

PRESS RELEASE

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In 2021, rail transport recovered gradually for passenger activities, and rebounded strongly for freight activities

The French Transport Regulatory Authority (ART) publishes its report on the [rail transport markets for the year 2021](#), completing "The Essential" report published on 12th December 2022, the sixth edition of this report. It presents the evolution of the freight and passenger rail markets, still impacted in 2021 by the consequences of the health crisis, and sheds light on several major issues for rail transport policy, including SNCF Réseau's financial equilibrium, the quality of the infrastructures and services it operates and the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions.

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, INVESTMENT EFFORTS HAVE ENABLED THE NATIONAL RAIL NETWORK TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY REJUVENATED BY MORE THAN TWO YEARS, WITHOUT HOWEVER GUARANTEEING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF ITS ASSETS

Investment in the national rail network has increased in 2020 and 2021, particularly on the high-speed lines, and amounted to a total of €5.4 billion (i.e. an increase of 12% since 2019). However, they do not yet allow for a reduction in the average level of track disrepair, particularly on high-speed lines, which still shows a significant need for renewal in the future. The contraction of the national rail network continues with the closure, in five years, of nearly 1,200 km of old and scarcely used track.

In 2021, track maintenance and monitoring costs, which have been stable for a year and have fallen slightly since 2019 (-5%), focus in particular on the most heavily used network (known as the "core" network).

PASSENGER TRANSPORT IS STILL AFFECTED BY THE HEALTH CRISIS IN 2021, ESPECIALLY AS A RESULT OF A VERY GRADUAL RESUMPTION OF PUBLIC SERVICE OBLIGATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

The modal split of passenger rail transport is 8.6% in 2021. This is an increase on 2020, but still 1.3% lower than in 2019, to the benefit of road transport. In 2021, the overall recovery in passenger rail transport appears to be more dynamic in France than in most European countries.

Passenger traffic remains badly affected for Paris regional public service obligation (PSO) services "Transilien" (down by almost a third on the 2019 level), despite maintaining the offer, and for international services (down by 58% on their 2019 level). Regional PSO services "TER" also show a weak recovery in subscriber traffic, which has fallen between 2019 and 2021 by more than 35% in some regions. However, passenger activities traffic shows a stronger recovery in the second half of 2021 for all rail services, a recovery confirmed in 2022.

FREIGHT TRANSPORT IS GROWING AND RETURNING TO ITS 2017 LEVEL, DRIVEN BY COMBINED TRANSPORT

Rail freight activity rebounds by 5.4% in 2021 to a level above 2019 (and at the same level as 2017), in particular due to a 20% increase in combined transport (in tonne-kilometres), which accounts for 39% of freight activity. The incumbent operator Fret SNCF, still dominant with a 49% market share, is facing dynamic competition, including within the SNCF group (such as Captrain and Naviland Cargo).

The combined transport market is, for its part, even more open, with a large number of combined transport operators (no trains traction) accounting for 56% of train path requests and the incumbent operator's share being only 18%. By contrast, the traction activity of combined transport trains remains concentrated, the incumbent operator fret SNCF is still dominant with a 49% market share.

A CYCLICAL IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF SERVICE AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN 2021

Late train cancellation rates are decreasing in 2021. The reduction in the number of trains on the national rail network has also led to an improvement in the regularity and punctuality of high-speed services, as well as most regional PSO services, with the notable exception of the Hauts-de-France region. However, there is still a high rate of train descheduling, both in the first half of the year, which was marked by a period of lockdown, and in the last six months of 2021.

The greenhouse gas emissions of rail transport are, compared to other public transport modes, very moderate, due to a low weight of thermal passenger train traffic. The decrease in traffic in 2021 was accompanied by a 7% decrease in measured greenhouse gas emissions.

IN 2022, MOST REGIONS HAVE VALIDATED A TIMETABLE FOR OPENING UP THEIR REGIONAL TRAIN SERVICES TO COMPETITION

The majority of regions have now validated a process and a timetable for opening up their PSO rail services to competition, with several regions specifying the batches considered.

The opening up to competition of non PSO passenger rail services did not begin until the very end of 2021, with the arrival of Trenitalia, and is still limited, in 2022, to the presence of a single alternative operator, in addition to the offers of the incumbent operator SNCF Voyageurs and its subsidiary OSLO, which operates "Ouigo Train Classique" services, newly created in 2022.

For further details

- [Rail market monitoring report in France in 2021 - Overview](#)
- [« Le marché français du transport ferroviaire en 2021 » - March 2023](#)

About the French Transport Regulatory Authority (ART)

Since 2010, the French railway sector has had an independent authority to accompany its gradual opening to competition: the Autorité de régulation des activités ferroviaires (Araf). Law 2015-990 of 6 August 2015 on growth, activity and equal economic opportunity extended the regulator's powers to road activities - coach transport and motorways. On 15 October 2015, Araf became the Autorité de régulation des activités ferroviaires et routières (Arafer), with the mission to contribute to the proper functioning of public service and competitive activities for the benefit of rail and road transport customers.

With competence for the regulation of airport charges since 1 October 2019, Arafer became the Transport Regulatory Authority (ART) on that date. Lastly, Law No. 2019-1428 of 24 December 2019 -mobility act- extended the Authority's powers and missions to the opening up of mobility and ticketing data, as well as to the regulation of infrastructure manager activities and security activities carried out by RATP in Île-de-France. Its opinions and decisions are adopted by a college of five independent members chosen for their economic, legal or technical skills in the field of digital services or transport, or for their expertise in competition matters. It is chaired since 4th August 2022 by Philippe Richert, Vice-President and Acting President.