



# Pilot Report

from the FTE Pilot  
**Shortening Consultation Phase**

version 1.0

Version	Responsible	Date	Description
0.1	Peter Bouman	30 January 2023	Creation of the first draft
0.2	Peter Bouman	01 March 2023	2 <sup>nd</sup> version, incorporating comments on the first draft
1.0	Peter Bouman	04 April 2023	Final version

## Management summary

After having tested in practice, the following can be concluded:

**A two-week Consultation Phase is only realistic under the condition that basic quality requirements are fulfilled, implying that improvement of the quality of the draft offer timetable is essential for being able to process all dossiers within the limited timeframe of two weeks.**

**The quality aspects incorporating the on time and full harmonizing of:**

- the timetable itself
- the involved calendars of the trains, including all sub-variants
- the train parameters.

For realizing this improvement, crucial elements for improvement are identified on 4 aspects to ensure a good basic quality of the draft offer:

	Description	Action
1.	Properly prepared annual request, including slots for Rolling Planning and Late Path request.	RUs and IMs jointly
2.	TCRs and Node planning should be sufficiently included in the allocation of the Annual Timetable.	RUs and IMs jointly
3.	The IT support should be improved.	IMs and RUs jointly
4.	Besides all technical improvements, IMs should improve the cooperation needed for realizing a harmonized offer	IMs

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# 1. Description of the pilot

One of the core elements of the TTR process is earlier and more stable allocation of capacity, thus enabling Passenger RUs to open reservations for (international) trains earlier than today and thereby improving the position of rail traffic in competition with airlines.

For Freight RUs, the benefit of earlier capacity allocation is not directly in being able to plan trains much earlier, but the envisaged increased stability of the timetable has a positive effect.

To be able to provide an earlier final allocation of capacity in the Annual Timetable process, all steps in this process must be sped up:

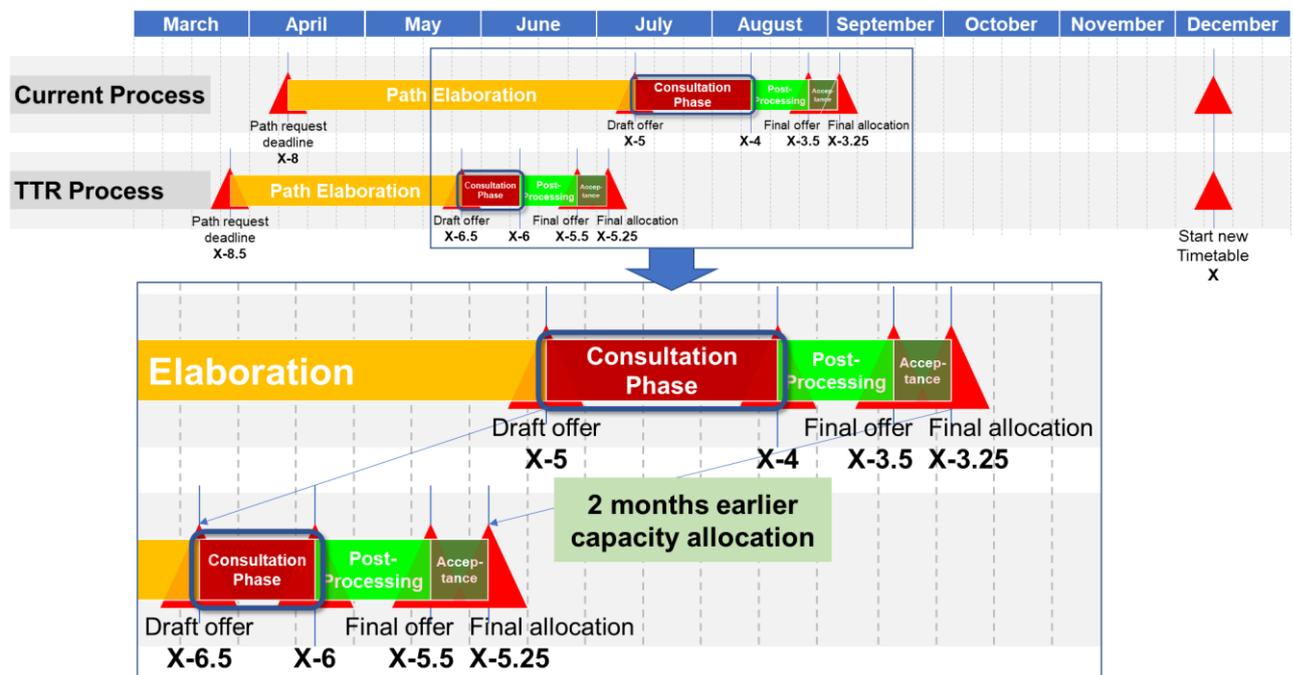


Figure 1: current and TTR process for allocating Annual Timetable capacity

Due to this process acceleration, the time for reviewing the Draft offers (Consultation Phase) will be reduced from 4 weeks currently to 2 weeks in the future TTR process.

