



National Investigation Body (NIB) Network

**Annual Peer Review Report for 2025
and
Common Peer Review Programme**

DOCUMENT CHANGE RECORD

The following table records the complete history of this document.

Version:	Date:	Reason for change:	Parts of document affected:
0.1	28/01/2026		Draft to TF1.
0.2	04/02/2028		Draft version to NIB Network.
0.3	25/05/2026	Bulgaria added.	
0.4	29/05/2026	Version after TF1 work.	Draft version to NIB Network.
Final version	23/06/2026	Comments from NIB Network	

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1 BACKGROUND

This Annual Report and Common Review Programme is published by the National Investigation Bodies (NIBs) to meet the requirements of Article 22 (7) of the Directive (EU) 2016/798 on railway safety. The Article states:

The investigating bodies, with the support of the Agency in accordance with Article 38(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/796, shall establish a programme of peer reviews where all investigating bodies are encouraged to participate so as to monitor their effectiveness and independence.

The investigating bodies, with the support of the secretariat referred to in Article 38(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/796, shall publish:

(a) the common peer-review programme and the review criteria; and

(b) an annual report on the programme, highlighting identified strengths and suggestions for improvements.

The peer review reports shall be provided to all investigating bodies and to the Agency. Those reports shall be published on a voluntary basis.

The peer review seeks to monitor the effectiveness and independence of a NIB by considering its organization, processes and outputs (eg accident reports, safety recommendations, annual reports). The peer review process also seeks to assist development of all NIBs by sharing with them strengths and suggestions for improvements identified during reviews.

The NIBs have appointed a Peer Review Task Force (Task Force 1) to manage and carry out the reviews. This Task Force comprises representatives from a range of NIBs and an observer from the Agency (The European Union Agency for Railways).

Since 2018, the Agency representative regularly participates as an observer in all peer review activities, including on-site visits, and actively contributes with assistance, opinions and advice to the development of the peer review programme and the work of the Task Force 1. This cooperation has been beneficial and the Task Force 1 supports its continuation in the future.

The peer review of each state is carried out by a Panel selected from the Task Force. The output of each peer review is based on information provided by the NIB being reviewed. This information is provided to the panel in a questionnaire and during interviews by the panel at the visit to the reviewed NIB. Details of the questionnaire and the review criteria are given in the NIB Peer Review Handbook. This can be found at the NIB Network webpage https://www.era.europa.eu/agency/stakeholder-relations/national-investigation-bodies/nib-network-european-network-rail-accidents-national-investigation-bodies_en.

The peer review relies on answers given by the NIB in the questionnaire and during the on-site visit. The peer review process is not intended to fully investigate all issues covered by the questionnaire and does not address all issues in the documents used as review criteria. It is targeted at issues where the reviewers believe there will be the most value to the reviewed NIB and to other NIBs. Peer review is a cooperative process involving trust between the parties. Peer reviewers will seek justifications for statements made but, unlike an auditor, will not seek evidence to verify the truth of statements.

The relevant Peer Review Panel has prepared a peer review report for each reviewed NIB. The Directive states that these are published on a voluntary basis and this is done by the reviewed NIB if it wishes to do so. Other NIBs and the Agency are not permitted to provide copies of the reports relating to individual NIBs. Any requests for a copy of a peer review report should therefore be addressed to the reviewed NIB.

The final peer review report for each reviewed NIB is prepared by the NIB peer review panel in the frame of the common peer-review programme established by the investigating bodies in accordance with Article 22(7) of the Directive (EU) 2016/798 on railway safety.

The NIB peer review team examines data during the peer review of the NIB using the process described in the Peer Review Handbook. The collection of data is based on the review of some documents, internal procedures or case studies provided on a voluntary basis, as well as on interviews with management and other staff members of the NIB.

The final peer review report reflects the collective judgement of the peer review panel regarding the findings resulting from the peer review process. However, the individual members of the peer review team and their NIBs are not liable for the contents of the report and/or for any omissions.

This 2025 annual report covers the peer reviews carried out in 2025 and it is the eighth annual report to be submitted to the Agency by the NIB Network.

