

PRIME 25th Plenary Meeting – Summary record

26 June 2025, Brussels and hybrid

Co-Chairs

[AQ] Alain Quinet, *Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs, SNCF Réseau*

[KS] Kristian Schmidt, *Director Land Transport, DG Move*

Welcome

- Participants were welcomed by AQ and KS.
- The 8th PRIME KPI Benchmarking Report is ready for publication, offering valuable long-term trend data.
- Since the last plenary meeting, workshops were held on funding pressures and asset conditions.
- The Capacity Management Taskforce has prepared a roadmap for endorsement; capacity related work on performance monitoring will continue with RNE.
- AQ met with RNE and held bilateral meetings with ÖBB and DB InfraGO.
- Key EU developments include new guidelines on track access charges, military mobility work, the upcoming high-speed rail communication, and MFF discussions.
- The plenary discussions will focus on funding (including private financing) and capacity regulation.
- ERA's new Executive Director, Oana Gherghinescu, was welcomed and introduced herself.

Ongoing Commission initiatives

Presentation by KS

- Crises response has led to the establishment of new funding instruments, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) after COVID and now increased defence spending, with NATO earmarking 1.5% of budgets for military mobility.
- The rail sector remains dynamic despite supply chain challenges, with growing demand, new services, cross-border expansion, and operators actively entering markets such as France.
- The Commission adopted guidelines on track access charges on 7 May 2025, clarifying the interpretation of Directive 2012/34/EU and aiming for consistent application across Member States. Charges should optimise network use, not revenue, and segmentation by market type (e.g. high-speed vs. night trains) is essential.
- A forthcoming implementation report will address governance of vertically integrated undertakings, access to service facilities as a key competition factor, as well as licensing, charging, and the role of regulatory bodies.

- A Commission communication on Connecting Europe by high-speed rail is under preparation for September, combining infrastructure and market policies. It will make the case for high-speed investment based on benefits such as travel time reduction, modal shift and economic opportunity.
- Negotiations on the draft Capacity Regulation have advanced, with agreement reached on the balance between national strategic guidance and European frameworks; remaining issues include incentives, governance, and application timelines, with a political agreement expected under the Danish Presidency.
- A new Regulation is being prepared to facilitate cross-border movement of train drivers through harmonised training requirements.

Strategic discussion on private financing of infrastructure

Presentation and moderation by Eric von Breska, Director Investment, Innovative & Sustainable Transport, DG MOVE. Panellists: Piotr Wyborski, CEO, PKP PLK; Pedro Marco de la Peña, CEO, ADIF and ADIF Alta Velocidad; Miguel Cruz, CEO, Infraestruturas de Portugal; Alain Quinet, Executive Managing Director, Strategy & Corporate Affairs, SNCF Réseau

- Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are increasingly explored to finance major high-speed rail projects, but their success depends heavily on risk-sharing, strategic signalling, and availability of EU co-financing.
- In Portugal, high-speed lines are being developed through a phased PPP approach, with a clear need for EU funding to reduce investor risk and demonstrate long-term strategy.
- ESG-linked instruments such as green bonds offer promising avenues for financing, provided there is clarity on modal shift impact and a taxonomy that gives a perception of risk reduction.
- Spain's model uses a state-owned company with a private legal framework to access debt markets without impacting national debt, supported by strong investor demand for green bonds.
- Blended financing structures combining EU funds, national funds, and private capital are key to attracting large-scale investment and ensuring project bankability.
- Past experiences in Spain with PPPs showed mixed results; high risk in railway projects requires careful assessment of which risks can realistically be transferred to private partners.
- France has used both PPPs and concessions for high-speed and modernisation projects, with concessions allowing to transfer also the commercial risk and thus create incentives to attract traffic. Concessions reduce public subsidies and increase track access charges.
- Financing ERTMS/FRMCS or large-scale digitalisation via PPPs is more challenging due to integration with existing networks; new financing models are being explored.
- Effects on the funding of the rest of the network should be considered: If attractive lines are separated out as PPPs, it is not possible to use TAC revenue from those lines to cross-finance other parts of the network. SNCF R had to lower TACs on other lines to balance the effect of high TACs on the concessions on RUs.
- There is strong interest in identifying replicable models for infrastructure financing across Member States, particularly those that minimise national debt impacts while maintaining investment levels.

