

# WORK PROGRAMME

2024/2025



**OTIF**

Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail



**OTIF**

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

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>General Objectives</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OTIF: A forum for Uniform Railway Law</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Promote and administer COTIF itself and uniform rail contract law</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Monitor and assess OTIF legal instruments	8
2. Perform depositary functions	9
3. Promote and support the implementation and application of OTIF law	11
4. Promote and assist accession to COTIF	11
<b>Continuously improve safety in the transport of dangerous goods</b>	<b>12</b>
5. Consider global developments in all modes of transport	12
5.1 UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods	12
5.2 Common dangerous goods provisions for land transport	13
6. Update the dangerous goods regulations on an ongoing basis, taking into account technical and scientific progress	14
6.1 RID 2025	15
6.2 RID 2027	21
7. Facilitate the transport of dangerous goods beyond the scope of COTIF	22
8. Promote the application of RID in non-contracting States	23
<b>Promote safe technical interoperability: from the exchange of vehicles to the truly international operation of trains</b>	<b>24</b>
9. Harmonise technical requirements and maintain compatibility with EU law	25
10. Develop the technical interoperability regulations in accordance with agreed principles	26
11. Keep regulations relating to the APTU UR updated	28
12. Keep the ATMF UR updated	29
13. Develop annexes to the EST UR	31
14. Monitor and assess implementation of the APTU and ATMF UR	32
15. Ensure compatibility between RID and the UTPs	33
<b>Ensure that the Secretariat functions properly and that the Member States are provided with an efficient service</b>	<b>34</b>
16. Renovation of OTIF's building and change management	35
17. Secretariat of the General Assembly and Administrative Committee	37
18. Secretariat of the Supervisory Authority of the International Registry of railway rolling stock set up under the Luxembourg Protocol	38
19. Financial management	40
20. Plan and manage human resources	41
<b>Provide high-quality language services on time</b>	<b>44</b>
21. Deliver high-quality translations on time	44
22. Ensure good linguistic quality of all OTIF texts	45
23. Format of meetings and interpreting	46
24. External cooperation	46
<b>Develop and increase awareness of OTIF</b>	<b>48</b>
25. Guidelines and framework of action	48
26. Ensure the hybrid presence of the Organisation: 360° dissemination	49
<b>List of abbreviations</b>	<b>50</b>



# INTRODUCTION



**Clio Liégeois**  
*Chair of the AC*



**Wolfgang Küpper**  
*Secretary General*

In August 2023, the OTIF Secretariat left its building at Gryphenhübeliweg and moved to temporary premises on the outskirts of Berne. We expect that all the renovation work will be completed as planned and that the Secretariat will be able to return to its modernised headquarters by mid-2025.

Although business continued during the relocation and did not affect OTIF's substantive work, the renovation sends out a clear signal: the organs of OTIF, its Member States and the host State are committed to OTIF and its future. In these uncertain times of geopolitical upheaval, this strongly symbolises continuity and resilience within OTIF and beyond.

OTIF's 2024-2025 Work Programme also reflects the current political framework and its impact on international rail transport. Around the world, expectations in international rail transport continue to be high. The aim is to bring about a turnaround towards sustainable transport and green mobility and a green economy. The work programme transposes these political aims into specific and ambitious working packages for the individual departments of OTIF:

- In contract law, priority is given to monitoring full implementation and application of COTIF law by the Member States and to performing the depositary functions and facilitating future accessions to OTIF;
- With regard to dangerous goods law, the focus remains on continuing to update and expand it;
- In the area of technical interoperability, it is important to continue establishing the conditions for the technically smooth and safe border crossing of trains;
- OTIF will also pay particular attention to the entry into force of the Luxembourg Protocol and to the new role of OTIF as the Secretariat of the Supervisory Authority;
- For all these tasks to be carried out properly and in order to ensure the professional communication of all OTIF's work, documents must be translated on time and to a high quality.

**Promote and administer COTIF itself and uniform rail contract law**

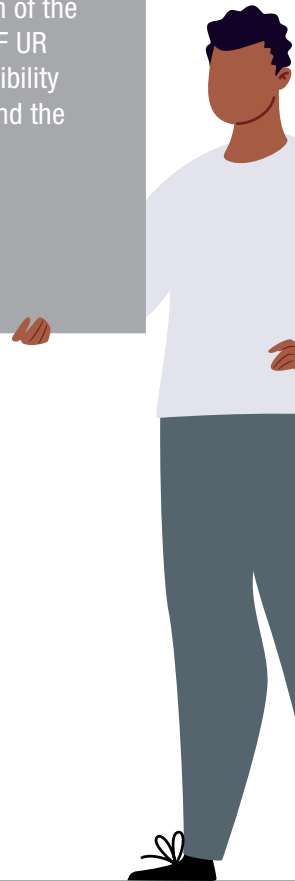
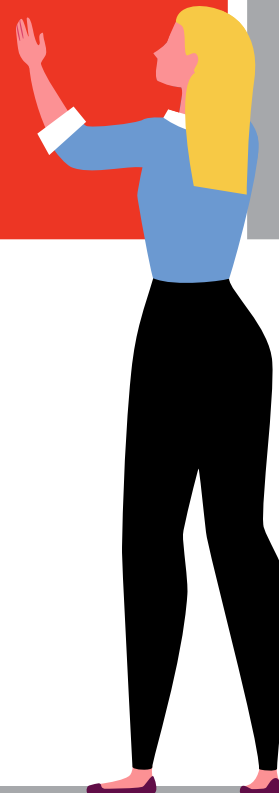
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**Continuously improve safety in the transport of dangerous goods**

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Ensure that the Secretariat functions properly and that the Member States are provided with an efficient service

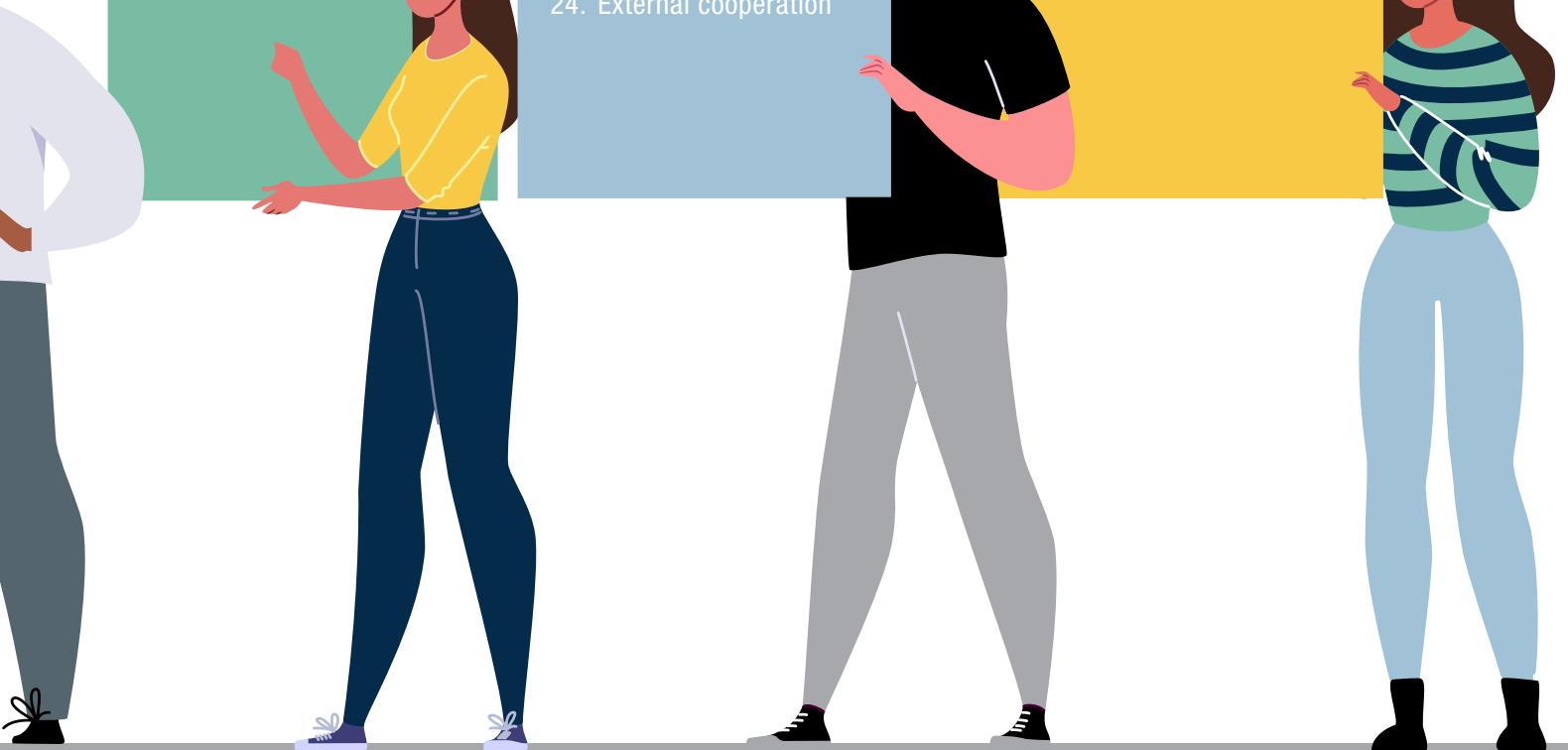
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# OTIF: A FORUM FOR UNIFORM RAILWAY LAW



**Wolfgang Küpper**  
*Secretary General*

## Context and high-level objectives

### General framework for international rail transport

Hopes for rail transport remain high. Ambitious plans are assigning rail transport, and in particular cross-border rail transport, a key role in the shift towards a sustainable transport system.

