



# **Procedures for designing the annual timetable**

## **Version 3.0**

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## Disclaimer, application, and transition period

This document is intended as a handbook for the implementation of the *Procedures for designing the annual timetable* as described by RNE. As neither legislation nor IT-systems are currently adapted to enable all the elements of TTR, individual TTR elements can only be implemented by the infrastructure managers to a limited extent for the upcoming timetable periods, starting in December 2024. If and when the legislation and IT-systems fully enable the implementation of all the elements of TTR, the different RNE handbooks on those elements should be adapted and applied to the process. The exact details for the transitional period are defined in the “*Scope of TTR for Timetables 2025-2028*”<sup>1</sup>.

Infrastructure Managers and Allocation Bodies should adapt their internal processes and the Network Statement in line with the *Procedures for designing the annual timetable* from X-8, where X denotes the first timetable referring to the complete roll-out of TTR.

Note that the process described in the Handbook does not fully reflect the targeted TTR elements, it is expected that the handbook will be subject to update or refinement.

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<sup>1</sup> Accessible via: <https://rne.eu/downloads/>

## Version history

VERSION	RESPONSIBLE	DATE	CHANGES
0.1	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2023-02-10	Document created by A.Bianchi (merging and finetuning of the previous “RNE Process Handbook for International Path Allocation for Infrastructure Managers” v.2.0 and “Procedures for International Late Path Request Management” v1.0)
0.2	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2023-03-08	Inclusion of remarks from TT WG and CM AG and preliminary legal check by the RNE JO Legal Team
0.3	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2023-03-20	Inclusion of additional remarks from TT WG and LM WG
0.4	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2023-03-24	Inclusion of the remarks raised and discussed during the TT WG meeting
1.0	RNE General Assembly	2023-05-31	Document approved by the RNE GA
1.1	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2024-02-14	Improvements and updates of annexes
2.0	RNE General Assembly	2024-05-16	Approval of the version 1.1 by the RNE General Assembly on 16 May 2024
2.1	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2025-02-10	Inclusion of annex C (process diagram)
3.0	Alessandro Bianchi Timetabling manager	2025-03-11	Document agreed by the TT WG

## 1 Introduction and scope of this document

RailNetEurope is an association of European railway infrastructure managers and allocation bodies for facilitating international traffic on railway infrastructure. Within that scope, RNE must endeavour to facilitate international path allocation work for applicants and Infrastructure Managers/Allocation Bodies (hereafter IMs).

Each IM designates resources to provide any information needed for the use of infrastructure and answers to customers' requests. Contact details: <http://www.rne.eu/organisation/oss-c-oss/>

In this context, the following handbook describes the procedures (Art 40, 43(3) and 44(4) of Directive 2012/34/EU) by which applicants (as defined in Article 3(19) of Directive 2012/34/EU) may request and obtain international paths for the next annual timetable from IMs. In particular, it focuses on the complete process for the construction of the annual timetable, which includes both requests submitted by the 2nd Monday of April and those submitted after that date.

The steps described in chapter 4 are located in the time scale according to the date the new yearly timetable is put in place, which is 00:01 the Sunday after the second Saturday of December. In the following pages of the document, "X" represents the date when the new timetable starts.

Unless specified, this document is applicable for passengers and freight traffic. As this handbook for international path allocation sets out a key process for path management, it must therefore be applied by all RNE members. The requesting process for traffic not crossing an international border is out of the scope of the document and is described in the Network Statement of each IM.

### **Important notes:**

- Based on the EU Regulation 913/2010 Rail Freight Corridors (RFCs) have been established throughout the European railway network. Guidelines to describe the specific processes of the RFCs have been issued by RNE. Particularities of these processes are not covered by this handbook. However, the RFC guidelines have been created in a way to correspond with this handbook and correlate with its contents.
- In May 2017 the RNE General Assembly agreed to gradually implement a newly designed timetabling process as a result of the project "Redesign of the international timetabling process" (TTR). With its gradual implementation, this handbook will be updated accordingly upon the implementation of new TTR components and elements. After implementing TTR, thanks to advanced planning, IT system developments and optimisations, the time frame for the annual allocation will be shortened.

