

ANNUAL REPORT

2020





OTIF

Organisation intergouvernementale pour les transports internationaux ferroviaires
Zwischenstaatliche Organisation für den internationalen Eisenbahnverkehr
Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	7
OTIF: a forum for uniform railway law	8
Promoting and assisting accession to COTIF	8
Enhancing cooperation with international organisations and associations	9
Digitalisation	12
Managing and strengthening OTIF's legal system	13
Execution of depositary functions	13
Ensuring legal support for OTIF's organs	14
Monitoring and assessment of legal instruments	15
Promote the safe transport of dangerous goods	16
RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting	18
RID Committee of Experts and its standing working group	20
Harmonisation of OTIF's RID and OSJD's SMGS Annex 2	23
Partnerships with the United Nations Organisations	24
Joint Coordinating Group of Experts	26
Promote safe technical interoperability	27
Context of the activities in 2020	27
Coordination of developments with the European Union	28
Committee of Technical Experts	30
Working Group Technology	32
Ensure that the Secretariat functions properly	34
Put in place the tools necessary to ensure the continuity of services within the Secretariat	34
Renovation of the building – feasibility study	37
Provision of effective services to the Member States	38
Maintain regular dialogue with the Member States	38
Expenditure control	39
Preparation for the entry into force of the Luxembourg Protocol	40
The provision of high-quality language services	41
Deliver good quality translations on time	41
Terminology database and editorial rules	44
Video-conferences and interpreting	45
Consolidate and increase awareness of OTIF	46
Redesigned publications	46
Digital presence	49

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADN

European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterways

ADR

Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road

APTU

Uniform Rules concerning the Validation of Technical Standards and the Adoption of Uniform Technical Prescriptions applicable to Railway Material intended to be used in International Traffic

ATMF

Uniform Rules concerning the Technical Admission of Railway Material used in International Traffic

BLEVE

Boiling liquid expanding vapour explosions

CEFIC

European Chemical Industry Council

CER

Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies

CIM

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail

CIT

International Rail Transport Committee

CIV

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Passengers by Rail

COTIF

Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail

COVID-19

Corona virus disease 2019

CSM

Common safety method

CTE

Committee of Technical Experts

CUI

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of Use of Infrastructure in International Traffic

CUV

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of Use of Vehicles in International Rail Traffic

ECM

Entity in Charge of Maintenance

ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

ERA

European Union Agency for Railways

EU

European Union

EVR

European Vehicle Register

GCC

Gulf Cooperation Council

IMDG Code

International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code

JCGE

Joint Coordinating Group of Experts

NVR

National Vehicle Register

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSJD

Organisation for Cooperation between Railways

OTIF

Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail

RID

Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail

SERA

Single European Railway Area

SMGS

Agreement concerning International Freight Traffic by Rail (OSJD)

TCRC

Train composition and route compatibility checks

TSI

Technical Specification for Interoperability

UIC

International Union of Railways

UIP

International Union of Wagon Keepers

UIRR

International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport

UN

United Nations

UNCITRAL

United Nations Commission On International Trade Law

UNECE

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNESCAP

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

UNIFE

Association of the European Rail Industry

UPU

Universal Postal Union

UR

Uniform Rules

UTP

Uniform Technical Prescriptions

WCO

World Customs Organization

WG TECH

Working group TECH

OTIF: A FORUM FOR UNIFORM
RAILWAY LAW MANAGING
AND STRENGTHENING
OTIF'S LEGAL SYSTEM
ENSURE THAT RID REFLECTS
CURRENT SAFETY AND
TECHNICAL CRITERIA
PROMOTE SAFE TECHNICAL
INTEROPERABILITY ENSURE
THAT THE SECRETARIAT
FUNCTIONS PROPERLY AND
THAT THE MEMBER STATES
ARE PROVIDED WITH AN
EFFICIENT SERVICE THE
PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY
LANGUAGE SERVICES
CONSOLIDATE AND INCREASE
AWARENESS OF OTIF

INTRODUCTION

2020, a lost year for OTIF? We do not believe so.

On the surface, it may seem that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which also had a massive impact on the work of the OTIF Secretariat, would lead to this conclusion.



Krzysztof KULESZA



Wolfgang KÜPPER

No physical meetings, no official travel, no diplomatic life! And two topics suddenly had absolute priority: protecting employees and ensuring the organisation's ability to work.

Both these issues could be dealt with by setting up a crisis management system, allowing teleworking across the board and using digital meeting technology that meets the special requirements of OTIF as a law-making organisation with three working languages.

All this made it possible to tackle and complete some essential tasks from the 2020/2021 work programme.

One example in the area of technology is the conclusion of a new administrative arrangement with the European Commission (DG MOVE) and the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA). The new arrangement ensures that OTIF can perform its important bridging role between EU and non-EU states in practice.

In the area of dangerous goods, the timely adaptation of the international rail dangerous goods legislation was ensured - despite the cancellation of meetings. Although the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting in March and the meeting of the RID Committee of Experts in May had to be cancelled, notification of the amendments for the 2021 edition of RID was possible, so they were able to enter into force on 1 January 2021.

Among other things, the Legal Department had the important task of checking the new working methods (video-conferences, written procedures etc.) against the provisions of COTIF and the various rules of procedure. Luckily, the result allowed these methods to be used without requiring fundamental adaptation of the provisions.

The pandemic also resulted in more flexible working methods (teleworking) and the increased use of digital technology (video-conferences). This was the special responsibility of the Administration and Finance Department, which enabled the various organs of OTIF and the Secretariat to run smoothly.

One positive aspect of the new working methods is the opportunity for active participation by Member States that were previously unable to take part in the work directly because of the physical distance.

The Translation Department was also particularly challenged by the new working methods, e.g. interpreting without being physically present, but also in testing the various technical systems.

The Communication Department's particular task was to disseminate OTIF's work with the help of digital media and to maintain the important contacts with all OTIF's members and partners in this way.

In summary, it can therefore be said that the special challenges in 2020 were successfully mastered - not least due to the constructive and pragmatic cooperation with the Administrative Committee.

Krzysztof KULESZA

Wolfgang KÜPPER

OTIF: A FORUM FOR UNIFORM RAILWAY LAW



Aleksandr KUZMENKO
Head of Legal Department

OTIF's legal regime supports a modern and constantly developing international rail transport system. The general aim of the Organisation is to promote, improve and facilitate, in all respects, international traffic by rail.

PROMOTING AND ASSISTING ACCESSION TO COTIF

51 states and one regional economic integration organisation are members of OTIF. 47 states are active, full Member States of OTIF and contracting parties to COTIF. The membership of Iraq, Lebanon and Syria is suspended. Jordan is an associate member of OTIF and is not a contracting party to COTIF. Accession to COTIF is open to any state on whose territory railway infrastructure is operated and to regional economic integration organisations of which at least one member is an OTIF Member State. Extending the geographical scope of COTIF is a priority of the OTIF Secretariat, which provides any assistance necessary with regard to accession.

The Secretariat and the Legal Department, in particular, continue to advise various stakeholders about the accession procedure (full membership, membership of regional economic integration organisations and associate membership) and about the benefits of membership.

In 2020, Moldova started the procedure for accession to COTIF. As soon as the Depositary receives all the legally mandatory information, the accession procedure in accordance with COTIF Article 37 will be launched. The Secretariat expects that the accession procedure will be successfully completed in 2021.

A great deal of work was also carried out with the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC), which is aiming to construct an integrated regional railway network in its Member States: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

ENHANCING COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

The achievement of OTIF's aim depends, among other things, on effective and efficient cooperation with relevant international organisations and associations.

Cooperation with international organisations and associations slowed at the beginning of 2020, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, with a successful shift to new modes of cooperation, primarily through various video-conferencing platforms, international cooperation quickly resumed and was intensive and productive. The ad hoc Committee on Cooperation (hereinafter ad hoc Committee) established by the General Assembly at its 13th session started its work in 2019 in a spirit of dialogue and determination. The pivotal work in preparing and conducting sessions is carried out by the Chair, Ms Clio Liégeois (Belgium) and Vice-Chair, Mr Krzysztof Kulesza (Poland). The Legal Department provides the Secretariat of the ad hoc Committee.

