

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

Date: 11.10.2023 10:00 - 15:00

Venue: DB Netz AG

Adam-Riese-Str. 13

60327 Frankfurt am Main

Germany

1. Welcome and introduction.

Oliver Sellnick, Chairman of the RFC NS-B Management Board and Katarzyna Wachowicz, RFC NS-B Managing Director welcomed the participants and presented the agenda. All participants introduced themselves.

2. RAG slot

Paweł Wiechoczek, RAG Speaker, presented the following topics:

- **Current situation regarding the security issues at the Horka – Wegliniec border point**

Paweł Wiechoczek informed that due to actions taken by the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure, PLK S.A and Rus, the situation improved significantly, however, some incidents still occur.

- **Update of inclusion of Luxembourg in RFC NS-B – current status**

Oliver Sellnick pointed out that in the TEN-T revision it is foreseen to change the routing of the RFC, so every extension has to be included in this revision. Patriks Markēvičs, representative of the Ministry of Transport from Republic of Latvia added that the letter to DG Move was sent, so the DG Move is aware of the Luxembourg request. It was concluded that by the end of this year or at least before the next RAG/TAG meeting, more information should be known.

- **Rail Baltica - a questionnaire within the RAG to be addressed to Rail Baltica project**

Paweł Wiechoczek raised the issue of the need to discuss the operability of the Rail Baltica line in the future after the completion of the project. It was agreed that RAG members will prepare a list of questions regarding the operability of the Rail Baltica line, which will be sent to the Rail Baltica project team and to Patriks Markēvičs, who will respond to them. Weronika Karbowskiak, the RFC NS-B Management Board Member informed that the meeting of PLK S.A and LTG Infra took place in July 2023. It was agreed that the parameters will be harmonised between the ETCS locomotives. She added that on some point the RUs will be included in the discussion. Andrius Bartuškevičius, the RFC NS-B Management Board Member informed that the Working Group is developing the operational model for the Rail Baltica, so the work is ongoing but not all questions can be answered yet. It was agreed to present intermediate results of the discussion on Rail Baltica for the next RAG/TAG meeting.

- **Planned closures for several months on the DB Netz AG network**

Paweł Wiechoczek pointed out that, according to information received from DB Netz AG, this network will be subject to long-term, complete line closures in the coming years. Oliver Sellnick confirmed this information and informed that a German program has been announced regarding the modernization of the most important lines on the DB Netz AG network. This will

be a set of approximately 40 closures, each closure for 3-5 months. Paweł Wiechoczek drew attention to the closure of the route between Nurnberg - Regensburg - Passau, which will force all freight traffic currently on this line to divert via other lines. Paweł Wiechoczek proposed using the capacity of corridor 8 on the sections via Decin/Bad Schandau and Horka/Węgliniec to conduct diversion of some trains on these lines. DB Netz AG cooperates with ÖBB and SZCZ to find the best solutions. This topic will be continued at subsequent meetings within the RFC group

▪ **Total closure on DB Netz AG route 6155 Oderbrücke 3-13 of Dec.**

Paweł Wiechoczek concluded that timetable is changing now, so it is not the best time for this closure. There will be a meeting organized regarding this topic, as the capacity has to be secured. It is also possibility to show that IMs and RUs can cooperate. Oliver Sellnick pointed out that the majority of traffic should go via Horka, so DB Netz AG will coordinate with PLK S.A.

3. TAG slot

Erik Nieuwenhuis, TAG Speaker stated that the TAG Members are not active as they are not that much interested in RFC, that is why RFC should be better promoted. The same issue is with the Rail Facilities Portal. He reminded that Rail Facilities Portal webinars were organized in cooperation with RNE. The IMs participated in webinars and they were interested in topic. The question is how to attract the terminals. The recordings are available and will be promoted on the RFC NS-B website. Erik Nieuwenhuis said that there is one year to include Rail Facilities Portal in RIS and then the data has to be implemented. In August 2024, publication of data on Rail Facilities Portal will be mandatory. Erik Nieuwenhuis will share the document with the RFC NS-B. Oliver Sellnick reminded that Implementation Plan update is ongoing. Regarding the National Plans, the European Commission requested the RFCs to get input from terminals and Infrastructure Managers. The Transport Market Study is also ongoing. Additionally, OS suggested that the work plan of RFC Coordinator can be circulated to all participants.

