

Summary of the 23rd meeting with the RFC North Sea – Baltic RAG & TAG

Date: 09.10.2024 09:00 – 15:00

Venue: Hotel Fitzgerald,
Vitkova 151/26
186 00 Prague
Czechia

1. Welcome and introduction.

Katarzyna Wachowicz, Managing Director of the RFC NS-B, Zita Koops – Arvai, Managing Director of RFC Rhine - Danube and Lőrinc Czakó, Managing Director of RFC Orient – East Med welcomed the participants. Katarzyna Wachowicz presented the agenda. Lőrinc Czakó reminded this is the first trilateral RAG/TAG meeting, organised as per Customer's request.

2. RAG slots

Joost Overdijkink (JO), UIC and ECCO Chair

presented a topic of proposal for compensation model for TCRs developed by speakers. Due to large maintenance backlog, zero carbon emissions requirement and modal shift requiring capacity increase, sector is looking for the solutions based on RU experience. Those solutions are meant to compensate RUs and stimulate IMs to better coordinate maintenance works. Goal of the proposal is to prevent reverse modal shift. JO stated improved cross – border and cross – RFC cooperation could allow for more useful capacity during construction and compensating RUs should be simple, standard and sufficient. He also presented ECCO group's project aiming at encouraging RUs to get in contact with the group and the RFCs, which could be beneficial in light of the TEN-T and Capacity Regulation revision, as well as allow for a useful input into TTR.

Martin Erlinger (ME), Rail Cargo Austria AG, RAG speaker of RFC Rhine – Danube,

presented a detailed analysis of TCR cost compensation. He stated SERAF'S commercial conditions and track access charges subgroup has begun working on the proposal. ME explained it should consist of an IM motivational component, should offer traction support, be reciprocal and standardised. Works on the proposal are ongoing.

ME presented RAG's view on the TEN-T parameters realisation – based on CIP maps, it is far from ideal. For the RUs, electrification/speed/route class and train length are the most important ones and should be improved upon the earliest. He also pointed out geographical differences when it comes to KPIs – some sections, especially those in N-W Europe, are competitive against road transport, whereas sections in S-E Europe still underperform. TEN-T parameter realisation may help improve performance along the corridors. JO added that according to the World Bank's analysis, the route from China via Turkey has a big potential, but the slow connection from Greece to mainland Europe poses as a bottleneck.

Guus de Mol stated we should stop using the word compensation and start using penalties, as the word compensation has too broad of a meaning and leaves room for interpretation. When it comes to the TEN-T parameters, he reminded that the financing of even the core network upgrades/improvements is lacking, leaving IMs with extremely limited to no funds at all.

Paweł Wiechoczek (PW), DB Cargo Polska, RAG speaker of RFC North Sea – Baltic,

Presented the topic of Medyka – Mostiska BCP and the investments needed to improve the capacity. This BCP was not used much before the war but now the situation has changed and significant improvements are needed. PW asked to keep this topic on the agenda for the future and requested from the Polish IM and Ministry to prepare an overview of planned investments. Weronika Karbowskiak of PLK S.A. reminded that Medyka BCP is not a part of the RFC but will become a part of North Sea – Baltic ETC. She stated PLK works closely with UZ, Ukrainian integrated IM/RU and acknowledged the low quality of infrastructure, now heavily used. Prior reconstruction was impossible due to the war, so only minor works have been done, however PLK has completed the feasibility study, EU funding is also confirmed and works are set to start in 2028.

Gyula Farkas (GF), Rail Cargo Hungaria, RAG speaker of RFC Orient – East Med,

Presented the topic of quiet sections in relation to Noise TSI regulation, that enters into force on 8th of December 2024. According to this regulation, all existing wagons will have to be quiet, with composite brake pads only, no iron pads. Availability of the information which line is classified as quiet section varies between the IMs. GF called for increased transparency, clarity and user friendly access to this data, preferably in English. Data should be available in Excel and map format, both on ERA's and RFC's website. It was also pointed out Noise TSI will not apply in the Baltic States. Zita Koops-Arvai and Michel Geubelle both pointed out their respective Management Boards will enquire at RNE about a possibility of adding quiet sections as a layer in CIP. Paweł Wiechoczek stated that both current status and planned changes should be made known to the RUs so they can prepare for rolling stock adaptation, especially when it comes to the cross border running traffic. Damian Figurski informed each country has a transition period and a list of exceptions – information on those should also be available to all interested parties.