Due to the pandemic, the ad hoc Committee held only one session in 2020, rather than the two sessions initially planned. At this session held in October, the Secretariat informed OTIF's members about recent developments in the field of international cooperation and was instructed to continue necessary activities in accordance with the mandates given at previous sessions.

CIT

The partnership with CIT is of particular importance for the following reasons:

- it is important to be able to rely on railway undertakings' operational expertise to resolve practical cases and to substantiate the legal concept of texts with a sound appreciation of the constraints in the sector;
- although CIT's task is to defend its members' interests, it occupies a privileged position with regard to the CIM/CIV Uniform Rules, as it prepares supporting documents, such as the CIM consignment note and tickets for CIV passengers, which are recognised throughout Europe and beyond.

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat (Legal Department) participated in the Berne Days and as an observer in relevant CIT meetings in the areas of freight transport, passenger transport, multimodal transport and use of infrastructure.

GCC

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat continued intensive cooperation with GCC, particularly with regard to the GCC railway project and GCC Member States' accession to COTIF. On 7 September 2020, the Secretary General and the Legal Department held a video-conference entitled "COTIF/OTIF Awareness Workshop: carriage of goods" to present Appendices B (CIM), D (CUV) and E (CUI) of the Convention. This workshop for experts from the Member States of GCC was the first in a series of four specific workshops on the application of COTIF and its appendices.

OECD

The OTIF Secretariat, particularly the Legal Department, continued active cooperation with international organisations in the framework of the "Partnership of International Organisations for Effective International Rulemaking" led by OECD. A joint statement was signed by the OECD and the Secretary General of OTIF on 3 September 2020.

OSJD

Cooperation with OSJD is based on the common position adopted on 12 February 2003. Regular contacts at management level in the two organisations ensure that strategic questions of joint interest, as well as any differences of opinion, can be discussed openly and in good time. Genuine partnership has been achieved, which is manifested by the participation of experts from OTIF in OSJD working groups and vice versa.

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat and the OSJD Committee continued discussions on possible areas and methods for enhanced cooperation between the two organisations, in particular organising a special meeting with the participation of some members of both organisations.

UNCITRAL

Starting from 2020, the Secretariat started participating in meetings on multimodal negotiable transport documents.

UNECE

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat continued cooperation with UNECE, particularly with regard to the transport of dangerous goods and the UNECE project on unified railway law.

UNESCAP

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat continued cooperation with UNESCAP, particularly with regard to promoting OTIF law in the Asia and Pacific region.

UPU

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat continued cooperation with regard to developing the transport of postal items by rail, by setting up the UPU-Rail Forum.

WCO

In 2020, the OTIF Secretariat continued cooperation with regard to the possibility of harmonising the data set required for customs transit procedures and consignment notes.

DIGITALISATION

Digitalisation is rapidly developing and presents new opportunities and challenges for the railway sector. For the competitiveness of railway transport, it is vital that national, regional and international regulations, as well as the railway sector itself, are adapted to meet new challenges and reap the full benefits of digitalisation.

The 2019-2021 Work Programme of the Working Group of Legal Experts included an item on “the digitalisation of international transport, particularly freight transport documents”, with the following objective and scope of work:

“New technologies, digitalisation in particular, have the potential to change the organisation and management of railway transport. However, digitalisation brings both improvements and new challenges. The aim is to monitor and assess how digitalisation, and which specific aspects, should be supported and/or regulated by OTIF.”

The Working Group of Legal Experts (see below with regard to the establishment of this Group) planned to start considering this item in 2021.

MANAGING AND STRENGTHENING OTIF'S LEGAL SYSTEM



Aleksandr KUZMENKO
Head of Legal Department

EXECUTION OF DEPOSITARY FUNCTIONS

The Secretary General is the Depositary of the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF). The depositary functions are administrative and non-political. To a certain extent, the execution of these functions includes the impartial exercise of control and supervision.

In 2020, the Depositary issued 50 depositary notifications concerning, in particular:

- Approval of amendments to COTIF adopted by the General Assembly at its 12th and 13th sessions;
- Accession to COTIF;
- CIV list of maritime and inland waterway services;
- CIM list of maritime and inland waterway services;
- Amendments to the Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID);
- Modification of UTPs.

ENSURING LEGAL SUPPORT FOR OTIF'S ORGANS

The Working Group of Legal Experts (hereinafter Working Group) established by the Secretary General at the end of 2018 started its work in 2019 in a spirit of dialogue and determination. The important work in preparing and conducting sessions is carried out by the Chair, Ms Clio Liégeois (Belgium) and Vice-Chair, Ms Kerstin Leuftink (Germany). The Legal Department provides the Secretariat of the Working Group.

Due to the pandemic, the Working Group held only one session in 2020, rather than the two sessions initially planned. However, the focal points of the Working Group effectively exchanged opinions in informal consultations before and after the session.

Based on the decisions of the General Assembly at its 13th session and the Administrative Committee at its 130th session, the Working Group prepared the following proposals at two sessions (October 2019 and October 2020) for adoption by the General Assembly in 2021:

- Proposal for a Regulation on the election and conditions of service of the Secretary General with the accompanying Explanatory Notes and
- Proposal for modification of the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure [concerning the Secretary General's election] with the accompanying Explanatory Notes.

The Working Group assessed the law and practice on the participation and representation of Member States within OTIF. Based on the assessment, the Working Group instructed the Secretariat to prepare proposals to amend the provision of the General Assembly's Rules of Procedure concerning credentials, with a view to improving and clarifying it. The Working Group will decide whether to submit a proposal on credentials for adoption by the General Assembly.

Lastly, the Working Group accepted the request of the Working Group Technology (WG TECH) to examine the legal aspects of the mutual recognition of ECM (entity in charge of maintenance) certificates under ATMF. An advisory legal opinion is planned in 2021.

At Secretariat level, legal advice is provided by the Legal Department. In particular, in view of restrictions and uncertainties caused by the pandemic, a legal opinion was issued in order to ensure systematic and coherent interpretation of the existing rules with regard to ensuring the legitimate functioning of the Organisation in extraordinary circumstances. Legal advice was also provided to the Secretary General on specific internal rules and directives and the draft OTIF long term strategy.

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

Keeping a watch on the application of all the rules and recommendations established within the Organisation is one of the aims defined by COTIF (Article 2 COTIF).

The Working Group was tasked with developing the monitoring and assessment policy for OTIF's legal system. Adoption of the policy is in the competence of the General Assembly.

At its second session in October 2019, the Working Group, among other matters, endorsed the proposal for a decision on the monitoring and assessment of legal instruments. In the meantime, the Working Group recommended that the organs of OTIF provisionally apply the draft decision and decided to disseminate it to the stakeholders. In 2021 the Working Group will, if necessary, review the draft decision and finalise it for submission to the General Assembly for adoption in 2021.

PROMOTE THE SAFE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS



Jochen CONRAD
Head of Dangerous Goods
Department

In the RID department, the focus in 2020 was on the adoption and notification of the amendments to RID that entered into force on 1 January 2021 and publication of the 2021 edition of RID in all three working languages. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting cancellation of a number of meetings, RID 2021 was able to be completed successfully within the planned timescale. Some of the new features in RID 2021 are as follows:

- Inclusion of a general exemption for devices used during transport which contain electric energy storage and generation systems. For example, these might be data loggers and cargo tracking units containing lithium batteries and which are also placed in wagons or containers not carrying any dangerous goods.
- Reference to revised checklists for the filling and emptying of gas tank-wagons and tank-wagons for the carriage of liquids. These checklists now cover all the obligations of the filler and unloader, and should avoid errors when filling and emptying tank-wagons and improve safety during transport.