Exchange on dual use investments for military mobility

Presentation from Eric von Breska, Director Investment, Innovative & Sustainable Transport, DG MOVE

- The Commission is preparing a legal package on military mobility to be adopted by the end of 2025, following the March White Paper on Security and Defence.
- Participants shared experiences and stressed the need to avoid parallel systems: dual-use infrastructure should also serve commercial rail operations.
- Calls were made for an increased and long-term EU budget for military mobility, reflecting the urgency and evolving security landscape.

Capacity management

Update on negotiations on the draft Regulation on better use of rail infrastructure capacity; Kristian Schmidt, Director Land Transport, DG MOVE

- The trilogue on 10 June saw progress on politically sensitive issues, including a common understanding on the role of strategic guidance, now aligned with EU-wide objectives.
- Agreement was reached on incorporating socioeconomic criteria for capacity allocation and on the role of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA).
- Provisions on funding are nearly resolved, with consensus expected in the next trilogue despite funding not being a core aspect of the Regulation.
- Governance discussions are nearly concluded; the key outstanding issue is who chairs the ENRRB, with the Commission insisting on acting as neutral referee to safeguard fairness.
- Final agreement is within reach, with approximately 30% of open points remaining and hopes to conclude under the Danish Presidency via an open-ended trilogue session.

Presentation of the work of the PRIME task force capacity management to prepare PRIME/ENIM for tasks under the future Regulation; Alfred Pitnik, OeBB Infra, Linda Thulin, Trafikverket

- The Task Force is preparing infrastructure managers to take up their future roles under the draft Capacity Regulation, which is expected to apply from 1 January 2026.
- Work focuses on building a harmonised, coordinated approach across Europe for managing infrastructure capacity, using existing structures such as PRIME and RFCs as a foundation.
- A roadmap for establishing the future European Network of Infrastructure Managers (ENIM) has been developed, aiming for operational readiness by end 2025.
- Four sub-groups are working on key elements: focal points, stakeholder consultation, transition from existing governance structures, and internal rules of procedure.
- Key deliverables include ENIM's internal procedures, the appointment of a network coordinator, consultation guidelines, and a business/work plan – all to be adopted by November 2025.
- Transparency, stakeholder engagement, and the flexibility to tailor coordination mechanisms to different national contexts are central principles guiding the work.
- Continued support from infrastructure managers is essential, both in contributing staff and preparing for an upcoming implementation phase beyond the current planning effort.
- **The roadmap is formally adopted by the PRIME plenary.**

Advancement of activities of RNE to prepare network coordinator tasks under the future Regulation; Elisabeth Hochhold, RailNetEurope

- RNE is preparing to take on the role of Network Coordinator (NC) with activities focused on scoping future tasks, setting up internal governance, drafting European frameworks, and estimating necessary resources.
- RNE expects a dialogue with PRIME/EIM to clarify which tasks under the Regulation will remain with ENIM and which may be delegated to the NC.
- The design of European frameworks has advanced: capacity management gaps are 68% closed and traffic management 78%; draft frameworks will include a main body, annexes, and implementation guides.
- An Editors Task Force is being set up to ensure the frameworks are consistently drafted, based on input from working-level task forces. First prototypes will be shared in a post-summer PRIME workshop.
- **RNE invites PRIME/EIM to reflect on when and how they want to be involved in reviewing draft and final frameworks—e.g. pre- or post-stakeholder consultation.**
- Stakeholder consultation mechanisms and regulator coordination are being redesigned for clarity and efficiency, including engagement with ministries and streamlining RNE's stakeholder groups.
- Budget for 2025–2027 is stable, but there is uncertainty beyond 2027. RNE urges attention to national-level investment needs, especially for IT systems, to meet Regulation requirements.

