

ANNUAL REPORT

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OTIF

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

Executive summary

This report reviews the activities of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) and its Secretariat in 2024, the first year of implementation of the 2024-2025 Work Programme, with an approach based on pursuing the objectives set out in the work programme and built around international cooperation.

The OTIF Secretariat continued its work on monitoring and adapting the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF).

Particular attention was paid to the Member States' implementation and application of the uniform rules, the main objective being to assist the Member States in their application of COTIF and to ensure that COTIF is properly integrated into the national legal systems. OTIF published three guides, on freight, dangerous goods and technical interoperability, to support application of the Convention.

The promotion of uniform railway law through accession to COTIF continued. It should be noted that Moldova became a member of OTIF in 2024, and that discussions started with Iraq to reactivate its membership.

Another noteworthy event in 2024 was the entry into force of the Luxembourg Protocol, which marked a turning point for OTIF, as the Organisation now acts as the secretariat of the Supervisory Authority, the body that oversees implementation of the Protocol.

With regard to the transport of dangerous goods by rail, the 2025 version of RID was adopted and notified, with major changes concerning recycled plastics and the transport of vehicles with batteries, for example.

With a view to increasing rail interoperability beyond the EU, a number of uniform technical prescriptions were amended in 2024, including the UTPs concerning wagons and noise.

Lastly, the renovation of OTIF's headquarters continued and the Secretariat continued to perform its duties: organisation of the meetings of the Member States, including the General Assembly in September 2024, high-quality and efficient translation and interpretation, modernisation and partial redesign of OTIF's website.

To sum up, in 2024 OTIF demonstrated its commitment to improving international rail transport by working on the legal framework, safety and technical interoperability, while ensuring the smooth running of the Secretariat.

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

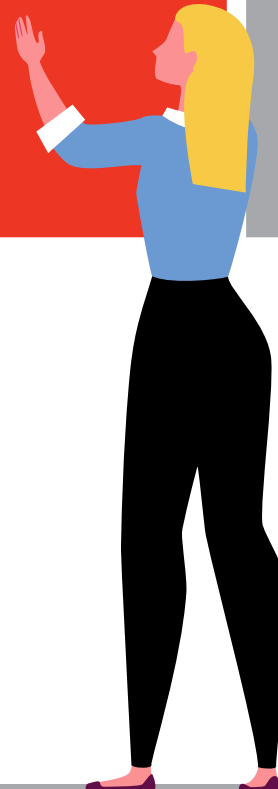
1. Monitor and assess OTIF legal instruments
2. Perform depositary functions
3. Promote and support the implementation and application of OTIF law
4. Promote and assist accession to COTIF

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

5. Consider global developments in all modes of transport
6. Update the dangerous goods regulations on an ongoing basis, taking into account technical and scientific progress
7. Facilitate the transport of dangerous goods beyond the scope of COTIF
8. Promote the application of RID in non-contracting states

**Promote safe technical
interoperability: from the
exchange of vehicles to
the truly international
operation of trains**

9. Harmonise technical requirements and maintain compatibility with EU law
10. Develop the technical interoperability regulations in accordance with agreed principles
11. Keep regulations relating to the APTU UR updated
12. Keep the ATMF UR updated
13. Develop annexes to the EST UR
14. Monitor and assess implementation of the APTU and ATMF UR
15. Ensure compatibility between RID and the UTPs



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

- 16. Renovation of OTIF's building and change management
- 17. Secretariat of the General Assembly and Administrative Committee
- 18. Secretariat of the Supervisory Authority of the International Registry of railway rolling stock set up under the Luxembourg Protocol
- 19. Financial management
- 20. Plan and manage human resources

Provide high-quality language services on time

- 21. Deliver high-quality translations on time
- 22. Ensure good linguistic quality of all OTIF texts
- 23. Format of meetings and interpreting
- 24. External cooperation

Develop and increase awareness of OTIF

- 25. Guidelines and framework of action
- 26. Ensure the hybrid presence of the Organisation: 360° dissemination

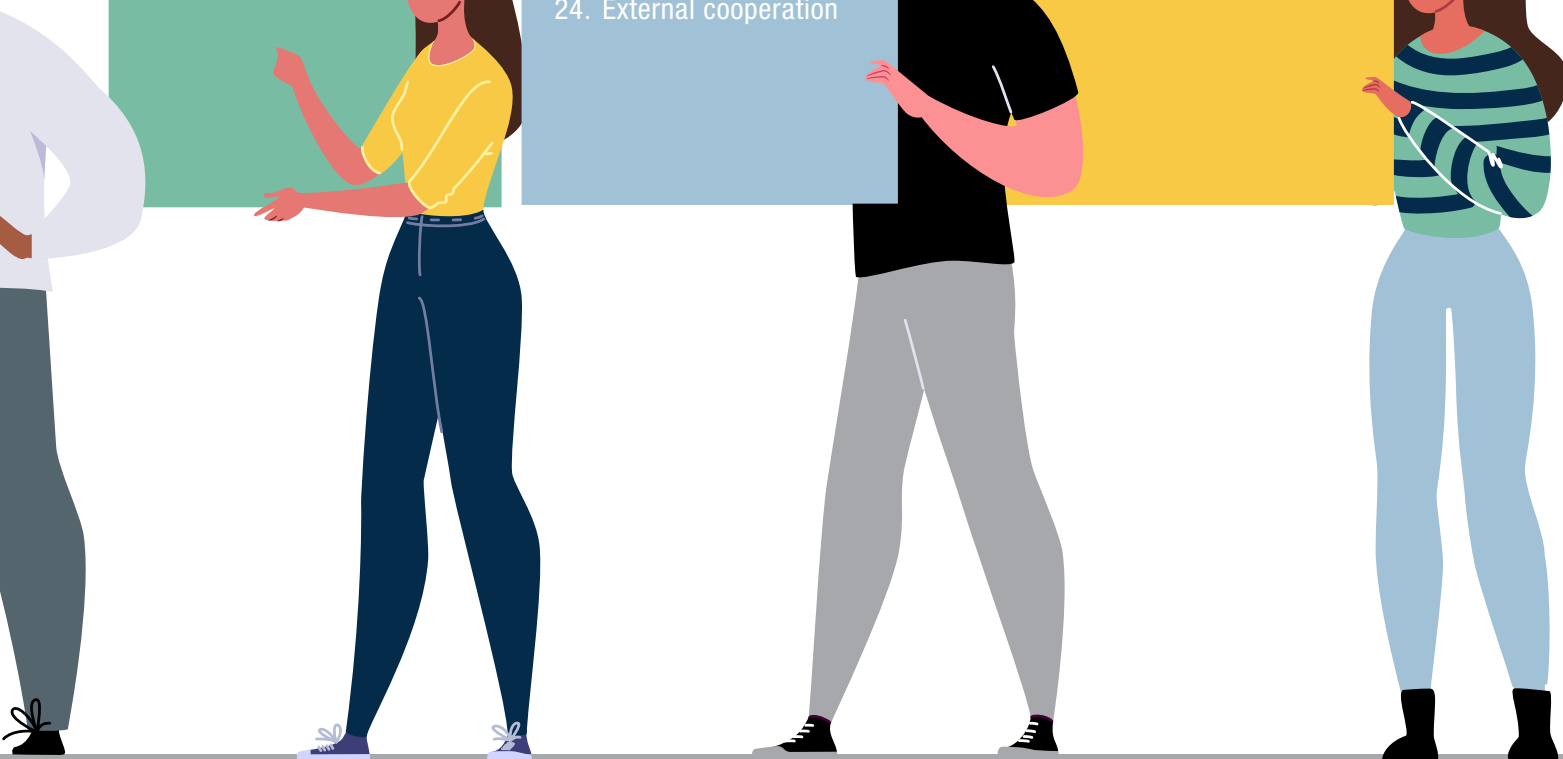


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List of abbreviations

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 UR

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 (Appendix F to COTIF)

ATMF UR

Uniform Rules concerning the Technical Admission of Railway Material used in International Traffic (Appendix G to COTIF)

CIM UR

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail (Appendix B to COTIF)

CIT

International Rail Transport Committee

CIV UR

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Passengers by Rail (Appendix A to COTIF)

COTIF

Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail

CS(s)

Contracting State(s)

CSM

Common Safety Method

CTE

Committee of Technical Experts

CUI UR

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of Use of Infrastructure in International Traffic (Appendix E to COTIF)

CUV UR

Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of Use of Vehicles in International Rail Traffic (Appendix D to COTIF)

ECM

Entity in Charge of Maintenance

ECO

Economic Cooperation Organization

ECOSOC

United Nations Economic and Social Council

ERA

European Union Agency for Railways

ERFA

European Rail Freight Association

EST UR

Uniform Rules concerning the Safe Operation of Trains in International Traffic

EU

European Union

FIATA

International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations

FIPOI

Foundation for Buildings for International Organizations

GCC

Gulf Cooperation Council

GEN

General Provisions

INF

Infrastructure

JCGE

Joint Coordinating Group of Experts

LOC&PAS

Locomotives and Passenger rolling stock

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSJD

Organisation for Cooperation between Railways

OTIF

Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail

PRM

Accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility

RID

Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (Appendix C to COTIF)

RISC

Railway Interoperability and Safety Committee

RNE

RailNetEurope

SMGS

Agreement concerning International Freight Traffic by Rail (OSJD)

TAF

Telematics Applications for Freight Services

TCRC

Train Composition and Route Compatibility Checks

TRACECA

Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia

TSI

Technical Specification for Interoperability (European Union)

UIC

International Union of Railways

UIP

International Union of Wagon Keepers

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

UNIDROIT

International Institute for the Unification of Private Law

UPU

Universal Postal Union

URVIS

Unique Rail Vehicle Identification System

UTP

Uniform Technical Prescription (OTIF)

WAG

Freight wagons

WG TECH

Working group Technology of the Committee of Technical Experts

Introduction

2024 marked both the first year of implementation of the 2024-2025 Work Programme and the adoption of OTIF's long-term strategy, entitled 'A single law for international rail transport'. This strategy, endorsed by the General Assembly at its 16th session, provides a clear, forward-looking framework for enhancing the Organisation's role in facilitating international rail traffic.

The achievements highlighted in this Annual Report were accomplished under the guidance of Wolfgang Küpper, the former Secretary General. The Report is therefore testament to his dedication and commitment to rail transport and to OTIF.

In 2024, OTIF continued to fulfil its core objective of promoting, developing and administering unified railway law to connect Europe, Asia and Africa. This included comprehensive railway contract law, the safe transport of dangerous goods and harmonised technical interoperability rules, all of which support seamless cross-border rail operations. As always, the success of these areas would not be possible without professional language services, ensuring that Member States receive documents and can work in any of the three working languages (French, German and English), effective communication that makes our work visible and, last but not least, effective financial and administrative management.

A key milestone in 2024 was the adoption of OTIF's long-term strategy, which outlines the Organisation's vision and mission and sets strategic objectives to guide the development of the Organisation, its organs, Secretariat, and overall governance in the years ahead. Another milestone was the start of the renovation of OTIF's building, ensuring that the Organisation has the necessary physical infrastructure to carry out its many tasks on behalf of its Member States and their railway sectors.

Vision: as an international forum, OTIF should play a central role to make rail transport the backbone of a sustainable and seamless international transport system.

Mission: promote, improve and facilitate, in all respects, international traffic by rail.

