

Technical Commission



New Leadership, Clear Priorities

The Technical Commission (TK) is the central body within the VPI for technical and regulatory issues relating to freight wagons. Here, experts from member companies assess current developments in the industry, evaluate technical events and develop the technical framework conditions within the association.

At the beginning of 2026, the TK appointed a new leadership team: Frank Sadowski (Wascosa) took over as Chairman from Jakob Kudlinski (Ermewa), who had chaired the committee since 2019. Stefan Franke (GATX) became Deputy Chairman.

Frank Sadowski and Stefan Franke see themselves explicitly as a leadership duo and want to further develop the work of the TK together — building on what already exists while also providing new impulses for the years ahead.

What does this mean in concrete terms for the future direction of the TK? Which role does the European dimension play? And which technical priorities will be in focus? Frank Sadowski and Stefan Franke provide answers in the following interview.



“Safety Only Works at a European Level”

Mr. Sadowski, Mr. Franke, what drives you in your new role as a leadership duo of the Technical Commission (TK)?

Frank Sadowski: Bringing safety and interoperability together and embedding both. Anyone working in rail freight knows: safety can only be achieved

at a European level and through joint efforts. Our wagons operate across borders. So technical and regulatory responses must also be conceived at a European level. Interoperability is one of rail’s greatest achievements. That is exactly what we want to protect—and shape.

Stefan Franke: Our shared goal is to further develop the TK so that it reflects this European

“Interoperability is one of the railway sector’s greatest achievements.”

Frank Sadowski

dimension even more strongly. Many of the issues we assess concern fleets operating across Europe. It is no coincidence that standard freight wagons carry the marking GE – Go Everywhere. Our technical assessments and positions

must reflect that framework.

Where do you currently see the greatest challenge to this interoperability?

Frank Sadowski: We are currently observing very clearly how national measures aimed at increasing safety risk restricting interoperability—particularly in the context of the BAV directives following the Gotthard Base Tunnel accident. These introduce additional requirements for wheelset maintenance and inspection regimes that go beyond the European consensus. For fleets operating across Europe, this means increased complexity and non-harmonised maintenance requirements.

Ultimately, such special regulations lead to fewer rail transports—the safest and most environmentally friendly mode of transport—without demonstrably increasing safety across the European system as a whole.

Stefan Franke: This is exactly where we come in. We will not discuss such issues in isolation at the national level, but will contribute our technical expertise with a European perspective to the ERA's JNS processes. Our ambition is clear: harmonised solutions that enhance safety—without undermining interoperability.

What does this mean in concrete terms for the future direction of the TK?

Frank Sadowski: We see the TK as a body that actively helps shape European topics. The fleets of our member companies operate across Europe, and many regulatory decisions are made at the European level. That is why close cooperation with our umbrella organisation UIP and other national associations is essential for us.

Stefan Franke: It also means making the results of our work increasingly available in English. When we contribute to European processes, our technical assessments are aimed at a European audience—and must be communicated accordingly. At the same time, we want to make our work more visible and broadly accessible overall.

Another focus is the stronger involvement of workshops. Why is this so important?

Stefan Franke: The TK brings together a high level of operational expertise from across the sector—from wagon keepers and workshops alike. This integration is crucial. It combines a wide range of experience and knowledge that we need to develop viable solutions.

Frank Sadowski: The wagon is part of the overall rail system. When we talk about inspection intervals, maintenance requirements or new technical specifications, we must always consider practical



“We bring our technical expertise into the European JNS procedures.”

Stefan Franke

implementation. Our goal is to contribute to maintenance that is both safe and practicable.

What other thematic priorities are you setting?

Frank Sadowski: The sector must become more digital—and this must also be reflected in the work of the TK. Digitalisation affects vehicle technology, data availability, communication and maintenance processes alike. We want to support these developments in a structured way.

Stefan Franke: At the same time, we are continuing the topics that have shaped the TK's work for

“In this composition, the Technical Commission is unique in Europe.”

Frank Sadowski

years. These include RID and tank technology, as well as the further development of the VPI-EMG, standardisation issues and non-destructive testing. For us, continuity and further development go hand in hand.

Major transformation projects such as the introduction of the Digital Automatic Coupling also remain in focus. Here, we stay close to operational practice and ensure that no additional approval requirements are created—for example in the area of ATEX.

Alongside these major topics, there are concrete operational tasks such as the field testing of wheel-set bearing greases. Such projects demonstrate how closely technology, safety and legal requirements are interconnected.

What does it mean to you personally to lead the TK as a leadership duo?

Stefan Franke: What motivates me most is the opportunity to shape things. I am interested in new topics, I enjoy diving into them and driving them forward. If leadership and responsibility enable that, I am happy to take them on—but they are not the primary driver. What matters is being able to make a difference. And in that respect, we think very much alike. That is what makes our collaboration strong.



Frank Sadowski: I fully agree. Given the current and upcoming challenges, it makes sense to share this responsibility. We are building on a strong foundation—supported by our member companies, which delegate highly competent experts to the TK. It is this close collaboration between the technical experts of the companies that enables us to work on the truly important issues of our sector. A wide range of experience is brought together, and knowledge is pooled. In this composition, the TK is unique in Europe.

Safety remains our guiding principle. Interoperability remains our benchmark. And the European perspective will increasingly shape how we, as the TK, address and position topics in the future.

Profiles

Stefan Franke is Head of Maintenance Engineering & Quality at GATX Europe.

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