

150 years of Forum Train Europe Overview



What is Forum Train Europe (FTE)?

- Is the European coordination platform, FTE promotes cross-border coordination amongst railway undertakings. In doing so, the FTE makes an essential contribution to promoting interoperability of European's rail services
- FTE supports its members with an international production planning process. This is synchronised with the schedule of the infrastructure managers and with EU Directives
- FTE helps its members to harmonise their production plans right through to requests for cross-border train paths
- FTE guarantees its members international contacts and an excellent network
- FTE actively represents its members interests in dealings with infrastructure managers, pan-European organisations, and international authorities

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Why to become an FTE member?

FTE has a very long and rich history when it served as a conference forum for integrated railway companies to coordinate their cross-border trains. Nevertheless, the new important function of FTE has emerged since the vertical separation of rail infrastructure management and train operation, but also the decision to create a single European railway market.

The liberalised market has brought many opportunities, but also many challenges when it comes to capacity management. Problems that were in the past easily solved within a single integrated company are now subject to many different interests and actors. The capacity conflicts between track maintenance, passenger traffic and freight traffic are growing, and transparent processes are needed to solve them. Furthermore, the number of Railway Undertakings (RUs) in Europe increases as well, they are having similar problems, and they are getting under high market pressure from their customers.

There was a high need for a competent capacity management platform where the issues of all RUs can be discussed, aligned between companies of different sizes and businesses, and transferred to a single stronger voice towards IMs and other stakeholders. Besides others, FTE means:

- Discussion platform for both passenger and freight to evaluate and consolidate the positions towards projects, IM-processes and to key stakeholders,
- Coordinated promotion of European-wide standardisation of processes and tools to increase the competitiveness of railways,
- Opportunity to codevelop European capacity related processes (incl. TTR (Timetable Redesign)) and IT systems (such as PCS (Path Coordination System) and ECMT (European Capacity Management Tool)),
- Coordination platform for international trains and trains operated in partnerships,
- Networking platform.

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FTE services in detail

Capacity Management Platform

FTE is the European platform for Railway Undertakings for Capacity Management and Timetabling. Freight RUs and Passenger RUs, irrespectively where they are considered as incumbent or new entrants are joining the same tables to tackle the key capacity challenges and improve the competitiveness of carriage by rail. Although being competitors, FTE members share the problems on the same infrastructure, they share the wish to have transparent and standardised processes, and they would like to have a market-orientated and efficient service from IMs.

FTE members meet regularly to discuss important issues for RUs in the capacity management area. Each member has the possibility to bring own topics and discuss it with others. Positions are consolidated, and if needed further steps are taken towards Infrastructure Managers and other European stakeholders.

Some of the groups and occasions also provide an excellent opportunity for both operative and management staff of FTE RUs to strengthen their contact network and exchange experience. FTE also supports the formation of international and national coalitions of RUs to strengthen the RUs' voice towards IMs and other stakeholder, push for change management and gather use cases, data and create common positions.

Several groups are also established together with Rail Net Europe (RNE) and Infrastructure Managers (IMs). In these groups, FTE RUs can provide feedback on the IMs' processes and performance and discuss steps jointly how to improve the shortcomings. FTE is also the initiator and co-designer of TTR process and TTR IT (DCM – Digital Capacity Management), and members are working together with IMs on the capacity management processes for the future.

Timetabling Conferences

FTE provides its members a coordination platform for the international harmonisation of timetable and production planning in the cross-border traffic.

The coordination conferences take place 3 times a year (as FTE A, B, and C/D). In the first one the members are dealing with the path study phases. The purpose of the second is to harmonise and place the path requests for the upcoming yearly timetable period. The third is dedicated to the validation of the draft timetables offered by the IMs, placing observations and potential deployment of coaches/wagons. Additionally, the conferences are also used by members to discuss the so call «Late Path Requests», requests placed after the annual timetable deadline that are handled by IMs with lower priority. Moreover, the conferences are also the spots where measures regarding construction works with international impact are discussed.

Input to IT Development

Forum Train Europe does not develop own European IT systems but serves as a business advisor and co-developer of European Capacity Management IT systems of Infrastructure Managers. FTE members are gathering and discussing their functional requirements for IT,

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which are then consolidated and provided to RNE and IMs. By this they make sure that the systems are as much as possible user-friendly and fulfil the needs of RU users.

FTE currently serves as a RU business advisor for the following tools:

- Path Coordination System (PCS)

Path Coordination System (PCS) is a web-based communication system for the international coordination process between the railway undertakings and the infrastructure managers during the production and train path planning phases. The system owner of PCS is RNE. Nevertheless, FTE members can benefit from the possibility to participate in the PCS User Group, the fact that FTE serves as a co-developer of the software and finally the FTE members also receive a general support in the respective planning processes.