However, due to the current economic and geopolitical situation, a certain degree of uncertainty prevails, especially regarding the further development of Euro-Asian rail freight transport. In this context, it is becoming increasingly important to explore alternatives, for example via the so-called central corridor, using the instruments of COTIF in particular.

Cross-border high-speed and night train traffic is expected to bring at least a portion of air traffic back to the railways. Over the past decades, liberalisation and technical harmonisation in the railway sector have brought about a new impetus and new business models.

Digitalisation is vital for the further development of cross-border rail transport. Multimodal ticketing in passenger transport and digital automatic coupling can be cited as examples.

The political will to make the necessary investments in the largely outdated infrastructure and in railway rolling stock is there. However, comprehensive plans need budgetary backing and, wherever possible, they must be laid down in high-level legislation.

New instruments to lower costs, such as those offered by the Luxembourg Protocol concerning railway rolling stock, are thus becoming increasingly urgent.



## Continuity with the 2022-2023 Work Programme

Many themes of the new work programme are linked to proposals from recent years. This continuity is important, as OTIF's work is oriented towards the long-term.

The further development of good legal conditions for international rail transport is and remains an ongoing task.

## Complementarity with the future long-term strategy

It is anticipated that OTIF's work programme will be complemented with a new long-term strategy in the future. Its development is explicitly required in the corresponding mandate of the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

Consequently, the objectives in the work programme will have to be aligned with the strategic objectives defined in the long-term strategy and specific, quantifiable measures will have to be proposed to achieve them.

## Key decisions of the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

OTIF's specific activities are still largely determined by key decisions adopted by the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in September 2021. This is particularly the case for decisions concerning the Secretariat's financial and staff resources.

## Flexible working methods

The Secretariat has put in place flexible working methods, satisfying the needs of both OTIF and its staff. Important experience has been gained during COVID-19, but also in the course of OTIF's relocation.

The same goes for the format of meetings: whenever possible, OTIF's meetings are organised as physical meetings. However, pragmatism and flexibility are necessary with regard to remote participation, both for financial reasons and in the spirit of sustainability by eliminating the need to travel.

# PROMOTE AND ADMINISTER COTIF ITSELF AND UNIFORM RAIL CONTRACT LAW



**Aleksandr Kuzmenko**  
*Head of Legal Department*

COTIF itself (or the Base Convention) established OTIF and constitutes the core of OTIF's institutional system. The latter is established with the aim of managing and developing uniform railway law. OTIF's institutional law regulates the Organisation's legal status, aim, organs and their procedures, financing, budget, dispute settlement (between Member States and between Member States and the Organisation), membership and the depositary, etc.

The appendices to COTIF constitute uniform railway law for international railway transport among OTIF's members. Appendices A (CIV UR), B (CIM UR), D (CUV UR) and E (CUI UR) lay down international railway contract law in the form of binding Uniform Rules for various railway contracts for international transport by rail, respectively:

- the contract of international carriage of passengers by rail;
- the contract of international carriage of goods by rail;
- the contract of use of vehicles in international rail traffic;
- the contract of use of infrastructure in international rail traffic.

The General Assembly and the Revision Committee share competence with regard to modifying the Convention itself and its appendices (except Appendix C to COTIF). However, implementation and application of the rules in force within the Organisation must be monitored and assessed. Moreover, as a result of monitoring and assessment and/or of new demands or requirements, the existing legal instruments might be modified or supplemented.

At its 15<sup>th</sup> session, in accordance with Article 13 § 2 of COTIF, the General Assembly established, for a three-year period (2022-2024), an ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation. Without prejudice to the competence of the organs referred to in Article 13 § 1 of the Convention, it was decided that “the ad hoc Committee’s mandate shall be:

- a. to prepare draft amendments or supplements to the Convention;
- b. to provide legal advice on its own initiative or at the request of the organs referred to in Article 13 §§ 1 and 2 of the Convention or at the request of organs established by them;
- c. to promote and facilitate the functioning and implementation of the Convention;
- d. to monitor and assess legal instruments;
- e. to take decisions on cooperation with other international organisations and associations, including establishing and dissolving consultative contact groups with other international organisations and associations and monitoring the functioning of contact groups.”

At its 1<sup>st</sup> session on 9-10 November 2021, the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation adopted its Work Programme for 2022-2024. The Work Programme reflects three areas of activity: legal affairs, international cooperation and the long-term strategy. The area of legal affairs is the central area of activity and includes: a) monitoring and assessment of legal instruments and b) legal advice. The Work Programme is ambitious and it is obvious that it will not be completed in this three-year period and that the work should continue subsequently. However, the ad hoc Committee will complete its current mandate in spring 2024 and report to the ordinary session of the General Assembly in autumn 2024. Consequently, the General Assembly will be invited to consider extending the mandate.

The Legal Department will continue to ensure substantive secretariat functions for the General Assembly and Revision Committee with regard to COTIF itself and its Appendices A (CIV UR), B (CIM UR), D (CUV UR) and E (CUI UR), and for the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation.

## 1. Monitor and assess OTIF legal instruments

The monitoring and assessment of legal instruments in accordance with Decision OTIF-21002-AG 15 is a cross-cutting priority for the Organisation in the area of institutional law and uniform railway law.

The Legal Department will monitor and assess implementation of the Convention, primarily its incorporation into the respective legal orders of OTIF members. The main objective is to assist OTIF members in fulfilling their international obligations and to ensure that COTIF, including all the modifications that have entered into force at international level, is also properly incorporated into national legal systems.

With regard to monitoring and assessing application of OTIF's legal instruments, in particular COTIF itself and uniform rail contract law, such activities should be carried out in the framework of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, with the participation of the registered stakeholders whenever appropriate. The Legal Department will continue to support the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation by providing the necessary background analysis and collecting data.

However, particular legal instruments or specific provisions thereof to be monitored and assessed should be determined by the ad hoc Committee. Taking into account the state of implementation of the 2022-2024 Work Programme of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, it can be assumed that monitoring and assessment in the following areas will be continued or started after 2024:

- the digitalisation of international transport, particularly freight transport documents;
- bill of lading;
- liability for loss or damage caused by a vehicle (Article 7 of the CUV UR);
- movement of empty wagons;
- arbitration;
- database of case law and bibliography;
- suspension and termination of COTIF and/or membership of OTIF with regard to a particular Member State.

## 2. Perform 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. Among other things, the Secretary General's depositary functions include receiving and keeping custody of any instruments and notifications relating to COTIF, such as

- ratifications;
- declarations/reservations;
- withdrawals of declarations/reservations;
- approvals of modifications to the Convention adopted by the General Assembly;
- applications for accession to COTIF;
- notifications of railway lines and maritime and inland waterway services to be subject to the CIV/CIM legal regime etc.

To a certain extent, the performance of these functions includes the impartial exercise of control and supervision. In so doing, the Secretary General has followed the practice of the Secretary-General of the United Nations as the Depositary of multilateral treaties. His own practice as Depositary was summarised and published in the “Guidelines on treaty acts under COTIF. The Secretary General of OTIF as the depositary of COTIF” of 20 November 2017, with subsequent updates.

Under COTIF, any State which is a party to a convention concerning international through carriage of passengers and goods by rail comparable to the CIV UR and CIM UR may, when it makes an application for accession to the Convention, declare that it will apply CIV UR and/or CIM UR only to carriage performed on a part of the railway infrastructure (i.e. railway lines) situated on its territory (see Article 1 § 6 of the CIV UR and Article 1 § 6 of the CIM UR) . This part of the railway infrastructure must be precisely defined and connected to the railway infrastructure of a Member State. Afterwards, Member States may include new railway lines or delete them by sending the Secretary General notification concerning the inclusion or deletion of such part of the railway infrastructure. Such railway lines of a Member State are included by the Depositary in two lists: the [CIV list of railway lines](#) and the [CIM list of railway lines](#).

Member States may extend application of the CIV UR and/or CIM UR to maritime and inland waterway services when international carriage being the subject of a single contract includes carriage by sea or transfrontier carriage by inland waterway as a supplement to carriage by rail. The prerequisite for applying the CIV UR and/or CIM UR to maritime and transfrontier inland waterway services is the inclusion of these services in the [CIV list of maritime and inland waterway services](#) and [the CIM list of maritime and inland waterway services](#).

At its 13<sup>th</sup> session, the General Assembly instructed the Secretary General to assist the Member States, upon request and whenever possible, in the accomplishment of national procedures that are necessary with regard to modifications adopted by the General Assembly.