Five strategic objectives: (1) Ensure the effective and uniform application of OTIF law; (2) Expand the application of OTIF law over the widest possible geographical area; (3) Ensure that OTIF law remains relevant over time; (4) Enhance OTIF's leading role in international rail transport and contribute to finding synergies with other relevant international organisations and associations; (5) Contribute to the harmonisation and unification of international railway law systems.

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 Legal Department is responsible for legal and administrative matters relating to COTIF itself and Appendices A (CIV UR), B (CIM UR), D (CUV UR) and E (CUI UR). It supports implementation and application of the Convention, assists with accession procedures and performs depositary functions. In addition, the Department provides secretariat services for the General Assembly (partially), the Revision Committee (partially) and the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation. The Department also prepares and reviews amendments to COTIF, represents OTIF in external meetings and promotes OTIF law through various activities.

The Legal Department underwent significant changes in 2024. Ms Iris Gries, the Senior Legal Advisor, retired after many years of dedicated and professional service. Her contributions have been invaluable, and OTIF would like to thank her for her unwavering commitment and expertise. At the same time, OTIF was delighted to welcome two new members to the Secretariat: Mr Steve Davey, who joined as the Senior Legal Advisor, and Ms Emilia Carcabassi, who has taken on the role of Legal Advisor. Their expertise and fresh perspectives will undoubtedly strengthen the department as we move forward.

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.

Implementation of the Convention

The Legal Department continued to 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.

The ad hoc Committee was regularly informed of the progress made by the members of OTIF in approving the modifications to COTIF adopted by the General Assembly at its 12th and 13th sessions and, at its 16th session, the General Assembly urged OTIF Member States that have not yet approved the modifications adopted by the General Assembly at its 12th and 13th sessions to do so.

Application of OTIF's legal instruments

In the framework of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, with the participation of the registered stakeholders whenever appropriate, monitoring and assessing application of OTIF's legal instruments (in particular COTIF itself and uniform rail contract law) was undertaken. These activities were not limited to 2024, but build on the work of previous years and will continue to evolve in the years ahead. It is worth noting that the ad hoc Committee held only one session in 2024 and focused on consolidating the results of its three-year mandate before the 16th session of the General Assembly.

Liability for loss or damage caused by a vehicle (Article 7 of the CUV UR)

At the request of Switzerland, the Secretariat carried out a survey among the members of OTIF on the rules applicable in their internal law with regard to liability and insurance in the event of damage caused by a vehicle. The request stemmed from the rail accident that occurred in the Gotthard base tunnel on 10 August 2023.

At its 6th session, the ad hoc Committee considered a report summarising the responses to the survey. It should be noted that this survey is a preparatory step for future activities to monitor and assess the application of provisions on liability for loss or damage caused by a vehicle (Article 7 of the CUV UR).

Bill of lading

The topic of the 'bill of lading' was included in the work programme of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, taking into account the fact that the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the Organisation for Cooperation between Railways (OSJD) had started discussions on the necessity for and regulation of a bill of lading (a bill of lading is a transport document which is also a document of title) in railway transport. It should be noted that Article 6 § 5 of the Uniform Rules concerning the Contract of International Carriage of Goods by Rail (CIM UR) states that '[t]he consignment note shall not have effect as a bill of lading'. More importantly, other provisions on the delivery of goods, the right to dispose of goods etc. confirm that the CIM consignment note is not a document of title. However, at least for international railway transport between China and Europe, there is demand to facilitate trade and financial settlement by using transport documents which are documents of title.

In recent years, work on the bill of lading has focused on following developments in UNCITRAL and OSJD and on informing relevant stakeholders of possible conflicts and overlaps between new instruments and the CIM UR. The Secretariat participated in relevant UNCITRAL meetings. At the 6th session of the ad hoc Committee, UNCITRAL was represented and informed the ad hoc Committee of its work on negotiable cargo documents.

Authentic text of the Convention

In the context of monitoring and assessing the law and practice on the adoption, authentication, certified copies and publication of COTIF, it was concluded that taking into account the legal nature of COTIF 1999, in particular its application, it is necessary to ensure the consistency of the three language versions and consider attributing equal authority to the three language versions.

It should be recalled that Article 45 § 1 of COTIF provides that '[t]he Convention shall be expressed in the English, French and German languages. In case of divergence, the French text shall prevail.' In other words, this means that the authentic texts of the Convention are in the English, French and German languages. However, the French text prevails in case of divergences.

At its 6th session, the ad hoc Committee considered and approved proposals to modify Article 45 § 1 of COTIF and the corresponding Explanatory Report. The modifications to Article 45 § 1 of COTIF were not submitted to the 16th session of the General Assembly for adoption in September 2024, as the Revision Committee will have to examine them first. Following in-depth consideration, the ad hoc Committee, among other matters, noted that proposals are not urgent and therefore instructed the Secretariat to submit them to the next session of the Revision Committee for consideration when it is convened to consider other modifications to the Convention.

Suspension and termination of COTIF and/or membership of OTIF with regard to a particular Member State

Since 2022, the ad hoc Committee has been considering possible amendments to COTIF with the aim of introducing rules concerning the suspension and termination of COTIF and/or membership of OTIF with regard to a particular Member State. It developed basic regulatory principles to guide its further work and submitted them to the General Assembly for consideration. At its 16th session, the General Assembly approved the following basic regulatory principles to guide the work of the ad hoc Committee on the topic:

- sanctions for the breach of OTIF rules should only be imposed if expressly provided for by COTIF,
- the Convention should oblige Member States to respect [not to undermine] the physical and functional integrity of the rail infrastructure of other Member States,
- COTIF should not set out sanctions for a breach of international law in general,
- the General Assembly should be responsible for deciding whether the relevant rules have been breached,
- the General Assembly should decide on the application of sanctions, the restoration of rights and the readmission of expelled Member States by a qualified two-thirds majority of Member States represented at the time of the vote,
- a non-exhaustive list of circumstances precluding the wrongfulness of an act should be expressly included in COTIF,
- the readmission of expelled members should only be considered and accepted by the General Assembly under specific conditions, possibly only after a certain period of time (e.g. one year), and in any case only if the breach of OTIF rules that gave rise to the sanction is effectively rectified.

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.

In 2024, the Depositary issued depositary notifications concerning, in particular:

- approval of amendments to COTIF adopted by the General Assembly at its 13th session,
- accession to COTIF and accession to OTIF as an Associate Member,
- CIV and CIM list of maritime and inland waterway services,
- CIV and CIM list of railway lines.

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 and/or CIM list of maritime and inland waterway services.

In the past, the chapters of the Member States that had railway lines and maritime and inland waterway services in the respective lists only included lines and services that are in operation. The Secretariat carried out work to restructure the various chapters concerning the Member States. The advantage of the work undertaken is that it provides all the information available on the lines and services, whether it concerns registration or deletion, in a single chapter for the Member States and for all those who may consult it, in particular to determine the scope of application of the CIV UR or CIM UR. Moreover, the aim of the restructuring was also to simplify the presentation and make the lists easier to read and apply.

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

The Secretariat continued to promote OTIF law at bilateral (e.g. Türkiye) and multilateral meetings (e.g. UNESCAP and UNECE) by raising awareness. It also supported the implementation and application of OTIF law by providing assistance with its interpretation.

In addressing complex legal questions concerning the interpretation of OTIF law, the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation was involved. The ad hoc Committee dealt in depth with a number of important topics in 2024, which are worth reporting in more detail.

Use of electronic signatures in official communications between OTIF and its members

The ad hoc Committee examined the legal requirements for the use and acceptance of electronically signed documents in official communications between OTIF and its members. Following consideration of a corresponding inception paper by the Secretariat, the ad hoc Committee adopted the 'Recommendation on the use of electronic signatures in official communications between OTIF and its members', which was endorsed by the General Assembly at its 16th session. According to the recommendation, official communications between OTIF and its members should be divided into two categories:

- 'qualified' communications, which currently require original paper documents (instruments) that are signed by a pre-determined state authority attesting the intention of the state to be bound or expressing its official position,
- 'simple' communications, where scanned copies, e-mails and documents signed with electronic images of signatures are accepted.

Electronic signatures should be accepted for 'simple' communications only.

Legal protection of OTIF's name, abbreviation, logo and works

The ad hoc Committee examined the legal requirements to ensure legal protection of OTIF's name, abbreviation, logo and works and to determine measures to this effect. Based on an inception paper prepared by the Secretariat, the ad hoc Committee approved two draft proposals for decisions, one on the symbols, name and abbreviation of OTIF, and one on copyright and open access, as well as the corresponding explanatory notes. The decisions were adopted by the General Assembly at its 16th session.

The General Assembly formally adopted the symbols of OTIF and expressly delegated to the Secretary General the task of determining the conditions for their use. It should also be noted that the name, abbreviation and emblem (logo) of OTIF were registered with the Secretariat of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) under Article 6ter of the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property and communicated to the states parties to the Paris Convention and the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in March 2024.

With regard to the protection of OTIF's work and its copyright policy, the 16th General Assembly acknowledged the need to ensure the broadest possible awareness and use of OTIF's law and its works in general among OTIF members, as well as the need to retain appropriate control over them to prevent any adverse effects that could be caused by inappropriate use.

Handbook on COTIF and its implementation and application by international associations

The ad hoc Committee set the objective of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of international associations with regard to the implementation and application of COTIF, thus promoting and facilitating the uniform implementation and application of COTIF. Following the ad hoc Committee's instructions, the Secretariat's Legal Department, in cooperation with CIT, ERFA, RNE, UIC and UIP, prepared the 'Handbook on International Freight Transport by Rail (Contract Law and Operational Instruments and Tools)', which was published on 15 October 2024. The handbook outlines the railway law established by COTIF and describes the different roles and responsibilities of international associations supporting the application of COTIF in the day-to-day business of international rail transport. It should serve as a practical reference for OTIF members, states interested in acceding to COTIF and, primarily, their respective railway sectors.

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).

To promote accession to COTIF, the Secretariat continued to provide legal advice and assistance on the procedure for accession to COTIF.

52 states and one regional economic integration organisation are members of OTIF. 48 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. In 2024, Moldova successfully completed the accession process, becoming the newest OTIF Member State. The formal accession procedure, which began in 2020, was supported throughout by the Secretariat, providing active guidance and advice to ensure the completion of all formalities.

Additionally, the first exchanges regarding the requirements and conditions for Iraq to resume its membership of OTIF began in 2024, marking a significant step toward reintegrating Iraq into the Organisation.

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

The procedure for China's accession as an Associate Member began in 2024 and is expected to continue through 2025, with the aim of bringing the topic to an extraordinary session of the General Assembly in 2026.

International Cooperation

The achievement of OTIF's aim depends, among other things, on effective and efficient cooperation with relevant international organisations and associations. Most of them are either registered stakeholders or observers with standing observer status at the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation. In 2024, cooperation with the following international organisations and associations is worth mentioning (in alphabetical order of their acronyms and abbreviated titles): CIT, ECO, FIATA, GCC, OECD, OSJD, TRACECA, RNE, UIC, UNCITRAL, UNECE and UNESCAP.

Outlook for 2025

In 2025, a significant milestone anticipated for the year is the adoption of a new work programme for the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, which will define its activities for the next three-year period.

The ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation will hold its 7th and 8th sessions in 2025, as follows:

8-10 April 2025	7 th session
2-4 December 2025	8 th session

Quantitative results/data

7 February 2024	Memorandum of Understanding between OTIF and UNESCAP (signed)
16-18 April 2024	6 th session of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation
26 June 2024	Memorandum of Understanding between OTIF and UPU (signed)
25-26 September 2024	16 th session of the General Assembly
15 October 2024	Handbook on International Freight Transport by Rail (Contract Law and Operational Instruments and Tools) (published)

OTIF-24001-JUR 6	Recommendation on the use of electronic signatures in official communications between OTIF and its members
OTIF-24005-AG 16	Decision on permanent representatives
OTIF-24006-AG 16	Explanatory Notes on the decision on permanent representatives
OTIF-24007-AG 16	Decision on the symbols, name and abbreviation of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail
OTIF-24008-AG 16	Explanatory Notes on the decision on the symbols, name and abbreviation of the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail
OTIF-24009-AG 16	Decision on copyright and open access
OTIF-24010-AG 16	Explanatory Notes on the decision on copyright and open access

Three articles relating to legal developments were published in OTIF's Bulletin

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF SAFETY IN THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS



Jochen Conrad

Head of Dangerous Goods Department

The aim of the Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID) is to ensure safety during the carriage of dangerous goods and prevent accidents and damage to persons, property and the environment.

The Transport of Dangerous Goods Department is responsible for developing the Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail (RID - Appendix C to COTIF) and adapting it to the current state of science and technology. RID is fundamentally revised every two years to ensure that the regulations are up to date. To achieve this objective, the Transport of Dangerous Goods Department must organise closely-scheduled international conferences, for which it provides secretariat services. The department represents OTIF at external conferences and promotes the application of RID through various activities.

5. Consideration of global developments in all modes of transport

5.1 UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods

The UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods contain basic regulations, in particular on classification and packaging, which apply to all modes of transport.

The OTIF Secretariat attended the 64th (Geneva, 24 June to 3 July 2024) and 65th (Geneva, 25 November to 2 December 2024) sessions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods as an observer. The decisions taken at these meetings were adopted by the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals on 6 December 2024 and will feed into the 24th revised edition of the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UN Model Regulations). They will be carried over into the 2027 edition of RID in the context of harmonisation.

5.2 Common dangerous goods provisions for land transport

The RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting develops harmonised provisions for the carriage of dangerous goods by rail, road and inland waterways. The Secretariat for this meeting is provided by OTIF's Transport of Dangerous Goods Department in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Transport Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Delegates from more than twenty states and more than ten non-governmental organisations regularly take part in the sessions of the Joint Meeting. This reflects the importance attached to this area of law by both the Member States and the industry concerned.

In 2024, the Joint Meeting held two one-week sessions.

At the spring session in 2024, it was still possible to make a limited number of amendments to the texts that were intended to come into force in 2025. For example, the clarification requested in particular by the International Union of Railways (UIC) that the consignor is responsible for determining the so-called holding time could be adopted. The holding time must be determined when carrying refrigerated liquefied gases in tanks and is intended to prevent safety valves from being activated during transport as a result of the tank heating up. References to various revised versions of standards were also approved. The Joint Meeting also agreed to extend by two years a transitional measure for certain environmentally hazardous paint products assigned to UN number 3082, which would have expired at the end of June 2025. The reason for this special provision is that type-tested packaging, which is required for the transport of water-based paints and printing inks in quantities between 5 and 30 litres, is still not available. The packagings used for paints must be able to be opened and safely resealed several times in order to enable the tinting of water-based paints at point-of-sale locations (e.g. do-it-yourself stores) and the repeated use of ink concentrates when preparing colour-matched finished inks for printing facilities.

The meeting in autumn 2024 then dealt exclusively with the 2027 revision of RID/ADR/ADN. Among the numerous topics that will still be discussed, the following should be highlighted:

- provisions for pressure receptacles approved by the United States Department of Transportation with regard to their disposal in an RID/ADR/ADN Contracting State,
- possible exemptions for “last mile” transport from distribution centres or retail outlets to the end consumer,
- interpretation of the consignor’s obligation to appoint a dangerous goods safety adviser for each mode of transport in the case of intermodal transport,
- inclusion of provisions for heating equipment on RID/ADR tanks,
- matters in connection with tanks approved both as portable tanks and RID/ADR tank-containers,
- carriage of used articles, machinery and apparatus containing residues which cannot be removed for the intended carriage,
- various issues in connection with the carriage of waste,
- continuation of the informal working group on improving the report for occurrences in the transport of dangerous goods,
- continuation of the informal working group for the clarification of references to the competent authority in RID/ADR/ADN.

6. Constant updating of the dangerous goods regulations for rail taking into account scientific and technical progress

6.1 RID 2025

In the Transport of Dangerous Goods Department, the focus in 2022 was on the adoption and notification of the amendments to RID that entered into force on 1 January 2025 and publication of the 2025 edition of RID in all three working languages.

The 58th session of the RID Committee of Experts took place on 23 May 2024, at which all the amendments proposed at the 15th (Berne/hybrid, 23 and 24 November 2022), 16th (London, 20 to 23 November 2023) and 17th sessions of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group (Berne, 22 May 2024) for entry into force on 1 January 2025 were adopted.

The RID Committee of Experts, which was preceded by the 17th session of the standing working group with a preparation of the Joint Meeting's final decisions concerning the 2025 amendments (see objective 5.2), unanimously approved the proposed amendments. The notification texts were brought to the attention of the RID Contracting States on 24 June 2024 by means of a depositary notification. As no objection was lodged by the RID Contracting States, the amendments were able to enter into force as planned on 1 January 2025.

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 the EU Member States' national law.

RID 2025 contains amendments that were developed at different levels and in different time periods:

- decisions of the UN Sub-Committee of Experts in 2021 and 2022, in particular on issues of harmonised classification and packaging,
- decisions of the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting in 2022 to 2024 on the implementation of the decisions of the UN Sub-Committee of Experts and on the conditions of carriage for land transport,
- decisions of the RID Committee of Experts and its standing working group in 2022 to 2024 on railway-specific regulations.

RID 2025 contains the following innovations in particular, which clearly show the influence of technological progress on the development of regulations:

- *Recycled plastics material*: until now, recycled plastics used for new dangerous goods packagings could only be obtained from industrial packagings. Based on global initiatives to limit the negative impact of human activities on the environment (e.g. the European Commission's "Green Deal", United Nations goals relating to the circular economy and sustainable development), the use of recycled plastics in the production of dangerous goods packaging should also be further expanded. The aim is to reduce the amount of non-recycled new plastics and increase the proportion of recycled materials in production processes. In particular, in addition to plastics from used industrial packagings whose origin and use are very well known, other plastics, for example from household collections, may also be used for recycled plastics.
- *New UN numbers 0514 and 3559 for fire suppression dispersing devices*: fire suppression dispersing devices are aerosol extinguishing systems, which have significant advantages over traditional extinguishing systems, including improvements in space and weight. Aerosol systems are also being used in areas where fire protection was previously considered to be prohibitively expensive. They are also preferred because compared to other fire suppression alternatives, they do not have environmental or safety disadvantages in occupied spaces. These devices are already being used in various means of transport, 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 damaged or defective batteries, are carried. Some electric vehicle manufacturers are also considering using them in e-cars. Fire suppression dispersing devices are considered dangerous goods because they are usually activated by a pyrotechnic substance, which disperses a fire extinguishing agent (or aerosol).

- *New UN numbers 3551 and 3552 for sodium ion batteries:* sodium ion batteries are a cost-effective alternative to lithium ion batteries because the raw material sodium is much more readily available than lithium. 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 the battery during transport. These batteries have basically been assigned the same special regulations and packaging instructions that already apply to lithium metal and lithium ion batteries. As sodium ion batteries, unlike lithium batteries, can be carried in a short-circuited state, i.e. de-energised, an additional special provision also allows exemption from the provisions of RID.
- *New UN number 3553 for disilane:* disilane is a pyrophoric 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). Previously, this substance was carried under the collective entry UN 3161 Liquefied gas, flammable, n.o.s., which, however, does not take into account the pyrophoric properties of the substance.
- *New UN number 3554 for gallium contained in manufactured articles:* gallium is suitable as a substitute for mercury in many applications, e.g. in thermometers or UV lamps. Replacement for products containing mercury help to comply with the numerous regulations at national and international level aimed at reducing harmful mercury emissions. The new UN number 3554 has been assigned the same transport provisions and exemptions that currently apply to UN 3506 Mercury in manufactured articles. The new exemption option eliminates the illogical situation where stricter regulations apply to the less hazardous substance gallium than to the more hazardous substance mercury.

- *New UN numbers 3556 to 3558 for vehicles powered by lithium batteries or sodium ion batteries:* lithium batteries have led to many innovations in the mobility sector, such as e-bikes, e-scooters, e-skateboards and other lightweight vehicles. These vehicles were previously assigned to UN number 3171, which includes both battery-powered vehicles and battery-powered equipment. With the inclusion of the new UN numbers, the previous UN number 3171 will only be used for battery-powered vehicles and equipment powered by wet batteries, batteries with metallic sodium or batteries with sodium alloys. A packing instruction has been assigned to the new UN numbers, which also permits packagings that have not been type-tested and also allows transport without packagings under certain circumstances. 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, for safety reasons, must remain in the vehicle. Vehicles powered by sodium ion batteries, like sodium ion batteries, are exempt from the regulations if the batteries are short-circuited.

- *Bulk transport of waste containing asbestos:* at present, waste containing asbestos that is contaminated with free asbestos may only be carried in packaged form. Large quantities of solid waste containing asbestos are produced at many construction and civil engineering sites (e.g. during road milling work, demolition or renovation of buildings or the removal of soil contaminated with asbestos). It is very difficult to pack the quantities to be removed and the sometimes large fragments. In addition, the authorities responsible for occupational health and safety have determined that the risk of exposure due to the release of carcinogenic dust or carcinogenic fibres is higher when filling RID/ADR-compliant packagings than when loading in bulk. The carriage of various categories of waste containing asbestos in bulk is now authorised under certain conditions. For this purpose, a double-layered container bag made of polyethylene or polypropylene must be inserted into the loading space (e.g. removable skip) to ensure dust-tight closure during transport. The outer surfaces of the container bag must be decontaminated after loading and the container bag must be sealed. The container bag may only be moved together with the load compartment (e.g. the skip).

- *Carriage of waste in inner packagings packed together in an outer packaging:* combination packagings for the carriage of dangerous goods consist of an outer packaging and one or more inner packagings. Normally, outer packagings must undergo the prescribed inspections together with the intended inner packagings. In waste collection however, there is in most cases only an inner packaging and no outer packaging. The variety of inner packaging types produced during waste collection is far greater than the RID regulations allow. For safety reasons, it is also not realistic to transfer waste into inner packagings that have already been tested. In order to take account of the circumstances surrounding the collection of hazardous waste at waste disposal centres, certain simplifications are now permitted with regard to the insertion of various types of inner packaging into outer packaging. The outer packaging must meet the highest requirements prescribed in RID (packing group I) and must contain sufficient cushioning material to prevent movement of the inner packagings. If easily breakable inner packagings are used, absorbent material must also be used in the outer packaging. Placing the inner packagings into the outer packaging must be carried out by trained and competent personnel.

6.2 RID 2027

Various points have already been discussed at the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting, which are to be incorporated into the 2027 editions of RID, ADR and ADN (see point 5.2).