- Inclusion of three new UN numbers for electronic detonators. These are ignition devices for blasting which contain micro-processors that can be programmed to determine the trigger time and that are secure against electromagnetic influences, stray currents and unauthorised use.
- Inclusion of a new UN number for medical waste and the concurrent introduction of two new packing instructions to allow the safe packaging and carriage of large quantities of waste generated from the medical treatment of humans or the veterinary treatment of animals, which arise particularly when there are epidemics.
- Revision of the packing instruction that applies to new and used batteries that do not contain any lithium. This packing instruction also enables the safe carriage of old batteries from collection facilities for recycling.
- Publication of guidelines for the use of an electronic transport document for the carriage of dangerous goods. These guidelines ensure that the emergency services also have all the necessary information quickly in the event of an accident.
- Possibility of multiple marking of dangerous goods packagings if they meet the design criteria and testing requirements for several design types.
- Increasing the maximum permissible internal pressure of aerosol dispensers (aerosols), which allows less environmentally hazardous propellants to be used.
- Clarification of the inspection required when the inspection date for a portable tank has been exceeded or when a portable tank is again used for the carriage of dangerous goods after it has been used to carry non-dangerous goods.

RID/ADR/ADN JOINT MEETING

The RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting develops harmonised dangerous goods provisions for carriage by rail, road and inland waterways. OTIF's RID Department provides the Secretariat for this meeting, together with the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Transport Division.

In 2020, the Joint Meeting only held one meeting in the autumn. Owing to the risks in connection with the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the spring session had to be postponed at short notice. In order to catch up with the resulting backlog of work, the autumn session of the Joint Meeting, which was originally planned to be for one week, was extended by two further meeting days. This meeting was held as a video-conference (10 and 11 September) and as a hybrid meeting, which people could attend in person or remotely (14 to 18 September 2020). For both parts of the meeting, a web-based multichannel platform was used, which made it possible to hold discussions in the four working languages (German, English, French and Russian).

Owing to the cancellation of the spring session of the Joint Meeting, there were 66 official documents and 64 informal documents on the agenda. Despite the difficult conditions, it was possible to deal with almost all the documents. It is anticipated that the amendments resulting from dealing with these proposals will enter into force on 1 January 2023.

Among the numerous amendments anticipated for 2023, the topics below should be highlighted. They do not provide an exhaustive overview of the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting's activities, but chiefly summarise the most important technological developments that have the biggest impact on the regulations. This makes clear the extent to which the provisions have a direct link to developments in the sector.

AMENDMENT OF RID/ADR CHAPTER 1.2

All the explanations of abbreviations and acronyms will be taken out of 1.2.1 (Definitions) and transferred to a new 1.2.3. This reflects the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code (IMDG Code), where this separation has already existed for some time.

RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE INLAND TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS

Together with some delegations of the Joint Meeting, the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) has developed framework risk assessment guidelines for the inland transport of dangerous goods. The guidelines can be applied to all three land transport modes and have now been published on the web-sites of the European Commission and ERA.

These framework guidelines, which will be referred to in RID/ADR/ADN, offer all categories of potential users, including the authorities, a harmonised method for risk assessment and a harmonised decision-making process, as well as principles that have to be taken into account in the preparation of robust risk management decisions.

INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON REDUCING THE RISK OF A BLEVE

In recent years, the informal working group on reducing the risk of a BLEVE has held numerous meetings. It now submitted six specific measures to prevent boiling liquid expanding vapour explosions (BLEVE) in future. These measures are partly of a preventive nature, to prevent the accident itself, and partly of a mitigating nature, in order to minimise the effects of an accident that has already occurred and to prevent the accident leading to a BLEVE. Four of the measures are specific to road transport and concern devices on tank-vehicles; one measure concerns the installation of safety valves on tanks and is therefore relevant to rail transport as well. The Joint Meeting decided not to pursue one of the measures, which consisted of incorporating a lattice structure made of aluminium alloy into the shell, owing to the uncertainty in terms of its effectiveness, the effects on maintenance and inspections and the costs resulting from the use of these materials.

RID COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS AND ITS STANDING WORKING GROUP

The RID Committee of Experts is one of the most important organs of OTIF, as the provisions for the international carriage of dangerous goods by rail are continuously amended, which leads every two years to a completely new edition of RID. As the provisions of RID must also be applied to domestic transport in the EU Member States in accordance with EU Directive 2008/68 on the inland transport of dangerous goods, amendments to RID automatically lead to changes in national law. In this respect, OTIF plays a leading role.

The technical discussion takes place in the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group, which meets once a year. As a rule, the RID Committee of Experts only meets every two years in order to adopt the decisions prepared by the standing working group.

56th SESSION OF THE RID COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS

It was planned to hold the 56th session of the RID Committee of Experts on 27 May 2020. At that meeting, all the amendments to RID proposed at the tenth (Krakow, 21 to 23 November 2018) and eleventh (Vienna, 25 to 28 November 2019) sessions of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group were to have been adopted. This meeting could not take place either because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the majority of the amendments had already been discussed by the standing working group, it was no problem to submit these amendments to the RID Committee of Experts for approval using the written procedure. It was more difficult with regard to necessary amendments that were only noticed subsequently. These were necessary consequential amendments which the Secretariat had come across, additional amendments proposed by the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting's

working group on tanks, adaptations in connection with the revision of standards and the updating of references to other COTIF appendices and European railway legislation. Consultation on these additional amendments took place via a video-conference in order to ascertain whether the RID Contracting States supported them. This was followed by the written procedure, in which a total of 33 Contracting States took part. All those states that took part voted in favour of adopting the amendments.

Owing to the periodic lockdowns imposed in many RID Contracting States in connection with the pandemic, several multilateral special agreements had to be concluded in 2020 in order to avoid problems in the carriage of dangerous goods. For example, it was not possible to provide any training for dangerous goods safety advisers. Transitional measures had to be found to maintain the validity of dangerous goods safety advisers' training certificates, despite their having expired. An arrangement was also agreed for tank-wagons and tank-containers which could not undergo the prescribed periodic or intermediate inspections on time during the period in which many workshops were also closed. Together with the gas industry, it was also necessary to find a solution to the problem of how gas cylinders for medical gases could continue to be used when they are due for periodic inspection. In so doing, it had to be remembered that, owing to the coronavirus crisis, the demand for liquid oxygen increased five fold and the demand for oxygen cylinders increased tenfold. Additional oxygen storage tanks also had to be provided in hospitals. The urgent nature of these multilateral special agreements was underlined by the number of states that acceded to them.

12th SESSION OF THE RID COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS' STANDING WORKING GROUP

The 12th session of the standing working group originally planned for 25 and 26 May 2020, which had to be postponed because of the pandemic, was held as a video-conference from 24 to 26 November 2020.

EXTRA-LARGE TANK-CONTAINERS

The standing working group was informed of the work of the working group on tank and vehicle technology, which had held a video-conference on 6 and 7 October 2020 and which had dealt exclusively with the safety assessment of the risk analysis of extra-large tank-containers carried out by BASF. A technical and scientific research institute in Germany had examined the risk analysis and noted various ambiguities and methodological gaps. For example, it was questioned whether all possible accident scenarios had been considered. The scope of the long term tests was also considered to be too narrow. Lastly, there was some doubt as to whether the statements from the BASF risk analysis are sufficient to substantiate amendments to the regulations with regard to filling levels and surge movements to an adequate degree.

The standing working group agreed that a definition might be necessary so that extra-large tank-containers can be better taken into account in the provisions for construction, approval, use and loading. Additional provisions might be necessary, bearing in mind the fact that the current provisions for tank-containers were developed on the basis of a tank-container with a maximum capacity of 36,000 litres and extra-large tank-containers are more than twice as large as conventional tank-containers and are hence on a par with tank-wagons in terms of volume.

The standing working group agreed to submit a proposal to the Joint Meeting to require a pressure resistance of 4 bar for the dome covers of tank-containers with a capacity of more than 40,000 litres. This requirement should not apply to tank-containers which are divided into compartments of no more than 7,500 litres separated by dividing walls or surge plates. The requirement for 4 bar manhole covers already applies to tank-wagons and is intended to prevent spray escaping from the dome covers as a result of liquid surge.

