

Summary of the 24th meeting with the RFC North Sea – Baltic RAG & TAG

Date: 26.03.2025 10:00 – 15:00

Venue: Invalidenstraße 44,
10115 Berlin
Germany

1. Welcome and introduction.

Katarzyna Wachowicz (KW), Managing Director of the RFC NS-B and Oliver Sellnick (OS), Chairman of the RFC NS-B Management Board welcomed the participants. A short tour the table took place. OS presented the agenda.

2. RAG slot

Paweł Wiechoczek (PW), DB Cargo Polska, RAG speaker of RFC North Sea – Baltic, presented the topic of the track closures at Oderbrücke and called for a better dialogue between IMs and RUs when it comes to TTR and TEN-T Regulation implementation. He informed that the information about track closure came in late for carriers involved in annual TT. PW stated the recent information was that this closure will be extended and there is a total closure planned in April, concluding that closures of such magnitude should be announced earlier. Wojciech Gawliński (WG) spoke about the cooperation with DB InfraGO and issues with communicating TCR information. He mentioned there is a rumour section Oderbrücke – Berlin will be closed for 41 weeks, and if it's confirmed, this information should be made available as soon as possible. OS said this topic will be taken up with DB InfraGO and kindly requested PW to send an official email request. PW called for clarification of communication standards.

Anna Diffliiff, the C-OSS Manager took an opportunity to spoke about improving communication between partnering RUs to ensure seamless international path modification. Such path request should be placed at the same time to ensure IM can ensure paths are modified as required. PW stated RUs are aware of this issue and orders should come in simultaneously. He also asked how long can an order remain in the IM's systems before it is deleted. AD stated there are indeed differences but TTR implementation and Capacity regulation will harmonise that.

3. TAG slot

Erik Nieuwenhuis (EN), TAG Speaker of RFC North Sea - Baltic, could not participate in the meeting due to unforeseen circumstances, the TAG slot was cancelled.

4. PaP Capacity offer for TT2026

AD presented the PaP offer for TT2026. She emphasised that CZ's exit from the Corridor will not affect the simplicity of ordering PaPs for customers as the allocation will happen via Corridor Rhine – Danube. She stated TCRs have the most impact on the number of PaPs and the average planned speed. OS concluded improving the network has an impact on day – to – day operations, but the offer remains stable. He also stated that the capacity offer of all RFCs functions as one offer.

5. Rail Baltica – state of play

Harri Aro (HA) and Lukas Miglinas (LM) prepared a joint presentation of Estonian and Lithuanian developments on Rail Baltica (RB). LM stated the priority for RB is to develop a convenient solution for the Baltic states and deemed developing an OSS similar the one we know from the RFCs as one of the priority tasks. He also pointed out the aim is to have a unified charging framework across the Baltics, when it comes to i.e. electricity charges. The upcoming task is to finish the general part of the Network Statement and have it published on each IM's website.

HA stated the main objective of RB is to bridge the missing link connection between Baltic and Black Sea by 2030. He specified the parameters of the line to be a double – track, fitted with ERTMS2, electrified 2x25kV, with a maximum train length of 1050m and SE-C loading gauge. Janis Eiduks clarified SE-C gauge is widely accommodated, especially when it comes to military transports. HA briefly presented planned RB terminals in Kaunas and Panavėrys. Gusts Ašmanis told the audience about a logistics centre near Riga, Salaspils Intermodal. Anna Difliff (AD) asked if the information about a private investor planning to built an intermodal terminal in Juragiai is correct. Representatives of the Lithuanian IM confirmed they are aware of this information circulating, but more information is needed when it comes to the terminal's connection to RB. HA emphasised the importance of the IMs and RUs working together on further requirements of RB Lines.

Patriks Markēvičs presented the state of play from the Latvian Ministry perspective. He stated the connection from Riga Airport to Riga Central station is vital, but the financing is an issue due to price of materials increase dramatically and a lack of sufficient EU funding.

Weronika Karbowskiak (WK) presented the state of play of RB development in Poland, where the situation is different, as RB is an already existing line. She stated PLK has almost completed the modernisation of the line from Warsaw to Ełk and is currently in design phase for section Ełk – Trakiszki. Parameter – wise, all will be TEN-T – compatible. She also stated modernisation is very much dependant on EU funding, with the biggest tender in the history of Poland announced this year. When it comes to ERTMS deployment – this will be done as a final layer once all modernisation is completed.

OS stated this is a monumental project and ask for the current estimate on Warsaw – Tallinn line becoming operational. All representatives underlined all works are advanced but the realisation depends on EU funding. For now, the official deadline is 2030, which is TT2031. Walther Götz asked if parameters on Polish side – 25kV electrification, train length and profile – will be compatible with the Lithuanian side. WK assured all parameters will be consistent and compatible.