As it is rather critical to process the draft offers within two weeks, FTE conducted a pilot study on these questions:

- is it possible to process the Annual Capacity Draft offers within two weeks?
- if not, what is necessary to make it work in the (TTR) future?

The pilot was executed during the normal Consultation Phase period for Timetable 2023, which took place from the 4<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> of July. During this period, several RUs tested whether it was possible to examine the PCS dossiers and/or the national IT systems within a period of two weeks.

By doing this, the shorter Consultation Phase period was simulated, however no risk was involved as the formal deadline for sending in Observations remained the 5<sup>th</sup> of August.

## 2. Participants

8 RUs participated in the FTE Pilot:

### Freight RUs:

- Trains Belgium < > Sweden (Lineas)
- EWLV trains, Block trains, intermodal trains (DB Cargo DE)
- Freight Krefeld - Katrineholm, Castelguelfo - Rolvsøy, Sweden/Norway timber and wood chips (HectorRail)
- All routes of DB Cargo Romania

### Passenger RUs:

- IC Amsterdam-Brussel (NS and SNCB)
- Nightjet Amsterdam/Brussel/Hamburg-Wien/Innsbruck (ÖBB Personenverkehr)
- Day trains Switzerland-Italy (SBB-CFF-FFS Personenverkehr)

This represents in total a good image; however, it isn't fully covering the European network as:

1. Several countries are not included
2. The pilot focussed mostly on the international trains. As the TTR process will be valid for ALL trains, the allocation process for national trains should also be envisaged

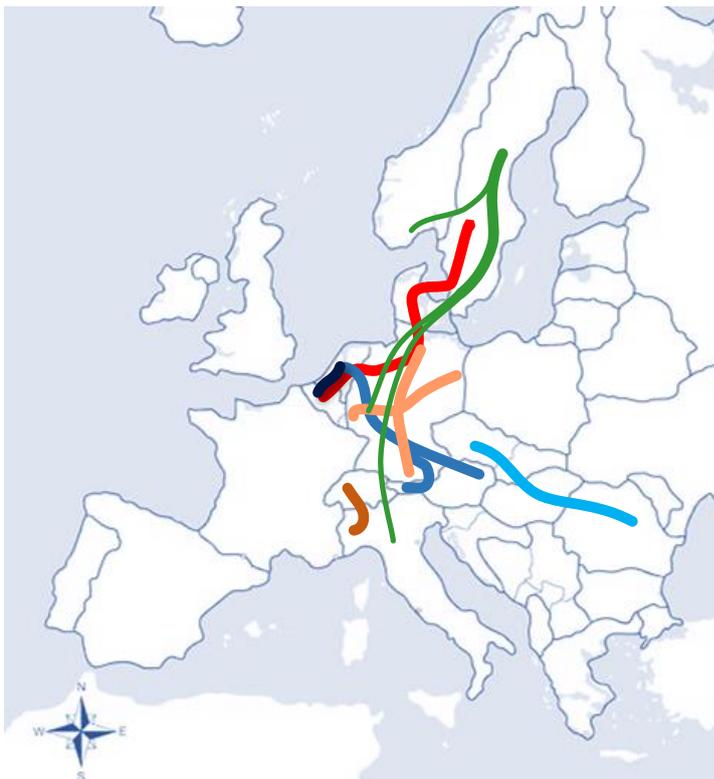


Figure 2: graphical display of the services incorporated in the pilot

However, the 8 respondents together analysed their work on approx. 500 separate train dossiers, already giving a good indication of the state of play on the feasibility of finalizing the consultation within two weeks. Moreover, all participating RUs also gave an indication on the number of dossiers they estimate to cover, summing up to a conclusion on a total number of more than 2000 trains.

### 3. Results from the pilot

#### 3.1. Draft offers provided by the IMs

##### 3.1.1. Number of Draft offers

From 8 participating companies, 6 received a Draft offer on time from the involved IMs for the trains on the whole route.

One participant only received a partial offer, as one IM didn't provide a slot (status 'red' in PCS dossier); this resulted in a partial offer.

Another respondent reported missing offers in various territories - at least being the case at the starting date of the Consultation Phase; in some cases, results arrived at the end of August.

*Comments from participants:*

- additional objections from RFI in the Switzerland-Italy traffic are also the case this year.
- two dossiers have been set to status "red" from RFI on 19.8.2022. If there's no solution, we will have to question the rotation concept.
- PCS offers: after 2 weeks (status of 19.07.2022), there are still missing offers (SNCF Reseau, 11 offers). Due to this, the offers could be considered 'partial' during the Consultation Phase. Due to SNCF Reseau delay there are partial offers for stretches of DB Netz, Infrabel and ADIF.



Figure 3: graphical display of the number of participants receiving complete offers in the pilot

An additional remark in one case was that, although the harmonized train path offer was entered into PCS on time, the offer cannot be fully trusted as the node planning of the infrastructure has not been completed. Past experience suggests that this might lead to later changes in the timetable, undermining the results of the elaboration phase and thereby part of the ultimate goal of offering earlier and *more stable* timetable slots.