AMENDMENT OF THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DANGEROUS GOODS TANK-WAGONS

The standing working group initiated a discussion on revising special provisions TE 22 and TE 25, which apply to tank-wagons, as well as the requirement in 6.8.2.1.29, so that, among other things, these requirements can also be applied to the carriage of tank-containers with dangerous goods. For tank-wagons, special provision TE 22 requires the deployment of crash elements, which must have a minimum energy absorption capacity of 800 kJ. Special provision TE 25 contains measures to prevent the overriding of buffers or to limit the damage caused by the overriding of buffers and 6.8.2.1.29 deals with the minimum distance of 300 mm between the headstock plane and the most protruding point at the shell extremity.

It was pointed out in particular that for digital automatic couplings, which were supposed to strengthen rail freight traffic, the energy absorption of 800 kJ required in special provision TE 22 cannot be achieved. This requirement cannot be implemented for container carrying wagons either, because of their construction.

It was agreed that protective aims should first be formulated that can be included in RID instead of specific provisions. The specific technical provisions should then be laid down in the TSI (ERA), the UTP (OTIF) and/or in standards (CEN).

HARMONISATION OF OTIF'S RID AND OSJD'S SMGS ANNEX 2

For a number of years, the Secretariat of OTIF has been making successful efforts to press ahead with the harmonisation of RID and SMGS Annex 2, which is applied in the Member States of OSJD (Organisation for the Cooperation of Railways). In addition to some European states, many states in Asia are Member States of OSJD. On the basis of the 2021 amendments to RID, SMGS Annex 2 was also amended and the amended version will enter into force on 1 July 2021.

From 1 July 2022, SMGS Annex 2 will include a new Chapter 6.20 containing construction, testing and approval provisions for 1520 mm gauge tank-wagons. In the context of work on this Chapter, several questions which also concerned the construction and testing provisions for standard gauge tank-wagons were discussed. The representative of Russia had submitted various proposals to the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group and the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting with the aim of further harmonising the construction and testing provisions for tank-wagons between RID and SMGS Annex 2 and of adapting them to the latest status of technological research and development.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATIONS

The RID Department took part as an observer in the 56th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. The decisions adopted at this session will be reflected in the 22nd revised edition of the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UN Model Regulations) and will be included in the 2023 edition of RID in the context of harmonisation.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the working method of this Committee also had to be adapted. Comments on documents submitted to the 56th session originally planned for July could be exchanged via an online platform. Instead of the meeting itself, there was an informal video-conference to enable discussion on those proposals where the authors had specifically wanted a discussion. This procedure enabled the authors to revise their proposals on the basis of the comments received so that at the meeting in December – the last meeting of the 2019/2020 biennium – these proposals could be adopted.

Before the meeting postponed to December 2020, heads of delegation were also given the opportunity to comment on the revised proposals on the online platform. As a result, it was already relatively clear before the meeting began which documents were ready for adoption without further discussion, which documents would have to be discussed further and which documents could not be decided on during this biennium.

Thanks to this procedure, it was possible to conclude a lot of work and to take account of the resulting amendments in the 22nd revised edition of the UN Model Regulations. For example, a new chapter containing construction, testing and approval provisions for fibre-reinforced plastics portable tanks was adopted, which an informal working group had been developing since 2017 on the basis of RID/ADR Chapter 6.9 that applies to RID/ADR tank-containers made of fibre-reinforced plastics.

The RID Department also attended the 108th session of the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) decision-making body for amendments to the Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR). The main purpose of attending these meetings is to make sure that the RID and ADR regulations are parallel and thus to ensure that there is a smooth transition between the modes in multimodal transport. Owing to the pandemic, the May session of WP.15 in 2020 had to be cancelled.

OVERVIEW OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2020

13 MAY (VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

Consultation on the amendments to RID planned for 2021

8 AND 9 SEPTEMBER (VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE)

10 AND 11 SEPTEMBER AND 14 TO 18 SEPTEMBER (VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting

6 AND 7 OCTOBER (VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

18th session of the RID Committee of Experts' working group on tank and vehicle technology

24 TO 26 NOVEMBER (VIDEO-CONFERENCE)

12th session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group

JOINT COORDINATING GROUP OF EXPERTS

The aim of the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE) is to help ensure that legislative developments in RID and railway law concerning interoperability and safety are consistent and harmonised for vehicles used for the carriage of dangerous goods by rail and the associated operations. The group brings together experts in the transport of dangerous goods and experts in the field of technical interoperability and safety from the Member States, representatives of the European Commission and ERA, as well as representatives from the relevant industry stakeholders, such as CEFIC, CER, UIC, UIP, UNIFE and UIRR. JCGE is unique, as its secretariat is jointly provided by the OTIF Secretariat and the European Commission.

In 2020, the JCGE held a remote meeting on 8 and 9 September.

An important topic concerning the design and construction of vehicles used for the carriage of dangerous goods was the reorganisation of requirements for RID tank-wagons so that they can also be applied to the carrying wagons for extra-large tank-containers. In addition, the group discussed proposed requirements concerning the ability of tank-wagons to withstand stresses and debated the ways such requirements should be dealt with in future between the competent authorities according to RID and the notified bodies according to the TSI/UTP (general railway law).

The JCGE was asked to examine how entry into service verification under future RID provisions could be integrated into the registration process for tank-wagons or the transfer of registration, particularly when EU authorisation for placing on the market is given by ERA.

The coordination processes between RID and general railway legislation for reporting accidents/incidents and statistics were also high on the agenda. The goal is to ensure that the reporting of events is harmonised, not only in rail transport, but also across the modes. An informal working group established by the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting has been in charge of reviewing the requirements for reporting dangerous goods occurrences. In parallel, ERA has been developing “Common Safety Methods” (CSM) to assess the safety level and safety performance of railway operators at national and European Union level. Good cooperation between the UNECE, OTIF’s working groups and ERA is therefore essential to ensure consistent reporting.

PROMOTE SAFE TECHNICAL INTEROPERABILITY



Bas LEERMAKERS
Head of Technical
Interoperability Department

CONTEXT OF THE ACTIVITIES IN 2020

In 2020, the main challenge for the Technical Interoperability Department was to continue the further development of the rules of COTIF despite the obstacles presented by the coronavirus pandemic. The Committee of Technical Experts had to postpone its 2020 session to 2021 and all other meetings had to be held remotely.

Despite these limitations, the Secretariat continued to work closely with the Member States, the European Union and sector associations in order to avoid significant delays in the development of rules. A pragmatic approach was agreed, in which the proposals initially prepared for adoption by the Committee of Technical Experts in June 2020 were adopted using the written procedure. Before this vote, the final versions of these proposals were subject to an extraordinary final review by the working group Technology. All proposals were adopted in September 2020.

Furthermore, in September 2020, new tripartite [Administrative Arrangements](#) were agreed between the OTIF Secretariat, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport and the European Union Agency for Railways. This was an important milestone which will enable coordination between the signatories to be strengthened further.

In 2020, there were two developments in Europe with significant consequences for technical interoperability under COTIF. Firstly, the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union was taking place. Secondly, the European Union finalised the legal implementation of the 4th railway package. These developments underline the importance of COTIF as a stable and neutral legal framework on the basis of which vehicles can be admitted to and used in international traffic.

COORDINATION OF DEVELOPMENTS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

From their inception, all the technical provisions of COTIF have been based on provisions developed in the EU. Firstly, this approach allowed OTIF to benefit from the experience gained at EU level with the harmonisation of interoperability and safety requirements. Secondly, it also saved OTIF the vast resources required to develop detailed rules from scratch. Lastly, it ensured compatibility between the EU and COTIF rules, so that the Member States of OTIF which are also Member States of the EU can apply both legal systems.

As a consequence of the adoption of the 4th Railway Package in the European Union, the EU Member States are in the process of creating a single European railway area (SERA). The national railway systems of the EU s are gradually being integrated with a view to enabling seamless domestic and international traffic. Apart from harmonisation and integration in terms of interoperability and safety, the EU Agency for Railways (ERA) has become a central EU authority with defined competences for all EU Member States. ERA was also designated as the Competent Authority in the meaning of Article 5 of the ATMF UR for the Contracting States which are also Member States of the EU. In addition, the EU is implementing new centralised IT tools to facilitate administration and make railway operations at EU level more efficient.