## 2 Reference documents

This handbook follows and is based on the principles set down in:

- Directive 2012/34/EU
- Regulation (EU) No. 1305/2014 of 11 December 2014 on the technical specification for interoperability relating to the telematics applications for freight subsystem of the rail system in the European Union and repealing the Regulation (EC) No 62/2006
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 454/2011 of 5 May 2011 on the technical specification for interoperability relating to the subsystem 'telematics applications for passenger services' of the trans-European rail system
- TAP/TAF TSI Sector Handbook for the Communication between RUs/IMs v3.1

### 3 Path Request System

All request methods shall be published and described in the Network Statement of each IM.

Alongside the national request methods, an internet-based path request system is provided by RNE, to optimise international requests and path coordination. Currently, this process is reflected in Path Coordination System (PCS). PCS shall be used as one of the official request tools, without the demand to place a duplicate/copy of the same path request via another tool once the interfaces with national systems are fully implemented.

The PCS functionalities are described in the “PCS Documentation” (<https://rne.eu/it/rne-applications/pcs/documentation/>)

### 4 Planning process

The Annual Timetable planning process constitutes a (re-)evaluation of the market needs and capacity availability once a year. In addition, it is the moment to coordinate incompatible requests (in accordance with Article 46 of Directive 2012/34) and find optimised solutions. From the IMs point of view, yearly planning forms the backbone of a robust timetable.

Capacity requests in the annual timetable can be divided into:

- Annual requests placed on time (new path requests), described in sub-chapter 4.5;
- Annual requests placed after the path request deadline (late path requests or LPRs for short), described in sub-chapter 4.6.

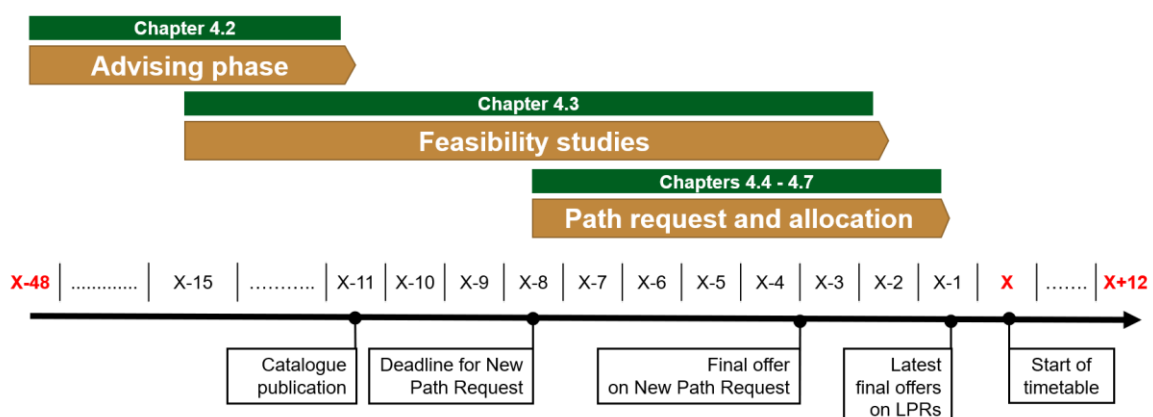
The process is organised in such a way that feasibility studies and international requests may be presented:

- by a sole railway undertaking (RU) for lines where it has rights to operate;
- by a sole non-RU applicant who fulfils the requirements for requesting capacity and intends to receive the rights to operate on part or the entire network in due time or who will appoint an RU responsible for the operation until the communicated deadline;
- by a group of applicants acting together as cooperating partners, and gathering rights to operate on the specified routes.

The process is open to any applicant whether it is or not part of an international applicant group or organisation.

As stated in Directive 2012/34/EU the allocation process has to be non-discriminatory.

#### Planning process description



## 4.1 List of involved stakeholders

Stakeholder	Definition
Lead IM <i>(only applicable if the request is placed in PCS)</i>	The IM in charge of execution of relevant tasks in PCS to promote dossiers to the relevant phase on time (more information at the following link: <a href="https://rne.eu/it/rne-applications/pcs/documentation/">https://rne.eu/it/rne-applications/pcs/documentation/</a> ).
Involved IM(s)	The IMs in charge of capacity allocation on the networks where the involved applicants apply for a particular national part of the international capacity.
Lead applicant <i>(only applicable if the request is placed in PCS)</i>	The applicant in charge of execution of relevant tasks in PCS to promote dossiers to the relevant phase on time (more information at the following link: <a href="https://rne.eu/it/rne-applications/pcs/documentation/">https://rne.eu/it/rne-applications/pcs/documentation/</a> ).
Involved applicant(s)	Applicants, who in coordination with the lead applicant, apply for a particular capacity in the networks of involved IMs.