Rail-specific topics that have an impact on the 2027 edition of RID were discussed at the 18th session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group on 20 and 21 November 2024 in Madrid.

The standing working group discussed interpretation issues that will lead to an amendment to RID in 2027 and for which an explanation has since been published on OTIF's website.

In continuation of the discussion on transferring the technical requirements for wagons for the carriage of dangerous goods from RID to the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI) of the European Union's rail system or to OTIF's Uniform Technical Prescriptions (UTP) for railway material intended for use in international traffic, the standing working group was informed that the marking for special technical equipment provided for dangerous goods wagons should also be used for non-dangerous goods wagons. This applies in particular to the marking of wagons that are voluntarily equipped with systems that limit the consequences of a derailment or prevent a wagon from derailling.

The standing working group again discussed the orange band that must be affixed to tank-wagons for the carriage of liquefied, refrigerated liquefied or dissolved gases. With regard to the colour tone, reference is now made to a colour standard. In addition, it was determined that weather-related visual changes to the colour tone, in particular fading, are permissible. The standing working group also agreed that this orange band should also be prescribed for extra-large tank-containers. As this also requires an amendment to the Agreement concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), the RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting and the UNECE Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) will also deal with this issue.

The standing working group also examined a rail accident involving ammonia that occurred in Serbia on 25 December 2022, which resulted in a derailment and the release of large quantities of ammonia. The question of how safety could be improved when carrying ammonia was discussed. Ammonia is a toxic and flammable gas that can cause skin irritation, eye damage, respiratory problems and even death by asphyxiation. Ammonia is carried in large quantities and is required in particular for the production of fertilisers. There are also plans to use ammonia as a carrier substance for transporting hydrogen.

The 18th session of the standing working group was preceded by the 20th session of the working group on tank and vehicle technology, which dealt with the carriage of extra-large tank-containers in single wagon traffic and the question of whether carrying wagons with extra-large tank-containers may operate without shunting restrictions. RID contains basic requirements for the strength of tank-wagons and tank-containers and their fastening devices. As tank-containers are usually carried in train-load consignments, the current load assumptions are based on use with shunting restrictions in order not to exceed the acceleration value of 2g required by RID. Shunting restrictions are intended to ensure that impact speeds of more than 7 km/h do not occur. The working group came to the conclusion that there are basically two possible solutions. In the first solution, the previous requirement for 2g for the design of tank-containers in RID could remain unchanged. In this case, a note would have to be included in RID to the effect that the hump shunting of tank-containers designed for 2g, including extra-large tank-containers, is only possible with restrictions, i.e. only marshalling yards that use automatic retarders to ensure that the impact speeds do not exceed 7 km/h may be used. However, if the industry or state representatives insist that, like tank-wagons, extra-large tank-containers can be shunted without restriction, a design value of 3g would have to be specified in RID for extra-large tank-containers. In addition, the container carrying wagons and the fastening devices must be designed for 5g. Discussions on this issue will continue in 2025.

The working group on tank and vehicle technology was also informed about the status of a research project on the effects of surge movements in rail transport. The aim of the project is to gain a fundamental understanding of surge behaviour in rail traffic. Various conditions, such as the geometry of the route, the speed, the tank design, viscosity of the substance and the interaction of transverse and longitudinal surge are to be considered. The need for this research project arose in connection with the discussions surrounding extra-large tank-containers. As part of this discussion, the chemical industry expressed the wish to delete a provision from RID that stipulates a degree of filling of at least 80% or a maximum of 20% for tank-containers used exclusively in rail transport. As tank-containers are generally used intermodally, this provision was included in both ADR and RID in the past because it was considered necessary in road transport for safety reasons.

7. Facilitation of the transport of dangerous goods beyond the scope of COTIF

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 Cooperation between Railways). Apart from some European states, the majority of OSJD Member States are Asian. On the basis of the 2025 amendments to RID, SMGS Annex 2 was also amended and the amended version will enter into force on 1 July 2025.

In order to facilitate the carriage of dangerous goods in Russian-speaking states and to promote the application of RID in the Russian-speaking non-Contracting States (see also point 8), a non-official Russian translation of RID 2023 has been published on OTIF's website.

8. Promoting the application of RID in non-Contracting States

The OTIF Secretariat had decided to develop handbooks for the application and implementation of the various Appendices to COTIF to make it easier for interested States to accede to COTIF. The handbook on Appendix C to COTIF (RID) prepared by the Transport of Dangerous Goods Department was adopted by the standing working group with various additions and corrections and was published on OTIF's website.

Cooperation with other organisations

The OTIF Secretariat took part in the meetings of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (WP.15), the European Commission's Group of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the UIC Expert Group on the Transport of Dangerous Goods.

At an international seminar on waste management and the carriage of waste by rail organised by the International Rail Transport Committee (CIT) (Geneva, 7 May 2024), OTIF presented the amendments to RID that are intended to simplify the application of RID provisions to the carriage of hazardous waste.

At a workshop organised by the Transport Community (Riga, 10-12 December 2024), at which Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine were represented alongside the Western Balkan states, OTIF gave a presentation on the relationship between RID and the other international regulations for the transport of dangerous goods as well as the innovations in RID 2025.

Outlook for 2025

The RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting will continue its work on the 2027 editions of RID, ADR and ADN. First, an ad hoc working group on the harmonisation of RID/ADR/ADN with the 24th revised edition of the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods will meet in April 2025, and on the basis of a draft prepared by the Secretariats of OTIF and UNECE, will submit proposals to the Joint Meeting to carry over the amendments from the UN Recommendations. These are then to be adopted during the two-week Joint Meeting in September 2025.

The RID Committee of Experts' standing working group will hold a one-week meeting in November 2024, at which the majority of the amendments to RID planned for entry into force in 2027 are to be adopted. The standing working group will continue its discussions on the strength of extra-large tank-containers and the wagons for carrying these tank-containers, on the effects of surge movements in rail transport and on explosion protection when using digital automatic couplings. The RID Committee of Experts will then meet in May 2026 to approve formally all the amendments.

Quantitative results/data

25 to 28 March 2024	RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting, Berne
22 May 2024	17 th Session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group, Berne
23 May 2024	58 th Session of the RID Committee of Experts, Berne
10 to 13 September 2024	RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting, Geneva
24 October 2024	Publication of the Handbook on the Regulation concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail
1 November 2024	Publication of RID 2025
19 November 2024	20 th session of the RID Committee of Experts' working group on tank and vehicle technology, Madrid
20 and 21 November 2024	18 th session of the RID Committee of Experts' standing working group, Madrid

Active participation in various workshops on the transport of dangerous goods and the transport of waste
Six articles in the Bulletin of International Carriage by Rail, in which the legal amendments in RID are examined in more detail
Two articles in the Bulletin of International Carriage by Rail dealing with the transboundary movement of waste

PROMOTE SAFE TECHNICAL INTEROPERABILITY – FROM THE EXCHANGE OF VEHICLES TO TRULY INTERNATIONAL TRAIN OPERATIONS



Bas Leermakers

Head of Technical Interoperability Department

Appendices F (ATMF UR) and G (APTU UR), together with their UTPs, annexes, guidance and explanations, address the requirements, procedures and responsibilities related to the admission, maintenance and use of vehicles in international traffic. This is collectively referred to as technical interoperability. Additionally, technical interoperability includes matters in the scope of the future Appendix H (EST UR) concerning the safe operation of trains in international traffic.

The Technical Interoperability Department is responsible for all matters pertaining to the APTU, ATMF and EST UR. For this purpose, each year it organises a session of the Committee of Technical Experts and three sessions of its working group TECH. It drafts working documents for these meetings, including proposals to modify the legal provisions, and the subsequent depositary notifications related to these modifications. The department is also substantively responsible for the Revision Committee and General Assembly when these organs deal with technical interoperability. Within its scope of work, the Technical Interoperability Department represents OTIF's Secretariat externally, including in relevant meetings of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) and the European Commission.

9. Harmonise technical requirements and maintain compatibility with EU law

The Committee of Technical Experts may adopt Uniform Technical Prescriptions (UTPs) in accordance with its competences laid down in Article 20 of COTIF and in the APTU UR. UTPs lay down harmonised rules for the railway system.

In 2023, OTIF started revising most of the existing UTPs to reflect technical progress and to keep the UTPs aligned with the EU's Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs) that were revised in 2023. The Committee of Technical Experts divided the work into two stages, firstly by focussing on UTPs relevant to freight wagons and secondly by working on the remaining UTPs. In the meantime, several documents with guidance and explanations were also updated.

The first stage of revising the UTPs concerned the UTPs WAG, Noise and TCRC. The Secretariat prepared draft documents that were reviewed by WG Tech. The resulting proposals were adopted by the Committee of Technical Experts in June 2024. On 1 January 2025, these revised UTPs entered into force.

The second stage concerned revising the UTPs LOC&PAS, PRM, Marking and INF. In 2024, WG Tech reviewed the draft documents for these UTPs. These texts will be proposed for adoption by the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

Further details concerning the UTPs and other documents are provided below.

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

Objective 10 of OTIF's 2024/2025 Work Programme lists eight principles that underpin the further development of the technical provisions of COTIF, including UTPs. The Committee of Technical Experts discussed and agreed these principles in 2023.

The principles focus on the relevance and effectiveness of the rules in different contexts. They promote the widest possible geographical application of COTIF, while ensuring compatibility with EU law and allowing flexibility for different levels of interoperability. They also address the potential accession of regional economic integration organisations, in addition to the EU. Furthermore, the principles establish guidelines for vehicle-related provisions that balance interoperability with freedom of design and innovation. The Secretariat drafted all working documents in accordance with these principles.

In 2024, an analysis was conducted regarding the possible integration of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) specifications into the UTPs. This initiative reflects OTIF's commitment to facilitating international rail traffic and broadening the application of its established concepts. The analysis will be considered by the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

The need for compatibility between OTIF's technical interoperability rules and the provisions of EU law is reflected in four of the eight principles, underlining their importance. For this purpose, not only do EU representatives take part in OTIF meetings, but staff from the Secretariat also attend selected EU meetings to which it is invited. This includes meetings organised by the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) and meetings organised by the European Commission, such as the Railway Interoperability and Safety Committee (RISC).

11. Keep regulations relating to the APTU UR updated

As indicated above, at its 16th session (11-12 June 2024), the Committee of Technical Experts adopted revised versions of the UTPs WAG, Noise and TCRC. These UTPs were adopted as consolidated new versions, meaning that they would replace the previous versions of these UTPs. At the same session, Appendix I to the UTP TAF was modified. The other parts of the UTP TAF remained unaffected. The revised UTPs and the modified Appendix I to the UTP TAF entered into force on 1 January 2025.

OTIF's 2024/2025 Work Programme indicated that UTPs would be revised in order of priority. The list below indicates the priorities and summarises the status of this work:

1. UTPs relevant to freight wagons (UTPs WAG, Noise) – In 2024, the Committee of Technical Experts adopted revised versions of these UTPs.
2. UTPs relevant to the use of vehicles in international traffic (UTPs TCRC, Marking) – In 2024, the Committee of Technical Experts adopted a revised version of the UTP TCRC. WG Tech analysed the necessity of revising the UTP Marking and a proposal for adoption will be prepared for the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.
3. UTPs relevant to locomotives and passenger rolling stock (UTPs LOC&PAS, PRM) – In 2024, WG Tech reviewed draft proposals to revise these UTPs. Proposals for adoption will be prepared for the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.
4. Telematics applications (UTP TAF) – During 2024, the EU extensively discussed the revision of its telematics TSIs. This work will continue in 2025. OTIF should consider the outcome in 2025 and beyond.