The adoption of the 4th Railway Package in the EU has led to changes in the EU's legislative interoperability and safety framework, including a new process for vehicle authorisation and the safety certification of railway undertakings, which has made it necessary for the EU to modify the technical specifications for interoperability (TSIs). The corresponding OTIF uniform technical prescriptions (UTPs) are going through a process of revision to ensure continued compatibility with the TSIs.

It is important that the SERA develops in a way that is compatible with COTIF. It is therefore necessary to ensure that all OTIF Member States, irrespective of their EU membership, can continue to benefit from their established rights under COTIF and can continue to meet their obligations under COTIF. Coordination with the EU institutions during the drafting and decision-making processes of EU rules is very important in this context and is an important task of OTIF's Technical Interoperability Department. The newly agreed Administrative Arrangements are instrumental to this coordination.

COMMITTEE OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS

On the basis of the APTU and ATMF Uniform Rules, detailed rules are adopted by the Committee of Technical Experts, most notably in the form of UTPs. These detailed rules cover technical construction requirements and procedures for the verification of compliance. For this purpose, all Contracting States mutually recognise and accept evidence of verifications and technical certificates issued in accordance with these rules, irrespective of the Contracting State in which they are issued.

The Committee of Technical Experts had to postpone its 13th session from 2020 to 2021 because of the coronavirus pandemic. Nevertheless, it was able to adopt several provisions using the written procedure, most notably:

- Changes to the UTP Noise, to align it with the EU provisions (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/774). The main aim of the changes is to limit the use of older freight wagons which are noisy because they have cast iron brake blocks acting on the wheel tread. In order to limit noise nuisance by curbing the use of noisy wagons, the concept of “quieter routes” has been introduced. Quieter routes are lines on which noisy wagons would no longer be allowed to operate. Contracting States may designate quieter routes on their networks on which noisy, older wagons would not be allowed to run after a set date.
- Changes to the UTP for freight wagons, to align it with the EU provisions (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/776). Changes include new requirements concerning automatic variable gauge running gear, provisions concerning the handling and maintenance of safety critical components, a reference to route compatibility checks and updated references to standards and other legal requirements.

- Revised specifications for vehicle registers, which are a consequence of the EU's decision on establishing a centralised European Vehicle Register (EVR, Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1614). From 16 June 2021, the standard software for national vehicle registers (NVR) and the central search engine (ECVVR) referred to in OTIF's current NVR Specification will become obsolete. The revised OTIF vehicle register specifications allow states to choose whether to establish their own NVR, use the EVR, or establish and share a joint register with one or more other states. However, any register must satisfy the specified common data format and access rights.
- Changes to the rules on certification and auditing of entities in charge of maintenance (ECM rules, Annex A to ATMF UR). The purpose of this revision is to align the OTIF rules with the latest EU provisions (Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/779), by extending the scope from the certification of ECMs for freight wagons only to the certification of ECMs for all types of vehicles. Furthermore, the new rules include the possibility of certifying outsourced maintenance functions and requirements concerning the management of safety critical components.
- In addition to the above, the UTP Marking was also subject to a limited revision.

All provisions were formally adopted on 30 September 2020 and were subsequently [notified by the Secretary General](#). The date of entry into force is 1 April 2021.

WORKING GROUP TECHNOLOGY

The standing working group technology (WG TECH) usually convenes three times per year with the objective of preparing working documents with proposals for a vote by the Committee of Technical Experts. In 2020, WG TECH held all its three meetings remotely:

- 40th meeting on 17 and 18 June 2020
- 41st meeting on 9 and 10 September 2020
- 42nd meeting on 17 and 18 November 2020.

Delegations from the following thirteen Member States took part in the meetings: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Iran, Italy, Morocco, Romania, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport and the European Union Agency for Railways were represented at each session. The following organisations and associations also took part in the meetings: the Transport Community Treaty Secretariat, CER, NB-Rail, UIC and UIP.

The 40th meeting started reviewing new working documents to be prepared for adoption at the next Committee of Technical Experts in 2021, and carried out a final review of the documents subject to a vote using the written procedure. The latter would normally have been voted on by the Committee in June 2020, but, as stated above, the coronavirus pandemic made this meeting impossible.

The 41st and 42nd meetings discussed and prepared proposals for adoption by the Committee of Technical Experts in 2021. These included:

- A new UTP applicable to “train composition and route compatibility checks” (UTP TCRC). This new UTP would define the parameters of the vehicles and infrastructure to be checked by railway undertakings and the procedures to be applied to check these parameters.
- A new UTP concerning infrastructure (UTP INF). The purpose of this new UTP would be to promote compatibility between lines and networks of neighbouring countries. The UTP INF would set out the railway infrastructure parameters that are relevant in terms of compatibility with vehicles and specific methods to check these parameters.
- Modifications to the UTP concerning freight wagons (UTP WAG). The proposals include new rules applicable when existing wagons or existing wagon types are modified and rules on whether or not the changes require a new admission to international traffic.
- Modifications to the UTP concerning locomotives and passenger rolling stock (UTP LOC&PAS). The proposals include provisions similar to those of the UTP WAG and also include new elements brought about by the revision of the APTU UR, which entered into force on 1 March 2019.
- Modification to the UTP concerning accessibility for people with disabilities and people with reduced mobility (UTP PRM). The proposals include clarification of the technical scope, editorial modifications and an update of references to other legal documents.

MEETINGS IN 2020

17 AND 18 JUNE

40th WG TECH

8 AND 9 SEPTEMBER

Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE)

9 AND 10 SEPTEMBER

41st WG TECH

17 AND 18 NOVEMBER

42nd WG TECH

ENSURE THAT THE SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS PROPERLY



**Lunesterline
ANDRIAMAHATAHITRY**
Head of Administration and
Finance Department

In addition to the standing objectives, which are the efficient functioning of the Secretariat and the provision of effective services to the Member States, in 2020 the Administration and Finance Department was involved in other projects, such as the renovation of OTIF's headquarters and the Luxembourg Protocol on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment.

PUT IN PLACE THE TOOLS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF SERVICES WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) has had to review its working tools and methods in order to adapt to the new situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting in February, discussions on the risks of the virus spreading and the consequences for the Organisation's activities led to a crisis management team being set up, with major input from the Administration and Finance Department.

The decisions taken by the crisis management team helped ensure that service continued. In this respect, the IT service was at the heart of the arrangements put in place, whether teleworking or remote meetings. The Administration and Finance Department also provided support for administrative and IT plans and in terms of logistics for the organisation of hybrid or remote meetings of the organs and working groups other than the Administrative Committee.

INTRODUCTION OF TELEWORKING

As anticipated, the interim directive on teleworking for the translators came into effect on 1 January 2020.

The teleworking pilot project was initially limited to the translators, but owing to the exceptional circumstances that arose at the beginning of 2020 with the COVID 19 pandemic, all staff had to start teleworking from March 2020 on the basis of a decision by the Secretary General.

The extension of teleworking to all staff received a positive welcome. In addition, as for the translators' teleworking, one of the positive aspects highlighted by staff was the opportunity to achieve a better balance between private/family life and work.

All OTIF's staff have been able to work remotely in an effective manner thanks to the IT that is available. In addition, one of the other positive aspects reported by staff members is the acquisition of new skills in connection with communication tools, particularly video-conference systems.

Making teleworking generally available to all staff during the COVID-19 pandemic helped ensure that service continued at a time when the risks to health were high and when schools and nurseries were generally closed. The Secretariat has not suffered any positive cases of COVID-19 since the pandemic started.

The assessment envisaged in the interim directive on teleworking for the translators enabled us to conclude that teleworking is a suitable working method for the translators' activities.

At this stage, it is not appropriate to assess the effectiveness of teleworking for all staff during the exceptional situation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. This was an exceptional measure taken without the prior definition of criteria that would enable an objective comparison with the previous period.

At the time this report is being prepared, the pandemic situation is still ongoing. The next step will therefore be to draft a definitive directive applicable to all staff.

The Staff Association will be involved in drafting the guidelines on teleworking for the staff, the aim being to issue definitive guidelines in the course of 2021.

