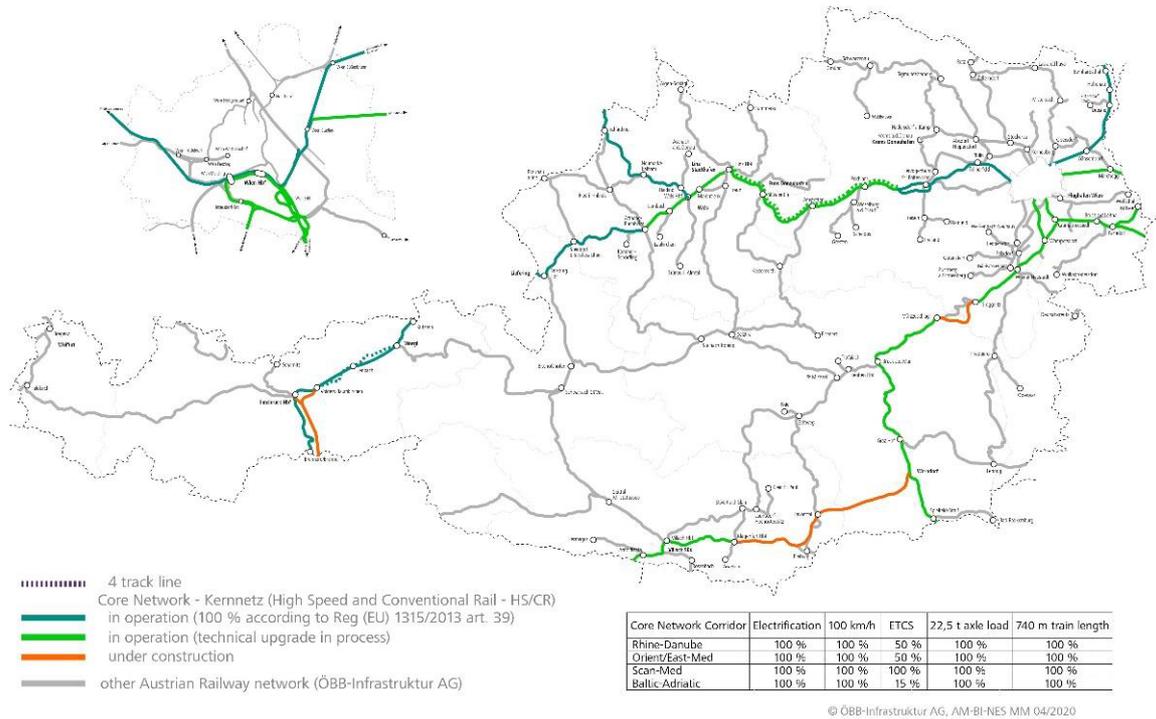
## **Conclusions**

- Austria considers the revision of the Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013 (“TEN-T Guidelines”) and Regulation (EU) No. 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight as a chance for a harmonised approach towards an integrated approach on infrastructural and operational development of the Trans-European network.
- This harmonised approach is needed to raise the efficiency of the network, especially for rail. Operational parameters should be included into the requirements of TEN-T network.
- Continuity is the keyword for the development of the CNC. Keep the main infrastructure parameters and the deadlines for the current network unchanged. The discussion shall include only minor extension of the network.

Vienna, May 2020

## Annex 1: Implementation status of rail network

TEN-T Core Network - Austrian Railway Network (ÖBB-Infrastruktur AG)



## Annex 2: Implementation status of road network