5. Infrastructure (UTP INF) – In 2024, WG Tech reviewed draft proposals to revise this UTP. A proposal for adoption will be prepared for the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

Revision of the UTP WAG

The UTP WAG lays down requirements to be met by new, renewed and upgraded freight wagons that are used in international transport. The modifications adopted in 2024 include provisions to facilitate combined transport, provisions for (optional) on-board derailment detection and prevention functions and for the mutual recognition of the first admission for wagons with electrical or electronic equipment on board. The implementing rules were updated too, so that it is clearer how the UTP applies to new wagons built to an existing design, or to existing wagons when these are upgraded or renewed.

Furthermore, references to EU legislation were updated and specific implementing rules for Norway and the United Kingdom were included.

Revision of the UTP Noise

The UTP Noise lays down requirements to be met by all types of rolling stock used in international traffic. It applies to new, renewed and upgraded vehicles, but also has important implications for the entire fleet of freight wagons that is currently being used in international traffic.

In particular, from 8 December 2024, wagons equipped with cast-iron brake blocks must no longer be used on parts of networks that are designated as “quieter routes” (see Appendix D to the UTP Noise). Quieter routes make up a significant part of the European networks. Consequently, cast iron brake blocks may no longer be used on most wagons that are used in international traffic in Europe.

The modifications adopted in 2024 include a method to assess the acoustic properties of composite brake blocks used in wheel tread brakes. The method determines whether the acoustic roughness of the wheel tread remains within set limits after using the brake block during a test cycle. When the cast iron brake blocks on existing ‘noisy’ wagons are replaced with composite brake blocks that either passed the UTP test or are listed in the UTP, the wagon will be considered silent and may continue to be used on quieter routes.

Furthermore, specific implementing rules and specific cases were added for Norway and for the Channel Tunnel (the tunnel linking France and the United Kingdom by rail).

Revision of the UTP TCRC

The UTP TCRC covers two different operational procedures that precede the movement of any train; train composition and route compatibility checks. Train composition is the process in which, based on the technical information of each vehicle, the railway undertaking prepares the train for operation and ensures that all vehicles in the train and the train as a whole meet the requirements. Route compatibility means the checks by which the railway undertaking ascertains that the train is compatible with the route on which it intends to run the train. For this purpose, route information must be provided by the infrastructure manager.

The modifications to the UTP TCRC include new and updated checks for compatibility between vehicles and train detection systems and definitions and requirements related to combined transport.

Update of Appendix I to the UTP TAF

Appendix I to the UTP TAF contains references to technical documents that include software coding necessary for the exchange of information and the harmonised implementation of the TAF provisions. These technical documents are updated from time to time, requiring an update of Appendix I to the UTP TAF as well.

Development of guidance and explanations

A significant achievement in 2024 was to issue the first version of the handbook for the implementation and application of the APTU and ATMF UR. The handbook, drafted by the Secretariat, describes the requirements for the implementation of these Appendices to COTIF and the various roles and responsibilities in connection with their application. It serves as a practical reference for OTIF members, particularly for the authorities, entities and actors in their respective railway sectors, and for states interested in acceding to COTIF. The Committee of Technical Experts approved the first version and WG Tech reviewed further additions and improvements, which will be proposed for approval by the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

The work to update the application guides and explanatory documents for various UTPs continued in 2024. UTP application guides are based on TSI application guides issued by ERA, whilst explanatory documents are authentic OTIF texts.

The Committee of Technical Experts approved an updated application guide for the UTP LOC&PAS and an explanatory document for the UTP TCRC. WG Tech considered updated draft versions of application guides for the UTP WAG and UTP Noise and an explanatory document for vehicle markings. These texts will be proposed for approval by the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

The table below provides a summary of the status of each UTP and the activities in 2024 that relate to it.

List and status of UTPs

UTP abbreviation	Subject	Date of entry into force of latest version	Status
UTP GEN-A	Essential requirements	1.12.2017	Stable
UTP GEN-B	Subsystems	1.6.2019	Stable
UTP GEN-C	Technical file	1.12.2017	Stable
UTP GEN-D	Assessment procedures (modules)	1.10.2012	Stable
UTP GEN-E	Assessing entity - qualifications and independence	1.1.2024	Stable
UTP GEN-G	Common safety method on risk evaluation and assessment (CSM RA)	1.1.2024	Stable
UTP WAG	Freight wagons	1.1.2025	Adoption of revised UTP by the CTE. Drafting of an update to the application guide by WG Tech
UTP Noise	Rolling stock noise	1.1.2025	Adoption of revised UTP by the CTE. Drafting of an update to the application guide by WG Tech
UTP LOC&PAS	Locomotives and passenger rolling stock	1.4.2022	Approval of an updated application guide by the CTE. Drafting of a revised UTP by WG Tech
UTP Marking	External vehicle marking	1.4.2021	Drafting of a revised UTP and a new explanatory document by WG Tech
UTP PRM	Accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility	1.1.2022	Drafting of a revised UTP by WG Tech
UTP TAF	Telematics applications for freight services	1.1.2025	Adoption of a revised Annex I by the CTE
UTP INF	Infrastructure	1.1.2022	Drafting of a revised UTP by WG Tech
UTP TCRC	Train composition and route compatibility checks	1.1.2025	Adoption of a revised UTP and approval of a new explanatory document by the CTE

12. Keep the ATMF UR updated

OTIF's 2024/2025 Work Programme reflects on the possibility of revising the ATMF UR, in particular to simplify the rules, improve the correlation between its provisions, limit the risk of different interpretations and to facilitate harmonised application of its rules. After considering the matter in 2024, the Committee of Technical Experts was of the view that revision of the ATMF UR was indeed required and that the objective of revising the ATMF UR could be achieved only by a full revision in the form of a new consolidated version. A final decision to this effect is in the competence of the General Assembly.

The Committee of Technical Experts was of the view that proposals should be brought to the General Assembly only once the modifications to COTIF adopted by the General Assembly at its 13th session (25-26.9.2018) have entered into force. These modifications cover, inter alia, modifications to Article 34 §§ 3 to 6 and Article 35 § 4 of COTIF, which are relevant to the revision of the ATMF UR. Entry into force of these modifications is pending their approval by two-thirds of OTIF's Member States. As this may still take considerable time, the Committee of Technical Experts concluded that drafting modifications to the ATMF UR should not currently be accorded high priority for WG Tech. Consequently, no further developments took place in 2024.

The Work Programme also mentions developments in the EU related to vehicle registers. In 2024, these EU developments did not reach a point where WG Tech or the Committee of Technical Experts could discuss the revision of related OTIF rules.

The table below provides a summary of the status of the rules that are based on the ATMF UR.

List and status of rules that are based on the ATMF UR

Reference	Subject	Date of entry into force of latest version	Status
Annex A	Rules for certification and auditing of Entities in Charge of Maintenance (ECM)	1.4.2021	Stable
Annex B	Rules, guidelines and explanations concerning derogations	1.1.2023	Stable
Certificates	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	Stable
Registers	Specifications for vehicle registers in accordance with Article 13 of ATMF	1.4.2021	Stable

13. Develop annexes to the EST UR

In 2018, the 13th session of the General Assembly adopted the EST UR. Two-thirds of OTIF's Member States must approve the EST UR before they can enter into force twelve months after the required approval is obtained. The requirements for the entry into force of the EST UR have not yet been met.

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. OTIF has been working on these annexes since 2021.

In 2024, the Committee of Technical Experts took note of a progress report on the development of these annexes and reviewed draft Annex D concerning a Common Safety Method for Supervision. Discussion at the meeting revealed that draft Annex D was not yet mature. Consequently, WG Tech prepared a revised draft for consideration by the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

The table below summarises the development of future rules that are based on the EST UR.

List and status of draft annexes to the EST UR

Reference	Subject	Status
Annex A	Common safety method for safety management system requirements	Reviewed by the CTE in 2022
Annex B	Common safety method on monitoring	Reviewed by the CTE in 2022
Annex C	Harmonised procedures for issuing safety certificates	Reviewed by the CTE in 2023
Annex D	Common safety method on supervision	Reviewed by the CTE in 2024 Update drafted by WG Tech in 2024 for review by the CTE in 2025

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

In 2024, the Secretariat and the Committee of Technical Experts continued monitoring and assessing the implementation and application of the APTU and ATMF UR.

The Committee of Technical Experts initiated the first phase of monitoring and assessment in 2022. It sought information about how the Contracting States (CSs) had implemented some of the key provisions incumbent on them and the perceived relevance of the rules by CS officials. The responses revealed that many CSs had not informed the Secretary General of their national technical requirements or their competent authorities. A key finding was the necessity for improved communication with non-responding states, and the establishment of formal focal points in each CS to facilitate this.

The second phase, initiated in 2023, involved distributing four questionnaires to sector representative bodies, assessing entities and competent authorities. The goal was to gather feedback on the practical application of the rules. The Secretariat also held bilateral meetings with respondents to discuss their responses and to gather additional details and gain further clarity on the issues. They indicated that many assessing entities were not sufficiently familiar with the scope and purpose of COTIF in general and the UTPs in particular. The responses also revealed a lack of understanding of the correlations between COTIF and EU law. The results were presented to the Committee of Technical Experts in 2024. Based on these findings, a handbook on the APTU and ATMF UR was developed to support authorities and stakeholders in implementing and applying the rules.

In 2024, WG Tech continued to discuss the importance of full and correct implementation of the ATMF UR for the admission of rail vehicles to international traffic, as well as the mutual acceptance of vehicle admissions between Contracting States. WG Tech acknowledged that some CSs may not be applying the ATMF UR despite not having made a formal reservation. To address this, it was suggested that the Secretariat could categorise CSs based on their implementation and involvement in OTIF's work related to the ATMF UR. WG Tech also suggested asking all CSs how the ATMF UR are implemented in their national legal order and whether all key rights and obligations are covered. WG Tech will report its findings and propose next steps to the Committee of Technical Experts in 2025.

15. Ensure compatibility between RID and the UTPs

In 2024, the Committee of Technical Experts reviewed and discussed the advice from the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE) regarding the migration of vehicle requirements from RID to the UTP WAG. The proposed amendments aim to transfer technical vehicle requirements applicable to wagons for the carriage of dangerous goods, previously only in RID, to the UTPs and TSIs, while retaining only protective aims in RID. The JCGE's preparatory work involved representatives from various (rail) industry organisations and took into account the future digital automatic coupler (DAC). The Committee of Technical Experts noted that these modifications to the UTP WAG should take effect no later than 1 January 2027, which will require adoption by the Committee of Technical Experts in June 2026. The Committee of Technical Experts requested that the Secretariat and WG Tech follow the related developments in the European Union and prepare relevant proposals for a future session.

Outlook for 2025

17-18 June 2025	17 th session of the Committee of Technical Experts
19 June 2025	55 th session of the working group TECH
9 September 2025	56 th session of the working group TECH
18 November 2025	57 th session of the working group TECH

Quantitative results

11-12 June 2024	16 th session of the Committee of Technical Experts, Berne
13 June 2024	52 nd session of the Working group TECH, Berne
6 September 2024	Publication of the Handbook for the implementation and application of the APTU UR and ATMF UR
17 September 2024	53 rd session of the working group TECH, Ittigen (hosted by Switzerland)
19 November 2024	54 th session of the working group TECH, Belgrade (hosted by Serbia)

Five articles relating to technical interoperability were published in OTIF's Bulletin

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

The support functions play a crucial role in the smooth running of the OTIF Secretariat. They strengthen the efficiency of the operational departments by enabling them to concentrate on their core tasks.