4. Information from the C-OSS

Results of the TT 2024 allocation and first view on the offer TT 2025.

Anna Difliff, the C-OSS Manager presented the results of the TT 2024 allocation and first view on the offer TT 2025, including:

- Draft and Final Offer Results TT2024
- Reserve Capacity TT2024
- Results of the wishes expressed by applicants for TT2025
- Pre-arranged paths for TT2025
- Next steps.

Oliver Sellnick informed that there is a low rate of punctuality on the new offer, due to TCRs in DB Netz AG part of the RFC.

5. State of play on the border crossings:

Implementation of “Check-in” process in Bad Bentheim

Zuhal Nalbant, the RFC NS-B Management Board Member presented the topic including:

- More efficient use of capacity through the Check-In procedure
- How does the Check-In procedure work?

- Timeline from drafting to implementation in 2024

She also pointed out that the procedures are really important for RUs to be followed.

Marcel Tijs, representative of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management from the Netherlands informed that the meeting of Infrastructure Managers and Executive Board Members regarding this border crossing took place and led to good results and creation of the process. It will be checked if the procedure can be used for Bad Schandau border.

Minimum ordering criteria orders

Marvin Christ presented the topic pointing out that the border stations often provide less capacity than required, therefore available capacity has to be used perfectly. Marvin Christ added that tracks have to be used in the best possible way, but sometimes it's not effective, as sometimes trains are parked even for a few hours, so DB Netz AG would like to know details where the train is going, what loco it is, when the train is planned, so these minimum criteria required were created.

The minimum criteria required when ordering train paths improves the quality of international train paths. The required pieces of information are part of the border section's guidelines in the network statement. The RUs stated that there is an improvement, however information regarding the capacity at the border station would be needed if there is a delay.

Oliver Sellnick answered that when the trains are running, the train coordinator should have this information. Paweł Wiechoczek stated that if the international timetable is ordered in Poland, this information has to be provided, therefore, it is available in the Infrastructure Manager national system. The topic of the information which is available in national system will be investigated further by the PLK S.A. Marvin Christ also added that the issue may be caused by the increasing number of RUs on the border in Germany, as it was 2 and now it is around 400, so maybe the path allocation system has to be updated.

Language projects at DB Netz AG

Marvin Christ presented the topic, he pointed out that in the aircraft sector, every pilot speaks English, so European Commission is questioning why the rule cannot be the same for the rail sector. Therefore, ongoing revision of the train driver's directive is also dealing with a common European operational language.

The DB Netz AG militates against the implementation of a common European operational language, the triggers are:

- Education and maintenance of language knowledge
- Preparation of bilingual network statements and guidelines
- Lack of staff
- Higher risks.

It is more than likely that there will not be one operational language for the railway sector. Michel Geubelle, the RFC NS-B Management Board Member pointed out that some Infrastructure Managers are more open for introduction of English as a railway language. The bilingual border stations employees including the signal box operator should use both languages. This should be taken into account during the recruitment process.

Marvin Christ agreed that he supports this approach, but it is not an easy task. Oliver Sellnick pointed out that, the DB Netz AG project which will present offers solution to language issue, as the DB Netz AG strategy is to introduce the translating tools.

GSM-R Translator “KITT” - Current status of project

Marvin Christ presented the topic, he said that GSM-R Translator “KITT” allows to overcome language barriers by using artificial intelligence. The language barrier complicates operations in border stations. By releasing an automatic translation feature to GSM-R - “KITT” - the goal is to simplify effectively the on-site communication between driver and signaller. The “KITT” – the “invisible” GSM-R cross border interpreter allows natural communication in the respective native languages. Marvin Christ presented the video regarding GSM-R Translator “KITT”, practical use and functionalities.

Anne Kemmler, representative of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport from Germany questioned what is the future of GSM-R. Marvin Christ informed that GSM-R is a solution from 90s. Oliver Sellnick added that a new technology will be used.

Götz Walther, representative of Verband Deutscher Verkehrsunternehmen e. V. (Association of German Transport Companies) stated that the idea is good but said that the speaker hears only translated message so how RUs will be informed about operational language? Marvin Christ explained that currently the approach is that official operational language is German and RUs get a second language. It’s most probably that the language requirement will be reduced. Oliver Sellnick said that the goal is to make sure that RUs do not have to fulfil this language requirements, the RNE is also working on the language project. He summarised that GSM-R Translator “KITT” project is fascinating.