## 4.2 X-48 to X-11 : Advising phase

In the advising phase, the applicants and IMs have the possibility to share information on upcoming infrastructure availability compared to commercial needs, ensuring the appropriate degree of protection of confidential information. It should provide all stakeholders with an overview of possibilities for the later path allocation and makes it possible to detect pressure points in capacity planning in time. All IMs are required to provide information on processes and/or platforms in the Network Statements.

If capacity catalogues are being published, these publications should serve as a baseline for the next phases.

PCS provides the possibility to request first feasibility studies from X-15, according to the “*Procedures for Feasibility Studies*” v1.0 (available at the following link: <https://rne.eu/downloads/>).

## 4.3 X-15 to X-2 : Feasibility studies

Feasibility studies can be submitted by applicants to have a proper understanding and indication of how paths could fit into the timetable before submitting their path requests (new path request or late path request), bearing in mind the need to protect confidential information. The relevant process is described in the Handbook for “*Procedures for Feasibility Studies*”. The timeline regarding the submission of feasibility studies is described in Chapter 7 of the aforementioned handbook.

## 4.4 X-8 : Path request deadline

The deadline for submitting 'new path requests' is the 2nd Monday in April (X-8).

It is also possible to submit requests after X-8 until X-2: this is the so-called 'late path requests' period and is part of the capacity management for the preparation of the annual timetable. These requests are handled after the final offer for the path requests submitted by X-8 and the allocation process follows a different timeline, described in sub-chapter 4.6.

Applicants prepare the path request, which they must harmonise together. This is the precondition for IM acceptance.

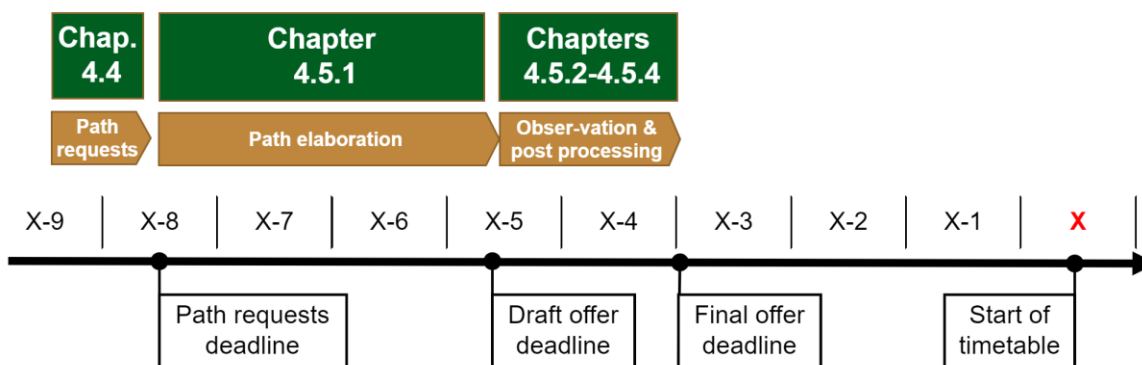
PCS supports the Applicants in the full harmonisation of the path request from origin to destination. For applicant groups, it allows each member to confirm the path request and/or agree on it and share responsibility for the path request.

The path request must provide all mandatory data which are specified in the relevant Network Statement. If it is not possible to fill in all mandatory fields, it is recommended to ask the respective IM for information before submitting the path request.

Applicants may also use a national catalogue path (or pre-constructed capacity) as part of their international path request, if provided by the respective IM. The catalogue of train paths is intended as an aid for preparing applications for paths. However, there is no guarantee that a request for a path published in the catalogue will receive a positive response in the allocation process, as the catalogue path may be allocated to another request with higher priority. In such a case, the IM will, however, aim at providing an alternative offer.

## 4.5 Timeline for path request placed on time (X-8)

The following sub-chapters are applicable only for requests placed by X-8.



### 4.5.1 X-8 to X-5: Path elaboration phase

If the request does not provide enough information for path construction, the lead or relevant IM will ask the applicant(s) to provide the missing data. In case the request is not harmonized on the whole route or does not contain plausible information, it might be rejected by the relevant IM – who should always explain why it has been rejected. The IM rejecting the request should inform the other involved IM(s).