The Task Force 1 would like to thank all the reviewed NIBs for their openness, for their courtesy and for the valuable feedback they have provided to help improve the peer review process.

2 NIB AND STATE DETAILS

NIBs reviewed				
State	NIB Name	NIB Type	Date of visit by Peer Review Panel	Number of rail mode investigators (full time equivalent)
Austria	Sicherheitsuntersuchungsstelle des Bundes, SUB (The safety investigation authority of the Federal Government)	Multimodal	October 28 - 29	5
Luxembourg	Administration des enquêtes techniques, AET (The Administration of technical investigations)	Multimodal	September 24 - 25	2
United Kingdom	Rail Accident Investigation Branch	Single mode	November 5 - 6	25,8 ¹
Bulgaria	National Air, Maritime and Railway Transport Accidents Investigation Board (NAMRTAIB)	Multimodal	December 9 - 10	1

¹ One investigator works 4 days a week.

Statistics for railways in reviewed states			
State	Route length (kilometres)	Passenger train-kilometres/year	Freight train-kilometres/year
Austria	Approx. 5 700 km	132,55478 Million	5148,612 km
Luxembourg	Single track: 100,3km - Double track: 160,3km	7,33 (millions km train in 2023)	0,38 (millions km train in 2023)
United Kingdom	15,935 route km (Great Britain mainline) 354 route km (Northern Ireland mainline) 413 route km (Metro) 374 route km (Light rail and trams)	60.100 billion (Great Britain mainline) 446 million (Northern Ireland mainline) 10.573 billion (Metro) 1.555 billion (Light rail and trams)	31.44 million (Great Britain mainline)
Bulgaria	6293 km	9728	21769
NOTE: Data rounded and refers to the year before the peer review was undertaken.			

Types of investigation undertaken by reviewed NIBs

State	Heavy rail			Metro railways*		Trams*		Other (trolley bus, cable car, etc)*	
	Investigations required by Directive 2016/798 Article 20(1))	National law requirement outside Article 20(1)*	Discretion to investigate other events*	National law requirement	Discretion to investigate other events	National law requirement	Discretion to investigate other events	National law requirement	Discretion to investigate other events
Austria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	No	No
UK	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No

* Directive (EU) 2016/798 permits, but does not require, a NIB to investigate these accidents and events.

3 PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The following NIBs contributed investigators to the Peer Review Panel members during the period covered by this report. The panel members are required to treat information obtained during peer reviews confidential and must not share this information with their employers. All these investigators were a panel member in at least one peer review or one planned review.

- NIB FR
- NIB DE
- NIB PL
- NIB IE
- NIB SE
- NIB BE
- NIB CZ
- NIB RO
- NIB UK²

People from the following organisations attended a peer review as an observer. Observers are required to treat information obtained during peer reviews as confidential as panel members and must not share this information with their employers.

- NIB IT
- NIB LV
- The Agency

² NIB UK is a technical advisor to the NIB Network and also integrating Task Force 1. In this capacity, the NIB participates in peer review panels.

4 INTRODUCTION TO PEER REVIEW FINDINGS

- 4.1 This annual report gives an overview of findings from the NIB peer reviews in the year 2025 covered by this report. It concentrates on issues most likely to influence the effectiveness and independence of NIBs and does not cover every finding of the individual NIB reviews.
- 4.2 Directive (EU) 2016/798 requires that the peer review process considers effectiveness and independence, and that the annual report identifies strengths and suggestions for improvements. The table below links comments on effectiveness and independence with related strengths and suggestions for improvements.
- 4.3 The strengths and suggestions for improvements identified during the peer review process do not apply to all reviewed NIBs.