6. TCRs on the Corridor:

Main TCRs on the Corridor

Henning Holtermann from DB Netz AG, WG TCR Member presented the topic. He informed that on RFC North Sea – Baltic the TCR Impact sheets were introduced to present in one glance a general and important information about upcoming TCRs. These impact sheets highlight some infrastructure works, which have a big impact on international rail freight traffic along RFC North Sea – Baltic. Henning Holtermann presented the coordination process of the RFC NS-B IMs including:

- Timeline of coordination
- Coordination between neighbouring IMs
- Conflict resolution process
- Involvement of applicants

Henning Holtermann also presented the TCR TT 2023 and TT2024 at Infrabel, DB Netz AG, PKP PLK S.A., LTG Infra, and ProRail.

7. Feedback from Rail Facilities Portal Webinars trainings

Anna Difliff presented the outcome from the Rail Facilities Portal webinars. The goal of Rail Facilities Portal is to create the transparency about service facilities and access points to rail infrastructure in Europe while complying with EU Regulation 2017/2177. A series of three webinar trainings for service facility owners and operators was offered on 13, 20 and 27.09.2023 by RNE in cooperation with UIRR. The C-OSS of RFC NS-B initiated the project and together with the RFC NS-B TAG Speaker contributed strongly. The content of the webinars focused on the minimum data requirements for terminals, as well as the data upload and data maintenance to the Rail Facilities Portal. All webinars were evaluated as ‘excellent’ by all respondents due to its comprehensive information from a user-perspective (practical explanations) and its good structure. Anna Difliff added that links to videos will be available on the RFC NS-B website.

Additionally Götz Walther pointed out that the RINF will be developed so he suggested contacting ERA if more information is needed regarding this topic.

8. AOB:

Implementation plan consultation

Katarzyna Wachowicz presented the Implementation plan update 2023 including the reason of an update and the timeline of the Implementation Plan update elaboration. She reminded that deadline for the consultation is 26th of October and the updated Implementation Plan will be published in January 2024.

C-OSS report about the train cancelation - information on the planned consultation with RUs

Katarzyna Wachowicz presented the information regarding the C-OSS report about train cancelation. She informed that this year, RFC NS-B would like to share with RUs a C-OSS report on the cancellation of train paths allocated to a freight operation in TT2023. The RAG members will be asked to complement the report by their opinion. The distribution date of the report will be communicated in the next weeks. The RAG/TAG Members took note on the information provided.

Advisory Groups meetings in 2024 (joint meeting with other RFCs)

The following meeting will be organized in 2024;

- 06.03.2024 – in the Netherlands (exact place will be confirmed) – hybrid meeting
- 09.10.2024 – in Prague.

User Satisfaction Survey 2023

Oliver Sellnick and Patrycja Urbańska, RFC NS-B Office informed that the User Satisfaction Survey 2023 is ongoing with the deadline on 12th of October. They kindly asked RAG/TAG Members to complete the survey. The link to online survey and paper version was distributed among the participants of the meeting.

Feedback round

Patriks Markēvičs pointed out that the direct dialogue is important and Rail Baltica topic will be discussed as requested by the RAG/TAG Members. Anne Kemmler thanked the participants pointing out that the meeting was a good opportunity for conversation. Kris Van Crombruggen, Infrabel - WG Member suggested that more RUs could participate in the upcoming meetings. Bartłomiej Siudak, representative of the Polish Ministry of Infrastructure thanked for the discussion stating that it helps the ExBo to recognize the market needs. Bert Stingl from Captrain Holding informed that he participated for the first time in the RFC NS-B RAG/TAG meeting and it was fruitful in his opinion. He also added that Captrain is conducting a study, which can be presented during the upcoming meeting. Paweł Wiechoczek stated that the RAG/TAG members appreciate that the RAG/TAG meetings take place as a discussion platform. Oliver Sellnick thanked to all participants for the meeting on behalf of RFC NS-B Management Board.

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 11.10.2023
- 2) Annex 1 Allocation Results TT2024_Offer PaP TT2025_RAG TAG
- 3) Annex 2 Bad Bentheim Check-In process
- 4) Annex 3 Language topics
- 5) Annex 4 RFC8 Outlook on TCRs 231011
- 6) Annex 5 Feedback on RFP Webinar
- 7) Annex 6 AOB

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