Deep dive study on capacity performance review

Presentation of results of the study, Ulla Braubach, Ramboll Management Consulting

- The study, launched one year ago, aimed to support the preparation of European performance frameworks under the draft Regulation.
- It was conducted in close collaboration with the PRIME KPI and benchmarking group, complemented by stakeholder interviews and contributions from ERA, RNE, and the Commission.
- The methodology combined desk research with six working groups aligned to the Regulation's performance areas, as well as five workshops involving infrastructure managers and railway undertakings.
- A catalogue of 104 performance indicators was produced, including 23 high-level KPIs, about half of which are already centrally measurable using existing tools (e.g. RNE systems, PRIME IT tool, RINF).
- Indicators were categorised by priority and purpose: high-level, mid-level, or background; feasibility, relevance, and measurability were assessed and documented in detail.
- Railway undertakings were actively involved via associations and provided a written position paper; their early engagement was seen as highly constructive.
- The study results are documented in a comprehensive, annotated catalogue shared with all PRIME participants. This will form the basis of further work on performance review under the capacity regulation, which will be carried out by RNE.

Update on PRIME subgroup activities

KPI and benchmarking – presentation of the external KPI report and findings on cost from the Bordeaux workshop. Raymond Geurts van Kessel

- The number of participating IMs grew to 22, with broader European coverage and increasing relevance of the PRIME benchmarking report.
- OpEx and CapEx levels have risen sharply, but many IMs report a real-term decline in OpEx due to inflation pressures.
- Key cost drivers include inflation in materials, energy, and labour, along with increased investments in climate resilience and electrification.
- IMs face challenges from ageing infrastructure and parallel systems, leading to increased maintenance and system costs.
- Network utilisation is recovering for passenger traffic, but freight volumes and punctuality continue to decline.
- Asset failures are decreasing overall, but delay minutes are rising, suggesting more disruptive incidents.
- Despite efforts to accelerate publication, the 2023 benchmarking report was released only slightly earlier, underlining the need to review the written adoption process.

Charging – Antoine Lowagie, DG MOVE

- The Commission adopted new guidelines on track access charges on 7 May, aiming to support infrastructure managers and regulators in interpreting Directive 2012/34/EU.
- The guidelines clarify legal provisions but do not provide technical solutions for issues such as market segmentation or assessing the ability to bear markups.
- A dedicated PRIME subgroup meeting on 12 June gathered feedback, with interest in topics like the principles behind markups and the concept of respecting productivity gains.
- Further discussions on technical aspects will continue in the SERAF subgroup, which includes infrastructure managers, regulators, and railway undertakings to ensure a broad stakeholder perspective.
- **The Commission encouraged continued discussion within PRIME on the implementation of the track access charge guidelines, especially on market segmentation, mark-ups, and incentive structures.**

Digital - Harald Reisinger, RailNetEurope, Joachim Lücking, DG MOVE

- The subgroup has achieved wide participation from infrastructure managers and meets twice a year to coordinate the digital work programme and priorities.
- Key workstreams include digital infrastructure information (e.g. RINF), digital capacity management, and real-time digital train data, underpinned by common topology and IT systems.
- The TAF/TAP TSI framework remains central, with ongoing cooperation between RNE, the European Commission, and ERA to ensure harmonised implementation.
- **The 2026–2028 work programme is in preparation, with a collaborative drafting workshop planned for 22 August and endorsement foreseen for November 2025.**
- EU co-funding is considered crucial to ensure coordinated cross-border implementation of digital tools, particularly under capacity regulation and ontology/reference data initiatives.

AOB

- The PRIME Wiki will be handed over to RNE, as the current Commission platform will be shut down in 2026.
- **The next PRIME plenary will take place on 20 November in Warsaw, hosted by PKP PLK.**