##### 3.1.2. Draft offers presented on time

Not all IMs delivered their Draft offers on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July:

- In some regions, the offer was presented at the end of the business day. There is also a time difference of about two hours between receiving the draft offers and availability for the employees. So in these cases, the real starting point for beginning to study the offers was the following day.
- One company faced a delayed presentation of (at least) one IM. The delay varied between 1-3 days and 2 weeks. The latter is, of course, fatal for being able to examine the integral dossier within a period of two weeks, starting at the agreed date of delivering the Draft offer.

*Comments from participants:*

- in Germany draft offers were mostly send on the first day 4th of July, but not in the morning - the offers appeared around mid-day. In some regions the offer was presented at the end of the business day. There is also a time difference of about two hours between receiving the draft offers and availability for the employees. So mostly, real starting point for examination was the next day.
- for the Elbtal-Region (trains to and from Czech Republic) some offers were presented with a delay of up to one week
- PCS offers: 10 offers of 82 arrived with delay. Delay occurred from one to three days (DB Netz, ADIF, LFP, SNCF Reseau, ÖBB Infra)
- PCS offers: after 2 weeks (status of 19.07.2022), there are still missing offers (SNCF Reseau, 11 offers). Due to this, the offers could be considered 'partial' during the Consultation Phase.

### 3.1.3. Quality of the Draft offers

The respondents were requested to indicate their experiences on several topics regarding the *quality* of the draft offer. This related to 5 key components:

- The harmonization of the border times
  - > Avoiding negative border times (which automatically leads in PCS automatically to a shifting to the next day)
- The harmonization of the calendars at the border
  - > Avoiding confusion on the connection of the various national sub-paths to each other
- The level of conflict solving by IMs (avoiding inconsistencies between IMs in the dossiers)
  - > Can refer to both path and calendar, has another background (lack of on-time coordination between IMs)
- Correct train parameters being used
  - > Potentially having a backwards effect on timetable if mistakes are being made.
- Sufficiently detailed node planning
  - > The grade of detail can vary case by case, the ultimate impact on the allocated timetable is essential

The responses regarding these aspects were rather mixed.

#### *Harmonization of border times*

For six respondents, all dossiers contained harmonized border times. Two respondents reported partial offers:

- The partial offer as mentioned in paragraph 3.1 didn't offer a slot in one territory, and therefore no harmonized border times

One respondent reported missing results in specific territories (or at least far too late).

*Comments from participants:*

- final harmonized result at the end of August (AT, CZ, PL).
- PCS: no harmonisation between SNCF Reseau-DB Netz & ADIF - LFP & SZCZ - DB Netz & SBB Infra - DB Netz.

#### *Harmonization of calendars at the border.*

On this aspect, the quality of the dossiers was worse. Only 5 of 8 participants stated having experienced fully harmonized calendars at the borders, 2 more experiences partially harmonized calendars and 1 had no harmonization. The non-harmonization of calendars causes a lot of confusion, as in these cases PCS generates a lot of path variants that cannot easily be understood by the RUs.

*Comments from participants:*

- due to lack of coordination on TCRs: when applied in one country, but not in the neighbouring one leading to inconsistent calendars.
- PCS: SNCF Reseau & DB Netz missing running days
- for the period 24/06 - 05/08, DB Netz created a variant via Emmerich due to infraworks between Rheine and Osnabruck. ProRail did not make any variant and are also not able to create one in the timetable – leading to missing/additional running days.



Figure 4: graphical display of the number of participants receiving harmonized timetable calendars

#### Conflicts solved

On this aspect, the scores are slightly lower than on the previous topic.

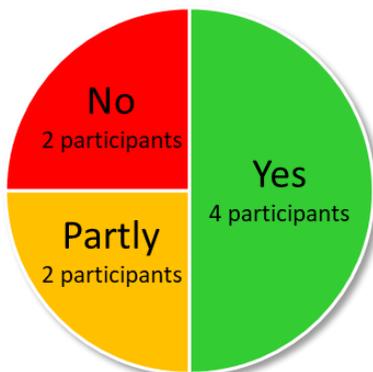


Figure 5: graphical display of the number of participants receiving dossiers without conflicts

Only 50% of the dossiers didn't contain conflicts. In the other dossiers, conflict was due to non-harmonized or missing dates in the calendar, TCR variants or missing node planning with an impact on the timetable itself.

#### Comments from participants:

- remaining conflicts:
  - CZ partly due to Elbtal-construction works
  - PL: Senftenberg - Zary & Lodz - Poznan - Seddin
- there are still uncertain points in the node planning in Italy.
- not really applicable; there were no conflicts due to the preparational work before the Annual Capacity Request

*Correct technical parameters being used*

On this topic, 5 out of 8 participants received dossiers with correct technical parameters included.



