

Paris and Berlin, February 5<sup>th</sup> 2021

Joint Declaration on the Europe-Wide Migration of Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC)

**Working Together for Rail Freight 4.0.  
Partners driving forward the migration to DAC**

During the crisis, systemically relevant rail logistics have proven to be the backbone of a stable supply chain, while promoting new growth. But only if the modal split proportion of sustainable rail freight transport increases massively, will the EU also be able to achieve its ambitious and appropriate climate goals in the transport sector. More freight by rail - this is rightly the guiding principle of the European Union. But for this to happen, rail logistics must be consistently digitalised and automated, to disruptively produce more flexibility, more efficiency and more trans-European routes. One of the keys to success is the Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC).

The Fédération des Industries Ferroviaires (FIF) and the Verband der Bahnindustrie in Deutschland (VDB) e.V. are both of the firm opinion that:

- DAC is a "Made in Europe" innovation of fundamental importance, which provides great leverage towards more intelligent logistics, growth and climate protection. DAC is capable of revolutionising processes and decarbonising logistics.
- DAC will form the backbone for automation, data-based monitoring, predictive maintenance, interoperable European solutions, providing consistent, smart, intermodally networked freight trains, while reducing time and cost-intensive single wagon traffic.
- A smooth migration to DAC is possible and for that a Europe-wide, standardised coupling system is essential.
- DAC is a genuine cornerstone investment for and in Europe. Therefore, the investment that has been estimated in studies (e.g. the BMVI study on the EU-Wide Migration of a Digital Automatic Coupling System) at a total cost of around €6.4 - 8.6 billion for comprehensive migration (432,000 - 485,000 freight wagons, 17,000 locomotives) will deliver a high cost benefit factor, resulting in growth and seriously-minded climate protection.

The FIF and VDB are pleased to acknowledge and certainly appreciate the political and technical milestones that Europe has successfully achieved for DAC; in particular recently that:

- The Berlin Declaration of 21 September 2020, jointly signed by the EU Conference of Transport Ministers, recognised that DAC must be given prominent priority for Europe's logistics of the future.
- Working in close partnership with industry, key national as well as European decision-makers in the sector have clearly spoken in favour of the DAC as a driver of Logistics 4.0

- The DAC pilot project for demonstration, testing and approval has made considerable progress. A test set-up has been designed for the four coupling prototypes currently available, with the aim of completing the first phase as early as the spring of 2021, conducting over 400 scheduled individual tests per wagon group - a rigorous test series under real operating conditions.
- The integration into the Shift2Rail Programme has been achieved and the European DAC Delivery Programme (EDDP) has been staffed with outstanding experts, assuring a coordinated approach at EU level. This guarantees an extremely reliable test architecture, ensuring that the type of coupling is specified clearly and interoperable (TSI), is open to competition and that throughout Europe, migration can then be rapidly driven forward.

The FIF and the VDB are well aware of the responsibility that rests on their shoulders and would like to give the following assurances:

- The railway industries of Germany and France are at the disposal of politics and key players for DAC migration in Europe, as ready and willing, reliable, highly innovative partners. To our knowledge, all relevant stakeholders in France and Germany are positive on the DAC project: From operators and wagon keepers to manufacturers along the entire value chain.
- A timetable for the process that is both ambitious and realistic will succeed. A decisive milestone is the objective of the Demonstrator Project to identify a coupling head by the end of the first quarter of 2021, with which the test phase can then be intensified and the migration of DAC Level 4 throughout Europe prepared. The optimised DAC must be upwardly compatible to Level 5 which remains the ultimate goal.
- A standardised data interface is of equal importance so that the DAC can develop its maximum effect. A standardization process for devices and data interface is on its way at European level (CEN).
- All ongoing research activities are to be consolidated under the EDDP umbrella.

Against this background, the FIF and VDB would like to make the following requests of the political stakeholders, in particular the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, of the European Union:

- From 1 January 2021, in a post "Berlin Declaration" process, to maintain momentum for DAC as a key goal and to further advance the migration strategy with milestones for 2021 as a priority.
- To advocate a reliable financing perspective at EU level, to be pursued in parallel with the current pilot project.
- To strengthen the consensus on the relevance of investments made in DAC, a fundamental digital innovation, in order to accomplish intelligent logistics for climate-neutral growth "Made in Europe".

Only ambitious digitisation will make it possible to put the best logistics system on the rails in Europe that has ever existed. The FIF and the VDB are firmly committed to this goal.