On behalf of the Secretary General, the Legal Department will perform depositary functions with regard to COTIF itself and Appendices A (CIV UR), B (CIM UR), D (CUV UR) and E (CUI UR). In particular, the Legal Department will:

- continue updating the Guidelines on treaty acts under COTIF whenever necessary;
- continue to contact OTIF members that have not yet approved the modifications adopted by the General Assembly at its 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> sessions in order to expedite the process and provide assistance where necessary;
- revise and restructure the CIV and CIM lists of maritime and inland waterway services and the CIV and CIM lists of railway lines in order to make them easier to manage and use, while ensuring legal certainty.

### 3. Promote and support the implementation and application of OTIF law

The Legal Department will continue to promote OTIF law at bilateral and multilateral meetings by raising awareness and, whenever possible, by organising special events for this purpose. The Legal Department will also support the implementation and application of OTIF law by providing assistance in its interpretation.

In the case of complex legal questions concerning the interpretation of OTIF law, the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation would be consulted. However, the Legal Department will continue to support the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation by providing the necessary background analysis and data collection.

### 4. Promote and assist accession to COTIF

Uniform international railway law ensures legal certainty and reduces costs, thus facilitating international trade and movement of passengers. OTIF's aim is to promote, improve and facilitate, in all respects, international traffic by rail among states, irrespective of their political, legal or economic system.

Enlarging OTIF's membership will benefit existing members and acceding states. The promotion of accession to COTIF and the provision of assistance to interested states and regional economic integration organisations is therefore an ongoing priority for OTIF (e.g. the objective of accession to COTIF set out in Memoranda of Understanding with relevant state authorities or international organisations).

The Legal Department will continue to provide legal advice and assistance on the procedure for accession to COTIF and promote accession to COTIF at various international meetings. Moreover, it will assist interested states and regional economic integration organisations in the implementation of COTIF itself and Appendices A (CIV UR), B (CIM UR), D (CUV UR) and E (CUI UR).

## PROVISIONAL PLANNING

6<sup>th</sup> session of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation  
**16-18 April 2024**

16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
**24-26 September 2024 (legal tasks)**

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> sessions of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation  
**spring and autumn 2025 (if the General Assembly extends the ad hoc Committee's mandate).**

# CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE SAFETY IN THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS



**Jochen Conrad**  
*Head of Dangerous Goods Department*

Like the Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR) and the European Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterway (ADN), the Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID) is revised every two years. This ensures a relatively quick adaptation to the current state of science and technology.

The ongoing development of RID takes place in several stages. First of all, every two years RID is harmonised with the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, which are developed by the UN Sub-Committee of Experts. In parallel, the work of the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting takes place, whose task is to develop harmonised dangerous goods provisions for all the land transport modes (rail, road and inland waterways). The rail-specific requirements are defined by the RID Committee of Experts and its standing working group.

## 5. Consider global developments in all modes of transport

### 5.1 UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

The United Nations Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods develops global recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods, which are then carried over by the competent international organisations into the dangerous goods regulations for the various transport modes (sea, air, rail, road, inland waterway). In 2024, this Sub-Committee will conclude work on the 24<sup>th</sup> revision of the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. The OTIF Secretariat takes part in the work of this Sub-Committee in an advisory capacity. In 2025, this Sub-Committee will start work on the 25<sup>th</sup> revision of the UN Recommendations, which will then come to fruition for rail transport in the 2029 edition of RID.



In order to carry over the amendments from the UN Recommendations, the Joint Meeting set up a working group whose task is to draft proposals on how the amendments adopted for the UN Recommendations can be integrated into RID/ADR/ADN. At a three day meeting in April 2025, this working group will draft a proposal on the basis of a draft to be prepared by the UNECE and OTIF Secretariats to carry over the amendments adopted by the UN Committee of Experts in December 2024 into the 2027 edition of RID/ADR/ADN. This means that detailed discussions at the Joint Meeting can be avoided.

## 5.2 Common dangerous goods provisions for land transport

The RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting develops the dangerous goods provisions that apply jointly to all the land transport modes (rail, road and inland waterways). The OTIF Secretariat's RID Department provides the Secretariat for the Joint Meeting, together with the Secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Transport Division.

A total of five weeks of meetings have been planned for the 2024-2025 biennium of the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting, starting with the spring session in 2024. Decisions the Joint Meeting takes in this biennium will be reflected in the 2027 editions of RID, ADR and ADN. Each year, more than 50 official documents published in OTIF's three working languages and in Russian, and around 100 informal documents, which are usually made available in English only, must be dealt with.

The OTIF Secretariat's RID Department also participates in an advisory capacity in the meetings of WP.15, the UNECE body responsible for the further development of the provisions concerning the carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR). The decisions of WP.15 must also be applied in domestic transport in the EU Member States in the context of EU Directive 2008/68/EC on the inland transport of dangerous goods.

## **6. Update the dangerous goods regulations on an ongoing basis, taking into account technical and scientific progress**

The rail-specific dangerous goods provisions are developed by the RID Committee of Experts and its standing working group.

The provisions for the international carriage of dangerous goods by rail are continuously amended, and must also be applied in domestic transport in the EU Member States in the context of EU Directive 2008/68/EC on the inland transport of dangerous goods. Provisions adopted by the RID Committee of Experts therefore take effect well beyond OTIF and also ensure the significance of the Organisation for the whole sector. The RID Committee of Experts only meets once every two years in order to approve the decisions of its standing working group. The next session is planned for May 2024, where all the texts for the 2025 edition of RID will receive final approval.

The standing working group, which prepares the RID Committee of Experts' decisions, will hold one two-day and two one-week meetings in the 2024-2025 biennium. The two-day meeting in May 2024 will conclude the work for the 2025 edition of RID and the one-week meetings in November 2024 and November 2025 will discuss provisions that are specific to the railways and which will enter into force in 2027. After the meeting in November 2025, where the focus will be on examining the amendments adopted by the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting for the 2027 edition, there will be coordination between the Member States of the European Union and the results of this will be taken into account in the concluding meeting of the RID Committee of Experts in 2026.

## 6.1 RID 2025

The 2025 edition of RID, which will be decided at the RID Committee of Experts' meeting in May 2024, will include the following new points, among others:

- a. Inclusion of ten new UN numbers and the associated conditions of carriage

- *Sodium-ion batteries and sodium-ion batteries contained in equipment or packed together with equipment*

- Sodium-ion batteries are a cost-effective alternative to lithium-ion batteries because the raw material sodium is available in practically unlimited quantities. Although they have a lower energy density and a lower power output than lithium-ion batteries, they are safer because they can be carried in a deep-discharged state, which has a significant influence on the heat release rate and thus on the thermal stability of a battery during carriage.

In principle, the same packing instructions, the same special provisions and the same marking and labelling provisions should apply to sodium-ion batteries as to lithium batteries. The use of danger label 9A, which is currently used for lithium batteries, will be extended to sodium-ion batteries for this purpose. However, in order to take account of the reduced risk posed by sodium-ion batteries, a new special provision has also been included, which contains conditions under which the other provisions of RID/ADR/ADN do not have to be applied (e.g. carriage in short-circuited condition).

As several large companies and some small start-ups have announced that they intend to start mass production of sodium-ion batteries, a multilateral special agreement has been initiated, which allows these new provisions to be applied already.

– *Vehicles powered by lithium batteries or sodium-ion batteries*

New UN numbers will be provided for light vehicles powered by lithium metal, lithium-ion or sodium-ion batteries, such as e-bikes, e-scooters and e-skateboards. The former UN No. 3171 now only applies to vehicles and equipment powered by wet batteries, batteries containing metallic sodium or batteries containing sodium alloys and carried with these batteries installed.

As the hazard posed by these vehicles is the same as that posed by lithium batteries and sodium-ion batteries, they must be labelled with a danger label according to model 9A. However, the vehicles are not subject to the marking and labelling provisions of Chapter 5.2 if they are not completely enclosed in packagings that prevent easy identification. The use of packagings that have not been design type tested is permitted. Parts of the vehicle may be removed from the frame so that they fit into the packaging better. The exception to this is the battery, which must remain in the vehicle.

– *Fire suppression dispersing devices*

Fire suppression dispersing devices are articles containing a pyrotechnic substance intended to spray a fire-extinguishing agent (or aerosol) when activated and which do not contain other dangerous goods. These new types of fire extinguishing systems offer significant advantages over traditional extinguishing systems, e.g. improvements in space and weight. Aerosol systems are also being used in areas where fire protection was previously considered to be prohibitively expensive.

These systems are also preferred because compared to other fire suppression alternatives, they do not have environmental or safety disadvantages in occupied spaces. Consequently, these devices are already being used in buses, trains, HGVs, ships and planes, electrical operating rooms, server rooms and data centres, and in dangerous goods storage facilities. Because they are particularly effective in combating lithium battery fires, they are also used in battery storage systems (e.g. UN 3536) and as an additional safety device in packagings in which lithium batteries, especially those which are damaged or defective, are carried. Some electric vehicle manufacturers are also considering using them in e-cars.