FTE is the exclusive co-developer of PCS and FTE also financially contributes to the further PCS development. FTE RUs define their own PCS change requests, to make the software more RU-orientated and respecting their needs. Each request is duly discussed in the respective FTE groups and afterwards submitted to RNE for implementation.

- European Capacity Management Tool (ECMT)

European Capacity Management Tool (ECMT) is a web-based system which is expected to serve as the European capacity hub in near future. ECMT is expected to give access to applicants to TTR Capacity Models, TTR Capacity Supplies and provide a solution for their consultation. Moreover, the ECMT should also include the management of the Capacity Needs Announcements, which might be sent by applicants to IMs as input for their Capacity Models and Capacity Supplies.

The system owner of ECMT is RNE. FTE serves as the key business advisor for the software development, by definition and consolidation of RUs' expectations and needs. While FTE IT WG and FTE CNA WG provide direct input, FTE members also have the possibility to join the ECMT Advisory Board and jointly with IMs codesign and test new functions.

- Temporary Capacity Restriction Tool (TCR)

The Temporary Capacity Restriction Tool shall serve to better coordinate restrictions on different networks in the future. FTE is currently establishing a mechanism how to ensure that the TCR publication function meets the RU-user expectations.

TTR

Today's capacity management process, created in the past century, does not reflect the market needs anymore. It calls for improvements in regards of flexibility, efficiency, and effectiveness, besides being not entirely cost-optimal. Moreover, the national particularities complicate the international harmonisation and stand in the way of seamless cross-border transport, better utilisation of existing infrastructure and further development of the single European railway area. Therefore in 2014, Forum Train Europe (FTE) and RailNetEurope (RNE), supported by the European Rail Freight Association (ERFA) have joined forces to start an ambitious project – "Timetabling and Capacity Redesign for Smart Capacity Management ", or shortly TTR.

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History

The need to coordinate Europe's railway timetables and to create cross-border rail connections was identified very early. From the available documents, the history of the European timetable conferences can be traced back as far as the year 1872.

Passenger Transport by Rail

Short history of the European Passenger Train Timetable Conferences (EFK – Europäische Fahrplankonferenz)

Period: Before the First World War (1872-1914)

The first meeting of delegates from certain European governments and representatives of some railway organisations for a timetable conference took place in Cologne (Germany) on 12 February 1872. Their task was to set the timetables for international trains and direct rolling stock routes for the summer timetable for 1872. This first historic conference was attended by the railway companies of Austria, Belgium, the German Reich, France (Compagnie de l'Est) and Switzerland. One of the joint decisions that was made was to introduce the use of Roman numerals for the hours 0-12.

Once the conference had been established, other railway companies from the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Spain, Portugal etc. very soon joined in. At that time the conference was called the "International Timetable Conference". It was not until 1897 that it became known as the "European Timetable Conference". The timetable conferences were followed up by the "European Rolling Stock Management Conferences", which determined the composition of international trains and specified the number and type of carriages for every direct route.

Until the First World War, the conference was held twice a year, once at the start of the year, when international timetables for the summer were set, and then in June or July to work out the international timetables for the winter season. The conference dealt with numerous applications regarding international train connections and with issues of fundamental importance to rail traffic. The organisation and leadership of each conference was the responsibility of the country in which the annual meeting of delegates took place.

On 10 and 11 June 1914, the "European Timetable Conference" met in Bern (Switzerland) for the last time before the First World War. The First World War resulted in a lengthy interruption to the work.

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Period: 1920 until the Second World War (1939-1945)

The first conference after the war was held on the initiative of the Swiss Railway Company SBB in Bern (Switzerland) again, in December 1920. The general wish was expressed that the conference should be given a more definite status. One year later, in 1921, it was decided that the European Timetable Conferences would now only be held once a year, in the countries of all member organisations in turn. In 1922 the first Statutes of the "European Conference" were approved. It was given the status of a convention under international civil law. In 1923 in Nice (France), the SBB was chosen to be the lead-managing railway for a period of 5 years.

The last conference before the outbreak of the Second World War took place in Budapest (Hungary) in 1938. Between 1938 and 1946 only two partial conferences were organised, in 1940 and 1945.

Period: 1946-1996

The first post-war conference was again held on the initiative of the SBB in Montreux (Switzerland). The main task at this conference was to set up international connections as quickly as possible.

It emerged that various procedural rules for the conference which had been in force since 1 January 1923 needed to be expressed more clearly. The statutes were therefore revised, with effect from 1 January 1952. From this time, the more accurate title of the "European Passenger Train Timetable Conference, EFK" was used for the conference.

The European Passenger Train Timetable Conferences in the 50s discussed important matters such as the creation of a unified seat reservation procedure, analysing international traffic flow and standardising train types.