MODERNISATION OF THE IT INFRASTRUCTURE

Information and communication technologies play a key role in the provision of services to the Member States, as well as contributing to the OTIF Secretariat's performance. They are essential tools that enable the departments of the Secretariat to carry out their tasks effectively.

In 2020, remote meetings with staff or with the Member States or other OTIF partners became the main way of working. The Organisation bought some more effective audio-visual equipment to equip its two meeting rooms.

During the year, a number of tests were carried out with various platforms in order to ensure, for example, that remote meetings with simultaneous interpretation were effective and to help choose a platform that meets the requirements for international meetings (IT security, confidentiality, etc.).

More generally, the COVID-19 pandemic speeded up changes to the working methods and has provided the opportunity to reduce the volume of paper being used. The Secretariat is considering how it can move towards paperless internal procedures.

In addition, as planned, a call for tenders was issued in August 2020 for the provision of consultancy services in order to define an IT and communication strategy and enable the Organisation to plan the necessary medium term investments.

The consultancy contract was awarded, which proposed a solid strategy in its offer, with an investment plan spread over three years. This was presented at the 133rd session of the Administrative Committee.

RENOVATION OF THE BUILDING – FEASIBILITY STUDY

Under the direction of the head of the Administration and Finance Department, a project team made up of staff from the various departments, chosen irrespective of their grade, but who have had experience in construction or building renovation, has been set up. Its task will be to validate the business case and define the outline design brief.

A call for tenders was issued in the second half of 2020 on the basis of the brief developed by the project team for the selection of a client assistant, i.e. a professional with experience of similar projects to analyse the feasibility of the work, estimate the associated costs and accompany the Organisation in the selection and subsequent supervision of the company(ies) that will be involved in the work on renovating OTIF's headquarters.

In December 2020, the contract was awarded to a company that has more than 60 years' experience in planning, advising and managing all phases of a project in the context of building construction or renovation work.

The first phase of the client assistant's task should result in a preliminary diagnosis of the scope of the renovation work, clarification of the timetable and the estimated costs. This information will be used to present financing scenarios to the Administrative Committee.

At the time this document was being prepared, the client assistant had already finished the building inspection. The initial conclusions revealed that a specialist would have to be asked to identify the measures necessary to strengthen the structure of the building in order to comply with the host state's legislation on earthquake-resistant construction. Sample analyses will also have to be carried out to check the presence of pollutants (e.g. asbestos), bearing in mind the date the building was constructed and the materials used in the 1960s.

PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE SERVICES TO THE MEMBER STATES

MAINTAIN REGULAR DIALOGUE WITH THE MEMBER STATES

Interaction between the Secretariat and the Member States mainly occurs at the meetings of the various organs listed in COTIF or set up by the General Assembly.

The Administration and Finance Department organises the meetings and ensures that the decisions taken by two of the organs listed in COTIF – the Administrative Committee and the General Assembly – are implemented. The General Assembly meets every three years. The next ordinary session is planned for September 2021. The Administrative Committee meets at least once a year in accordance with the provisions of COTIF.

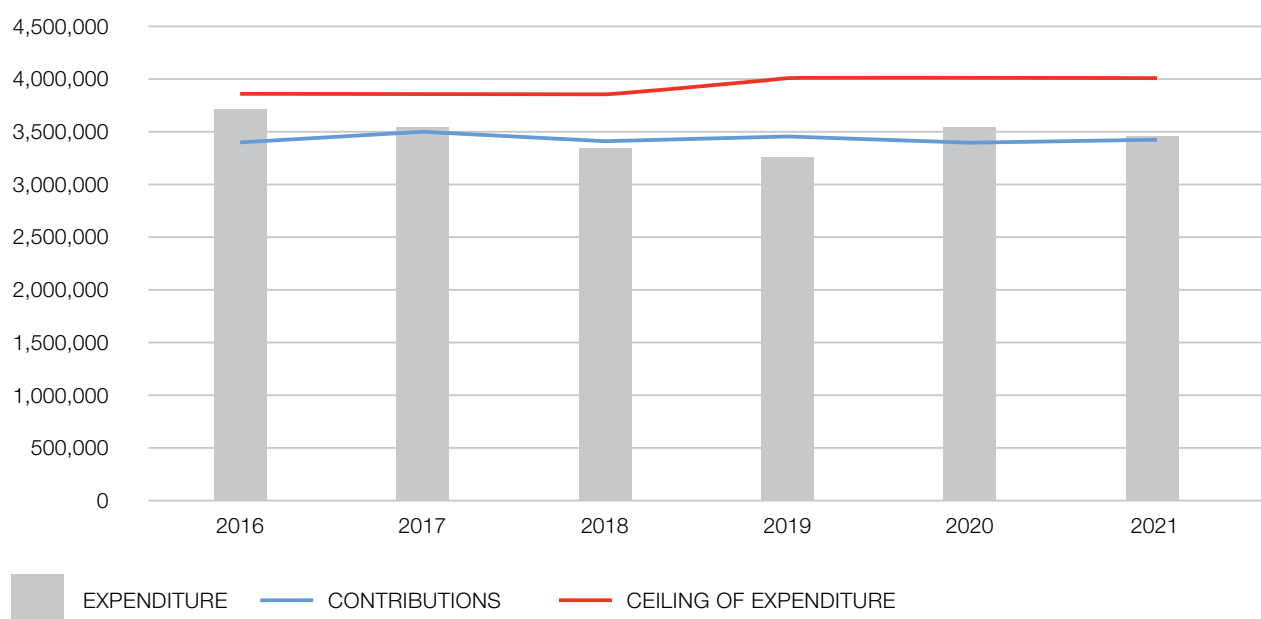
In 2020, owing to the health risks linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries brought in foreign travel restrictions. Similarly, in line with the recommendations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the host state, whose authorities recommended avoiding meetings of more than a certain number of people, OTIF had to postpone or cancel several meetings that had been planned between March and June 2020.

Initially, decisions were able to be taken using the written procedure. This was the case in June 2020 when the Administrative Committee approved the Organisation's annual accounts and the auditor's report. Subsequently, once the possibility of holding hybrid or remote meetings had been approved, the Committee was able to meet remotely. At its meeting in 2020, some important decisions were taken concerning the budget, the Organisation's long term strategy and the preparation of the 15th General Assembly, etc.

EXPENDITURE CONTROL

In 2020, the Organisation's expenditure of around 3.22 million CHF was still less than the ceiling set by the 13th General Assembly (4 million CHF for the period from 2019 - 2024). The Member States' contributions, which form the main and almost only source of income for the Organisation to cover expenditure, have stabilised at between 3.4 and 3.5 million CHF.

The chart below shows how the Organisation's expenditure has changed since 2016.



The reason for reduced expenditure in 2020 is partly explained by the cancellation or postponement of activities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, it should also be pointed out that compared with previous years, more services were put out to tender in 2020. These tendering procedures enabled the Secretariat either to stabilise prices or negotiate them to improve services or reduce the prices.

PREPARATION FOR THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE LUXEMBOURG PROTOCOL

The Luxembourg Protocol was adopted at the diplomatic conference held in Luxembourg in February 2007. It sets up a new legal regime for the recognition and enforcement of securities, particularly those of creditors and lessors when these securities are in railway rolling stock. A registry will be set up for this as well as a Supervisory Authority for the registry.

In line with the decision of the 7th General Assembly (Berne, 23 and 24 November 2005), OTIF will act as the secretariat of the Supervisory Authority once the Protocol enters into force.

As a result of COVID-19 and the travel restrictions, work to promote the Luxembourg Protocol was suspended. So far, only three states have ratified the Protocol: Luxembourg, Gabon and Sweden. A fourth ratification is necessary for the Protocol to enter into force.

Pending entry into force of the Protocol, there has been some progress in designing a numbering system, which will be used to identify and differentiate rolling stock entered in the Registry. A working group made up of experts designated by the states or various organisations or associations with competence in the field of rail transport, including OTIF, has been set up on the initiative of Luxembourg and the Rail Working Group (RWG) under the leadership of the UNECE. This working group met twice in 2020. Once its work is complete, it will submit recommendations on the system for numbering and marking rolling stock in the context of the future Registry.