In particular, administrative and financial support has two objectives: to simplify day-to-day organisational and logistical operations and to ensure the efficient management of the Organisation's resources.

The tasks of the Administration and Finance Department include:

- managing OTIF's finances and headquarters, including drawing up and implementing the budget,
- invitations to tender and management of service provision contracts,
- managing human resources,
- IT support.

The Administration and Finance Department also ensures that the Member States receive efficient service by organising meetings and providing secretariat functions for the Administrative Committee (two sessions a year) and the OTIF General Assembly (once every three years).

Since the entry into force of the Luxembourg Protocol on 8 March 2024, the department has been responsible for providing the secretariat of the Protocol's Supervisory Authority.

Lastly, the Administration and Finance Department is at the forefront of cross-cutting projects, such as the renovation of OTIF's headquarters and the temporary relocation of staff during the renovation work.

16. Renovation of the OTIF building and change management

In accordance with the decision of the Administrative Committee at its 134th session, the renovation work on the OTIF headquarters building is being financed by the Organisation's reserve fund (20%) and by a loan from the Swiss Confederation (80%).

At the end of 2023, the Federal Council of the Swiss Confederation approved the granting of a loan at a preferential rate, repayable over thirty years to the Foundation for Buildings for International Organisations (FIPOI), which administers the loans granted by the Swiss authorities to support the property projects of international organisations on Swiss territory.

The loan contract between FIPOI and OTIF was signed on 28 February 2024. As a result, renovation work began in March 2024.

The works implementation phase has been broken down into two stages: completion of the structural work, the carpentry and the building's waterproofing before December 2024, and completion of the work, including the finishing work, by the second quarter of 2025.

More than 90% of the work packages were awarded by the end of 2024, and costs are in line with estimates. The structural work, structural reinforcement and external and internal insulation were completed at the end of November 2024, several days ahead of schedule. The previous Secretary General was able to thank all the teams involved since the start of the work at the topping out ceremony, which marked the completion of the structural work.

The project to renovate and extend OTIF's headquarters has therefore progressed according to plan. The final objective remains the completion of the renovation and extension work on the building in 2025, in particular the acceptance of the renovated, sustainable, accessible, compliant building by July 2025 and the return of the Secretariat to the renovated premises in August 2025.

17. Secretariat of the General Assembly and Administrative Committee

Only one session of the Administrative Committee was planned in 2024. For the first time however, this session was 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 15th General Assembly.

At its last meeting, held on 18 and 19 June 2024, the Administrative Committee in its previous composition was able to approve several important documents, including the 2023 Financial Management Report and the 2023 audit report, the Administrative Committee’s activity report for the period 2021-2024 and the proposed renewal of the Administrative Committee for the period from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2027.

The Candidates’ Forum was held on 20 June 2024. As a reminder, the Candidates’ Forum is an informal meeting at which candidates who have applied for the post of Secretary General introduce themselves and answer questions.

Chaired by the Chair of the Administrative Committee, the first Candidates’ Forum went well. 26 delegations came to Berne to take part in it. The lessons learned from this experience have been documented for future candidates’ forums.

The 16th General Assembly, which was held in person on 25 and 26 September 2024, was very well attended. It saw the election of the new Secretary General for the period 2025 to 2027, validated the strategic guidelines and set the ceiling for the Organisation’s expenditure for the coming years.

The General Assembly also designated the members of the Administrative Committee for the period from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2027. There will be two sessions of the Administrative Committee in 2025.

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

The Luxembourg Protocol entered into force on 8 March 2024.

As a reminder, the Luxembourg Protocol is the Rail Protocol to the Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment. Its aim is to facilitate the financing of railway rolling stock by establishing a new general legal system for recognising and prioritising securities held by creditors for railway equipment.

In line with the decision of the 7th General Assembly, OTIF assumes the role of 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.

Secretarial duties include organising meetings and preparing reports, working documents and meeting minutes, attending meetings with other bodies, such as the Commission of Experts assisting the Supervisory Authority and the Ratification Project Group, the Revisions Committee responsible for evaluating and updating the rules for affixing the URVIS number (a unique identifier assigned by the Registrar to a particular item of rolling stock) as well as meetings with Unidroit and the Rail Working Group to monitor ratification projects and periodic meetings with the Registrar.

In 2024, OTIF prepared and organised the 12th and final session of the Preparatory Commission, as well as the inaugural session of the Supervisory Authority.

The first session of the Supervisory Authority took place on 8 March 2024 in Berne following the ceremony at which OTIF officially handed over to Unidroit, the depositary of the Protocol, a certificate confirming that the International Registry was fully operational, as provided for in Article XII § 8 of the Protocol.

The decisions adopted by the Supervisory Authority at its first meeting can be divided into three groups:

- the first set of decisions concerned the documents relating to the establishment and operation of the Supervisory Authority: the resolution establishing the Supervisory Authority, the Supervisory Authority's statutes, the Supervisory Authority's rules of procedure and the agreement between the Supervisory Authority and OTIF concerning secretariat functions,
- the second set of decisions concerned the documents relating to the establishment of the Registrar: annual budget and schedule of fees identifying all the International Registry services to be provided by the Registrar and the corresponding fees,
- the third set of decisions concerned approval of the various documents required for the operation of the International Registry of interests in railway rolling stock: the regulations and procedures of the International Registry, a user guide and the standard rules for the permanent identification of railway rolling stock.

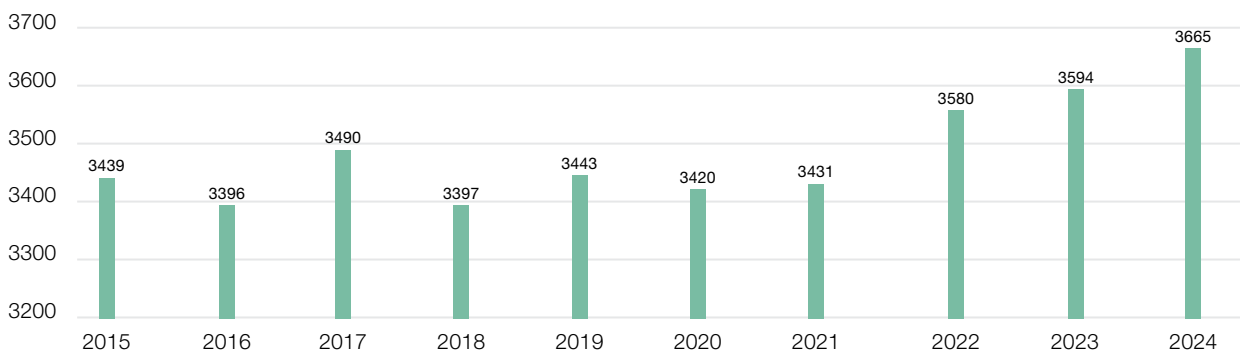
19. Financial management

The Secretariat's provisional budget for 2024 approved by the Administrative Committee at its 138th session was CHF 3,978,581, excluding renovation projects, and was therefore below the ceiling for recurring expenditure set by the General Assembly at CHF 4.2 million.

The Organisation's expenditure at 31 December 2024 was approximately CHF 3.802 million. The 2024 budget was therefore characterised by the quality of its estimates, with an average budget execution rate of close to 94%, excluding renovation projects.

Member State contributions are the Organisation's main source of income to cover expenditure. The graph below shows how Member States' contributions have changed over the last ten years (2015 to 2024).

Graph: Changes in Member States' contributions from 2015 to 2024 (in millions of CHF)



20. Planning and management of human resources

Staff changes

The number of staff at OTIF remained stable in 2024, with 21 members of staff representing 18.4 FTEs (full-time equivalents). However, there have been changes in the Legal Department, with the arrival of the new Legal Advisor and the new Senior Legal Advisor during the year, and above all the forthcoming vacancy at the head of the Legal Department following the election of the Head of the Department as Secretary General for the period from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027.

At previous meetings, the Administrative Committee was informed of the risk associated with the retirement of several members of staff over the next five years, including the Management Assistant in the Administration and Finance Department, who will retire in 2025. The call for applications for this post began in 2024. However, the recruitment procedure was suspended pending the new organisation envisaged by the newly elected Secretary General.

Training/information

For the Organisation, training is seen as one of the tools for motivating staff and retaining talent. For members of staff, this means adapting to technological changes or different tasks, as well as developing throughout their careers to acquire new skills.

The training requests submitted to and approved by the Secretary General in 2024 mainly concerned training to adapt to the post (15% of the training budget), to acquire new skills (33%) and to learn one of the Organisation's working languages (32% of the training budget).

In addition, at OTIF's request, the Swiss pension fund Publica, to which all staff members, Swiss and non-Swiss, contribute, came to the Secretariat for an information session on the rights of pension scheme members, to give advice on the options and associated financial consequences, and above all to answer staff questions.

Implementation of the recommendations of the human resources study - revision of the Staff Regulations

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

This study was 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 137th session of the Administrative Committee, which took note of it.

Phase I of the study concluded, among other things, that it was necessary to modernise the Staff Regulations, in particular to take account of changes in family structures, but also to review certain provisions on social benefits which were creating inequalities.

Revision of the Staff Regulations is one of the objectives for 2025. The revision project was able to begin with the consultation of all members of staff in the last quarter of 2024. The next steps and the framework for the revision will have to be discussed with the Organisation's new Secretary General.

Outlook for 2025

2025 will be another busy year, with the end of the renovation work on OTIF's headquarters, the closure of the project in July 2025 and preparations for the return of the Secretariat in August 2025.

Several meetings of OTIF's organs will be able to take place in the new conference room at headquarters, which has been fitted out to host international meetings with interpretation, in the last quarter of 2025.

A number of meetings are also planned:

23 April 2025	2 nd session of the Luxembourg Protocol Supervisory Authority
27-28 May 2025	140 th session of the Administrative Committee
November 2025	141 st session of the Administrative Committee

Quantitative results/data

2024 was a particularly busy year. In addition to meetings with stakeholders on the renovation project, a number of important meetings and events were held:

28 February 2024	Signing of the loan agreement between OTIF and FIPOI
7 March 2024	12 th session of the Preparatory Commission for the Luxembourg Protocol
8 March 2024	Entry into force of the Luxembourg Protocol and 1 st session of the Supervisory Authority
14 March 2024	Ground-breaking ceremony (start of structural work on the renovation)
18-19 June 2024	139 th session of the Administrative Committee
20 June 2024	First Candidates' Forum for the election of the Secretary General
25-26 September 2024	16 th General Assembly, in person, with a large attendance
5 December 2024	Topping out ceremony (end of structural work)

THE PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY LANGUAGE SERVICES



Joana Meenken

Head of Translation Department

The Secretariat's Translation Department plays a central role in the preparation of all meetings of the OTIF organs and in the drafting of their legal texts, ensuring that all content is rendered accurately and consistently in the three working languages. As a “cross-cutting department”, it provides its services for all OTIF departments and for the organs under COTIF. It is responsible for the professional and timely translation of diplomatic, legal, technical and financial documents and for interpreting at meetings of the organs.