The main events in the 60s were the decision passed in Sofia in 1963 to switch to a two-year cycle from 1964 and the completion of the revision of the Statutes with a new edition published on 1 January 1967.

1972 saw the celebration in St. Gallen of "100 years of EFK".

At the EFK in 1994 in Warsaw (Poland), the lead-managing company of the EFK, the SBB, was instructed to work with the lead-managing company of the "European Goods Train Timetable Conference, EGK", the CD (Czech Railways), to investigate the possibility of merging the two organisations, EFK and EGK. In 1995 the concept was approved for a reorganisation to take effect from 1 January 1997. The first full joint meeting of the EFK and the EGK took place on 20 September 1996 in La Rochelle (France). It was on this historic occasion that the representatives of the European railway companies brought into existence the combined organisation Forum Train Europe or FTE.

Freight Transport by Rail

Short history of the European Goods Train Timetable Conferences (EGK – Europäische Güterverkehrskonferenz)

Period: Before the first World War (1915-1918)

Following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian double monarchy in 1918, the railway companies of the newly created states had to resolve the problems of freight transport to and from the port of Trieste, which was of particular importance to them. These problems were discussed at numerous sessions organised by the Czech railway company (CSD). Freight traffic to and from Trieste was quite significant. It supplied the starving countries bordering the Danube, which paid in goods. It should be remembered that the international convention on rail freight transport had been in existence since 1878.

Period: 1920 until the Second World War (1939-1945)

At the meeting in Bologna in 1923, the representatives of the CSD, ÖBB, FS and JZ railway companies decided to work out regulatory timetables for freight transport before each change of timetable. The first meeting took place in 1924 in České Budejovice with the participation of a representative of MAV (Hungarian rail company). The CSD was initially nominated as the lead-managing railway for a period of five years, which was subsequently extended to six years. In 1925 the PKP and the CFR also joined in. Since then, the conference has been held twice a year.

In 1927 the Deutsche Reichsbahn (DR) (later Deutsche Bahn (DB) and DR), BDZ (Bulgaria), CH (Greece) and GySEV/ROeEE (Győr-Sopron-Ebenfurt railway, Hungary) companies took part. In 1928 the SNCB/NMBS (Belgium), DSB (Denmark), NS (Netherlands), SBB (Swiss Federal railways), BLS (Bern Lötschberg Simplon railway, both Switzerland) and SJ (Sweden) also joined. This year for the first time the conference published the results of its work in the form of a book, the international goods train timetable, which listed the main international freight traffic connections in Europe and was called the LIM, the abbreviated form of its French title. In 1929 the first Statutes of this organisation were approved, as was the official title "International Goods Train Timetable Conference". In 1930 other railways (SNCF (France), CFL (Luxembourg), NSB (Norway), the former Lithuanian Railways and part of the RENFE (Spain) also took part in the conference, and in 1934 BR (Britain) joined too.

Period: 1946-1996

In 1963 RENFE, TCDD (Turkey) and the Interfrigo and Intercontainer company joined, in 1968 the CP (Portugal), in 1980 Eurotunnel, in 1991 HZ (Croatia) and SZ (Slovenia), in 1992 CFARYM (North Macedonia) and in 1994 UIRR (International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport)

After the Second World War, the conference resumed its work in 1946, and in 1951 it was renamed the "European Goods Train Timetable Conference" or EGK. Until 1969 it was known for short as the LIM conference, after the international goods train timetable "Livret indicateur International des Marchandises - LIM". In 1951 the agreement on cooperation between non-state railway organisations, such as the UIC, and the EGK came into force. In 1952 the new Statutes were approved. In 1961 it was decided to keep regular records of goods train

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movements. This was also the year in which TEEM was introduced, the Trans-Europe-Express goods train network, designed for speeds of 100 km/h. TEEM connections and timetables were published in the form of a book. In 1969 combined transportation in containers was introduced. Connections were published in a special TEC timetable.

In 1979 a new version of the Statutes was published and in 1980, to make the task of the lead-managing railway company easier, a "permanent working group" was set up. In 1981 the criteria for the "list of high-capacity border crossings and transit routes" and the "list of high-capacity train paths" were defined. In 1984 the international freight network ICM (Intercity-Marchandises) was set up, later to be called TEF (Trans-Euro-Freight). The freight system "EurailCargo" was set up in 1986. The TEEM timetable appeared for the first time in graphical form in 1987. In 1988 the Statutes were changed again.

In 1993 CD (Czech Republic) and ZSR (Slovakia), the successors to CSD (Czechoslovakia), were admitted to the conference. CD took over as organisers of the conference. The first computer-generated LIM timetable was produced and published in 1994.

In 1994 the General Meeting instructed the lead-managing railway company to work with the EFK to investigate the possibility of a merger in 1996.