In 2020, the Secretariat of OTIF also continued discussions with stakeholders in the Luxembourg Protocol, particularly the Preparatory Commission, so as to work on the draft agreement between the Supervisory Authority and OTIF in its role as secretariat of the Supervisory Authority.

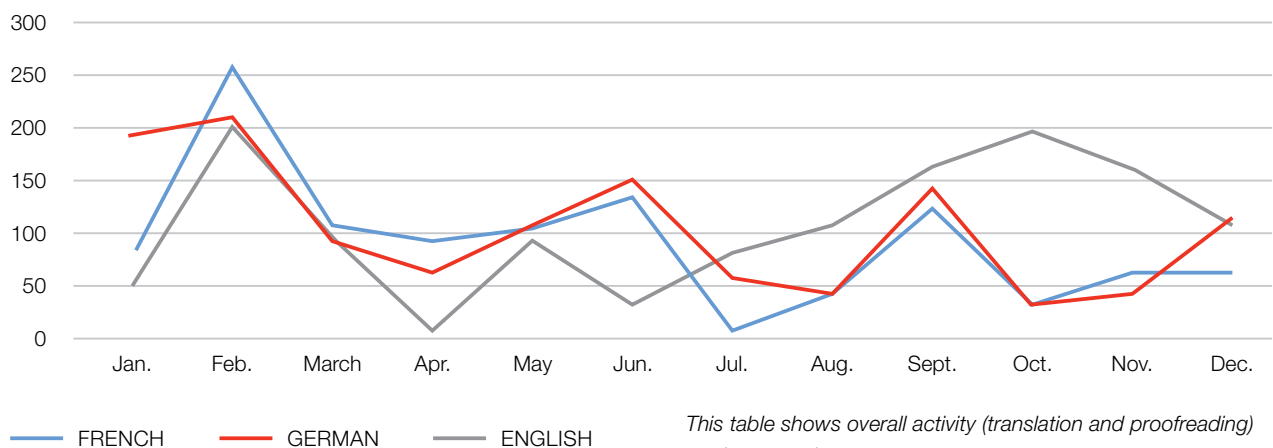
THE PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY LANGUAGE SERVICES

2020 was also an unusual year for the Translation Department. The pandemic meant that virtually overnight, new working methods became the norm within the OTIF Secretariat. For OTIF's translators and interpreters, increased digitalisation brought with it new challenges and extensive new tasks in addition to their usual activities (see "Video-conferences and interpreting").

However, let us look first at the translators' core area of activity.

DELIVER GOOD QUALITY TRANSLATIONS ON TIME

TRANSLATION AND PROOFREADING



The above table shows the workload for each language throughout the year. It should be noted that no distinction is made here between translated and proofread pages. German required the most translation work at around 900 pages, while English required the most proofreading at around 825 pages. In French, there was a good balance between the two tasks at around 600 pages. In all three languages, the total number of pages (translation and proofreading together) was very similar at between 1125 and 1300 pages.



Joana MEENKEN
Head of Translation
Department

The apparently lower number of pages compared with the previous year is due to a new method of calculation. In 2020, the figures were based on the second highest number of words established per standard page (330¹). Overall therefore, the volume of text has remained the same or has even risen slightly.

Looking at the individual months, those with the highest workload overall were February, May/June, September and the beginning and end of the year in general, although slight variations between the various languages can also be seen. Despite occasional major differences, April and July/August can be considered as the least busy months.

In addition to the number of pages, it is interesting to note how the work is spread between OTIF's various areas of activity. The following picture emerges:

	FRENCH		GERMAN		ENGLISH	
	Translation	Proofreading	Translation	Proofreading	Translation	Proofreading
ADMINISTRATION	10.8 %	21.9 %	23.9 %	7.36 %	40.5 %	4.7 %
COMMUNICATION	22 %	40.8 %	17.7 %	50.4 %	16.8 %	11.8 %
LAW	20.5 %	0.6 %	15.3 %	4.5 %	7.6 %	43.8 %
RID	21.5 %	2.1 %	24.2 %	0 %	33.5 %	9.6 %
TECHNOLOGY	22.3 %	34.6 %	16.9 %	37.9 %	0 %	20.3 %
OTHER	2.8 %	0 %	2.1 %	0 %	1.5 %	9.8 %

The above table makes clear that for the various languages, there are very different requirements in terms of translation and proofreading, depending on the department/area of work.

In the area of *administration*, most of the documents are drafted in French. The largest and second largest amounts of translation work in English and German are proof of this. As the spring session of the Administrative Committee was cancelled because of the pandemic, there were fewer pages than usual in this area in 2020. For 2021, the volume of work will be considerably higher because of the forthcoming General Assembly.

¹ In other organisations, this number varies between 250 and 350 words per standard page.

In the area of *communication*, at 40.8% and 50.4% for French and German respectively, there is a large amount of proofreading. This is mainly because all official publications (Bulletin, Annual Report etc.) have to undergo final proofreading by OTIF's translators. This has a particularly significant impact for German, because in addition to the revised UTPs (see Technology), these are the only texts which are systematically proofread. There is less work here with regard to English, because owing to the fact that the English translator is the only native speaker of English in the Organisation, English requires a lot more correction work overall. As a result of the special edition of the Bulletin on the Vilnius Symposium, there was more to do in 2020 than in previous years.

With one exception, the values in the area of *law* are comparatively low. This is because in 2020, owing to the pandemic, only one session of the ad hoc Committee for Cooperation and the Working Group of Legal Experts was held and most of the working documents for these two legal bodies were already available from previous meetings in all three working languages. The large amount of proofreading in English (largest amount) is explained by the fact that when cooperating with other international organisations and partners, the Legal Department, at least initially, works a great deal in English.

In the area of *RID*, the volume of text remained constant. The cancellation of the Joint Meeting in March 2020 did not mean that the corresponding documents were not produced, as they had already been translated in December and January. The preparation of documents for the cancelled RID Committee of Experts in May was also simply postponed, at least in part, to the second half of the year and to the preparation of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group. As is the case every year, the dangerous goods department again provided active support in 2020 in terms of translations into German, as the timeframe is such that preparation of the Joint Meeting always takes place in months when the translation department has a particularly heavy workload.

In the area of technology, as anticipated there was again far more to do in 2020 than in 2019. For the Committee of Technical Experts planned for June 2020, five extensive OTIF legal texts in particular (UTP, ECM Regulation, vehicle register) were comprehensively revised or rewritten and had then to be proofread and translated.

The reason that the amount of proofreading in English under other is significantly higher than in all other cases is that all correspondence with the Organisation's external partners that cannot be assigned to other areas of activity is often written in English only.

TERMINOLOGY DATABASE AND EDITORIAL RULES

In addition to the actual translation work, 2020 also saw a great deal of work to be done in connection with terminology again. Where this was not carried out during the translation process itself, this work had to be carried out in the less busy periods of the year. In 2020, OTIF's terminologist dealt particularly with dangerous goods terminology and started developing a separate RID terminology database. So far, she has produced 105 full terminology entries (term, definition, explanations) in four languages (FR, DE, EN, RU). The general database was also developed further with the addition of around 40 new entries and the completion and correction of numerous existing entries. The aim is still to make the database available in future to other colleagues in the Secretariat.

With regard to the other major project adopted in 2019 (OTIF's internal editorial rules – see the 2020-2021 work programme approved by the Administrative Committee in December 2019), in 2020 a preliminary basic framework was drafted, initially in French, which was subsequently extended to cover all three languages. This work is ongoing.

VIDEO-CONFERENCES AND INTERPRETING

The biggest change in 2020 was probably with regard to the way meetings were held, and OTIF's interpreters were also particularly affected by this. Every meeting in 2020 was organised either as a video-conference or in hybrid form. Both required rapid adaptation to completely new ways of working (remote interpreting, among others). Although these new methods can be considered as a success overall, there were occasions when the interpreters had to contend with some technical problems and/or bad sound and image quality.

In order to find the best solution both for OTIF's organs and for the interpreters, the Translation Department took this matter on from the beginning and worked hard to carry out the broadest possible comparison of the various tool providers. To this end, a number of video-conference platforms were contacted (Interprefy, VoiceBoxer, Interactio, Zoom) and numerous tests were organised, some of them involving OTIF's external interpreters as well.