Figure 6: graphical display of the number of participants receiving dossiers with correct technical parameters

Especially in freight dossiers, several parameters concerning length and weight of trains were not fulfilled, or not fulfilled correctly - in some cases even after having been discussed and even before submitting the capacity request. This creates a lot of uncertainty regarding the usefulness of the offered slot.

*Comments from participants:*

- PCS: wagon weight & length has been changed (DB Netz, Infrabel, SZCZ, Trafikverket) even though it was agreed before on the parameters
- some train parameters were not taken correctly in the draft offer, for example the gabarit.
- some trains did not have correctly configured train parameters.

*Sufficient detailed offer, including node planning*

Although most respondents answered positively, 2 respondents didn't give an answer on this. Moreover, one respondent answered clearly that the node planning wasn't properly finalized, and therefore objections from the infrastructure managers are possible at any time, which can influence the entire concept.



Figure 7: graphical display of the number of participants receiving dossiers with sufficient detailed node planning

**3.2. Draft offer being in line with the Annual Request**

Being curious about the level of pre-cooking in the phases before the Annual Capacity Request, FTE asked the participants whether the offered timetable(s) were in line with the request being placed in April.



Figure 8: graphical display of the number of participants receiving dossiers in line with the Annual Request

The result is both on Freight and Passenger RUs similarly. The response is surprising in a way that, also when the request had been jointly prepared in the phases before the actual Annual Request, still quit a substantial number of Draft Offers didn't meet the requested characteristics. Responses of RUs mentioned various problems:

- Running times up to more than 3 hours longer than requested, potentially being solved in the Ad-Hoc process instead of Annual Planning.
- Lacking harmonization by IMs, resulting in trains being directed via different border points.
- Difficulty having to use separate train numbers when being re-routed due to construction works, leading to too late offers.

In some cases, RUs protested at IMs when allowed time margins were exceeded.

*Comments from participants:*

- PCS: SNCF Reseau & DB Netz missing running days.
- PCS: ProRail - DB Netz constructed timetables for some days for different borders.
- if maximal allowed time margins were exceeded without consultation before, we complained mostly. Mostly means: if it has been a deviation just in single digit range, we haven't complained.
- RFI requires a separate train number for each timetable variation due to construction work, which makes dealing with the booking systems in Italy massively more difficult.

As mentioned before, this result is despite the effort of preparing jointly with both IMs and RUs the possibilities for conflict-free slots (for instance during route meetings, FTE conferences, feasibility studies and bi- or multilateral meetings with involved parties):



Figure 9: graphical display of the number of participants having preparational meetings with IMs

### 3.3. Uniform timetable process regarding TCRs being used

The respondents of the query gave a rather diverse picture on the consistency of processes being used; for instance, considering whether TCRs are included in Annual Capacity Request or not.

Especially the difference between Freight and Passenger RUs was strikingly different:



Figure 10: number of participants experiencing a consistent process within Freight (left) and Passengers (right) RUs

Freight companies especially experience great difficulties in ordering train paths in various countries. These different approaches result in confusing offers, or worse: inconsistent offers.

*Comments from participants:*

- The process, which systems to use and what data is presented where is wildly different in several countries
- Zeitscheiben (time slices) for DB Netz and partly CZ partly due to Elbtal-construction works
- Banedanmark & Trafikverket - predefined in the PAP, time slices are created through them
- AT, NL: no Zeitscheiben and considering of TCRs in annual timetable
- DE: even though there is an TCR process before Annual Timetable ordering (ANITA-Z), the offers do sometimes not match to the ANITA-Z offer.

### 3.4. IT systems

#### 3.4.1. Use of PCS versus national systems

Responses to the question posed on the use of the system was that almost all RUs received the Draft offer in both PCS and the national system – only one Passenger operator could use PCS as single source of information regarding the (Draft) Offer.

Comments from participants:

- due to missing interfaces from DB Netz to the national system we are using PCS only limited. We have only used PCS for ATT ordering 2023 only for 82 trains (=Pap's and CZ-traffic, not handled by CD Cargo). In case of using PCS, PCS is the leading system. After accepting the final PCS-offer (September), we have to order the paths in the national tool, due to missing interfaces. On the one hand ordering for DB Netz, on the other hand also for our systems.
- manual transfer from PCS to national system necessary, no interface available.

