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TAF – TELEMATIC APPLICATIONS FOR FREIGHT

Status and way forward

1. INTRODUCTION

The OTIF Secretariat presented a study to the 8th session of the Committee of Technical Experts (CTE) on the significance of the TAF TSI for OTIF. The CTE discussed the paper and decided on a course of action that would include further discussion and the organisation of a TAF workshop targeted at non-EU OTIF Member States. The aim of this paper is to summarise the findings so far in order to help the CTE decide on the next steps, including the transposition of the TAF TSI into COTIF provisions.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS TO DATE

a) The main findings of the study and the follow-up discussions were as follows:

- On the one hand, the provisions of the TAF TSI have been developed assuming a liberalised railway market which requires the exchange of information in accordance with harmonised procedures and data formats. On the other hand, international rail freight traffic among the non-EU OTIF contracting states is largely organised on the “exchange of vehicles” principle, which requires less exchange of information (than specified in the TAF TSI). However, as one of the aims of the Organisation is to contribute to interoperability and technical harmonisation in the railway field, it seems justified to transpose the TSI into a UTP.
- The cost of implementing TAF should be taken into account in the decision-making process. In the EU, TAF TSI implementation is co-funded by EU funds, whereas for non-EU OTIF countries this is not the case. Where only a limited number of neighbouring countries apply the “TAF TSI concept”, it is questionable whether countries such as, for example, Iran would be able to benefit from the use of the TAF TSI concept. On the other hand, there are also certain investment costs if the TAF TSI concept is not implemented, but another IT system. From this perspective, it may also be interesting for non-EU States to take over a Europe-wide, recognised IT standard for the exchange of information in rail freight traffic. Some parts of TAF TSI were also implemented voluntarily outside the EU (e.g. Balkan region). This indicates a positive business case for these TAF TSI functions outside the EU as well.
- The TAF TSI is different from vehicle related TSIs in the sense that it requires investment in order to implement it. Vehicle TSIs are only applied to new, renewed or upgraded vehicles. As long as a vehicle is in service and not renewed or upgraded, the TSI does not apply. In the case of the TAF TSI the situation is different; step-by step implementation is required. Obviously the implementation of the TAF TSI has been subject to an impact assessment in the EU, but if and to what extent the results are also representative for non-EU States is not known.
- Due to different transport requirements and differing ways of organising the railways, different regions may need different approaches in terms of international information exchange. The TAF TSI concept is not the only possible platform dealing with the exchange of information. There is no evidence suggesting that the TAF solution is the best option for the exchange of information in the Euro-Asia region. OTIF should therefore be careful before giving preference to the “TAF TSI concept” by transposing it into OTIF law. In any case, compatibility with other systems, such as in particular the OSJD system, should be pursued.
- A legal basis for the transposition of TAF TSI into UTP TAF is set out in APTU Article 8 § 2 in connection with the UTP GEN-B. However, transposition of the TAF TSI into OTIF law would not be straightforward, as the core TAF TSI regulation itself refers to several appendices that are published and regularly updated on the website of the European Railway Agency (ERA), including the data and message model in XML files. This combination of law

and IT specifications makes the situation very specific and particularly tricky to transpose into international OTIF law.

- Examples of the voluntary use of the TAF TSI data model exist in, e.g. in Serbia, Ukraine and Russia, whose railway companies realise the need to exchange information for freight traffic and which have already applied some of the IT modules based on TAF TSI (RNE, RAILDATA), which help them to exchange information for trains operating from/to the EU. Such platforms are very useful and suitable for international traffic outside the EU as well. They are available to the non-EU OTIF contracting states and can handle basic information and ensure the interoperability of the following information, e.g.:
 - Electronic consignment note
 - Tracking of trains/wagons
 - Estimated time of arrival of consignment (especially important for the customer).

These platforms could be of added value for non-EU OTIF CS.

b) The options for dealing with TAF that were identified in the study and presented to CTE 8:

- 1) Do not transpose TAF TSI
 - a) Do nothing within OTIF
 - b) Promote the use of TAF TSI solutions on a voluntary basis
 - c) Voluntary scheme + application guide issued by OTIF
- 2) Transpose TAF TSI into an OTIF regulation
 - a) Full transposition of the TAF TSI into OTIF law (UTP), including its technical appendices.
 - b) Partial transposition, meaning that the core requirements of the TAF TSI would be transposed into OTIF law, but would refer to the technical details as published centrally on the website of the European Railway Agency.