In terms of the number of days of interpreting, the following table compares OTIF's three working languages between 2020 and 2019:

	2019	2020
ENGLISH	22	15
GERMAN	16	11
FRENCH	16	11

The reduced number of days from 22 to 15 and 16 to 11 has nothing to do with any decrease in the Organisation's activities, but is due instead to various OTIF meetings' having been cancelled as a result of the pandemic. These figures are expected to rise again in 2021.

CONSOLIDATE AND INCREASE AWARENESS OF OTIF



Sarah PUJOL
Communication Officer

2020 was the start of the biennium of the new 2020-2021 work programme and the Communication Department's task was to revitalise and update the layout of OTIF's publications. As mentioned in several places in this Annual Report, 2020 was also marked by the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it unavoidable and obligatory to make use of new IT and communication technologies. In this context, the Organisation's digital presence was crucial.

REDESIGNED PUBLICATIONS

Proposals for graphics and content submitted by the Communication Department are adopted at the management meeting and after systematic consultation of the Secretariat's other departments. It is important that internally, the Organisation's communication tools gain majority acceptance.

The 2020-2021 work programme was published in December 2019 and inaugurated OTIF's new visual codes. It laid the foundation for an up-to-date, minimalist and pared down design to make the content more readable.

THE BULLETIN OF INTERNATIONAL CARRIAGE BY RAIL

In accordance with the frequency principle, the Bulletin was published quarterly as usual in March, June, September and December.

A special supplementary edition of the Bulletin was also published in 2020. This edition included all the speeches made at the symposium held in Vilnius, Lithuania at the end of October 2019, which brought together 12 distinguished authors to discuss the achievements of and prospects for OTIF and the railways 20 years after the Vilnius Protocol was signed.

With the first edition of the Bulletin in 2020, readers had the opportunity to gauge the new design and layout of this official publication.

The visual identity of the title page changed to reinforce the official nature of the Bulletin. In terms of the content, the summary remained visible so that readers had direct access to it.

Inside the Bulletin, the font has been changed and graphics now accompany the text to make it more comfortable and consistent to read.

In 2020, the readership remained stable compared with 2019. More than 800 contacts continued to receive it.

Following changes to the content (2019) and presentation (2020) of the publication, the communication team wanted to find out what readers' opinions are. In the last quarter of 2020, it issued an online satisfaction survey. The results and suggestions were positive, encouraging and constructive.

More than 70% of readers asked were satisfied (30% very satisfied) with the new title page design. 75% of readers thought a summary directly accessible on the cover page is useful (26%) or very useful (49%). There is a similar trend with regard to reintroduction of the section on "Depositary Notifications", which 36% of readers asked found very useful and 33% found useful, i.e. a total of 69% who were in favour of it.

Overall, the vast majority of people find the articles in the Bulletin interesting, clear and well written. A large majority of readers appear to be satisfied with the publication.

Some of the people asked also provided suggestions concerning the presentation and content of the Bulletin. These suggestions will be examined in 2021.

PRESS RELEASES

In 2020, 24 press releases were published, i.e. a third more than in 2019. This increase was due to the pandemic and the resulting need to communicate more.

The design and layout of OTIF's press releases were also updated in line with the work programme and Bulletin in order to make them more comfortable to read on a screen.

The communication team has a statistical tool that enables it to measure how often the website and online documents are consulted. Thanks to this tool, it is possible to gauge the interest shown by internet users, particularly with regard to the various press releases.

The interest shown by internet users, together with interest from the press, which relayed more press releases in 2020 than in 2019, enables us to classify the most widely read and/or relayed press releases:

1. "Publication of the new edition of RID" (4 November 2020)
2. "Joint statement on global supply chain continuity during covid-19 pandemic" (15 May 2020)
3. "OTIF-DG MOVE-ERA: Signing of the second Administrative Arrangement" (30 September 2020)
4. "World Economic Forum, Davos" (21 January 2020)
5. "OTIF at the "Berne Days"" (17 February 2020)
6. "3rd Session of the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts" (21 August 2020)
7. "RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting" (26 August 2020)
8. "International Transport Forum Consultation Day" (29 January 2020)

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

The last tools to undergo graphic redesign in 2020 were OTIF's PowerPoint presentations.

The new minimalist model of presentation now offers slides that are completely pared down compared with slides using the 2015 model. There are fewer photographs, fewer recurring graphic objects and fewer colours so as to leave more space for texts, illustrations, diagrams and maps. This new, lighter model, is easier to read and send by email.

Some guidelines for users of the new model of presentation were then published and shared internally.

2020 generated an increase in the number of presentations and remote meetings. It also reinforced the need for OTIF to have a digital presence.

DIGITAL PRESENCE

The Organisation's digital presence must partly abide by the concept of short timeframes and partly its status as an intergovernmental organisation.

THE WEBSITE

Technically, there are three OTIF websites. Three independent sites to minimise the risk of unavailability: even if one of the sites goes down, the other two are still online and accessible.

In this 2020 Annual Report, as in previous and subsequent reports, we simply refer to “the website” in order to simplify understanding, without lessening the quantity and quality of the work carried out. It is therefore important to make clear that specifically, the communication team, with the support of the webmaster technician and the Translation Department, maintains and works on the website in a threefold manner.

In 2020, the website was visited by more than 40,000 users. This is 300 more visitors per month than in 2019. The same proportion of users (58%) consulted the English version of the website as in 2020.

The pages visited most frequently by language:

FRENCH	GERMAN	ENGLISH
Homepage	Homepage	Homepage
RID 2021	RID 2021	RID 2021
COTIF 1999	Latest documents	Dangerous goods
Latest documents	Dangerous goods	COTIF 1999
OTIF	Notifications from the Member States (RID)	Convention
Dangerous goods	2020 working documents (RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting)	Latest documents
Reference texts	OTIF	Members
2020 working documents (12 th session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group)	RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting	OTIF
News/press 2020	COTIF 1999	Working at OTIF
Working at OTIF	Reports (RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting)	Notifications from the Member States (RID)

The website is updated very regularly and quickly, depending on the technical requirements, topicality and activity of the Organisation's operational departments. More than 800 updates and document uploads were carried out by OTIF's communication team in 2020.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

The Organisation has a Flickr, LinkedIn and Twitter account and was more active and visible on the social networks in 2020.

The increased activity and health context resulted in a significant increase in the number of subscribers on the two social networks. There was an increase of more than a third on both social networks.

The level of involvement, i.e. the number of web users that interact (likes, comments, shares) divided by the range of the publication is 5.6% on LinkedIn. This is a good figure compared with other rail sector organisations that have a LinkedIn presence.

On average, the Organisation made two publications per month on the social networks. This average has been increasing constantly since 2018 and the aim is to reach a more sustained rhythm with the resources available within the communication team and in the context of the status of OTIF.

The staff of the Organisation also took part in spreading the word about OTIF on the social networks by the frequent sharing of OTIF news. Lastly, it should be noted that OTIF, COTIF and RID are often mentioned by the Organisation's stakeholders and partners.

VIDEOS

In 2020, the communication team produced 5 videos which can be directly accessed on OTIF's website and the Vimeo platform. The videos describe the symposium held in Vilnius at the end of October 2019. They were all produced entirely within the Organisation: filming, sound recording, montage, presentation, effects and dissemination. This work was intense, precise and time-consuming.

Lastly, in the last quarter of 2020, the communication team began production of another video, which should be disseminated in the first half of 2021.

Published by:

OTIF - Intergovernmental
Organisation for International
Carriage by Rail

Design and layout: Sarah Pujol,
Valerio Compagnone



OTIF

Organisation intergouvernementale pour les transports internationaux ferroviaires
Zwischenstaatliche Organisation für den internationalen Eisenbahnverkehr
Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail

Gryphenhübeliweg 30 CH - 3006 Berne

Tel. : + 41 (0)31 359 10 10 | Fax : + 41 (0)31 359 10 11 | info@otif.org | www.otif.org