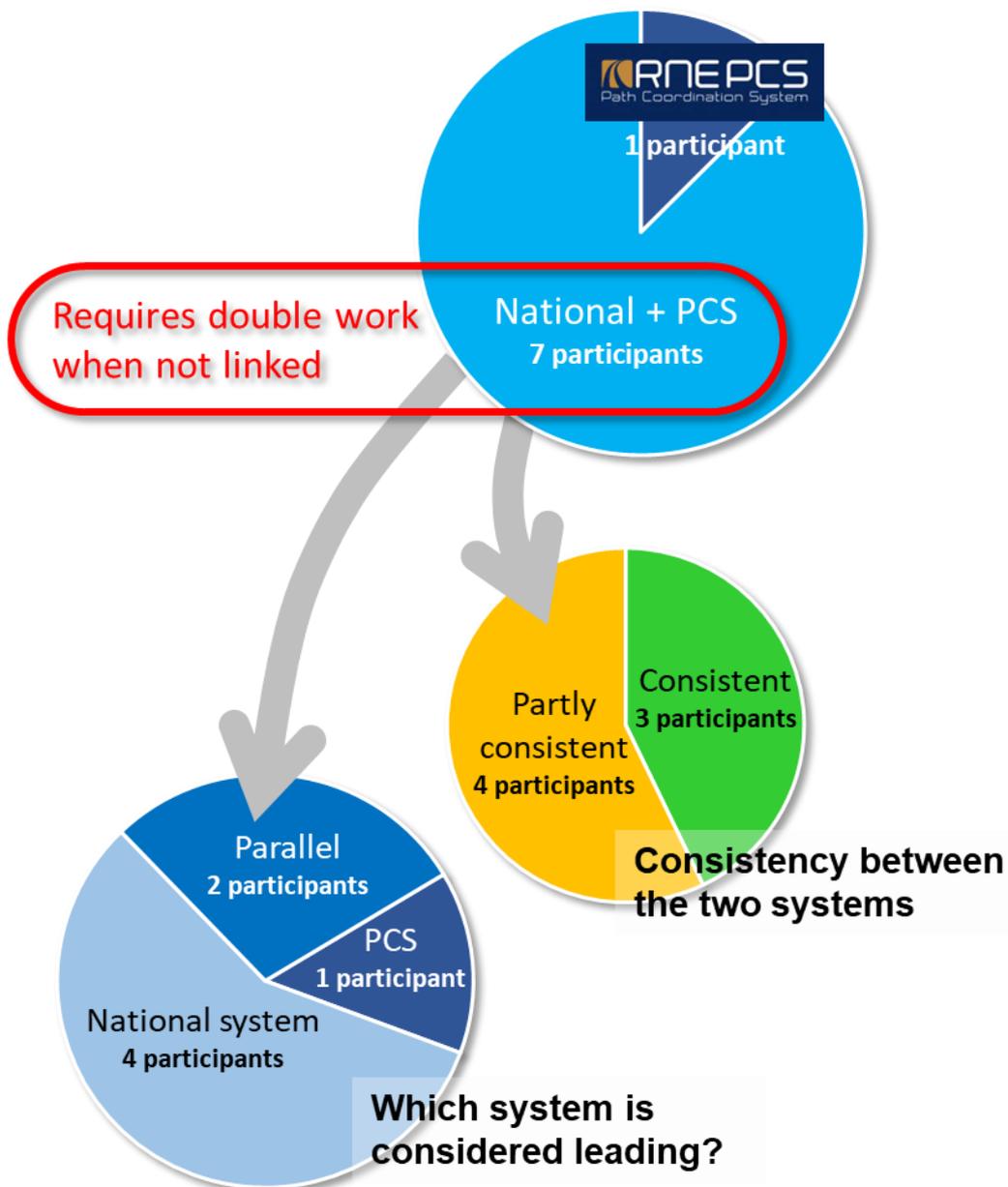


Figure 11: number of participants receiving draft offer in IT systems, consistency and which system is leading

For the companies that received offers in both systems, the majority showed inconsistencies in the results in PCS vs. the national system, not contributing to an easy understanding of the offer and therefore hindering to the possibility to manage the Consultation in two weeks. In the cases of having two systems, the status of the leading system was also rather diffuse.

**3.4.2. Ability to scan the Draft offer on differences with Request**

The possibility within the IT system to get a clear and easy view on the differences between the Capacity Request and the Draft Offer contributes largely to the easiness of evaluating the dossiers, and thereby managing the job of finishing the Consultation in two weeks. Using both a national (IM and/or RU) system and PCS, most respondents answered on the question whether it is easy to compare in the two systems:

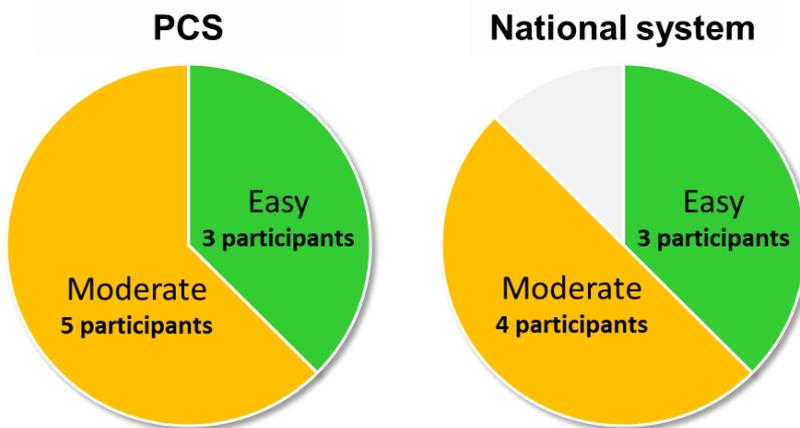


Figure 12: easiness to compare Annual Request with Draft Offer, in PCS and National System

It seems that improvement is possible, both in National Systems and PCS.

