
DB Cargo: Digital freight train goes into customer use

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Almost half a million freight wagons are rolling on Europe's rails; they are currently still coupled by hand and are unable to establish power or continuous data lines. This is set to change: The EU-wide introduction of a Digital Automatic Coupling (DAK) as a new system standard will make climate-friendly rail freight transport significantly more powerful and efficient.

"A digital freight train has successfully completed its two-year practical tests," explained Dr Nikutta at the presentation of the train to the EU Commission in Brussels today. "Now the first customers in rail freight transport are set to benefit from the new technology. Our joint experience will then flow into series production." Only with the digitalisation and automation of rail freight transport will it be possible to transfer more goods from road to rail. "That is the decisive lever. Only with green supply chains will Europe be able to achieve its climate targets."

"More than half of the steel industry's transport operations are carried out by rail. Our member companies rely on efficient logistics for both the supply of raw materials and the dispatch of finished steel products. The Digital Automatic Coupling can become a real turbo for rail freight transport – and thus an important building block for efficient, climate-friendly supply chains," says Kerstin Maria Rippel, Managing Director of the German Steel Federation.

Together with other European rail freight companies and numerous other stakeholders from the railway industry, DB is involved in the development and Europe-wide introduction of the DAK. The presentation of a digital freight train is a central item on the programme at the EU Commission's "Connecting Europe Days" in Brussels. This week, politicians, railways and industry are discussing the further development of European transport systems. One focus is the expansion of the ten trans-European transport corridors and the strengthening of climate-neutral supply chains for the continent. The financing of the digital coupling as a new system standard is a key priority.

DB Cargo runs around 20,000 freight trains a week through 17 EU countries, crossing at least one border on 60 % of all journeys. Freight wagons are coupled from Spain to

Scandinavia using the almost 200-year-old principle of a mechanical screw coupling. At DB Cargo alone, employees have to manually attach the 30-kilogram couplings to the wagons' iron hangers up to 50,000 times a day. In return, a freight train can replace up to 52 lorries and save 80 to 100 % of CO2 emissions.

All rail customers benefit from the digitalisation of freight trains: With the DAK and continuous power and data lines, significantly higher speeds are possible, partly because brakes can be controlled electronically - as has long been the case with passenger trains. Freight trains, whose speed is currently limited to 120 km/h, will be able to adapt much better to the rhythm and speed of passenger transport with the DAK. This leads to more capacity in the network.

(Deutsche Bahn)