



Press Release

Digital automatic coupling for freight wagons on the go

By 2030, half a million freight wagons across Europe will be equipped with digital automatic coupling • Wagons can be retrofitted during ongoing operations • 150 pop-up workshops planned in Europe • First test in practice a success

(Berlin, 16 October 2022) Digital automatic coupling (DAC) is set to simplify rail freight transport in Europe and make it faster. It will speed up handling, operations and turnaround cycles, which means that freight trains will be faster, too. Around 500,000 freight wagons will need to be equipped with DAC across Europe by 2030. To make that possible, Deutsche Bahn is relying not only on retrofitting wagons at its own maintenance depots; it is also installing DAC at pop-up workshops. Thanks to these mobile workshop tents, freight wagons can be equipped with the new technology quickly near where they are used, for example at industrial customers' sites. The aim is to create temporary additional retrofitting capacity and to shorten the amount of time that wagons are unavailable to customers. DB Cargo, Europe's leading freight operating company, has successfully completed the first test in practice in Bremen.

Dr Sigrid Nikutta, DB Board Member for Freight Transport: "Test runs through Europe have proven that digital automatic coupling works in practice. The next step is to find solutions for installing DAC in freight wagons quickly and efficiently. We have shown that it can be done with our innovative approach of using pop-up workshops. In just a few steps, we can convert an analog freight wagon into a smart, digital one. The mobile workshops will allow us to make thousands of freight wagons fit for the digital future in a short span of time."

When DAC is introduced, operations need to be ensured despite there being two incompatible coupling systems (screw coupler versus DAC). Freight wagons are first pre-equipped during normal visits to the maintenance depot. Once wagons are DAC-ready, it takes just a few steps to finish retrofitting them at a pop-up workshop. The conversion works similar to Plug & Play. Deutsche Bahn and its partner companies want to set up 150 pop-up locations throughout Europe.

DAC speeds up shunting, increases capacity at transshipment yards and boosts the capacity of the existing rail infrastructure. Retrofitting wagons with DAC means that wagons are also being equipped with continuous power and data lines for the first time. This strengthens single-wagon transport as a green alternative to lorries in particular.

Beginning in 2023, DB Cargo intends to make its freight wagons DAC-ready as part of normal maintenance depot stops.

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About DB Cargo:

DB Cargo AG is the freight transport division of Deutsche Bahn and the leading rail freight company in Europe. More than 30,000 employees are responsible for some 20,000 trains travelling through 18 European countries and China each week. DB Cargo's annual volume produced replaces up to 22 million lorry journeys per year. In this way, DB Cargo already saves seven million metric tons of CO₂ a year with its freight trains.

Around 60% transports cross at least one national border and thus operate on a pan-European basis. DB Cargo has the highest volume sold and the most customer connections in Europe, at around 4,200. With some 78,000 freight wagons and 2,700 locomotives, DB Cargo operates Europe's largest rail fleet.

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