*Comments from participants:*

- some offers are inconsistent, IMs are offering despite mistakes. It is difficult to compare the offers with the requested timetable. PCS shows that there are mistakes, but it is not visible where exactly.
- thanks to the improved compare function, I managed to get a full comparison on times and calendars on the whole route (32 trains) within 30 minutes.
- ProRail supplies a list of modifications.

**3.4.3. Reliability of IT systems during the Consultation Phase**

On this topic, the responses were only positive. Considering that two companies didn't give an answer, none of the answering companies mentioned problems in both national system nor PCS.



Figure 13: responses to experiencing IT problems during the Consultation Phase

Due to the successful operation of all IT systems, the question on IT support by IMs wasn't answered.

### 3.5. Overview on evaluation process of draft offers

As the involved trains are all international, FTE asked the participants whether the Consultation took place involving harmonization with all involved RUs, in which way this joint evaluation was done, and what effect it had on the results of the Consultation.

A slight difference was found between Freight and Passenger RUs:

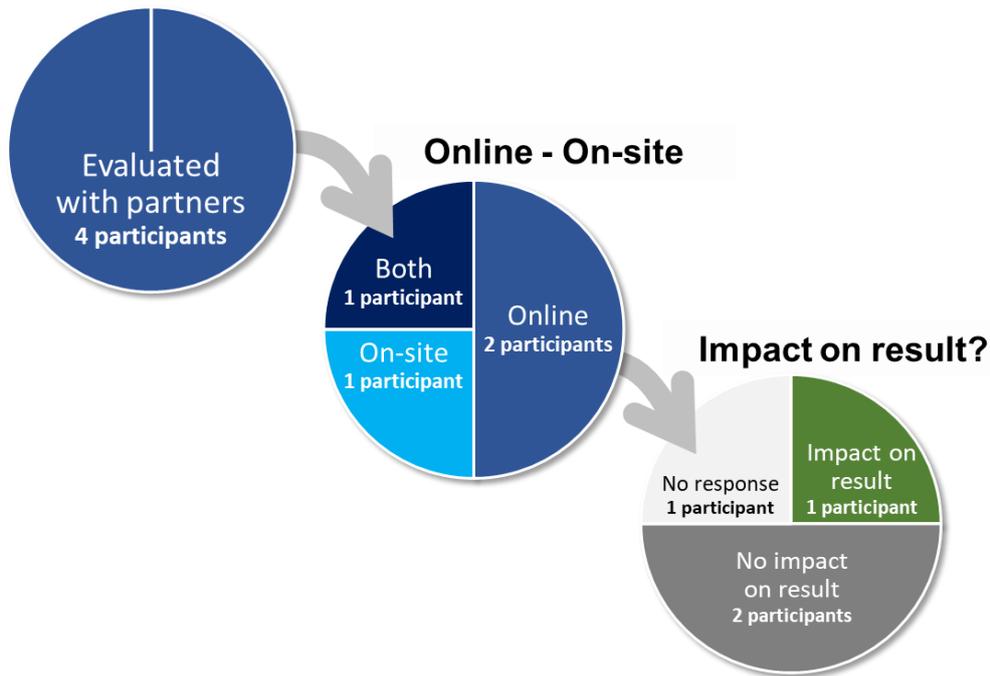


Figure 14: evaluation of dossiers with partner RUs for Freight

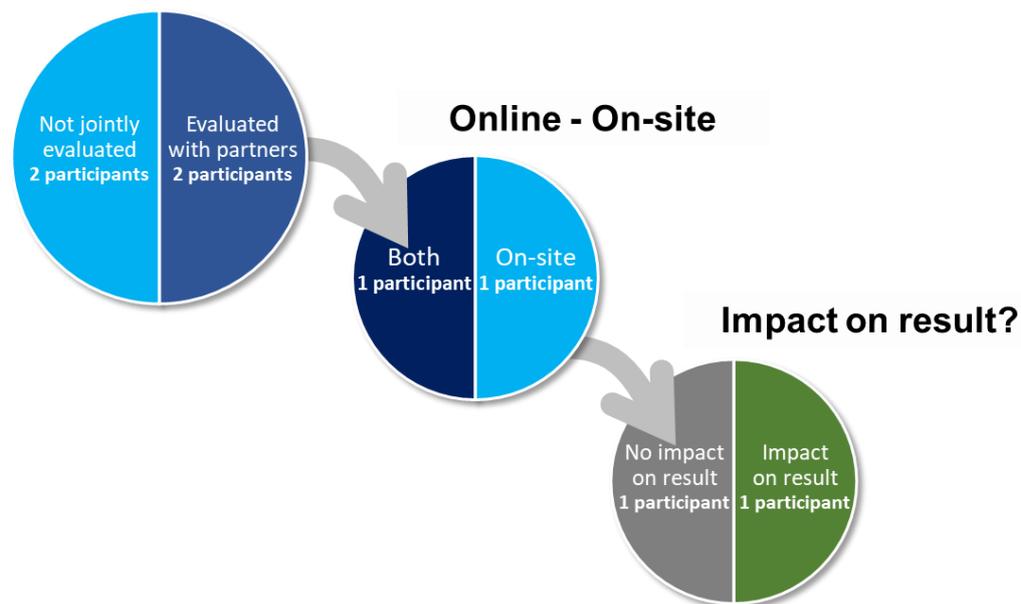


Figure 15: evaluation of dossiers with partner RUs for Passenger

The conclusion can be that the coordination of dossiers can sometimes contribute to easier processing of the Consultation Phase; however, this does not always have a direct impact on the result. However, the two RUs that indicated NOT to have harmonized their reaction already did the Consultation within a TTR Pilot time schedule, thus earlier. This concerns a route that is already well prepared in advance (before the Capacity Request); the Draft Offer in this case matches completely with the Request and therefore poses no questions or remarks.

*Comments from participants:*

- we prepared the dossier carefully and jointly before the Annual Capacity Request; a jointly evaluation of the results from the elaboration phase wasn't really necessary.
- with on-site meetings, misunderstandings can be avoided much more easily.
- on-site in FTE C conference. No influence on the result - but it much easier on-site

### 3.6. Impact of train composition planning and node planning on allocation

Specifically for Passenger RUs, the question of whether the allocation is impacted by node planning was posed, and if yes: whether node planning is already included in the Draft Offer.



Figure 16: indication of node planning having a potential impact on the allocation of capacity

Two RUs have indicated that node planning will (potentially) impact the Final Offer; although the node planning has already been considered in the process, still a residual risk remains that final evaluation - mostly taking place after the publication of the Final Offer - has an impact on the paths of the already planned paths. This undermines the stability of the offer. However, the risk is much higher the other way round, i.e., that a changed train path offer completely changes the train composition or the rotation planning.

*Comments from participants:*

- you have to know the weight of the train for ordering the path - the weight depends on the composition
- if the train weight gets higher than in the ordered path - risk on necessity to make modifications afterwards