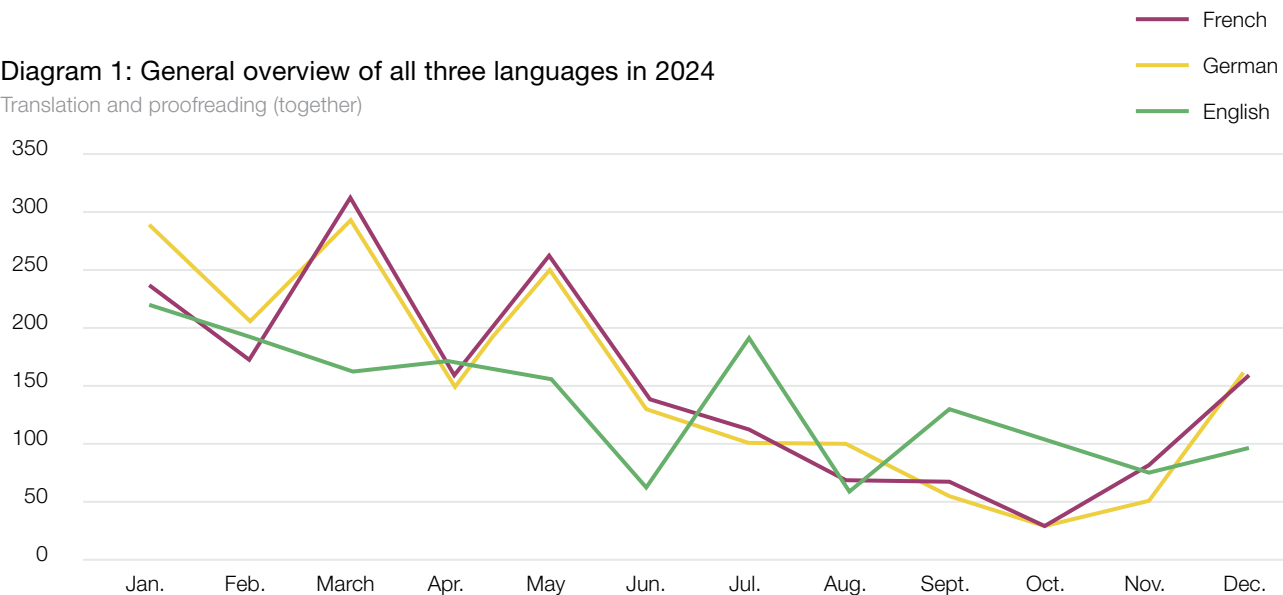
21. Deliver good quality translations on time

Translation and proofreading

A General Assembly was held in 2024, which not only resulted in more documents being produced, but also added more deadlines for the Translation Department. The proven external cooperation continued. The [“Guidelines on the use of gender-neutral language”](#) published in 2023 provided orientation for the revision of various texts of OTIF and its organs.

Diagrammatic representation of workload

The development and distribution of numbers of pages¹ is probably easiest to show in specific figures. To this end, there is first an overview of all three languages, followed by a presentation of the translated and proofread pages, divided by language.



Overall, the picture here is similar to that of the two previous years; it is clear that there was more work to be done in the first half of the year, which means that almost all outsourcing of translation work occurred during this period. Owing to the fact that most of the source texts were in English, the German and French curves run almost parallel. One of the reasons why it is not possible to compare the swings in the English curve is that the proofreading of various documents that are only written in English has to be added. Otherwise, the English proofreading curve would have to peak one to two months before the translation peaks for the other two languages.

¹ As usual, standardised pages of 330 words were used for the calculation. In other organisations, this number varies between 250 and 350 words per standard page.

Diagram 2: French translation and proofreading

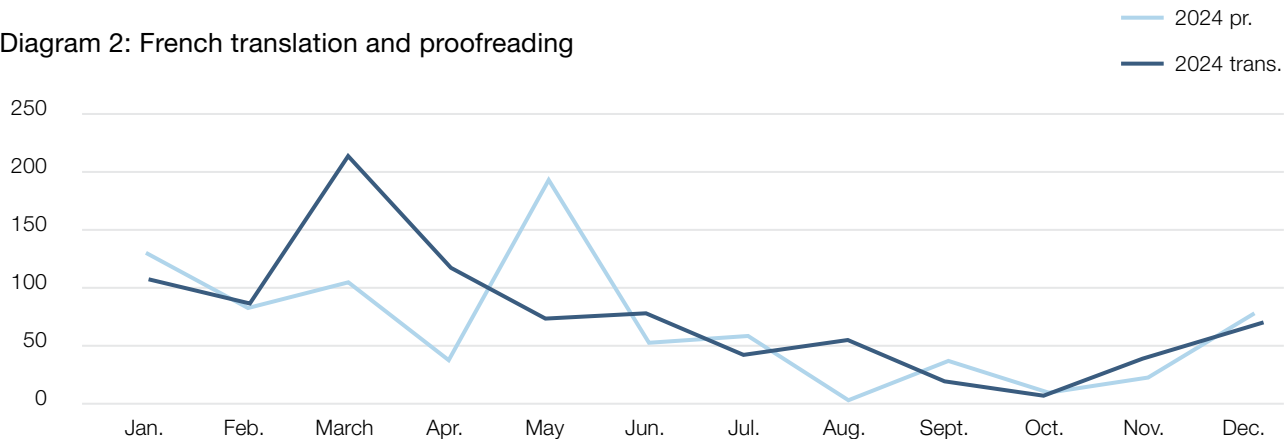
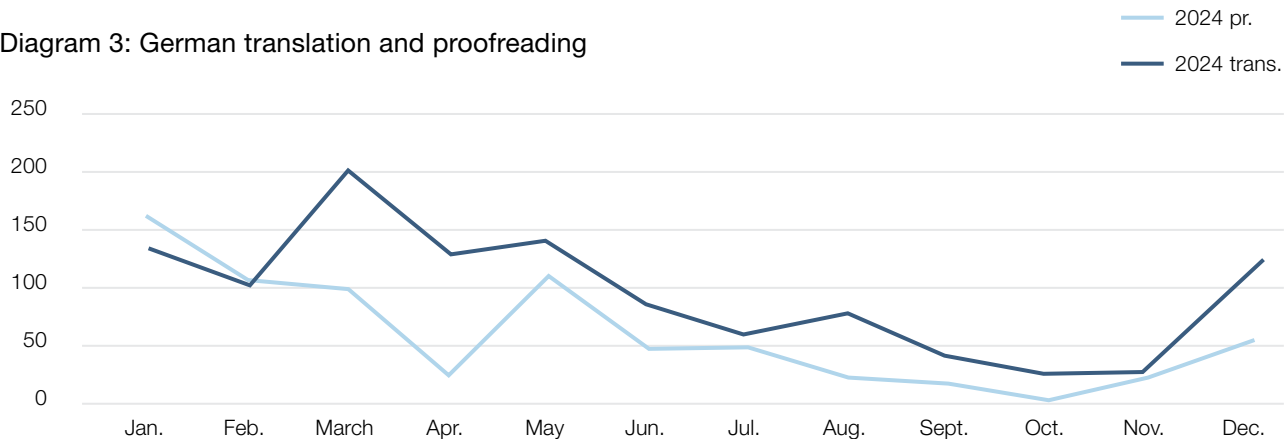


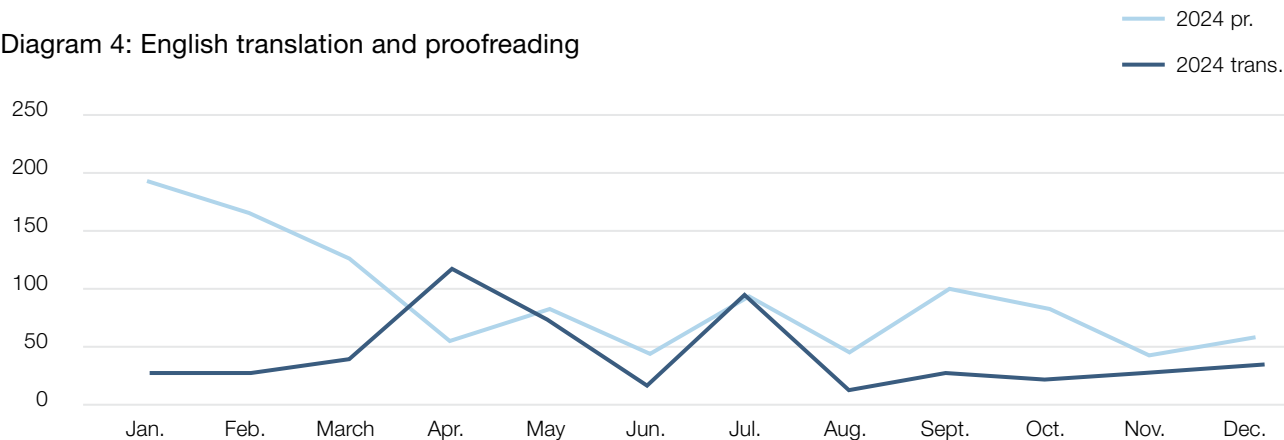
Diagram 3: German translation and proofreading



The curves for German and French in 2024 show the increased workload during the first six months more clearly than in previous years. In January and February, in addition to the documents for the Committee of Technical Experts and the Joint Meeting², the minutes of the 138th Administrative Committee (January) also had to be translated. The peaks in March and May are mainly due to preparations for the 6th session of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation (March), the 139th session of the Administrative Committee, the 16th General Assembly and the Bulletin and Annual Report (May). The increase in December is due to the follow-up to the 16th General Assembly.

² Only concerns German, as the English and French versions are produced by the United Nations.

Diagram 4: English translation and proofreading



The high volume of proofreading work between January and March is due to the follow-up to the 138th Administrative Committee (January) and the preparation of the 6th session of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation (January to March) and the Committee of Technical Experts (January and February). The peaks in April, May, July and September are due to the preparation of the 139th Administrative Committee (April and May), the 2023 Annual Report and the Bulletin (April and May), the follow-up to the 139th Administrative Committee and the 16th Committee of Technical Experts (July) and the preparation of the 16th General Assembly.

Workload in figures

The diagrams are followed below by a comparison of the number of pages between 2020 and 2024, expressed in figures.

Diagram 5: Comparison of the number of pages generated since 2020

	FRENCH			GERMAN			ENGLISH		
	Translation	Proofreading	Total	Translation	Proofreading	Total	Translation	Proofreading	Total
2020	549	575	1124	898	347	1245	469	824	1293
2021	898	1004	1902	1351	557	1908	722	1096	1818
2022	844	620	1464	1193	443	1636	560	889	1449
2023	899	567	1466	1155	376	1531	386	822	1208
2024	947	854	1801	1118	704	1814	523	1092	1615

As the workload in German and French translation remained relatively stable at a high level and was not evenly distributed throughout the year, the cooperation with external translators was continued so that they could continue to relieve the Secretariat noticeably at peak times. A total of 157 pages³ were outsourced for German (previous year 131) and 86 pages for French (previous year 178). Experience with the responsiveness and quality of outsourced translations continued to be positive in 2024. As a result in particular of the flexibility offered by this solution, and as a result of an analysis of the outsourcing spread over the year and the costs it entails, it was decided to keep this solution for the time being.

The significant increase in proofreading in all languages is due to the fact that, among other things, in preparation for the 16th General Assembly, various texts of OTIF's institutional law (such as rules of procedure, etc.) were adapted in line with the [“Guidelines on the use of gender-neutral language”](#) published in 2023.