– *Tetramethylammonium hydroxide (TMAH)*

Tetramethylammonium hydroxide (TMAH) is mainly used in the semiconductor and display manufacturing industry. It is used as a main substance in developers for photolithography and is one of the most critical substances in the microchip manufacturing process. As such, every microchip and Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) or Organic Light Emitting Diode (OLED) display is manufactured using TMAH. In these applications, TMAH is most commonly shipped as a simple aqueous solution containing only water and TMAH in varying concentrations generally ranging from 2.5% to 25%.

TMAH is an ammonium compound used in the chemical industry in solid form and as a solution. According to the literature, TMAH has alkaline, corrosive properties that can cause skin burns and systemic neurotoxic effects that can lead to respiratory failure and cardiac arrest. In the literature, 37 incidents can be found in which people were exposed to different concentrations of TMAH. In four incidents, contact with TMAH resulted in death.

As the current classification of TMAH in RID/ADR/ADN does not reflect the acute toxic properties of the substance, information relating to the TMAH content will be introduced in the descriptions of the UN numbers currently used. A new UN number will be assigned to tetramethylammonium hydroxide, aqueous solution containing at least 25% TMAH, with the risk of toxicity as the primary risk and the risk of corrosivity as a subsidiary risk. A special provision indicates that instead of strictly applying the classification criteria, this substance has been classified and assigned to a packing group on the basis of experience with incidents involving humans.

– *Disilane*

Disilane is a pyrophoric (spontaneously combustible) liquefied gas under pressure which is spontaneously flammable in air. This gas, which belongs to the group of silicon hydrogens, is used in industry to coat products with silicon and to clean silicon-containing wafers (base plate for electronic components). At present, this substance is carried under a collective entry, which, however, does not take into account the pyrophoric properties of disilane, which is particularly important for air transport, as pyrophoric substances may not be carried in either passenger or cargo aircraft.

– *Articles containing gallium*

Mercury is a silvery-white heavy metal that is liquid at room temperature. It is a corrosive substance with the subsidiary risk of toxicity. In fact, it was the subsidiary risk of toxicity that led to numerous regulations at national and international level, with the result that mercury was used much less.

Gallium is also a silvery-white metal that has a corrosive effect on some other metals. Some gallium-based alloys are liquid at room temperature and are suitable as an alternative to mercury in various applications. Examples are gallium thermometers or gallium UV lamps.

The new UN number allows the same exemptions to be applied that currently apply to articles containing mercury. This means that the previously applicable stricter provisions for an overall less hazardous substance no longer apply.

b. Use of recycled plastics material

The use of recycled plastics should also be further expanded in the production of dangerous goods packagings to take account of global initiatives to limit the negative impact of human activities on the environment (e.g. the European Commission's "Green Deal", the United Nations goals relating to the circular economy and sustainable development).

The definition of recycled plastics material in RID will be amended so that not only plastics from industrial packaging whose origin and use are very well known, but also plastics from packaging whose origin and use are less well known, e.g. from household collections, may be used. Particular emphasis will be placed on ensuring that each batch of recycled plastics material has a homogeneous composition with properties within the prescribed specification range. A quality assurance programme must record which plastics the recycled plastics material was obtained from. It must also be known how and for which filling substances these plastics were previously used.

c. Carriage of waste containing dangerous goods

The provisions of RID are not always suitable for the carriage of waste containing dangerous goods. A working group is drafting various exemptions that are intended to facilitate the carriage of waste in practice without lowering the general level of safety. These exemptions concern, for example, the carriage of waste by private individuals, the chemical compatibility of plastics packagings containing liquid waste, the carriage of waste in inner packagings packed together in an outer packaging and the carriage in bulk of certain categories of waste containing asbestos.

#### d. Carriage of molten aluminium

Aluminium is carried from smelters to processing plants, particularly those of the automotive industry, in a molten state in order to avoid having to reheat the cooled metal, which is energy-intensive. The melting point of aluminium is about 660°C. Insulated containers – so-called vats – with a refractory lining are used for transport. Because of its high temperature, molten aluminium is considered as dangerous goods. According to the applicable provisions of RID, the conditions for the carriage of molten aluminium are determined in each case by the competent authority of the country of origin of the transport operation.

As molten aluminium is now also carried across borders, it was decided to dispense with different national regulations and to include detailed provisions in RID for the construction, testing and marking of vats. For example, the insulation of the vats must ensure that the surface temperature does not exceed 130°C. It must be impossible for people to touch the vats under normal conditions of carriage.

#### e. Extra-large tank-containers

Extra-large tank-containers are tank-containers which have a capacity comparable to that of tank-wagons. Owing to their high mass, these tank-containers cannot be carried by road when full. Some issues relating to extra-large tank-containers were already resolved in the 2023 edition of RID. The provisions for the design of extra-large tank-containers and of carrying wagons for the carriage of these tank-containers, which are to facilitate free operation in marshalling yards with hump-shunting, are yet to be developed. In so doing, the acceleration values measured in the risk analysis of extra-large tank-containers must be taken into account.



## 6.2 RID 2027

As the 2027 edition of RID will not be finally adopted until 2026, it is not yet possible to make any detailed statements on the amendments. However, the following topics are already being considered.

- a. At the request of the industry, degrees of filling of between 20 and 80% should also be permitted for partially loaded tank-containers carried exclusively by rail. As part of a research project, the effects of surge movements on driving stability are to be investigated first. In particular, various conditions, such as the geometry of the route, the speed, the tank design type, viscosity of the substance and the interaction of transverse to longitudinal surge would be considered.
- b. The Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE) is an ad hoc working group whose aim is to contribute to the legal development of RID and general technical railway law in such a way that they are free from contradictions. In the context of the work of this ad hoc working group, the few technical requirements for wagons for the carriage of dangerous goods are to be removed from RID and transferred to the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs) and the Uniform Technical Prescriptions (UTPs) of Appendix F to COTIF. RID itself should only contain protective aims. A workshop organised by the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), in which both dangerous goods experts and experts in railway technology took part, drafted proposals as to how this reorganisation of the technical requirements might look. After a final decision in the competent committees of OTIF (RID Committee of Experts and Committee of Technical Experts) and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), implementation of this reorganisation is expected for the 2027 edition of RID.
- c. At present, valves, pressure relief devices and manholes for all types of portable tanks are made of metallic materials. Particularly when carrying corrosive substances, these devices have a shorter service life than the shell. In the future, fibre-reinforced plastics (FRP) will also be used for the service equipment of portable tanks.

- d. RID contains definitions of aerosols and gas cartridges used for the carriage of gases. Neither means of containment are refillable. Based on technical developments in recent years, better distinguishing features between these two types of receptacles must be sought, which, according to current knowledge, will be based on the design of the gas extraction device.
- e. As part of the energy transition that aims to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels and the emission of carbon dioxide, propane and butane of biological or renewable origin are increasingly being used to produce liquefied petroleum gas. In addition, the LPG industry has started to include dimethyl ether of renewable origin as a blending component of LPG. These developments mean that the classification provisions for LPG need to be revised.
- f. Hydrogen plays an important role in the decarbonisation of energy systems. There are various possibilities for the carriage of hydrogen. One possibility is to bind the hydrogen molecules to an organic carrier substance. The advantage of this type of transport is that it can be carried out at normal pressure and temperature. Safety during transport is significantly increased by the low flammability of the carrier substance. The provisions for the carriage of hydrogen need to be adapted to take into account the various transport options.

## **7. Facilitate the transport of dangerous goods beyond the scope of COTIF**

Since the beginning of the millennium, there has been close cooperation between the OTIF Secretariat's RID Department and the Committee of the Organisation for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD), with the aim of ensuring harmonisation between RID and SMGS Annex 2, the dangerous goods legislation of the OSJD Member States. This cooperation leads to considerable simplification of dangerous goods transport between these two legal regimes.

In order to further this harmonisation, the OSJD Member States are also invited to the meetings of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group. In return, the RID Department can take part in an advisory capacity in all meetings of the OSJD Commission on the development of SMGS Annex 2 and its working groups. As the working languages of the OSJD Committee (Chinese and Russian) and the OTIF Secretariat (German, English and French) are not the same, since 2015 RID has been translated into Russian and made available on OTIF's website.

Almost all the amendments adopted for RID are also integrated into SMGS Annex 2, and enter into force six months later.

## **8. Promote the application of RID in non-contracting States**

States which are not RID Contracting States are also recommended to apply the provisions of RID. The OTIF Secretariat's RID Department takes part in various events aimed at promoting the application of RID in states bordering the Mediterranean.

Information on the contents of RID must also be provided regularly in those states which are interested in acceding to COTIF. Currently, the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Republic of Moldova and China have expressed interest in acceding to COTIF. In connection with these accessions, solutions must be sought as to how the circumstances in these countries can be taken into account.

