

Procedures for International Path Requests

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1 Introduction

This handbook describes the process by which railway undertakings (RUs) and other applicants can request and obtain international paths. **The intended audience of this handbook is you, the applicant.** You may be an RU, another authorised party, or an applicant group.

The handbook describes how you can communicate with infrastructure managers (IMs) as planning proceeds through strategic and operational phases, and particularly in the path study and path order phases. RNE coordinates this process.

2 Reference documents

The basis for this handbook is the internal “RNE Process Handbook for International Path Allocation” and its accompanying Excel diagram, which describe the full path allocation process. This handbook follows the principles set down in the European directive 2001/12-14.

3 Scope

This handbook describes the process by which you communicate your plans and needs to IMs, learn about their plans and constraints, request studies and finally place orders for international paths.

This handbook applies only to **international** traffic, both passenger and freight. The process for national path requests is the responsibility of the national IMs and is outside the scope of this handbook.

If you request a path for a cross-border train from an IM at national level, the train must be consistent with an international path and you need rights to operate on both network.

4 Abbreviations and definitions

This handbook uses the following abbreviations and definitions.

Item	Definition
applicant	<p>(1) A licensed RU or, to the extent authorised by each member state, another party seeking to procure infrastructure capacity for the operation of railway service on its territory with commercial or public-service intent. Examples of such authorised parties may be public authorities, shippers, freight forwarders or combined transport operators.</p> <p>(2) An international group of such parties, which is also known as an applicant group.</p>
applicant group	Several authorised parties who jointly seek an international path
CM	Corridor Manager within RNE in charge of coordinating planning activities along the corridor.
FTE	Forum Train Europe
IM	Infrastructure manager
member state	A country whose infrastructure manager is member of RailNetEurope
OSS	One-Stop-Shop
path	<p>The right to operate a train between specified stations within a defined time frame.</p> <p>This handbook addresses international paths only. The relevant IM is responsible for the process of attributing national paths.</p>
path study	A feasibility study carried out by IMs concerning an international path.
path study request	An applicant's request for a path study, which it submits between X-18 and X-11 (or exceptionally X-9).
path order	An applicant's firm order for an international path, which it places before X-8.

Item	Definition
RNE	RailNetEurope (at its joint office in Vienna)
RU	Railway undertaking. Any public or private party, licensed according to applicable EU legislation, whose main business is transporting freight or passengers by rail and who in so doing provides traction. This includes parties that provide traction only.
you	An applicant or applicant group
X	Month of starting date of new timetable (second Sunday of December of each year)

5 Principles for the path request process

5.1 Who can submit a path study request or path order

You can submit an international path study request or path order if you are:

- a single party wanting for yourself the rights to operate on the full length of a path. In this case, you are the *applicant*.
- a group of parties (for example several RUs in the context of FTE) wanting to share, section by section, the purchase of a coordinated international path. In this case, you are an *applicant group*.

5.2 Key steps by applicants

Figure 1 below presents the path request process.

The dark black boxes show the two most critical steps for you, as applicant or applicant group: **Submission of path feasibility requests** and **placement of path orders**.

