

## Press release

### European Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC): key element for the “Green Deal” modal shift to rail

- **Memorandum of Understanding for the European Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC) for rail freight signed**
- **The joined sector initiative lays the foundation for the automation and digitalization of rail freight transport in Europe**
- **DAC enables smart capacity increase for European rail infrastructure**

(Brussels, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020) – In order to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal, rail freight transport plays an essential role in the European mobility system of the future. Shifting freight traffic to rail is the fastest and most efficient way to combat the ever-increasing CO2 emissions. To achieve this modal shift, infrastructure capacities, the general competitiveness of railways and therefore cost-efficiency and productivity in rail must be increased. This requires a fundamental transformation of the sector towards automation and digitalization. In this regard, RFF promotes the renewal of rail freight through technological pillars such as European Railway Traffic Management (ERTMS), Automatic Train Operation (ATO), Digital platforms and Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC) as well as infrastructure measures offering rail freight capacity and frequency to attract clients from road transport.

Digital Automatic Coupling is considered the unique chance to revolutionize European rail freight transport, as it is the essential element to transform railway operations management. DAC brings more capacity for shifting freight transport to rail through new technologies and innovations, thus providing a foundation for climate protection and economic growth. As a key enabler for further digitalization and automation of the European rail system, it is a prerequisite to significantly increase rail freight's share of the modal split to 30% by 2030 and therefore comply with the Green Deal. With the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding, the sector aims to promote the Digital Automatic Coupling throughout Europe and fully supports the ambitions of the German Council Presidency on implementing DAC across Europe.

#### **Why Europe needs Digital Automatic Coupling**

As coupling/decoupling is one of the two main procedures in train operations (train assembly, train driving), its automation is of utmost importance. Europe is trailing the world in this respect, as it is the last continent to use standard manual couplers. The sector propose to fully deploy the DAC technology latest until 2030 which will significantly improve competitiveness of the rail sector's operations by providing electricity and data bus line across train, automated brake testing, electro-pneumatic brakes, and will enable train consistency checks which is a infrastructural prerequisite required for the introduction of ERTMS level 3.

#### **MoU as a decisive signal for driving the DAC throughout Europe**

The sector initiative is sending the required positive signal to the council of transport ministers to get full support for the essential project to promote the DAC throughout Europe. Initiated by DB, ÖBB, SBB, the sector initiative is supported by the Rail Freight Forward members (BLS Cargo, CD Cargo, CFL cargo, DB Cargo, Green Cargo, Lineas, LTE, ÖBB Rail Cargo Group, Ost-West Logistik, PKP Cargo, RENFE MERCANCÍAS, SBB Cargo, Fret SNCF, Mercitalia Rail, ZSSK Cargo) and by the sector associations CER, CIT, ERFA, FTE, UIC, UIP and VDV. To promote the shared vision of a high-performance rail network across Europe, Infrastructure Managers, Wagon Keepers, Railway Undertakings and other sector players are invited to join

this MoU. The EU DAC Delivery Programme is currently being set up under the umbrella of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking. According to this program, DAC will produce benefits when combined with other innovations (such as ATO, digital brake tests and visual inspections) and measures (rail freight capacity and frequency). In this regard, a possible automation roadmap for the EU rail sector would need to include both automatic coupling and automatic uncoupling, for obvious efficiency as well as financial reasons. The success of the DAC deployment depends on the different stages, such as demonstrating the benefits of the available prototypes, assessing the DAC prototypes and defining the European DAC open standard, establishing a feasible migration programme and identifying the relevant funding model to enable, accelerate, and bridge the transition process until deployment is completed. The signatories commit to the Union-wide deployment of the digital automatic coupling in the rail freight sector until 2030, subject to a sound migration plan, strong financial and deployment support by European Commission as well as Member States, which will pave the way to achieve this goal encompassing all concerned actors.

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