## **PROVISIONAL PLANNING**

**RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting  
Berne, 25 to 28 March 2024**

**17<sup>th</sup> session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group  
Berne, 27 and 28 May 2024**

**58<sup>th</sup> session of the RID Committee of Experts  
Berne, 29 May 2024**

**7<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE) (jointly organised with the TECH Department)  
Berne, 4 September 2024**

**RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting  
Geneva, 9 to 13 September 2024**

**18<sup>th</sup> session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group  
19 to 22 November 2024**

**Ad hoc working group on harmonising RID/ADR/ADN with the UN Model Regulations  
three days in April 2025**

**RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting  
Berne, one week in March 2025**

**8<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE) (jointly organised with the TECH Department)  
Berne, one day in September 2025**

**19<sup>th</sup> session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group  
one week in November 2025**

# PROMOTE SAFE TECHNICAL INTEROPERABILITY:

## from the exchange of vehicles to the truly international operation of trains



**Bas Leermakers**

*Head of Technical Interoperability Department*

Railway networks have been optimised primarily to meet domestic needs, leading to a lack of compatibility for international operations. Consequently, most international traffic still requires train reconfiguration at border crossings. Some rudimentary but important efforts towards harmonisation were made in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the “Technische Einheit im Eisenbahnwesen” (Technical Unity in Railways) of 1882. These rules aimed to facilitate the mutual acceptance of freight wagons for international traffic among participating states, and served as the technical and legal predecessor to OTIF’s Uniform Technical Prescriptions (UTPs) of today.

To enhance railway efficiency and avoid disruptions at border crossings, it is imperative for national rail systems to align and interconnect comprehensively. This means that seamless border crossing must be ensured, not only of wagons and passenger coaches, but also of locomotives and complete trains, allowing them to operate internationally. A key precondition for achieving this is the mutual acceptance of all types of rolling stock in international traffic, which is the core objective of the APTU and ATMF UR. Moreover, railway undertakings should in future be capable of operating their trains across multiple states on the basis of the EST UR.

The Committee of Technical Experts, with secretarial and substantive support from OTIF’s Technical Interoperability Department, addresses these challenges and establishes a legal framework for more integrated and efficient railway networks to better serve international transport by rail.

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## 9. Harmonise technical requirements and maintain compatibility with EU law

The Committee of Technical Experts adopts detailed provisions on the basis of the APTU UR and the ATMF UR. For railway material, the APTU UR specify the procedure for the validation of technical standards and the adoption of UTPs. For vehicles, the ATMF UR specify the procedure for their admission to circulation or use in international traffic. On this basis, Member States mutually accept vehicles and certificates and other evidence of compliance related to these vehicles.

The Committee of Technical Experts updates the provisions regularly in order to take account of practical experience and technical progress. The Committee of Technical Experts is also competent to declare equivalence, in railway safety terms, between provisions in the UTP and the corresponding EU rules of the European Union (EU) contained in Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs).

It is noteworthy that the EU is establishing a 'Single European Railway Area' (SERA), with the aim of effectively doing away with all obstacles to the crossing of borders between the EU Member States. The European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) has been assigned the role of a central authority. It performs centralised functions, with the competence to issue vehicle authorisations, issue safety certificates to railway undertakings and manage registers.

In contrast to SERA, COTIF is a treaty between sovereign states parties and is in principle implemented and enforced at national level. COTIF applies to international traffic only. OTIF does not have a central authority. The Secretary General and the OTIF Secretariat have no direct role in the implementation of COTIF in the Member States or in the application of COTIF by railway actors. Nevertheless, at the request of Member States, the Secretary General and the OTIF Secretariat can provide guidance and advice concerning the application of COTIF.

At the time of writing, 25 of the 43 states that apply the APTU and ATMF UR are also members of the EU. In 2011, the EU acceded to COTIF and bound itself in accordance with the accession agreement. The technical interoperability provisions of COTIF are based on EU law and are compatible with EU law. This compatibility is essential for both non-EU vehicles used in the EU and for EU vehicles used outside the EU. At the same time, the provisions of COTIF should also be appropriate and suitable for traffic between two or more non-EU OTIF Member States.

OTIF is involved in the development of TSIs and other EU provisions that are aligned with the provisions of COTIF. Firstly, staff from the OTIF Secretariat participate in ERA working groups and in the European Commission's Railway Interoperability and Safety Committee (RISC). Secondly, ERA and the European Commission present relevant developments in EU law at sessions of the OTIF working groups. Thirdly, before finalising legal proposals, ERA, with help of the OTIF Secretariat, consults non-EU OTIF Member States on these proposals and gives them the opportunity to provide feedback. Lastly, non-EU assessing entities and certification bodies are invited to participate in cooperation meetings with their EU peers.

As a result of these different levels of involvement, the non-EU OTIF Member States can remain informed and provide their views on the development of interoperability and safety rules in the EU. This involvement is very important, as many of the EU rules will serve as a basis for the development of technical rules in COTIF.

## 10. Develop the technical interoperability regulations in accordance with agreed principles

In accordance with the decision taken by the Committee of Technical Experts at its 15<sup>th</sup> session (13-14 June 2023) the following principles should underpin further development of the technical provisions of COTIF:

1. Harmonisation of the technical provisions of COTIF, which also include requirements related to procedures and operations, is most useful if it is implemented over the widest possible geographical scale. It is therefore worthwhile attracting new Contracting States. The provisions of COTIF should make sense and be of use in different geographical areas and between states which may have different legal systems. The structure of different railways also differs, ranging from competitive open-access structures to fully integrated state monopolies. COTIF should build a bridge between these differences.
2. Compatibility between the technical provisions of COTIF and the provisions of EU law is an important aim, as is the continued mutual acceptance in international traffic of vehicles that comply with either COTIF or EU provisions.

3. States may choose the level of interoperability suitable for them, i.e. the border crossing of vehicles only or of complete trains. The technical provisions of COTIF should cater to requirements at all levels and should therefore be appropriately flexible. However, this also justifies the development of far-reaching interoperability provisions for use only between states which wish to facilitate the interoperability of complete trains.
4. Compatibility with EU legislation must be maintained. This does not mean that all aspects can be taken over, as the provisions must fit within the general scope of COTIF. For example, elements from EU legislation linked only to market opening, either for services or for products, should not be taken over, as there is no basis for them in COTIF.
5. When revising existing provisions, possibilities for simplification adapted to the scope of COTIF should be considered. This simplification should not affect the acceptance of vehicles in international traffic, including traffic to and from the EU.
6. The technical provisions of COTIF should be attuned to the possible accession of regional economic integration organisations which meet the conditions of Article 38 of COTIF. Provided the relevant conditions are met, these organisations should be able to enjoy similar legal relations with the technical provisions of COTIF as the EU currently enjoys.
7. Any proposal for modification of provisions that regulate legal relations with regional economic integration organisations, such as Article 3a of the ATMF UR, should be accompanied by an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. No existing functionality should be lost.
8. The provisions related to vehicles should consist of:
  - o Prescriptive rules to ensure interoperability, whilst offering maximum freedom of design to allow innovation.
  - o Technical solutions, whose application is optional, for vehicles suitable for free circulation in international traffic. This primarily concerns, but is not limited to, “go everywhere” freight wagons and interchangeable passenger coaches.

## 11. Keep regulations relating to the APTU UR updated

As of 1 January 2024, there are fourteen UTPs in force. Six concern general provisions, relating, for example, to assessment procedures, the definition of subsystems and the qualification of assessing entities. Eight UTPs lay down requirements related to vehicles, infrastructure, telematics applications, train composition and route compatibility checks.

UTP abbreviation	Subject	Date of entry into force of latest version	Amendments anticipated in 2024/2025
UTP GEN-A	Essential requirements	1.12.2017	No
UTP GEN-B	Subsystems	1.6.2019	No
UTP GEN-C	Technical file	1.12.2017	No
UTP GEN-D	Assessment procedures (modules)	1.10.2012	No
UTP GEN-E	Assessing entity - qualifications and independence	1.1.2024	No
UTP GEN-G	Common safety method on risk evaluation and assessment (CSM RA)	1.1.2024	No
UTP WAG	Freight wagons	1.1.2022	Yes (2024 and 2025)
UTP LOC&PAS	Locomotives and passenger rolling stock	1.1.2022	Yes (2025)
UTP NOI	Rolling stock noise	1.4.2021	Yes (2024)
UTP MARKING	Vehicle marking	1.4.2021	Yes (2025)
UTP PRM	Accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility	1.1.2022	Yes (2025)
UTP TAF	Telematics applications for freight services	1.1.2023	Yes (2025)
UTP TCRC	Train composition and route compatibility checks	1.1.2022	Yes (2024)
UTP INF	Infrastructure	1.1.2022	Yes (2025)



In 2023, the EU adopted revised versions of several TSIs and further revisions are expected for 2024 and/or 2025. These revised TSIs will be used to draft proposals to update the OTIF UTPs accordingly. The UTPs should be revised in the following order of priority:

- Those relevant to freight wagons (UTPs WAG, Noise);
- Those relevant to the use of vehicles in international traffic (UTPs TCRC, Marking);
- Those relevant to locomotives and passenger rolling stock (UTPs LOC&PAS, PRM);
- Telematics applications (UTP TAF);
- Other (UTP INF).

The sequence for publishing revised TSIs should be taken into account, i.e. if a TSI on a subject with a lower priority (as per the list above) becomes available, it could be dealt with without delay, rather than waiting for a TSI with a higher priority to be completed.

The work to update the application guides and explanatory documents for various UTPs, which started in 2022, should continue.

## 12. Keep the ATMF UR updated

As of 1 January 2024, there are four sets of legal provisions in force that have their basis in the ATMF UR.