In 1995 the "Europ Unit Cargo (EUC)" system was introduced and a merger with the EFK was agreed, to start from 1.1.1997. The joint General Meeting of the EFK und EGK decided in a session in La Rochelle on 20 September 1996 to introduce a new organisational structure.

Merger of EFK and EGK into today's Forum Train Europe FTE

Period: 1997-2005

From 1 January 1997, the merger of the EFK and EGK resulted in "Forum Train Europe", which should really be called "Forum Rail Europe", but this name was rejected in view of France's legal concerns. Forum Train Europe FTE is now the framework organisation for international coordination in planning international passenger and freight connections in European rail transport systems.

With the deregulation of the European rail network, the structures of the railways have changed completely. EU Directives 91/440/EEC of 29 July 1991 (later 2001/12/EC) on the development of the Community's railways, and 95/19/EC of 19 June 1995 (later 2001/14/EC) on the allocation of railway infrastructure capacity and the charging of infrastructure fees, call for the functional separation of railway undertakings and infrastructure operators, and non-discriminatory access to the railway infrastructure.

The FTE, a pan-European organisation responsible for international production planning, timetable coordination and harmonisation of path allocations for rail transport, went still further with separating the functions of railway undertakings (RU) and infrastructure operators (IO), by distinguishing even more clearly between the main activities of the RUs and the IOs under the umbrella of the FTE. A new coordinating meeting of capacity managers "FTE C" was introduced to harmonise the paths that were to be allocated among the capacity managers.

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Timetable Change postponed from May/June to mid-December 2002

On 21 April 1999 the General Meeting of the FTE decided to postpone the timetable change from May/June, as it then was, to mid-December. Since 15 December 2002, the timetable change has been implemented across Europe in mid-December. It was also decided at that General Meeting that the effect would be studied at the end of a two-year trial period, to decide whether the date should be left in December or postponed to January. There is no possibility of returning to a date at the end of May / beginning of June at the end of the trial period (there would be no reason to change back, since a fundamental decision had been made in favour of the end of the year).

The FTE submitted an amendment application to the EU Commission in Brussels for the date to be enshrined in EU Directive 2001/14/EC, and Appendix 3 was successfully amended. On 23 October 2002, based on the application by the FTE, the EU Commission decided to amend EU Directive 2001/14/EC regarding the date for changing the network timetable for rail transport, with effect from the timetable for 2003 (from 14.12.2002).

PATHFINDER - internet based Communication System

On 19.04.2000, the General Meeting of the FTE decided to launch Project Pathfinder. Pathfinder is an Internet-based communication system designed for reaching production plan agreements between RUs and for coordinating timetables, and for agreeing train paths between infrastructure operators. On 1.1.2004, Pathfinder was implemented in Europe under the auspices of the FTE and with project management by the SBB, after about three years of design and development. The project also won the Swiss IT Award in 2004.

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Further Development of the FTE

At the request of the lead-managing railways of the FTE, on 6 November 2002 the General Meeting decided to modify the timetable planning process to suit new requirements and circumstances, to review the present organisation and to introduce a legal form for the FTE as of 1.1.2004. The reasons why a legal form is needed for the FTE include the lack of status as a legal entity, the lack of limitation on liability, limited negotiating powers etc.

However, at their meeting in Paris on 24 September 2003, and under pressure from the EU Commission in Brussels, the CEOs of the executive committee of the International Railway Union UIC put a stop to this further development of the FTE. They mandated the executive boards of the FTE and of the RailNetEurope Association (RNE), set up on 1.1.2004, to produce a joint proposal (position paper) by 19.11.2003 on the future structure and allocation of roles and responsibilities between FTE and RNE.

The General Meetings of RNE and FTE approved the joint position paper on the further development of FTE and RNE, which was dated 24.10.2003, on 3/4.11.2003 and 5.11.2003 respectively. As of the end of 2004, all infrastructure operators left the FTE.

With the departure of the infrastructure operators from the FTE, as of 1.1.2005 the FTE became an organisation for railway undertakings and service companies. The General Meeting of the FTE on 4 November 2004 instructed the lead-managing railways to produce new Statutes and a new formula for the allocation of votes and costs, on this basis. On 25 May 2005, the General Meeting approved the new Statutes and the new formula for the allocation of votes and costs. Soon afterwards the association Forum Train Europe FTE based in Bern was founded

In addition, for the first time the Presidency and the new Management Board of the FTE were named and voted for accordingly:

Hans-Jürg Spillmann	President	Swiss Railways SBB
Jaroslav Kocourek	Vice-President	Czech Railways CD
Roland Scholten	Passenger Traffic	NS Reizigers
Roland Hartkopf	Freight Traffic	Railion Deutschland AG
Peter Jäggy	Secretary General	Forum Train Europe FTE



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Members

FTE currently consists of 86 members from 27 European countries



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