### 3.7. Final evaluation: ability to process all dossiers in two weeks

An important last question concerns the experience on the possibility to process all dossiers within two weeks. All respondents gave an answer to this question; 7 of the 8 also gave an indication on the percentage of dossiers being processed within two weeks:



Figure 17: indication of ability to process all dossiers within two weeks, and estimation of percentage of dossiers that can be finalized within two weeks according to participants

The results indicates that, to the current experience, the participants in the query indicated to be able to treat between 65% and 100% of all dossiers within the two weeks period. Causes for this are various:

- the vast number of dossiers to be evaluated,
- the quality of the offer
- the more different from the request, the more time it consumes and the harder to finalize all dossiers

If dealing in two weeks will be - within the current constraints - mandatory, this will influence the quality of the evaluation and thereby cause modifications in a later stage, which is the opposite of one of the primary goals of TTR.

#### Comments from participants:

- Partly possible to treat all dossiers within two weeks.
- PCS: due to bad quality not possible: missing offers (SNCF Reseau), too many Zeitscheiben (Scandinavia), harmonization.
- 2 weeks are possible if the whole framework changes: introducing Rolling Planning is necessary. Without introducing, the ATT-workload does not change (peak).
- yes, if the draft offer meets our request. Partly: some dossiers need to be checked with the stakeholders within the RU, but during summer period some of the stakeholders are not present which makes it difficult to process it in two weeks.
- reducing the consultation phase to two weeks is not possible.
- for the special one dossier: yes. But ÖBB PV AG has more than 160 international trains, so it will be very difficult to work on all of them in these two weeks. Furthermore, we run a lot of trains (also international trains on the Austrian part) in PSO-contracts, where we also have a lot of coordination work to do. I'm afraid that managing all dossiers is not possible - or only with poor quality, which may lead to late path request for changes or problems with the process later on.
- due to failing details in some other dossiers, it won't be possible to finalize all dossiers like we do on the Amsterdam-Brussels route.

## 4. Conclusions

With some of the respondents, elaborating interviews have taken place to explore further on the issues and the underlying problems.

### 4.1. Necessary improvements

All participants agree on the fact that, for being able to process all dossiers during the Consultation Phase in the limited timeframe of two weeks, *an improved quality of the draft offer is essential.*

The improvement of quality is necessary in the following aspects:

- **Timetable:** this concerns the harmonization of border times, but also the proper harmonization of timetable data in the national system and in PCS.
- **Calendar:** Also, the proper identification - and harmonization - of all running days, including all defined sub paths in PCS, are very important: it contributes also largely to the possibility to understand the Draft Offer, as non-harmonized sub paths create a chaotic view on the actual offered capacity.
- **Parameters:** Especially for Freight RUs, the harmonization of train parameters is essential for avoiding paths that must be modified in a later stage - also regarding times, and thus leading to instability of an already prepared Draft Offer timetable.