Title	Date of entry into force of latest version	Amendments anticipated in 2024/2025
Annex A to ATMF, concerning the rules for certification and auditing of Entities in Charge of Maintenance (ECM)	1.4.2021	No
Annex B to ATMF, concerning the requirements and procedure for derogations from application of UTP(s) related to a structural or functional subsystem	1.1.2023	No
Uniform formats of certificates which verify the technical admission of a vehicle or of a type of vehicle according to Article 12 § 1	1.12.2012	No
Specifications for vehicle registers in accordance with Article 13 of ATMF	1.4.2021	Yes (2025)

The EU is expected to modify its rules concerning the centralised European Vehicle Register. In this context, the Committee of Technical Experts should seek possibilities that facilitate the international search and retrieval of vehicle data from the vehicle registers.

The original version of the ATMF UR was established under the Vilnius Protocol of 3 June 1999, and entered into force in 2006. Subsequently, the ATMF UR were substantially modified in 2010, 2015, 2019 and most recently in 2023. These modifications were aimed, among other things, at ensuring compatibility with EU law. All modifications were based on the initial version, which had been drafted in the 1990s. Since then, several articles have been modified and new articles have been added. Based on the feedback and questions it has received, the Secretariat is of the view that the logical correlation between provisions has become difficult to oversee due to subsequent modifications. This may lead to apparent redundancies in the text, discrepancies in interpretation, and differences in the application of the rules, none of which are desirable.

In this context, it may be useful to revise the ATMF UR to rationalise their structure and content, without modifying their aims and principles. To this end, initial discussions on the substance should take place at the Committee of Technical Experts. Such discussions are not expected to take place before 2025. It is worth noting that the Committee of Technical Experts does not have the competence to adopt changes to the ATMF UR. The consideration and adoption of such changes are within the remit of the Revision Committee and the General Assembly. However, the latter will take place outside the timeframe of this Work Programme.

### 13. Develop annexes to the EST UR

In September 2018, at the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, a new Appendix H to COTIF was adopted, entitled the EST Uniform Rules. Entry into force of the EST UR is still pending approval by two-thirds of the OTIF Member States. It is not possible to predict when these approvals will take place. Once this required approval is obtained, it will take approximately another year for the provisions to enter into force.

While COTIF traditionally deals mainly with international railway traffic that is based on the exchange of vehicles at border stations, the EST UR will provide the legal basis to support interoperability and safety in terms of complete trains crossing borders. This type of operation has the potential to improve the efficiency of rail transport hugely by reducing transit times and costs as a result of limiting the number of stops and organisational interfaces.

The General Assembly recommended that the Committee of Technical Experts prepare proposals for annexes to the EST UR before the EST UR enter into force. The proposals could then be adopted by the Committee of Technical Experts without delay after the EST UR enter into force. The Committee of Technical Experts acted accordingly, by preparing and considering draft Annexes, as shown in the table below.

Title	Subject	Draft text considered by CTE in
Annex A	Common Safety Method for safety management system requirements	2022
Annex B	Common Safety Method on monitoring	2022
Annex C	Harmonised procedures for issuing Safety Certificates	2023
Annex D	Common Safety Method on supervision	2024

The development of Annex D to the EST UR, which is planned for 2024, will finalise the drafting of all the Annexes to the EST UR. Once the EST UR enter into force, formal adoption of the Annexes will be placed on the agenda of the Committee of Technical Experts.

## 14. Monitor and assess implementation of the APTU and ATMF UR

In 2022 the Committee of Technical Experts concluded its first step in monitoring and assessing the implementation of the APTU and ATMF UR by Contracting States. It focussed on how Contracting States implemented the provisions in national law and whether they established authorities and entities required for applying the rules.

In 2023, the Committee of Technical Experts initiated the second step, which also involves sector associations and assessing entities. The results of this second step are expected to be discussed in 2024.

In 2025, a third step may be considered if deemed relevant and necessary. The scope and focus of this third step, if taken, would be determined based on the outcomes of the previous phases and the evolving needs of the APTU and ATMF UR implementation process.

## 15. Ensure compatibility between RID and the UTPs

Experts in the field of RID and experts in the field of interoperability and safety are cooperating in the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE). The JCGE convenes once yearly. Representatives from Member States as well as sector associations are invited to the sessions.

The objective of JCGE is to promote alignment between RID and the technical interoperability provisions, in particular the vehicle provisions of the UTPs and the corresponding TSIs of the EU. The main actions for the time frame of this work programme are:

- To remove vehicle construction requirements from RID and replace them with high-level safety objectives.
- To include vehicle-related provisions in the UTP and TSI concerning freight wagons to comply with the high-level safety objectives set out in RID.
- To ensure that RID is compatible with the specifications of the (future) digital automatic coupler (DAC) and that DAC is compatible with the requirements of RID.

JCGE cannot itself take binding decisions but may advise the respective Committees to amend RID or the UTPs.

## PROVISIONAL PLANNING

16<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee of  
Technical Experts  
**June 2024**

52<sup>nd</sup> session of the working group  
Technology  
**June 2024**

7<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Coordinating  
Group of Experts  
**September 2024**

53<sup>rd</sup> session of the working group  
Technology  
**September 2024**

54<sup>th</sup> session of the working group  
Technology  
**November 2024**

17<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee of  
Technical Experts  
**June 2025**

55<sup>th</sup> session of the working group  
Technology  
**June 2025**

8<sup>th</sup> session of the Joint Coordinating  
Group of Experts  
**September 2025**

56<sup>th</sup> session of the working group  
Technology  
**September 2025**

57<sup>th</sup> session of the working group  
Technology  
**November 2025**

# ENSURE THAT THE SECRETARIAT FUNCTIONS PROPERLY AND THAT THE MEMBER STATES ARE PROVIDED WITH AN EFFICIENT SERVICE



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

2024 and 2025 will be another two very busy years for the Administration and Finance Department.

The renovation project, which began in 2022, will enter its implementation phase in 2024. The renovation work will continue until the second quarter of 2025.

The Luxembourg Protocol on Matters specific to Railway Rolling Stock to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment will enter into force at the beginning of 2024.

From 2024 therefore, the Administration and Finance Department will be responsible for preparing and organising the sessions of the General Assembly, the Administrative Committee and the Supervisory Authority provided for in the Luxembourg Protocol.

## 16. Renovation of OTIF's building and change management

### Objective 1: Completion of the headquarters renovation work in 2025

#### Background:

Preparatory work to clean up the site and protect the works of art, as well as demolition and dismantling work, will be carried out in the last quarter of 2023.

The renovation work itself, including the structural work, will begin in earnest in 2024.

#### Description:

The work on renovating the OTIF headquarters building will be financed by the reserve fund (20%) and by a loan from the Swiss Confederation (80%). The loan from the host state will be granted through the Foundation for Buildings for International Organisations (FIPOI) and will be evidenced by the signing of a contract between OTIF and FIPOI in early 2024.

In practical terms, OTIF will receive the loan in successive instalments as the work progresses. To this end, the Administration and Finance Department will produce a quarterly progress report as a basis for calls for funds.

The implementation phase of the works can be broken down into two stages: completion of the structural work by the third quarter of 2024, and completion of the work, including the finishing work, in the second half of 2025.

With regard to the planning, regular meetings with the client assistant and the general planner will be continued to monitor the progress of the project and anticipate any problems that might arise.

It is up to the client, i.e. OTIF, to take delivery of the building on completion of the work. The project team will be assisted by the client assistant and the general planner in carrying out the pre-acceptance checks on the building, before signing the acceptance report with or without reservations. This report is particularly important as it marks the start of the warranty periods (two-year and five-year).

The Administration and Finance Department, which is responsible for the smooth running of the building, will collect all the project documentation in order to proceed with the formal closure of the project. It will incorporate the building data modelling tool used by the general planner during the project to monitor the work and maintenance of the building in the future.

**Expected result:**

Loan contract with FIPOI signed in 2024. Acceptance of the renovated, sustainable, accessible, standards-compliant building, in accordance with the specifications, by the end of the second quarter of 2025.

**Objective 2: Change management****Background:**

Moving the staff back into the building and returning the archives of the Organisation's Secretariat to the headquarters must be planned and organised. The staff will need to reclaim the new working spaces or perhaps even acquire new skills. Up to now, only the meetings of WG TECH, which were held in a single language, i.e. without interpretation, were held at the headquarters building. From 2025, with the extension of the conference room, the meetings of other OTIF organs can be held there.

**Description:**

Once the renovated building has been accepted, the Secretariat will be able to move back into the building. For a smooth transition, the Administration and Finance Department will be able to rely on the experience gained when relocating the Secretariat into the temporary offices in Gümligen in 2023.

The Member States will also see a change once the meetings of OTIF's organs, with the exception of the General Assembly, can be held at the headquarters building. The session of the Administrative Committee in November-December 2025 might be the first meeting with interpretation in the new conference room.

In addition, the new features of OTIF's building after the renovation (managing maintenance with the BIM tool, managing the conference room, welcoming people and ensuring security in a building open to the public, etc.) will mean that some staff members, including those in the Administration Department, will need to acquire new skills.