6. State of play on borders

Zuhal Nalbant (ZN) presented the update on QCOs. This collaborative format aims to improve operations and capacity for international freight trains at high – traffic borders. Workshops on border cooperation with neighbouring IMs/customers focus on how to improve border processes with a focus on dwell time optimisation. QCOs on RFC NS-B are as follows:

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

Lukáš Soukup (LS) asked if a timeline of Bad Shandau Öst is available, and WG – if there are plans to install system for modern locos to go without stopping at Öderbrücke. ZN stated both

of those questions lay outside the scope of the activities of QCOs. OS asked to put those in writing to the Office and we will look into it.

7. DAC

Stefan Hagenlocher, Consultant for HWH, who prepared a study for German MoT on DAC, presented the key findings of the study on the national possibilities for financial support. DAC is not as widely spread in Europe as it is in the rest of the world. Now DAC not only couples, it also enables data communication, and has a potential to improve rail competitiveness. On EU – level, cost benefit/fleet analysis is ongoing, along with migration strategies, functional requirements and retrofitting scenarios. Plan is to start running pioneer trains in 2027, then roll out DAC in 2029. Until the end of 2026 technical development is taking place. After the pioneer trains run between 2027 – 2029, test phase results should be evaluated. This evaluation also gives the suppliers time needed to build production facilities and DAC units. SH stated CEF funding is expected this year, more information on if and where DAC pioneer trains shall run will be available. LS asked which IRUs confirmed the will to take part in the test. SH stated he cannot make this information public, but it is an international consortium. OS stated funding is once again crucial, rail sector suffers from lack of finance.

8. German Rail Freight Masterplan and funding schemes

Stephan Jörg, Head of Unit E13, Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport, presented the current challenges the sector is facing in Germany, along with key actions and the outlook for the upcoming years. The focus is to increase modal shift and rail's market share by 25% until 2030. The market is, however, tense, with a decline in demand and a maintenance backlog causing strain. The key areas of action for the upcoming years are:

- Efficient infrastructure;
- Modernisation by promoting innovations (i.e. DAC);
- Enhancing competitiveness by subsidising track access charges and promoting single wagonload transport.

When it comes to an outlook for the future – process of implementing the strategy on automation and digitalisation of rail freight transport is ongoing. Infrastructure towards Poland and Czechia is to be with the highest priority. Justina Hudenko (JH) asked if there is a budget foreseen to support terminals in order to promote combined transport, like track access charges reduction or other price -reduction incentives to use combined transport. JS stated there are indeed no limits on regional tracks access charges and those are contributing towards infrastructure modernisation. European Commission proposed a reform of the pricing, ECJ ruling on short distance trains is expected soon.

9. Implementation plan – consultation timeline

KW presented the Implementation Plan consultation timeline, expressing the importance of the AG's input. The main reason of new implementation plan is TEN-T Regulation and amended 913/2010 Regulation.

RFC will consult the Advisory Groups with the below documents:

- 1 – EC investment plan on infrastructure developments and investment needs (with parameters maps) – deadline in April
- 2 - Draft implementation plan – deadline in June (12.06.2025).

Delivery expected from Advisory Groups will be a written common statement from each AG with a justification of the needs reported on.

The views and assessment of the advisory groups on the investments and developments of the corridor and results of the consultations, including the opinion of the advisory groups, will be included in the implementation plan and sent to the European coordinator.

10. USS 2024 results and action plan

Katarzyna Wachowicz presented the results and action plan. She also informed this was the final round of the USS.

11. AOB

- TAG telco

As EN, the TAG speaker, was absent, the Office will ask his opinion. PW pointed out not many terminals are active and we should incentivise their participation. He stated he will cooperate with EN to improve engagement. Cezary Klimont (CK) stated TAG meetings should bring value to its participants.

- Topics for next joint RAG/TAG meeting

OS stated this next RAG/TAG is a joint one with RFC Baltic-Adriatic and RfC Rhine-Danube, therefore a great opportunity to exchange views and ideas.

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 26.03.2025
- 2) Annex 1 RU to RU communication
- 3) Annex 2 PaP capacity offer for TT2026
- 4) Annex 3.1 Rail Baltica EE, LT
- 5) Annex 3.2 Rail Baltica in Latvia
- 6) Annex 3.3 PLK investments on Rail Baltica
- 7) Annex 4 QCOs state of play
- 8) Annex 5 BMDV study DAC financial support
- 9) Annex 6 German Rail Freight Masterplan and funding schemes
- 10) Annex 7 Implementation plan – consultation timeline
- 11) Annex 8 USS 2024 results and action plan

*Prepared by Izabela Szymańska
RFC NS-B Office*