### 4.2. Elements for reaching improved draft offers

#### 4.2.1. Preparation of the timetable before the Annual Capacity Request

A way to avoid surprises in the Elaboration Phase is to prepare for the potential conflicts already before the Capacity Request. A few potential ways to reach this goal are following options:

- Joint preparation of capacity request for Annual Timetable with involved RUs and IMs.
  - This optimizes the chances for a supported Capacity Model, being the basis for the requests,
  - Thus avoiding 'surprises' in the Elaboration Phase, which will be shortened as well. *This is, for instance, done in the Netherlands in workshops with all involved parties. The harmonized results are non-binding but mostly respected by parties requesting in Annual Request.*
- Use the Feasibility Study phase. In this phase, IMs elaborate on the conflicts and propose solutions for desired slots.
- Safeguarding the capacity for later request, in accordance with market needs (elaborated in dialogue).
  - Necessary to fulfil the commercial need to keep possibilities for requesting slots at a later stage
    - Especially relevant for Freight RUs who in many cases don't know their traffic in detail yet more than one year in advance; using safeguarded capacity such as Rolling Planning also has a positive effect on the quality of the planning; both on the RU and IM sides.
    - But this contingent can also be relevant for Passenger RUs, confronted with late request from political bodies to run additional or modified services

- Strongly related to ensuring capacity for Rolling Planning, Late Path requests and Ad-hoc planning
  - Having sufficient and good quality Rolling Planning paths available releases the pressure on the necessity for Freight RUs to request in Annual Timetable
  - Ensure remaining capacity to fulfil late requests, for both Passengers and Freight

All proposed solutions can be regarded as well-fitting within the TTR process, as Capacity Modelling and Feasibility Studies are foreseen.

#### **4.2.2. Including node planning and TCRs better in the Annual Timetable**

Some of the problems as noticed during the pilot were due to the lack of integration of node planning in the process. This can be blocking for final possibility to run trains, therefore necessity to ensure sufficient capacity to avoid negative surprises at a later stage, leading to necessary modifications in a later stage and thus undermining the stability of the offered slots in both the Draft and Final Offer.

The node planning should include train compositions (adding additional train set or vice versa, involving necessity for shunting of additional train set), cleaning, stabling etc., and in the meantime avoiding that the Annual Timetable becomes a 'harness' that doesn't give any freedom to modify or add trains anymore.

Also, proper planning of TCRs is a critical issue in realizing the desired stability in timetables for international trains, this is especially essential for Passenger RUs.

This requires that TCR planning should be well elaborated, with following remarks:

- Avoiding confusing calendars and inconsequential offers at the border
- Requiring all IMs to do this: 'a chain is as weak as its weakest link'
- Avoiding perverse incentives to plan over-dimensioned TCRs, to remain 'on the safe side' as the IM.

The way to include TCRs in the Capacity Request and Allocation is a subject of discussion in the Amsterdam-Brussels pilot, as the stability of the TCRs themselves is essential as well. Therefore, the level of detail is to be discussed, avoiding too much detail in a too early stage. This would lead to undesired re-working due to modifications in a later stage (double work).

#### **4.2.3. Better IT Support**

As the workload of having to examine many dossiers for international trains is challenging, an optimal support by IT is essential for coping with this task. The improvement concerns firstly the usage of ONE system, or at least one international system with interfaces to the national systems. This would facilitate an improved transfer from the IM to the RU, as some countries nowadays already lose vital working days for being able to view the Draft Offer after all.

The following specifications are critical for a successful processing of all international trains in two weeks:

- Not only for Annual Requests, but also Late Path requests and Ad-Hoc
- Avoiding having to evaluate and/or modify in both the national system and in PCS
- Avoiding differences between national system and PCS, leading to misunderstandings and therefore loss of time
- Avoiding having to work in various national systems with their own special behavior
- Transparent view on offers, enabling the ability to understand the draft offer much easier than currently

Secondly, a transparent view on Draft Offers is essential, enabling an understanding of the draft offer much more easily than is currently possible. This contains:

- Modifications to request clearly visible
- Consequent calendar presentation and usage
- An easy detection of differences between offer and request (compare function). This is very helpful for understanding the content of the Draft Offer better (and especially faster).

#### 4.2.4. A proper coordination between the IMs

This sounds like an open door, but in some cases, this proves currently still being a bottle neck. When coordination doesn't take place properly, all above mentioned tools and procedures are in vain.

The coordination is also applicable on several topics:

- The coordination of timetables themselves, including TCRs, becomes even more essential, enabling models to be fed with proper input
- Correct use of IT systems has proven to be crucial, as even small mistakes have been shown to cause totally untransparent draft offers.
- Harmonization of processes and especially procedures and timelines are the backbone of proper integral planning. As long as national variations occur, draft offers will remain unharmonized - leading to an impossibility to evaluate an integral offer in Consultation Phase. This contains for instance:
  - Harmonizing procedures and timelines, avoiding partial offers
  - Consistent use of IT systems
  - Inclusion of TCRs in the Annual Timetable in a consistent way