**Expected result:**

Staff will return to the renovated building in the third quarter of 2025. First meeting of the OTIF organs in the conference room in the last quarter of 2025.



## 17. Secretariat of the General Assembly and Administrative Committee

### Objective 1: Preparation of the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

#### Background:

The General Assembly, which is made up of all the OTIF Member States, meets every three years. The next session will take place in September 2024.

#### Description:

The Administration and Finance Department provides the secretariat functions for the General Assembly and Administrative Committee.

The Administration and Finance Department will therefore be in charge of preparing and organising the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly. The Administration and Finance Department's work programme for 2024 is arranged around this priority.

The 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly planned for September 2024 will in particular have to elect the Secretary General for the period from 2025 to 2027, validate the strategic direction and set the Organisation's ceiling of expenditure for the next few years.

The General Assembly will also designate the members of the Administrative Committee for the period from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2027.

Only one session of the Administrative Committee is planned in 2024. For the first time however, this session will be followed by the "candidates' forum", a new feature introduced in the Regulation concerning the election and conditions of service of the Secretary General of OTIF, which was adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

The rules of the Regulation on the election and conditions of service of the Secretary General of OTIF and the associated application measures adopted at the 137<sup>th</sup> session of the Administrative Committee will be applied for the first time in 2024. This concerns, for example, the ad hoc committee responsible for checking the admissibility of applications and the publication on OTIF's website of the list of candidates and Member States that have submitted an application, which will have to be done before the date of the General Assembly.

There will be two more sessions of the Administrative Committee in 2025.

**Expected result:**

Sessions of the General Assembly and Administrative Committee organised to delegates' satisfaction. Productive "candidates' forum" in May 2024, followed by the election of the Secretary General by the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in September 2024.

## 18. Secretariat of the Supervisory Authority of the International Registry of railway rolling stock set up under the Luxembourg Protocol

**Objective 1: Set-up and functioning of the secretariat of the Supervisory Authority**

**Background:**

In line with the decision of the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, OTIF will take over the role of the secretariat of the Supervisory Authority of the International Registry of railway rolling stock set up under the Rail Protocol to the Cape Town Convention, referred to as the Luxembourg Protocol.

Article 3 § 1 of the draft Rules of Procedure of the Supervisory Authority sets out the requirement for an annual general meeting.

**Description:**

As with the secretariat functions for OTIF's General Assembly and Administrative Committee, the Administration and Finance Department will be responsible for organising meetings of the Supervisory Authority and the Commission of Experts, preparing reports, working documents and minutes of meetings, etc.

The secretariat functions also include participating in meetings with other bodies, such as the Commission of Experts responsible for assisting the Supervisory Authority, the Ratification Task Force, the Revision Committee that is responsible for assessing and updating the rules on affixing the URVIS number, and in meetings with UNIDROIT and the Rail Working Group in order to monitor draft ratifications, as well as periodic meetings with the Registrar, etc.

As the Supervisory Authority is made up of Member States and non-Member States of OTIF, the link to the various people responsible and experts nominated by the Supervisory Authority still has to be established. 2024 will be the first year in which the secretariat functions of the Supervisory Authority and establishing this link will be fully exercised. At the time of writing, the dates of the second and third meetings of the Supervisory Authority in 2024 and 2025 are not yet known.

**Expected result:**

A meeting of the Supervisory Authority and working documents for the meeting sent out within the deadline. Assessment and adjustment, if necessary, after the first year of acting as the secretariat of the Supervisory Authority. Design a tool to monitor expenditure separate from that of the OTIF Secretariat, for reasons of transparency.

## 19. Financial management

### Objective 1: Control of expenditure

#### Background:

There is a significant increase in the Secretariat's provisional budget for 2024 approved by the 137<sup>th</sup> session of the Administrative Committee, compared with expenditure in 2022. At the same time, a large number of Member States are preparing for an economic context of budget restrictions for 2024.

As a result, controlling the Secretariat's expenditure is an ongoing objective.

#### Actions:

A significant part of the budget increase in 2024 is explained by the increased personnel expenditure and increased expenditure on the organs. While personnel expenditure is irreducible, expenditure on the organs offers room for manoeuvre, which can influence the level of annual expenditure and hence the Member States' contributions. As a reminder, expenditure on the organs includes interpretation fees, travel expenses and meeting room hire.

In order to achieve the objective of controlling expenditure, it is planned to generalise the use of tendering procedures. In 2024, the contract for interpretation services will expire. In addition, the Secretariat has been using the same travel agency to purchase flight tickets for more than ten years. Tendering for this service is being looked into.

It is then planned from 2025 that OTIF will start to repay the loan from the Swiss Confederation for the building renovation. Although the Swiss Confederation applies preferential interest rates for loans to international organisations that are carrying out renovation work, interest rates in Switzerland have increased as a result of inflation and this might have an impact on the cost of the loan.

The only way to reduce the amount of annual instalments to be repaid is to ensure that the costs of the renovation project are controlled and remain below the ceiling approved by the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

The Administration and Finance Department is involved in the tendering process for the works and will ensure that the lots are put out to tender to obtain the best bids. Amendments and modifications to the project will be controlled and documented to avoid surprises at the end of the works. It should be noted that the ceiling of expenditure approved by the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly applies to the 2024 budget. In September 2024, the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will set the budget expenditure ceiling for the period 2025-2030.

**Expected result:**

Compliance with the budget ceiling set by the General Assembly for recurring expenditure and for expenditure relating to the headquarters renovation project. Approval of the Secretariat's 2024-2025 two-year budget. Reservation-free audit of the Organisation's accounts.

## 20. Plan and manage human resources

**Objective 1: Revision of the Staff Regulations****Background:**

A study on the human resources requirements and conditions of service of the Secretariat staff was started in 2021.

This study has been split into two phases, as follows:

- Phase I: Study on conditions of service and social benefits.
- Phase II: Study of human resource requirements and in-depth analysis of the OTIF staff situation.

The final report with the recommendations of the external consultancy firm was submitted to the 137<sup>th</sup> session of the Administrative Committee, which took note of it. Some of these recommendations were implemented as early as 2023, with the two-year promotion plan approved by the Administrative Committee and the clarification of the legal framework for the recruitment of trainees, for example.

The Administration and Finance Department, which is responsible for human resources, will continue to implement the study's recommendations, including in particular the revision of the Staff Regulations.

**Actions:**

Phase 1 of the study concluded that the Staff Regulations need to be modernised in order to take account of changes in family structures and roles, but also to review certain provisions on social benefits that were creating inequalities.

The draft revised Regulations will have to take into account the recent decision to use inclusive language in legal texts under institutional law and in OTIF's general communication texts.

It is planned to set up a project team to work on this revision of the Staff Regulations, which will also examine the provisions of the Staff Regulations that need to be reworded or clarified. In view of the meetings and changes planned for 2024, which would have an impact on the length of the consultation and approval procedure (Staff Association, Administrative Committee), the revision project could be completed in 2025.

**Expected result:**

Revised draft Staff Regulations in 2025.

**Objective 2: Planning, alignment and continuous adaptation of human resources****Background:**

With regard to the assessment of resources, phase II of the above-mentioned study showed that there is no fundamental need to allocate additional staff, although some departments require more support (estimated at 0.5 full-time equivalents) during periods of high activity. This applies in particular to the Dangerous Goods Department, the Translation Department and the Administration and Finance Department. Outsourcing and using trainees might be an alternative.

The study aside, there is another risk concerning human resources: 25% of current staff will be in the 61 to 65 age bracket over the 2024-2029 period.

**Actions:**

The Secretariat must prepare for the future retirement of a significant number of staff over the period 2024-2029.

These are people with recognised expertise acquired over time. The transfer of knowledge with future incumbents must be ensured, especially as experience shows that the recruitment procedure for international posts varies to between nine and twelve months. Experience of the procedure to recruit a Senior Legal Adviser in 2022 shows that this period may be longer in the event of unsuccessful recruitment. As a reminder, under Article 47 of the Staff Regulations, staff may apply for retirement at the age of 60, giving three months' notice.

The Administrative Committee was informed of this risk at its 137<sup>th</sup> session. The Administration and Finance Department is working on the outline of a more effective recruitment strategy to attract a diverse range of talent.

**Expected result:**

Better awareness of vacant posts in the Secretariat. More quality applications meeting the minimum requirements. Diversity of applications, with candidates from states not represented in the Secretariat.

## PROVISIONAL PLANNING

139<sup>th</sup> session of the Administrative  
Committee  
**May 2024**

16<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly  
**24-26 September 2024**

140<sup>th</sup> session of the Administrative  
Committee  
**Spring 2025**

141<sup>st</sup> session of the Administrative  
Committee  
**Autumn 2025**

# PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY LANGUAGE SERVICES ON TIME



**Joana Meenken**

*Head of Translation Department*

## 21. Deliver high-quality translations on time

The particularity of OTIF as an intergovernmental organisation with three working languages and areas of work with very different linguistic and terminological features places high demands on the Translation Department. As a “cross-cutting” department that works with all the other departments of OTIF and all the organs of COTIF, the translators have to satisfy a diverse range of requirements: firstly, all the deadlines set down in COTIF, the Rules of Procedure and the internal planning have to be met, and secondly, translations and interpretation at the meetings of OTIF’s organs have to satisfy the linguistic demands of diplomatic, legal, technical and financial usage. Achieving this core task of the Translation Department, which accounts for a good 90% of the work, will - as in the past - also be the main priority over the next two years. Everything else is subordinate to this priority. Nevertheless, in the spirit of linguistic consistency, the two ongoing projects started in 2020 will also be continued. In addition, following the decision to use gender-neutral language in OTIF, the Translation Department will be mindful of the consistent application by the Secretariat of the guidelines it drafted and published in 2023 and will be entrusted with implementing this aspect in possible revisions of the texts of institutional law and in all other communication texts of OTIF.