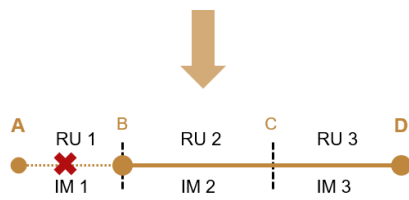
In order to provide well-harmonized offers, the following steps shall be applied:

- Communication with neighbouring IMs:  
To ensure harmonised paths at the border, each IM informs the neighbouring IM about all trains crossing the border until one week before the RNE Technical Meeting. This information is used for checking paths (i.e. times, calendars and other path details) at borders and as preparation for the RNE Technical Meeting in June.
- RNE Technical Meeting  
This meeting is organised by the RNE Joint Office and takes place 3 weeks prior to the publication of the draft working timetable; additional details are available in Annex B. IMs meet to fulfil path requests as close as possible to the requests in a harmonised way. They endeavour to make sure remaining problems are sorted out and check that all paths match at borders.

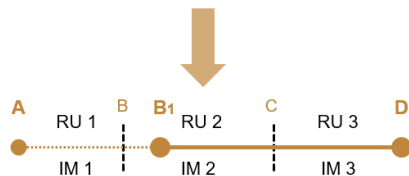
If path requests have not received any positive response<sup>2</sup> and no solution is to be found, involved applicant(s) are being informed at national level with detailed reasons for the refusal by the relevant IM<sup>3</sup>. Other IMs may adjust the path to a reasonable point of the infrastructure (alternative origin/destination), and then offer the path if the applicants are still interested in receiving a harmonised offer on a limited route. This offer should be submitted by the relevant IM(s) only if it does not cause any operational issues (e.g., not applicable in case IMs in-between cannot allocate the path) on all networks and it does not affect the future allocation decisions.



Harmonized path request



IM 1 cannot allocate this request. The involved applicants (RU1 and RU2) are informed and confirm their interest to receive a harmonised offer on a limited route



IM 2 adjusts the path with an alternative origin

Conditions: remaining IMs should check if this change affects their allocation decisions and does not cause operational issues

#### 4.5.2 X-5: Draft offer deadline

At X-5 the lead IM (if the request is placed in PCS) or the relevant IM (if the request is placed in national systems) publishes the internationally harmonised draft offer<sup>4</sup>.

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, it is also possible to provide a harmonised offer on a limited route. This means that the requested capacity cannot be offered by all IMs, but the paths offered are coordinated with each other and it is possible to run a train even if it cannot operate on the entire requested route (without causing operational issues on all networks).

In case of a delay in delivering the draft offer, the exact required actions are described in chapters 2 and 3 of the Handbook "*Procedures and Counter-Measures for Delays in Annual Timetable Preparation*" (accessible via: <https://rne.eu/downloads/>).

#### 4.5.3 X-5 to X-3.5 : Consultation and post-processing phase

Based on the draft offer provided by the IMs at X-5, applicants have the legal right to cross-check the draft timetable with their request and place observations as comments until one month after the provision of the draft offer.

<sup>2</sup> If the request is submitted in PCS, the relevant IM sets the red light in the system.

<sup>3</sup> This is the result of the so-called "coordination process", as described in Art.46 of directive 2012/34/EU.

<sup>4</sup> Term "internationally harmonised offer" means that border times, train parameters and running days are agreed among the involved IMs.

IMs may adapt the offers within another 2 weeks after the observation phase has ended (post-processing phase). If an observation is linked to a deviation of the draft offer from the initial path request or due to a lack of proper harmonisation, IMs should do their utmost to comply with the initial path request; the involved IMs have to cooperate during this phase.