3. TAG slot

Erik Nieuwenhuis (EN), Rail Terminal Rzepin, TAG Speaker of RFC North Sea - Baltic,

raised the topic of benefits of RAG/TAG participation, namely being a platform of communication between the terminals - it is lacking and this should change. Feedback exchange, especially now when last/first mile connections are part of TEN-T, should become an industry standard. He also informed that terminals provide data to the RFP for free but in order to get the data from RNE systems they need to pay, and the cost is an obstacle for small companies. When it comes to Asia/UA – EU traffic – EN stated that all borders should be open and investment plans should be made known to prepare for an increased traffic from the East.

4. Capacity Management – a joint presentation

C-OSS Managers of 3 corridors: József Ádám Balogh, Anna Difliff and Bernd Wetzel presented the state of play of this year's dossier requests and how were those managed. When it comes to RFC NS-B's results, Anna Difliff was pleased to announce very good results. Draft offer non compliance was lower compared to the final offer. Out of 38 dossiers, 33 were ready for the final offer deadline without any major quality defects.

5. TCRs – a joint presentation

Representatives of all 3 corridors presented the planned TCRs for TT 2025 and TT2026. For RFC North Sea – Baltic, Hans Verhoeven major impact (total closure) TCRs were presented.

Those with the biggest impact in TT2025 are as follows:

- Korsche Towarowa -Efk Towarowy (PLK S.A.)
- Emmerich Border – Oberhausen Main Station (DB InfraGO AG)
- Dresden – Děčín (Elbe valley) (DB InfraGO AG)
- Frankfurt (O) – Frankfurt Oderbrücke (DB InfraGO AG)
- Kijfhoek – Meteren – Zevenaar (Infrabel)

When it comes to TT2026, the following main total closures will take place:

- Emmerich Border – Oberhausen Main Station (DB InfraGO AG)
- Uelzen Gbf – Hamburg (DB InfraGO AG)
- Frankfurt Oder – Erkner (DB InfraGO AG)
- Dresden – Děčín (Elbe valley) (DB InfraGO AG)
- Riesa – Röderau (DB InfraGO AG)

Paweł Wiechoczek questioned why no major TCRs on PLK's lines have been shown, even though their Network Statement shows closures on a line from Poznań to Rzepin with a single track only and re-routing via Wrocław. Weronika Karbowski stated TCRs are chosen to appear Impact Sheets and this year it was decided to show full track closures only. Aforementioned TCR is not such a closure and will be shown on the website, PLK has also organised bilateral meetings with the RUs to discuss the options, with more meeting coming up. She also added proposed speed restrictions will be added at a later date.

Martin Erlinger asked if it's safe to assume many more TCRs in order for the IMs to fulfil TEN-T requirements as major improvements are expected. Lőrinc Czako stated if the EU funding schedule can be harmonised with the IM's projects, major improvements can be expected.

6. ERTMS rollout in Czechia

Tomaš Konopač (TK), ŽSR General Directory, Manager for ETCS implementation coordination on the Czech railway infrastructure, presented the state of play.

Currently in Czechia 25% of lines are equipped with an old class B system, and 75% of lines have no system at all. As safety is a priority, the Czech Government decided to equip all lines with some ATP system until 2040. ETCS L2 is expected to be fitted on 25% of lines, mainly those belonging to TEN-T, ETCS L1 is to be fitted on low traffic intensity lines. Starting in January 2025, only ETCS compatible wagons will be permitted to run on some lines. When it comes to problems encountered, TK mentioned backwards compatibility issues as well as stability of technical specification and frequent TSI changes by ERADG MOVE.

Michel Geubelle stated Belgium was one of the first countries to have fitted ETCS and also has faced many problems – if not all countries are ready with the rollout at the same time, it will always cause problems. Whether it is as RU who has to change wagons with each specification change or an IM, problems are the same and caused by lack of planning rather than technical aspects.

Martin Erlinger asked what is the reason for such frequent specs changes. TK replied that it is due to the software errors found and new functions/developments added but those should not be introduced on an ad-hoc basis but rather rolled out together.