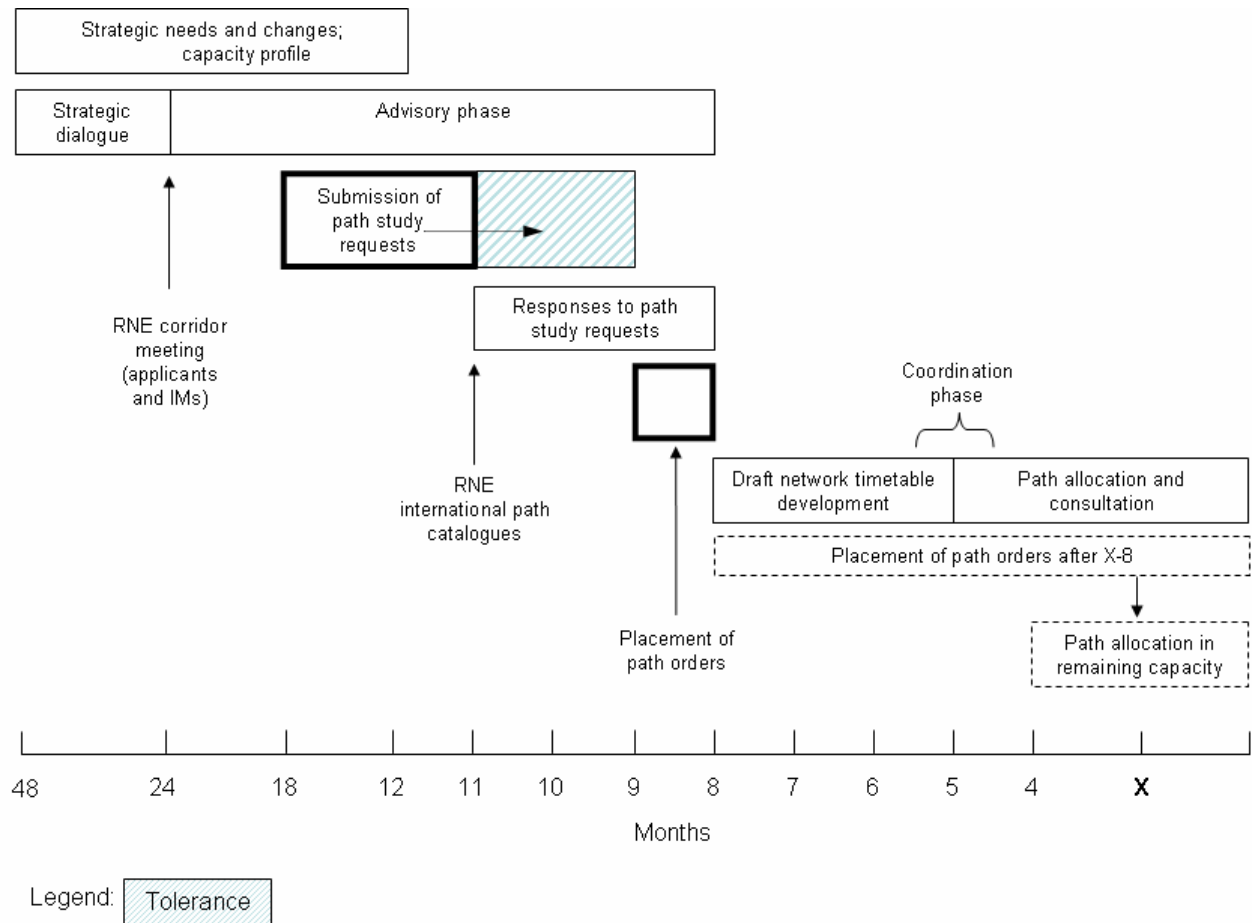


Figure 1: Key steps in the path request process

5.3 Documents for the path request process

As Figure 1 shows, the path request process centres on two main steps:

- the path study request and
- the path order.

For each of these steps, RNE has developed a form that lists all the information RNE and the IMs need in order to process your application. For better communication, coordination, and efficiency, and for better end results, it is highly recommended that you use these forms.

You should submit the forms and all attachments in English.

5.4 Applicant groups

You can jointly request a path by combining your rights to operate successive sections of the path. The RNE has designed its forms for the path study request and the path order with the needs of applicant groups in mind.

RNE stress the importance for applicants to agree on the details of the path request before submission. An inconsistent request impairs the IM's ability to work in your collective best interest.

It is also important that your applicant group takes responsibility for all sections of path. The IMs cannot study an international path without a responsible applicant for each of the path's sections.

5.5 Non-RU applicants

If you are not an RU, and intend to contract with one or more RUs for train operation, you should place only the name of your organisation on the path study request and path order.

5.6 Role of One-Stop-Shops

Each IM contains an OSS whose role is:

- to help you obtain international paths and other elements such as certification for operation on each involved IM network and
- to facilitate the process of introducing you into the rail transport business if you are a new entrant.
- Offer the customer support and make sure that requests for the next timetable period are duly taken into account in the yearly timetable process.

- Handle requests for any international train path within RNE organisation.
- Provide train path offers for the whole international journey.

Process your path study request or/and your path order and forward it to the involved IMs for processing. A list of OSS contacts is available at www.railneteurope.com

6 Strategic needs and changes (X-48 to X-12)

Between X-48 and X-12, you have the opportunity to communicate with IMs concerning main desired changes, such as the introduction of new infrastructure, high-speed trains or cadenced timetables. RNE facilitates this communication and strives to bring needs and constraints together.

6.1 Strategic dialogue (X-48 to X-24)

The aim of this phase is to shape capacity from a middle-term perspective. In this phase, you can help IMs and CMs develop and record strategy concerning capacity on the basis of national and international requirements and constraints.