#### 4.5.4 X-3.5 : Final offer and acceptance

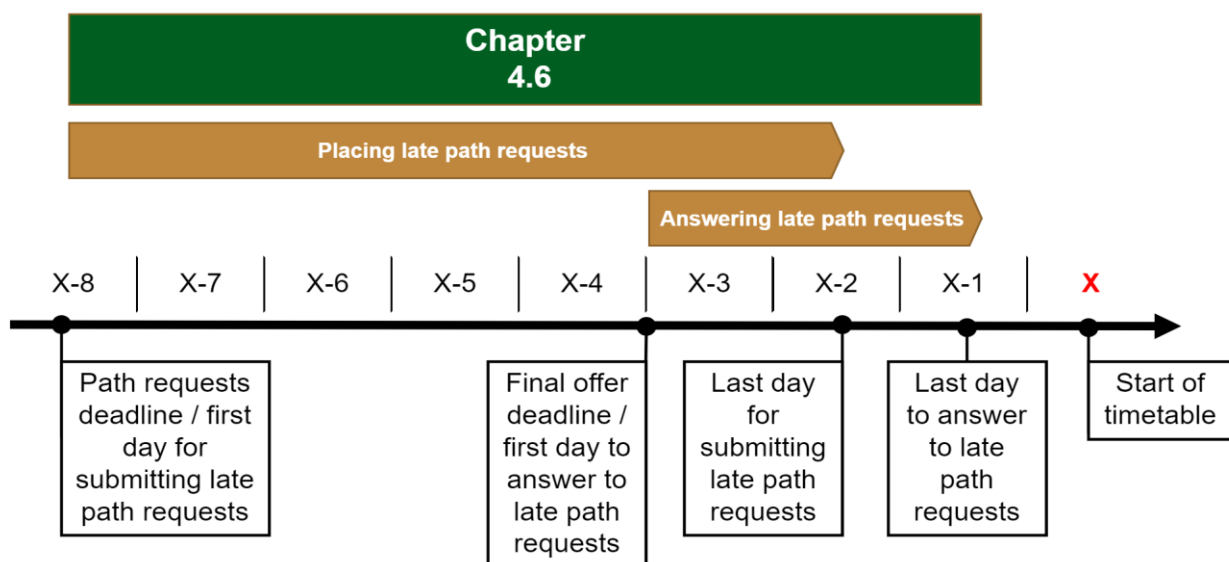
After the post-processing phase, the lead IM (if the request is placed in PCS) or the relevant IM (if the request is placed in national systems) is in charge of sending the harmonised and consistent final offer – with remarks if necessary. Remarks may consist of an indication regarding restricted availability during temporary capacity restrictions (TCRs).

In case of a delay in delivering the final offer, the exact required actions are described in the Handbook “*Procedures and Counter-Measures for Delays in Annual Timetable Preparation*”.

If all applicant(s) agree to this final offer within 7 calendar days, the paths will be allocated accordingly. If no agreement is reached or if the applicants do not respond in due time, the offer will be withdrawn by the lead IM (if the request is placed in PCS) or the relevant IM (if the request is placed in national systems) and the capacity will be made available for further needs by each IM taking national law into consideration.

### 4.6 Timeline for path request placed between X-8 and X-2 (LPR)

The following sub-chapters are applicable only for requests placed between X-8 and X-2, also called “Late Path Requests” (LPRs).



#### 4.6.1 X-3.5 : Path elaboration phase

LPRs are treated by the IMs after the final offer deadline (X-3.5) on new path requests.

As already explained in sub-chapter 4.5.1, if the request does not provide enough information for path construction, the leading or relevant IM will ask the applicant(s) to provide the missing data. In case the request is not harmonized on the whole route or does not contain plausible information, it might be rejected by the lead IM (if the request is placed in PCS) or the relevant IM (if the request is placed in national systems) – who should always explain why it has been rejected.

The IMs work on the request for their respective networks using (remaining) available sections of national catalogue paths whenever possible, as well as remaining capacity.

According to the Annex VII of Directive 2012/34/EU, the IMs may reschedule an allocated path to ensure the best possible matching of all path requests and if it is approved by the applicant to which the path had been allocated. This process (so-called “path optimization”) is described in the “*Procedures for Alteration of Allocated International Paths triggered by IMs*” (accessible via: <https://rne.eu/downloads/>).

The relevant IM must inform the involved applicant as soon as it becomes aware that a train path is not available. If possible, the IM will provide an alternative proposal; otherwise, the relevant IM will provide negative feedback<sup>5</sup>. Other IMs may adjust the path to a reasonable point of the infrastructure (alternative origin/destination), and then offer and allocate the path if the applicants are still interested in receiving a harmonised offer on a limited route. This offer should be submitted by the relevant IM(s) only if it does not cause any operational issues (e.g., not applicable in case IMs in-between cannot allocate the path) on all networks and it does not affect the future allocation decisions.

The IMs also need to take into account infrastructure availability and check it with their partners. Infrastructure availability may be reduced due to temporary capacity restrictions (TCRs). This work needs to be fully integrated into the process of harmonisation. Appropriate communication between IM and applicant must take place (e.g., alternative proposals).

The relevant treatment of such requests will be on first-come-first-served basis. If the request is submitted in PCS, it will be delivered to all IMs of the train run at the same time.