## 22. Ensure good linguistic quality of all OTIF texts

### **Set up a common terminology database for the OTIF Secretariat**

This project was started in 2020 (see 2020-2021 Work Programme) and is systematically managed mainly by one staff member (terminologist) in the Translation Department, depending on the time available, so the terminology database is still an internal project of the Translation Department and has not yet been shared with the Secretariat.

Owing to the rapid technological developments since the beginning of the project, there are always new possibilities with regard to how the databases can be shared. The trend is clearly towards cloud-based solutions, where content can be uploaded to the cloud and shared with external users in just a few steps. One definite advantage of such a cloud-based solution would be that the terminology database could also easily be made accessible to the freelance translators who occasionally work for OTIF (see also the part on external cooperation).

It is planned to keep an eye on developments and to review the tools in terms of their advantages and disadvantages. Data security also plays a very important role of course, especially when you consider that an organisation's data, including its own terminology, is an asset that should not be underestimated.

In terms of content, both the general terminology database and the specialised RID terminology database, which was set up in 2020, will be permanently maintained and expanded over the next two years, as the basic prerequisite for publishing the terminology databases within the Secretariat is that they are correct in terms of content and form.

This is an ongoing project for which no specific timetable can be set, owing to the aforementioned limited human resources in the Translation Department and the many other priorities. As before, progress can be followed within the framework of the Annual Report.

### **Develop internal OTIF editorial rules**

Over the next two years, work will also continue on this ongoing project started in 2020.

Now that the special chapter on using gender-neutral language in OTIF has been completed in 2023 in the form of trilingual guidelines, the project can be returned to in general over the next two years.

## **23. Format of meetings and interpreting**

The push towards digitalisation over recent years cannot be reversed, and nor would such a step be desirable. On the contrary, the new technological possibilities offer OTIF and its members clear advantages in terms of organising their meetings.

After a period in which videoconferencing and hybrid events became the norm, the next two years will in all likelihood see an increasing return to meetings at which all participants are physically present. From the Translation Department's point of view, this is very welcome, as the sound and image quality in video conferences is often very poor and unstable.

## **24. External cooperation**

As a result of the Translation Department's steadily increasing workload over the last few years (see also Annual Reports from 2019 onwards), the contracts originally concluded for one year with external translators were renewed. The aim of these contracts is to create a flexible but stable form of cooperation under constant conditions and to enable OTIF to react at short notice to translation bottlenecks for individual languages.

It is planned to continue this very well-functioning cooperation. The reasons for this, as well as the pros and cons of this flexible solution, are listed below:

- The feedback received from the authors of texts and the Department's own experience with external cooperation are consistently positive;
- This flexible solution has proved to be suitable for OTIF's requirements. It enables OTIF to react to bottlenecks in a targeted manner. In addition, an analysis of the annual costs has shown that, compared to recruiting another translator on a permanent basis, this solution is less expensive. Moreover, as all three working languages are affected by the outsourcing and the Translation Department generally applies the mother tongue principle, the translations could not be done by a single person/new recruit anyway;
- Translation requirements vary considerably from one department to another and, in extreme cases, can quadruple from one year to the next for a meeting of a particular organ, so flexibility is an absolute must;
- However, the case of longer absences (illness, maternity, other unforeseeable reasons) must also be considered and covered.

# DEVELOP AND INCREASE AWARENESS OF OTIF



**Sarah Pujol**  
Communication Officer

The activities of the OTIF Secretariat's Communication Department are driven by several objectives, including in particular to spotlight the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF) and its appendices, to ensure that the Organisation's role is clear and to increase awareness of the Organisation.

## 25. Guidelines and framework of action

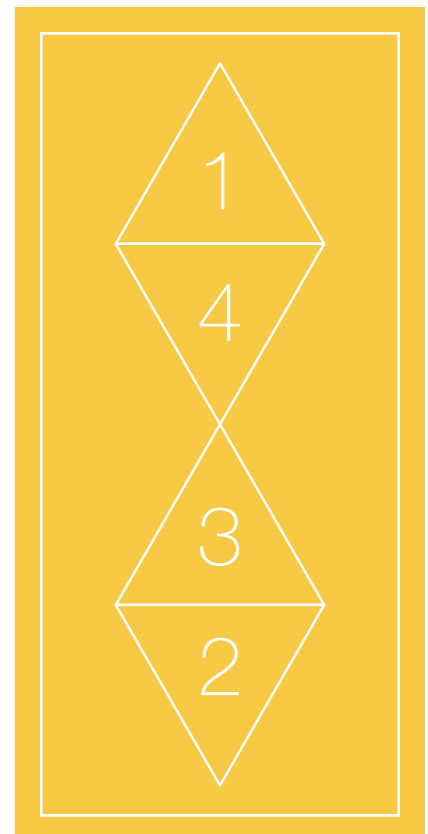
Four intangible principles guide the OTIF Secretariat's Communication Department. These principles are the guidelines for OTIF's communication plan:

- Ensure the consistency of messages and publications in terms of both content and presentation
- Develop a modern and contemporary image
- Ensure the frequency of messages
- Measure, evaluate and improve the communication tools

## ACTIONS FOR COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

- △ 1. ATTRACTIVENESS  
A modern image: website, videos, revamped publication design
- ▽ 4. MONITORING  
Measuring, evaluating, improving: monitoring tools, surveys, website
- △ 3. FREQUENCY  
Frequency of messages: maintain the rhythm of publications
- ▽ 2. CONSISTENCY  
Consistency of the image, messages and publications

## FOUR PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION



## 26. Ensure the hybrid presence of the Organisation: 360° dissemination

### **Digital communication tools**

Activity on social networks, development of the website and the creation and dissemination of videos are all ways of ensuring the Organisation's digital presence. In 2024 and 2025, the Communication Department will continue along the path defined in 2022: in motion.

In addition, the communication team will head up a substantive and cross-cutting project that will enable the Organisation to communicate even more effectively. It has been decided to set up a "contacts" database common to all departments in the OTIF Secretariat.

Lastly, quarterly publication of the Bulletin of International Carriage by Rail and the regular dissemination of press releases entitled "NEWS OTIF" will continue to be the preferred tools for the Organisation's regular presence for the entire rail sector.

### **Printed communication tools**

Depending on the requirements of the various departments in the Secretariat, the Communication Department will support the various requests and create printed communication materials.

The Organisation's headquarters building is being given a makeover. It will be completely modernised and in 2025, the teams of the Secretariat will be moving into completely renovated offices. At the same time, the Luxembourg Protocol will enter into force and the OTIF Secretariat will provide the secretariat of the Supervisory Authority. To reflect these lasting changes, the Organisation's presentation brochure will be revised and reissued.

### **Events**

In 2024 and 2025, a number of major events will punctuate the Secretariat's and the Organisation's activities. To mention only two of them, there will be the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly in 2024 and the inauguration of the new headquarters building in 2025. Both a source of ideas and support, the communication team will be deploying its expertise to ensure that these major events go off smoothly.

# 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

## **CIM**

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

## **CIV**

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

## **COTIF**

Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail

## **CUI**

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

## **CUV**

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

## **DAC**

Digital automatic coupler

## **DG MOVE**

Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport of the European Commission

## **ECM**

Entity in Charge of Maintenance

## **ERA**

European Union Agency for Railways

## **EST**

Uniform Rules concerning the safe operation of trains in international traffic

## **EU**

European Union

## **FIPOI**

Foundation for Buildings for International Organisations

## **GCC**

Gulf Cooperation Council

## **JCGE**

Joint Coordinating Group of Experts

## **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

## **RISC**

Railway Interoperability and Safety Committee

## **SERA**

Single European Railway Area

## **SMGS**

Agreement concerning International Freight Traffic by Rail (OSJD)

## **TMAH**

Tetramethylammonium hydroxide

## **TSI**

Technical Specification for Interoperability

## **UIC**

International Union of Railways

## **UN**

United Nations

## **UNECE**

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

## **UNIDROIT**

International Institute for the Unification of Private Law

## **UR**

Uniform Rules

## **UTP**

Uniform Technical Prescriptions

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**OTIF**

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Zwischenstaatliche Organisation für den internationalen Eisenbahnverkehr  
Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail

Gryphenhübelweg 30 CH - 3006 Berne

Tel. : + 41 (0)31 359 10 10 | Fax : + 41 (0)31 359 10 11 | [info@otif.org](mailto:info@otif.org) | [www.otif.org](http://www.otif.org)