6.1.1 Questionnaire

Between X-48 and X-24, if RNE knows that you are a potential applicant, RNE will send you a questionnaire concerning your needs in terms of services and train parameters. You can communicate to IMs the number of international paths you would like to buy, year by year.

6.1.2 Strategic timetable concept

On the basis of the questionnaires and other information, the CMs develop a strategic timetable concept that takes into account survey results and other input from IMs, other applicants, and you. The strategic concept defines capacity and timetabling policy for each corridor and cadenced path systems where necessary. As appropriate, you will be invited to an RNE corridor meeting at X-24 involving IMs and applicants. This meeting serves to integrate all information gathered since X-48.

6.2 Capacity profile development (X-48 to X-12)

Discussions with IMs, other applicants and you allow the CMs to develop a capacity profile for each main route. Such a profile allows all involved to understand availabilities and constraints, route by route.

The profile describes capacity by kind of traffic (fast passenger, slow passenger, freight) and, if presentable in this form, capacity reservation for maintenance

- for a typical day in the middle of the week,
- as the number of possible paths per hour, for each of the 24 hours in a day and
- at each main bottleneck or border point on the routes in a corridor.

At this stage, participants can identify and take into account major planned works that significantly effect capacity.

A key part of the route profile is a diagram showing the number of paths for each of the 24 hours in a day. Blue zones show capacity restrictions due to maintenance:

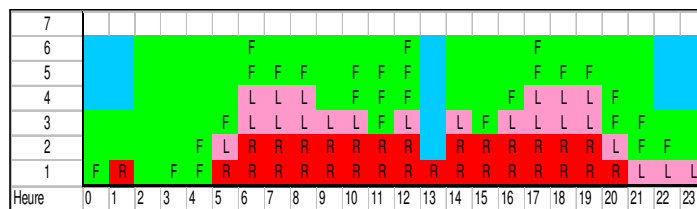


Figure 2: Capacity profile example

Although the capacity profile is of particular interest in middle-term planning, it is useful throughout the planning process. The following table shows the uses of the capacity profile in the successive planning phases.

Time horizon (approximate)	Use of capacity profile
before X-36	Guide for inversedment
X-48 to X-18	Shaping capacity use and reservation
X-18 to X-8	Basis for path catalogues and feasibility studies
X-8 to X-4	International timetable drafting
X-8 to X+12	View of remaining capacity

6.3 Advisory phase (X-24 to X-8)

X-24 to X-8 is an advisory phase. During this phase, IMs can help you to define your needs for international paths. Positions expressed in this phase do not commit any involved party, as all factors and priorities are still in flux. IMs devote the same attention to each applicant and request, within the limits of available resources.

From X-24 to X-12, IMs seek to gain as much information as possible from you and other applicants in order to produce a provisional, high-level international timetable that meets the needs of the market.

6.4 RNE path catalogues (X-11)

The European Directive 2001/12-14, Annex III, requires establishment of a provisional international timetable at X-11. This timetable is the basis for path studies after X-11.

In the course of the planning phases from X-48 to X-12, you, other applicants and IMs express a number of requirements and constraints. The CMs and IMs progressively translate part of this information into RNE path catalogues. The IMs own and are responsible for the catalogues, but you can express your visions concerning the catalogues' contents (for example, three 100 km/h paths per hour Bettembourg > Basel > Milan).

At X-11, the CMs and IMs present the provisional high-level international timetable in the form of RNE path catalogues for main corridors. These catalogues aim to show applicants possible international paths and are the basis for path studies and the construction of the annual timetable.

An RNE catalogue presents the following information for each path:

- Origin and destination
- Days available for reservation
- Main stations expected to be the subject of path study requests
- Train weight and locomotive characteristics

IMs may modify RNE path catalogues because of major maintenance or repair work. The relevant IM is responsible for informing all involved parties in due time.

7 Path feasibility studies (X-18 to X-9)

An important contribution to the efficiency in the path request process is the international path feasibility study, or "path study" for short. You can request such a study between X-18 and X-9. Between X-18 and X-12, the path study is an important input for the provisional high-level international timetable that the IMs complete at X-11. After X-11, the IMs carry out path studies mainly on the basis of this same timetable.

The purpose of a path study is to launch detailed discussions between you and the involved IMs. A path study generally helps to prepare and facilitate the implementation of a new operational concept or a request for a major change in the timetable.

You can request such a study to gain a better understanding of how your desired paths could fit in the timetable before you place the corresponding path orders.

7.1 Period for path study requests

You can submit path study requests to any OSS between X-18 and X-9.