5 PEER REVIEW FINDINGS

5.1 Effectiveness of investigation activities and developing recommendations

General comment	Strengths identified in at least one NIB	Suggestions for improvement applicable to at least one NIB
<i>Evidence supporting the overall finding that most NIBs were effective included the strengths tabulated in the adjacent column.</i> All NIBs considered in this report appear to be generally carrying out 'mandatory' investigations and making recommendations effectively. Three out of the four NIBs keep an average of more than 12 months for 'mandatory' investigations. All NIBs are using manuals/handbooks that provides a very good support for all investigators and contains guidelines on how to carry out investigations. All of the NIBs that have to follow the reporting structure stated in the COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2020/572 (or similar) are following the regulation as closely as possible. Greater effectiveness could be achieved by ensuring that the NIB has sufficient resource available to meet the requirements of the Directive and any additional requirements of national law; and	Robust processes for timely notification of accidents. Rapid access to railway industry data Structured approaches to investigating accidents. All NIBs are using an Accident Investigation Manual (or similar documents) that provides a very good support for all investigators and guidelines on how to carry out investigations. Findings and recommendations being well supported by evidence. Translation into English of at least parts of reports to assist both accident investigation and safety improvements in other countries.	Ensuring that the NIB has sufficient resources for the 'mandatory' investigations and also publish reports timely to increase safety learning. Having the necessary resources, one NIB should consider investigating non-mandatory accidents to ensure that its investigators maintain their competence in investigating railway accidents, to improve railway safety and to follow the spirit of the Directive. In one of the investigation reports submitted by the NIBs there was a short analysis section and the recommendations were not clearly linked to the contributing factors. It is recommended that the recommendations shall be based on established facts and in the analysis section.

5.1 Effectiveness of investigation activities and developing recommendations

General comment	Strengths identified in at least one NIB	Suggestions for improvement applicable to at least one NIB
• greater coverage of some factors affecting accidents. • Investigating 'non-mandatory' accidents or incidents to improve railway safety. All of the NIBs have MoU's with the judicial authorities etc. for the cooperation between the NIB and other stakeholders that are involved in accident investigation.	Good cooperation with rail industry. Active participation in the NIB Network in order to exchange safety learning with other NIBs. Two of the NIBs has consultation meetings (or similar) with the addressees of the recommendations.	One of the NIBs publishes comments received on the draft report in the final report which results in an extended report and have little context when the comments have been taken into consideration and the final report has been amended. The NIB is proposed to pursue legislative changes.

5.2 Effectiveness of recommendation implementation

General comment	Strengths identified in at least one NIB	Suggestions for improvement applicable to at least one NIB
<i>A NIB cannot be considered fully effective if its recommendations are not being properly considered and implemented in a timely manner when appropriate. There is evidence suggesting that this does not always happen.</i> All NIBs reported that the NSA reported back periodically on measures that are taken or planned as a consequence of a given recommendation. One of the NIBs reported that 40% of the recommendations were not implemented. One of the NIBs do not clearly identify the end implementers which means that it is difficult to engage with the end implementers during the production of the recommendations to ensure that the recommendations have their backing and understanding.	The cooperation seems to be working good between the NIB and NSA.	<i>If NIBs are not receiving meaningful and timely feedback on actions taken in response to their recommendations, appropriate state organisations or ERA should take the action needed to ensure that this happens.</i> If recommendations are not being implemented in a timely manner when appropriate, the state organisations responsible for ensuring proper implementation should take the action needed to achieve implementation. To get a better understanding for the recommendations and also improving the rate of implementation of recommendations, it is suggested that the NIB could set up specific meetings with the addressees of the recommendations before publishing the final report. Identifying the end implementer makes it easier for the stakeholders to take actions in line with the recommendation.

5.3 Independence

General comment	Strengths identified in at least one NIB	Suggestions for improvement applicable to at least one NIB
All NIBs indicated that they were independent in its organisation, legal structure and decision-making from any infrastructure manager, railway undertaking, charging body, allocation body and conformity assessment body and from any party whose interests could conflict with the tasks entrusted to the investigating body. For one NIB, the investigation onsite is made by a Task Force composed by representatives of IM and RU and is led by the IM. This is not in line with the provision of the RSD and can threaten the NIBs independence and influence the investigation process.	Legislation making provision for independence. Working relationships with other parties which take account of NIB independence.	One NIB has only one railway investigator which makes the NIB very vulnerable if the investigator is not able to perform his tasks. The NIB ought to have sufficient resources to perform their tasks.