#### 4.6.2 X-1 (at the latest) : Final offer and acceptance

Once the answer has been harmonised, the lead IM (if the request is placed in PCS) or the relevant IM (if the request is placed in national systems) is in charge of sending the harmonised and consistent offer – with remarks if necessary. Remarks may consist of an indication regarding restricted availability during TCRs.

Offers for LPRs are not given before final answers to new path requests have been provided, which means after the final offer deadline in the second half of August (X-3.5). In any case, LPRs should be answered at the latest by X-1.25.

If all applicant(s) agree to the offer within 7 calendar days, the paths will be allocated accordingly. If the applicants do not agree with each other on the path offer, any corresponding remark will be treated as far as possible in the final answer. The IM(s) will propose an alternative; however, if “No alternatives” are possible, applicants will have to prepare a new request<sup>6</sup>. That means that the whole process starts again from the beginning, placing of a completely new LPR or ad hoc request<sup>7</sup>. If applicants do not send an answer within 7 calendar days, the final offer will be withdrawn by the lead IM (if the request is placed in PCS) or the relevant IM (if the request is placed in national systems) and the capacity will be made available for further needs by each IM taking national law into consideration.

<sup>5</sup> If the request is submitted in PCS, the relevant IM sets the red light in the system.

<sup>6</sup> The allocation of part of the route (harmonised offer on a limited route) can only be done if it does not cause any operational issues, as described in the sub-chapter 4.6.1.

<sup>7</sup> The relevant process for requesting an ad hoc path is described in “*Procedures for International Ad Hoc Path Request Management*” (accessible via: <https://rne.eu/downloads/>)

## 4.7 Path allocation

Formal path allocation is a legal act. For the time being, this will remain a national process and contracts will be delivered IM by IM.

## 5 Pre-warning system

In order to provide a platform for IMs to report border harmonisation issues and pressure points during the construction of the annual TT, RNE implemented the pre-warning system as one of the main solutions in this regard.

It consists of a short questionnaire in which the timetable experts have the chance to point out critical points that might lead to non-compliance with the main deadlines. The surveys will be carried out at the most crucial stages:

- X - 6.5 to detect critical issues during the path elaboration phase that can be addressed at the technical meeting.
- X - 5.5 to point out critical points/delays in the delivery of the draft offer.
- X - 3.75 to define pressure points related to the delivery of the final offer.
- X - 1.5 to indicate possible problems related to the LPRs.

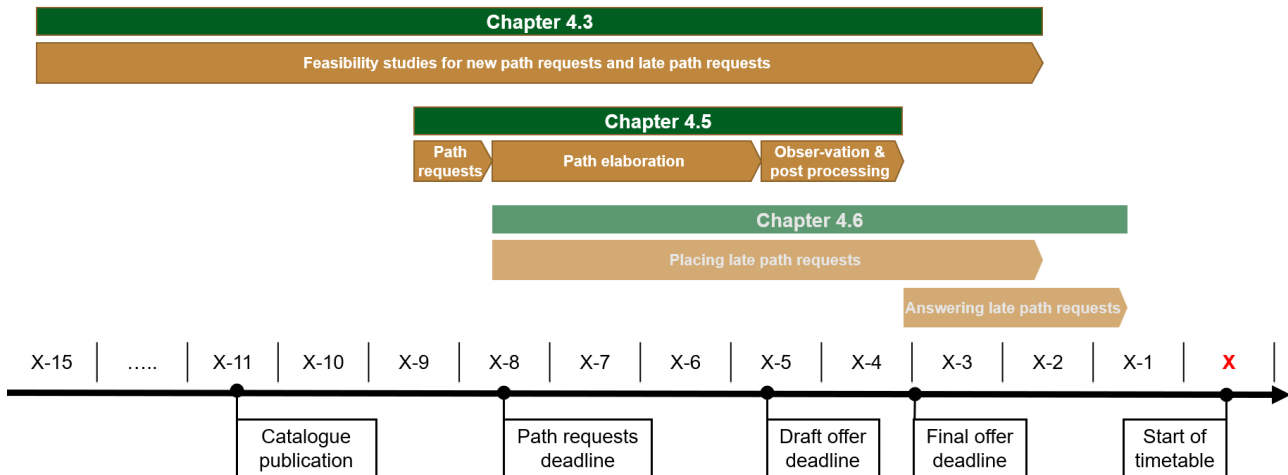
Answers are being used to find countermeasures for massive problems in time.