Given the work load imposed by such studies, however, you must keep the number of paths studies you request after X-11 to a minimum. In processing requests they receive after X-11, IMs will seek the best result possible given the time and resources remaining.

7.2 Path study request form

RNE recommends that you use the RNE path study request form because all IMs are familiar with it and because it contains all the information necessary to develop the path in compliance with EU directives. (If necessary, you can use another form if it contains all the same information.)

The RNE form helps to ensure that the path study request is valid for the whole journey. Also, if you are an applicant group, it allows each of your members to sign and share responsibility for the study request.

7.3 Submitting the path study request

Please submit each path study request by means of Pathfinder if you use it. If not, please submit the study request the prescribed form.

Any applicant, either jointly or not, should submit the path study request to any OSS. If you all use Pathfinder, each of you should endeavour to submit your path study request by means of Pathfinder.

7.4 Processing of path study requests (X-11 to X-9)

From X-11 to X-9, IMs carry out path studies and discuss related issues with you and other applicants.

Coordination is managed under RNE umbrella (With corridor manager if relevant) and applicants may be invited to coordinating meetings if necessary.

7.5 Response to a path study request (X-8)

IMs provide a joint written answer to each path study request by X-8 at the latest. This response consists of a library of paths, along with commentary if you submitted the request

outside Pathfinder. If you submitted the path study request in Pathfinder, you receive the response and related information in Pathfinder.

A response to a path study is a strong indication that the IMs will apply the study results during the final path allocation phase if you place a corresponding path order. However, depending on the type and number of path orders you and others submit, the IMs may offer a different path. The IMs manage this process on the basis of efficient, transparent and non-discriminatory principles as stated in Directive 2001/14/EC.

8 Path orders (before X-8)

8.1 Period for placement of path orders

You must place an international path order before the second Monday in April (X-8) in order for the IMs to take account of it in the draft network timetable. (Some IM may ask a national confirmation of the international path.)

If you submit a path order after the X-8 deadline, IMs deal with it after completing the draft network timetable. Such paths are worked out in the “remaining capacity allocation” phase.

8.2 Path order form

For best results, it is strongly recommended that you use the RNE path order form and include all requested information. The path order form contains much the same information as the path study request form. The status of this information, however, is now firm instead of provisional.

The RNE form helps to ensure that the path order is valid for the whole journey. Also, if you are an applicant group, it allows each of your members to sign and share responsibility for the path order.

8.3 Submitting the path order

You should submit each path order in Pathfinder if you use it. If not, please submit the path order to an OSS. If the path was the subject of a previous path study request, please send the path order to the same recipient as for the path study request, citing the reference of the study request.

You are an applicant group, and your members use Pathfinder, you should endeavour to jointly submit the path order in Pathfinder, citing the corresponding path study if any.

9 Draft network timetable development (X-8 to X-5)

Between X-8 and X-5, the IMs develop the draft network timetable. A critical basis for this work is the coordinated path orders of each applicant group, which greatly facilitates coordination between IMs as they finalise paths.

9.1 Drafting the network timetable and co-ordination

If your path order refers to a path study request to which the involved IMs responded favourably, the IMs will endeavour to process the order in line with the study's results.

If, on the other hand, your path order is a new request, the IMs will respond as well as possible given that they can manage only very limited study after X-8.

If necessary, IMs or corridor managers will invite you to specific co-ordination meetings. However, your efforts to ensure the coordination of path study requests and path orders in the upstream process will minimise conflicts at this final stage.

9.2 Publishing the draft network timetable; consultation

The IMs complete the draft network timetable by X-5 at the latest. This timetable is also called the "path offer". The schedule for publication of the draft network timetable may differ from country to country.

Once the IMs have provided the draft network timetable, a one-month consultation phase begins in which you can submit observations and comments. The IMs try to respond favourably. The consultation phase ends when you accept the path offer.

9.3 Path allocation

Path allocation is a legal act. It will remain in 2006 based on national process and path will be delivered country by country as close as possible to the draft answer. IMs commit themselves to provide the customer with the final answer.

10 Path allocation in remaining capacity (after X-4)

After the consultation phase, the IMs will deal with any path orders you may have placed after X-8. The IMs will allocate such paths using either path catalogues or the remaining available capacity.

“Remaining capacity” means capacity left between paths of the draft network timetable after the end of the consultation phase.

The date the new yearly timetable is put in place is 00:01 the Sunday after the second Saturday of December

“RNE will publish a separate document describing this short term allocation process and how to maximise its flexibility”.