7. Cross – border groups QCO – a joint presentation

For RFC North Sea - Baltic Zuhail Nalbant and Christian Schneider of DB InfraGO AG presented the QCO format – cross border cooperation groups with neighbouring IMs/customers on how to improve border processes with a focus on dwell time optimisation. QCOs on RFC NS-B are as follows:

- Frankfurt(Oder) – Rzepin
- Bad Schandau - Děčín
- Bad Bentheim – Oldenzaal border crossing

All of the above mentioned QCOs serve as a valuable platform to exchange information and test new solutions. Bad Bendheim – Oldenzaal is facing the biggest challenge due to the planned Emmerich closure – this, for now, passenger – oriented crossing is about to become the route for at least 30 more freight trains per day. Zuhail Nalbant invited all customers to participate in the QCO meetings.

8. Impact of the revised TEN-T Regulation.

Katarzyna Wachowicz presented the background information, informing all participants about the changes posed to the RFCs by the Regulation, along with the timeline of when will they take place. As the Managing Director of RFC NS-B, she explained the routing changes on the corridor:

- Extension to Finland and Sweden
- Extension to Ukraine
- Removal of the Czech stretch from the Corridor map
- Changes to routing in Poland and other countries

She assured all customers all those changes will be published in the Implementation Plan and will mostly go unnoticed from their side. All RFCs will continue business as usual and even closer cooperation is expected now. When it comes to integrating Ukraine to the Corridors, Zita Koops – Arvai informed there is an intention to sign a treaty similar to Transport Community Treaty signed with Western Balkans but for the time being, the date of the signature remains uncertain.

3 C-OSS Managers presented changes to the offer caused by the TEN-T revision.

For RFC North Sea – Baltic, Anna Difliff informed that the Czech network offer (that previously belonged to RFC NS-B) will be moved to the RFC Rhine – Danube offer and published there. She also informed that Berlin Ring will be closed for TT2026 and offered Horka – Węglińiec as an alternative route. When it comes to a new options, a faster route via Riga passenger station will also be offered in TT2026. AD once again invited all customers to the PCS training scheduled for February 2025.

9. Transition into ETC Rhine – Danube

Lőrinc Czakó, Managing Director of RFC Orient – East Med informed all participants this RFC will cease to exist on the 31st of March 2025 and become a part of ETC Rhine – Danube. He assured all customers their experience will not be hindered by this change and thanked everyone for the years of support.

10. Future RAG/TAG cooperation

Katarzyna Wachowicz presented the 2 areas of cooperation with the RAGs and TAGs the RFCs would like to improve upon:

- Infrastructure development and investment needs
- Assessment of the performance of rail freight services

Martin Erlinger stated he will also communicate with RAG speaker of RFC O-EM on how to cooperate in light of O-EM merging with Rhine – Danube. He also emphasized again the importance of TEN-T regulation requirements and their fulfilment, and proposed to discuss some sort of performance targets that could be helpful to improve the market share of rail.

11. AOB

Katarzyna Wachowicz reminder all participants about:

- Rail Facilities Portal webinar on the 30th of October
- User Satisfaction Survey – deadline for submitting the answers is 12th of October
- CEF call published by the EC

She also asked about feedback from today's meeting. Martin Erlinger stated he likes this joint format, it is efficient, useful and a great opportunity to learn from one another. Regional meeting also mean less travel time, especially if rail networks are overlapping. He proposed to keep the regional approach, with one joint meeting and one corridor – specific. Paweł Wiechoczek also would like to have one joint and one corridor – specific meeting.

Lőrinc Czakó thanked everyone for their presentations and questions.

Katarzyna Wachowicz and Lőrinc Czakó thanked to all participants for the meeting on behalf of the Management Boards. The meeting was closed.

List of annexes and presentations:

All the presentations and annexes are available on the RFC NS-B website in the Download area <https://rfc8.eu/downloads/>.

- 1) Agenda for the RAG-TAG meeting on 09.10.2024
- 2) Annex 2 RAG slot
- 3) Annex 3 TAG slot
- 4) Annex 4 Draft – Final offer results TT2025
- 5) Annex 5a RFC NS-B TCRs for 2025 and 2026
- 6) Annex 5b RFC OEM and RD TCRs
- 7) Annex 6 Status of ERTMS roll out in the Czech Republic
- 8) Annex 7a Cross-border groups QCOs RFC NS-B
- 9) Annex 7b Cross-border groups RFC OEM
- 10) Annex 8a Impacts of the revised TEN-T Regulation
- 11) Annex 8b PaP Offer TT2026
- 12) Annex 9 RFC OEM farewell
- 13) Annex 10 Future RAGTAG cooperation
- 14) Annex 11 AOB

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