**Each Infrastructure Manager/Allocation Body has set up specific contact points (One-Stop-Shop, or OSS) to ensure efficient handling of the international path requests.**

**Contact details: <http://www.rne.eu/organisation/oss-c-oss/>**

## 6 Annex A: Timeline of planning process

The timeline of the planning process provides a general overview of the phases and deadlines in the process.



The exact dates of all specific phases and deadlines are issued by RNE for each timetable period. Deadlines defined by legal acts of EU (e.g. Annex VII to Directive 2012/34/EU) are subject to the calculation method defined in [Regulation \(EEC, Euratom\) No. 1182/7](#) of the Council of 3 June 1971 determining the rules applicable to periods, dates and time limits. Applicants shall be consulted before fixing the timetabling calendars, which are published at the following link: <https://rne.eu/capacity-management/capacity-planning-timetabling/>.

The table below shall provide the means to calculate the deadlines.

No	Time in process	Deadline	Date definitions	
			Legal requirement	Calculation method applied
1	X-15	Start of <b>feasibility study</b> requests <sup>1</sup> for annual path requests placed on time		To coincide with PCS major releases
2	X-11	Last day for publishing <b>catalogue paths</b>	Point (4) of Annex VII to Directive 2012/34/EU	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday in January
3	X-10	Last day for <b>feasibility study</b> requests for annual path requests placed on time		
4	X-9	Last day for answering <b>feasibility study</b> requests		
5	X-8	Last day for submission of path requests on time (so-called " <b>path request deadline</b> ")	Point (3) of Annex VII to Directive 2012/34/EU	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday in April
6	X-8	First day for submission of <b>late path requests</b>		First day after milestone 5
7	X-5.5	Start of RNE Technical Meeting		Three weeks prior to milestone 8
8	X-5	Last day for publication of the <b>draft working timetable</b> (so-called "draft offer deadline")	Point (5) of Annex VII to Directive 2012/34/EU	12 weeks after milestone 5
9	X-5	Start of the <b>observation phase</b>		First day after milestone 8
10	X-4	Last day to provide observations by applicants; start of post-processing phase	Art. 45(3), Directive 2012/34/EU	One month after milestone 9

11	X-3.5	Last day for IMs to provide final offers (so-called " <b>final offer deadline</b> ")		3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday after milestone 10
12	X-3.5	First day for IMs to answer <b>late path requests</b>		First day after milestone 11
13	X-2	Last day for submission of <b>late path requests</b>		54 days before timetable change
14	X-2	First day for submission of <b>ad-hoc requests</b> <sup>2</sup>		First day after milestone 13
15	X-1.25	Last day for IMs to answer <b>late path requests</b>		7 calendar days before milestone 16
16	X-1	Publication of the <b>final working timetable</b> to include allocated LPRs	Point (6) of Annex VII to Directive 2012/34/EU	One month before milestone 17
17	X	<b><u>Timetable change</u></b>	Point (2) of Annex VII to Directive 2012/34/EU	Sunday following the second Saturday in December

- 1) A detailed description can be found in the handbook "*Procedures for Feasibility Studies*".
- 2) A detailed description can be found in the handbook "*Procedures for International Ad-Hoc Path Request Management*".

## 7 Annex B: RNE Technical Meeting

### 1. Basics

- Goal of the meeting: IMs check that paths provided in the draft working timetable are harmonized at the border.
- RailNetEurope is responsible for organising the RNE Technical Meeting.
- Only Infrastructure Managers (IM), Allocation Bodies (AB) and Corridor One Stop Shops (C-OSS) are participating to the platform.
- Passenger and Freight paths are concerned in the meeting.
- English should be the common language.