For the latter two options, the TAF TSI could be transposed in such a way that the requirements are either voluntary or mandatory in non-EU OTIF Member States. The arguments set out in the study would suggest that any transposed requirements be voluntary. A third possibility is to make the requirements mandatory, but not implementation. This would mean Member States are not committed to invest in TAF solutions, but if they did invest in new IT applications, this would have to be done in accordance with the TAF specifications.

c) During the 26th session of the standing working group technology (WG TECH), which took place in Amiens on 9 and 10 September 2015, the following was discussed.

From ERA's perspective, the most preferred option was partial transposition of the core requirements into OTIF law, with technical documents managed by ERA only (Scenario: 2b). In its justification, ERA explained that this scenario would allow progressive evolution of the application instead of disruptive regulatory change. Furthermore, ERA would better support

OTIF with a bilateral coordination working group, rather than OTIF's full involvement in TAF TSI CCM WP¹ and the TAF TSI Implementation Cooperation Group. In addition, this scenario would also enable voluntary implementation of the technical appendices (in particular in EU candidate States and countries with an EU border).

The representative of the EU supported ERA's proposal. He reminded the meeting that although all functional requirements could be applied through TSI, the system might be useless if the technical appendices are not applied as well. He reminded the meeting how the TAF/TAP TSI had been developed within EU, i.e. through consultation with stakeholders, which had resulted in the implementation plan for the TAF TSI. He recalled that in terms of impact assessment, the TAF TSI had the best outcome of all TSIs, meaning it was a good investment. He proposed that a similar approach be used for OTIF's stakeholders.

The **Secretariat** reminded the meeting that voluntary transposition of TAF would avoid imposing investments on non-EU OTIF MS. The Secretariat also noted the requirement for further clarification of what non legally binding technical appendices meant for non-EU OTIF MS. With regard to OTIF's limited ability to participate in TAF working parties, the Secretariat was of the view that non-EU OTIF MS could be more involved in these developments on the same basis as other members of the TAF working parties.

The conclusion at WG TECH 26 was as follows:

- ERA and the representative of the EU supported the transposition of TAF TSI into a UTP, with a reference to the technical appendices on the ERA website (Scenario: 2b).
- WG TECH noted the position of the OTIF Secretariat, that it did not have the resources to participate in ERA's working party "Change Control Management Telematics Applications for Freight" and the TAF TSI Implementation Cooperation Group and that these should be open to non-EU OTIF Member States once they implemented TAF.
- WG TECH noted the need to prepare an implementation plan, which would comprise:
 - Organising the workshop to introduce the general framework of TAF,
 - Preparing a consultation paper for OTIF stakeholders,
 - Organising a workshop to discuss the options, and
 - Preparing a proposal for CTE9.
- WG TECH noted that the OTIF Secretariat would organise a workshop in early 2016.

3. SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD

The suggested way forward as expressed in WG TECH 26 was to transpose the TAF TSI into a UTP and to make reference to the appendices that are published and regularly updated on ERA's website, including the data and message model in XML files. This way the legal provisions will become embedded in COTIF but the IT provisions will be managed by ERA. Provisions should be agreed so that the non-EU Member States of OTIF can be involved in the development of these IT provisions.

Implementation should not be forced upon non-EU Member States; the UTP TAF should instead ensure that if IT investments and developments in the scope of the UTP TAF are made, they are done in a harmonised and compatible way, so as to facilitate international rail traffic.

¹ Change Control Management (CCM) Working Party

No objection to the suggested way forward has been expressed in the meetings, or as a reaction to the minutes. Moreover, no alternative has been suggested. For these reasons the OTIF Secretariat suggests working further on the basis of scenario 2b, meaning that it will draft the UTP TAF for review in WG TECH 29-31 and submit it as a proposal to CTE 10. In the meantime, conditions should be agreed upon for the non-EU OTIF Member States and the OTIF Secretariat to take part in developing the technical appendices which are managed by ERA.