6 PEER REVIEW COSTS

Although it is not explicitly required by the EU legislation, the Agency has been financially supporting the Peer Review Programme since 2022, reimbursing all expenses such as travel and accommodation for panel members when attending the on-site phase. This has continued in 2024, where the Agency assured a dedicated budget for the peer review activities.

This support has facilitated the participation as panel members of some NIBs who were initially reluctant to contribute to the Peer Review programme for budgetary reasons. In 2025, the Agency will continue to reimburse the peer review activities and this will hopefully lead to more NIBs participating as panel members.

The peer review process will not be fully effective without the participation by most of (preferably all) NIBs and will not be fully effective if some types of NIBs (eg small NIBs) are not represented in the peer review panels. If the peer review process is not fully effective, opportunities to improve railway safety by improving accident investigation will be lost.

Directive (EU) 2016/798 states that participation in the peer review programme is voluntary so there is no direct requirement for national governments to meet panel members' costs. Article 35 of the Regulation (EU) 2016/796 indicates that the Agency expects to receive information from an effective peer review programme.

There was a need for interpreters in one of on-site visits in the peer reviews in 2025 and the budget for the peer review programme from the Agency included the cost for the interpreters.

The NIB Network is willing to work with the Agency to look for an ongoing funding of the peer review programme. If the peer review programme does not have an ongoing funding plan, this may affect the peer review programme, which could result that the peer review programme not fully achieve the railway safety improvements that can be achieved through a fully effective review process.

7 AREAS OF ONGOING CONCERN

Since the start of the peer review programme in 2018, the Agency has also provided «NIB secretariat» support to the programme in accordance with Article 38(2) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/796 'The Agency shall support the investigating bodies in accordance with Article 22(7) of Directive (EU) 2016/798. To facilitate cooperation among the investigating bodies, the Agency shall provide a secretariat which shall be organised separately from the functions within the Agency...' and Article 22(7) of the Directive (EU) 2016/798 'The investigating bodies, with the support of the Agency in accordance with Article 38(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/796, shall establish a programme of peer reviews where all investigating bodies are encouraged to participate so as to monitor their effectiveness and independence. The investigating bodies, with the support of the secretariat referred to in Article 38(2) of Regulation (EU) 2016/796, shall publish: (a) the common peer-review programme and the review criteria; and (b) an annual report on the programme, highlighting identified strengths and suggestions for improvements. This secretariat support included organising meetings, taking minutes of the TF1 meetings, uploading documents to the Sharepoint etc. Since 2023 this support from the Agency has decreased and this could have a negative impact on the peer review programme in the long term. It is important for the success of the peer review programme that the Agency still continues to support the programme with a secretariat, as the individual NIBs in Task Force 1 do not have additional funds to facilitate a secretariat.

The Peer review programme is voluntary and the aim is to get all NIBs to participate in the programme. Currently 21 NIBs have participated and there are five NIBs planned to be peer reviewed in 2026 and 2027. There are still two NIBs to volunteer to the programme.

There were also a few obstacles during the peer review programme. The first obstacle for participating to the programme was the budget; with a budget from the Agency NIBs who participate as panel members (not observers) can be reimbursed. The second obstacle is the level of English to participate to the peer review programme; with a budget from the Agency these NIBs can also participate in the peer review programme. Therefore, the NIB Network is satisfied that these two obstacles were removed from the process.

8 COMMON PEER REVIEW PROGRAMME

The programme below is published to comply with Article 22(7)(a) of the Directive (EU) 2016/798.

Year	NIBs	Status
2018	Romania, Czech Republic and Denmark	Completed.
2019	Norway and Lithuania	Completed.
2020	Sweden, Hungary and Croatia	Postponed due to the pandemic situation.
2021	Sweden and Croatia	Completed.
2022	Germany, Ireland and Hungary	Completed.
2023	Belgium, Finland and Portugal	Completed.
2024	France, Netherlands, Switzerland and Spain	Completed.
2025	Austria, Luxembourg, Bulgaria and United Kingdom	Completed.
2026	Greece, Latvia and Estonia.	Planned.
2027	Italy and Poland.	Planned.