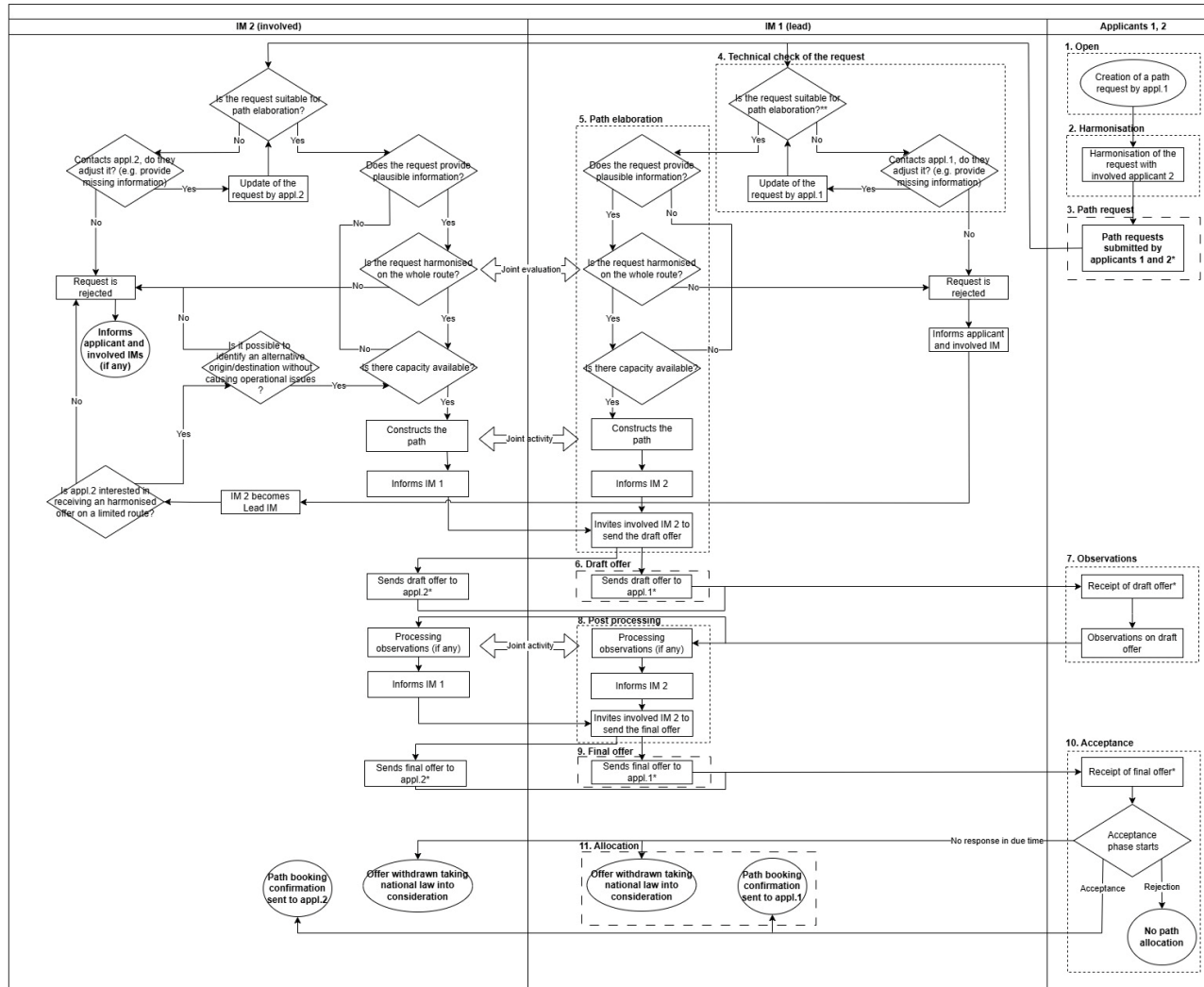
### 2. Organisation

- Planning of meetings is worked out by RNE and distributed by RNE JO before meetings take place.
- The meeting is scheduled to start three weeks prior to the publication of the draft working timetable.
- As far as it is possible, a list of paths must be sent at least one week prior to the RNE Technical Meeting to all IMs concerned. This enables IMs to discuss and focus only on remaining problems for trains at borders. It is advisable that IMs endeavour to sort out major problems or discrepancies which may occur before the RNE Technical Meeting.
- Depending on the workload and the number of trains involved, passenger and freight meetings may take place at the same time. However, when necessary, meetings will be organised separately. All meetings are organised in person only.
- Small meetings are organised by RFCs or group of countries for passengers and freight. Smaller bilateral meetings can be organised in order to IMs to deal with one border at a time.

## 8 Annex C: Process diagram

**Diagram Annual Timetable process**

The process diagram below shows a scenario in which a train runs over two networks in order IM1 and IM2. In each network a different applicant has been granted the right to request a path, i.e. applicant 1 for the network of IM1 and so forth.



\* If it is not possible to deliver the information using the same method by which the request was sent, the recipients must be contacted via alternative methods specified in the Network Statement (e.g. email).

\*\* Applicants must provide all mandatory data which are specified in the relevant Network Statement.