

Position Paper

Recommendations in consequence of the Rastatt Tunnel Incident

Preamble:

The EGTC and its members strive for strengthening and coordinating the integrated development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor as it is laid down in its Joint Strategy¹. This implies also supporting activities leading to a modal shift from road to rail and waterways, as well as activities reducing the negative impact of transport for the citizens.

The incident at the Rastatt tunnel construction site led to a closure of the railway section Rastatt - Baden-Baden from 12 August to 2 October 2017. This incident caused the disruption of the major international Rhine-Alpine Corridor with a tremendous impact and it undermined the EGTC's objectives.

Emerged problems:

Although the accident occurred during less frequented months at summer season (150 instead of 200 trains a day), both freight and passenger transport were strongly affected. Alternative freight routes in Germany, France and Austria became accessible only gradually and with limited capacity. Hence, customer confidence in rail transport has been severely damaged.

Key problems identified are:

- The closure of only a small stretch of railway line leads to enormous consequences to the entire and interdependent Corridor;
- Incident has exposed rail as the weak part of the integrated and intermodal logistics chain;
- A lack of communication with other modes of transport in order to redirect freight;
- Limited use of the synchro modality concept, allowing to decide day-by-day about which mode to choose for a specific transport task;
- Coordination of construction planning along the Corridor and its neighbouring areas needs to be improved;
- Lack of viable and economically efficient alternatives for re-routing;
- National technical and staff requirements with divergent standards proved to be an obstacle for seamless international transport.

¹ Available under <http://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/publications/one-corridor-one-strategy/>

Recommendations and necessary actions:

In line with the first development priority formulated in its Joint Strategy, the EGTC underlines the necessity of an improved **Corridor wide coordination of infrastructure works and construction management**. This includes the timely information on planned line closures or restrictions in order to provide for resilient and seamless transport operations. However, also operational accidents, natural hazards or any other kinds of incidents have to be considered.

Three steps for improvement:

1. A prevailing consequence of the Rastatt incident is the necessity to **ensure resilience for the Corridor**. Therefore, we ask for a **comprehensive risk analysis** for the Corridor concerning main and alternatives routes, involving all relevant logistics stakeholders;
2. On this basis, emergency plans for different risk scenarios need to be elaborated jointly, including relevant stakeholders and experts from all countries along the Corridor. Such plans should comprise adequate pre-defined alternative routes, fit for immediate use in case of necessity, applying the synchro modality approach.
3. Finally, in order to implement the emergency plans, we suggest to **establish an effective crisis management**, which is ready for action if needed.

Furthermore, the following issues need to be taken in consideration:

- Improvements for (EU) investments and funding to reduce bottlenecks, also for alternative routes (TEN-T core and comprehensive routes);
- Harmonisation of standards in order to overcome national restrictions in regard to technical and staff incompatibilities and limitations;
- Ensure interoperability along the Corridor, e.g. ETCS equipment also for alternative railway lines;
- Use the existing Rhine-Alpine Corridor Forum as a platform for facilitating mutual information and coordination.