Percentage distribution based on the area of activity

In addition to the total number of pages, the distribution between OTIF's individual areas of activity might also be of interest. The following picture emerges:

Diagram 6: Percentage distribution based on the area of activity

	FRENCH		GERMAN		ENGLISH	
	Translation	Proofreading	Translation	Proofreading	Translation	Proofreading
ADMINISTRATION	23.4%	16.9%	18.5%	25.9%	39.4%	27.1%
COMMUNICATION	11%	38.1%	15.3%	27.4%	24.9%	6.9%
LAW	31.3%	15.0%	23.1%	15%	6.8%	38.3%
RID	8.3%	3.9%	19.2%	1.3%	26.2%	1.3%
TECHNOLOGY	20.7%	23.8%	18.8%	25.5%	0.6%	25.7%
OTHER	5.3%	2.3%	5.1%	4.9%	2.1%	0.7%

³ The German translations in connection with RID and the Joint Meeting carried out by the Transport of Dangerous Goods Department are not included.

22. Ensure good linguistic quality of all OTIF texts

Apart from ongoing “routine tasks” (updates, additions and corrections to existing terminology entries, as well as the generation of new entries during the translation process) and minor structural adjustments to improve user-friendliness, there were no noteworthy terminological activities in 2024.

Following finalisation of the “Guidelines on the use of gender-neutral language” in 2023, which were adopted at the 2nd session of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation, work resumed in 2024 on the remaining chapters of the Translation Department’s second long-term project, *OTIF’s internal editorial rules*.

23. Format of meetings and interpreting

With the exception of the Committee of Technical Experts, which was organised in a hybrid format, all meetings were held in person. This also applied to the interpreting, most of which was again done from the booths on site.

The following table contains a comparison of the number of conference days in OTIF’s three working languages of OTIF since 2019:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
ENGLISH	22	15	19	20	20	19
GERMAN	16	11	19	19	26	21
FRENCH	16	11	19	19	19	18

The table shows a stable picture overall since 2020. For German, there were five days fewer than in the previous year, as the Joint Meeting in Geneva⁴ in September only meets for two weeks in odd-numbered years in connection with the biennial revision cycle of RID. In 2024, as in every year since 2021, all scheduled meetings took place. The difference of one conference day between the English and French booths is due to the fact that the meetings of the Joint Coordinating Group of Experts (JCGE) are only interpreted into English.

24. Continuation of external cooperation

As already explained in diagram 5, cooperation with external translators also proved successful in 2024 and was continued. Given the unequal workload in the Translation Department with various peaks throughout the year, this flexible solution proved to be the option best suited to the Secretariat’s requirements.

4 As the Joint Meeting in September is held at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, OTIF only provides the German cabin.

DEVELOP AND INCREASE AWARENESS OF OTIF



Sarah Pujol
Communication Officer

There are two main aspects to OTIF's communication: firstly, external communication, which consists of making COTIF, its appendices and everything produced by OTIF and the Secretariat in general known and visible; secondly, institutional communication, which consists of making OTIF itself and its tasks known.

The Communication Department is a “support” department within the Organisation. The communication team is responsible for a wide range of tasks, including events, graphic design, coordination of editorial projects, writing and publishing documents and disseminating information about the activities of OTIF and the Secretariat. Also at the service of the public and the press, the Communication Department regularly responds to external requests.

25. Guidelines and framework for action

Attractiveness and consistency

In 2024, the OTIF Secretariat's Communication Department worked on a variety of media.

These include the layout of OTIF's long-term strategy, a new business card design, the front covers of the three application guides produced by the operational departments, the writing of articles and press releases, the graphic charter, photo shoots, etc.

The project to redesign OTIF's website - content and graphic design - represented a very large part of the Communication Department's activity in 2024, together with the IT Manager in OTIF's Administration and Finance Department.

In carrying out these tasks and projects, the team endeavoured to ensure that the image, messages and publications are consistent with OTIF's identity and tasks, while continuing to develop a modern and attractive image for the Organisation.

Frequency and monitoring

Throughout the year, the communication team maintained, improved and updated OTIF's French, English and German websites. These sites alone provide an almost complete overview of the Organisation's activities. They are an essential tool to help the Member States and provide a rich and varied source of information for the rail sector.

The Communication Department has a number of tools at its disposal to measure the Organisation's visibility. This includes quantitative data about the website and activity on social networks.

The department also keeps the lists of subscribers to the Bulletin and to news and press releases about OTIF and the Secretariat up to date.

Lastly, whether through the Bulletin, press releases, "OTIF NEWS" or communications on social networks, OTIF's presence is maintained through frequent publications.

26. The hybrid presence of the Organisation: 360° dissemination

Digital publications

The Bulletin is a publication provided for in Article 23 of the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF). It reports on the activities of OTIF's bodies and the Secretariat. It contains information relevant to the application of COTIF. It also contains articles on leading railway law issues of the day. The Bulletin is also published on OTIF's website. In 2024, four editions of the Bulletin were published.

News and press releases reflect the statements and activity that the Organisation wishes to make public. The following is a list of news and press releases published in 2024:

25.1.2024	International cooperation: UNECE and OTIF
22.2.2024	RID 2023 also available in Russian
28.2.2024	Entry into force of the Luxembourg Protocol and inaugural session of the Supervisory Authority of the Luxembourg Protocol
8.3.2024	The Luxembourg Protocol enters into force
14.3.2024	Ground-breaking
26.3.2024	Moldova: application for accession to OTIF
26.4.2024	China: Application for accession to OTIF
17.5.2024	Dangerous goods: final decisions for RID 2025
7.6.2024	Berne Days (Berner Tage) 2024
12.6.2024	139th Session of OTIF's Administrative Committee
13.6.2024	Candidates' Forum
26.6.2024	Memorandum of understanding with the Universal Postal Union
23.7.2024	Ankara: High-level meeting
27.8.2024	RID/ADR/ADN Joint Meeting
30.8.2024	List of maritime and inland waterway services: an improved structure
2.9.2024	Moldova: 52nd Member of OTIF since 1 September 2024
16.9.2024	Lists of railway lines: improved presentation
25.9.2024	Mr Aleksandr Kuzmenko elected Secretary General of OTIF
3.10.2024	OTIF General Assembly: the main decisions
15.10.2024	Publication of the 'Handbook on COTIF and its implementation and application by international associations'
18.10.2024	Consultation: What changes, if any, should be made to COTIF and railway contract law?
24.10.2024	Publication of the 'Handbook on the Regulations concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Rail'
1.11.2024	Publication of RID 2025
5.11.2024	54th Session of WG Tech in Belgrade
8.11.2024	On the agenda of the 18th session of the standing working group (RID)
5.12.2024	Renovation and extension of OTIF's headquarters: completion of the structural work
20.12.2024	Useful information on OTIF's logo

Other materials, such as the 2023 Annual Report, OTIF's long-term strategy and the cover pages of the application guides were designed by the OTIF Secretariat's Communication Department. It also coordinated their publication.

Lastly, the Communication Department maintains a catalogue of pictures specific to OTIF: photos, illustrations, maps, diagrams, etc. These images are used in the Organisation's publications and during presentations made by representatives of the Secretariat's departments. In 2024, the OTIF maps were extensively updated.

Digital tools

Social networks

The Organisation has a presence on Flickr, LinkedIn and X. On Flickr, the department regularly publishes new photos illustrating OTIF's activities (https://www.flickr.com/photos/otif_cotif/albums/).

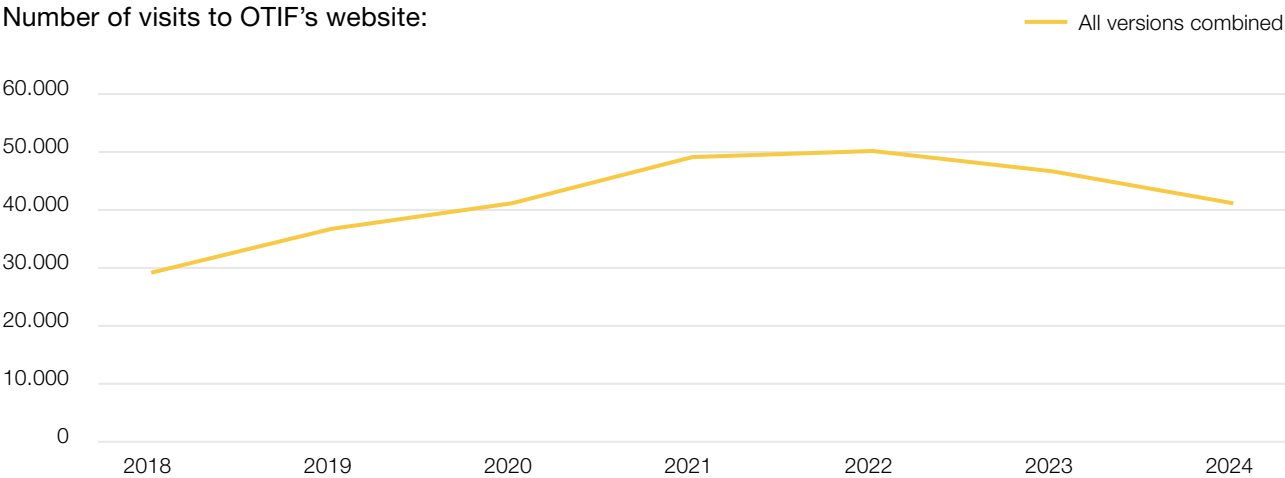
LinkedIn is the social network where OTIF has the most subscribers. In 2024, the Organisation gained 340 new subscribers compared to 195 new subscribers in 2023 and 252 in 2022. The level of involvement corresponds to number of user interactions ("likes", comments, shares) divided by the scope of the posts (the number of views). The level of involvement is a performance indicator and is one of the statistics that should be studied regularly to find out whether the digital communication strategy is effective. On LinkedIn, in 2024, the average rate was 7.5%. An engagement rate of over 5% is generally considered to be good: this means that the community is active and is contributing to the prominence of OTIF.

Websites

OTIF’s new website finally went on line in 2024. It was slightly restructured, with updated texts and a completely revamped graphic design, and now looks more modern. New pages, such as “Depositary Notifications” have been added. The website has also been technically enhanced, designed to be readable and easy to use on smartphones.

Technically, there are three OTIF websites, one for each of the Organisation’s working languages. 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 2024 Annual Report, as in previous and subsequent reports, we simply refer to “the website” in order to simplify understanding. It is therefore important to make clear that specifically, the Communication Department, with the support of the webmaster technician and the Translation Department, maintains and works on the website in a threefold manner.

In 2024, the website was visited more than 42,000 times. Compared with 2022, the number of visits has decreased. Nevertheless, the number of visits in 2024 was higher than the number of visits in 2020, a year marked by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Events

In 2024, the Communication Department was involved in holding some of the meetings of the OTIF bodies. This was the case for the spring 2024 session of the ad hoc Committee on Legal Affairs and International Cooperation and the 16th session of the General Assembly.

Quantitative results/data

In 2024, the Communication Department wrote and published:

24 press releases

25 articles in the Bulletin

1 post-publication every 9 days on social networks

In 2024, the Communication Department carried out:

+ 150 updates on the website

20 updated maps, illustrations and photos in three language versions

the redesign and uploading of the website in three language versions (5 December 2024)

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