European Commission

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Newsletter

Signal

The ERTMS Newsletter

Contents

Did you know? - Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

What is the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

CEF is an essential EU funding instrument in achieving the aims of the European Green Deal and the Union's decarbonisation targets for 2030 and 2050.

CEF provides support for the development of sustainable, high-performing and efficiently interconnected trans-European networks in the areas of transport, energy and digital services, helping to create better connections across Europe.

CEF aims to accelerate investment in the field of trans-European networks and to leverage funding from both public and private sectors. It offers funding opportunities, with both grants and procurement, including blending operations in the transport area, which in turn attract additional financing from the private and public sector.

Overall, CEF plays a critical role in enhancing sustainability in the transport system, securing Europe's energy supply supporting also cross-border cooperation in the field of renewable energy, and promoting digital connectivity through cross-border collaboration among individuals, businesses and governments in the EU and beyond.

CEF Energy
Connects the energy infrastructure of EU countries to improve sector integration, market competition, and security of supply

CEF Transport
Supports the European transport infrastructure policy by helping realise key projects across Europe

CEF Digital
Supports and catalyses investments in digital connectivity infrastructures of common European interest

CEF Transport

CEF Transport focuses on the development of cross-border projects aimed at eliminating bottlenecks and missing links within both the Core and the Comprehensive TEN-T networks. Additionally, it addresses projects related to smart and interoperable mobility, such as the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).

CEF Transport contributes to the EU Green Deal objectives by optimising transport infrastructure, mitigating the environmental footprint of transportation, improving energy efficiency and raising safety standards.

Between 2021 and 2027 CINEA will manage €25.81 billion to support transport infrastructure projects throughout the EU and beyond. A portion of this funding - €11.29 billion - will be allocated for countries eligible to receive support from the Cohesion Fund, while €1.69 billion will be invested to deliver infrastructure capable of enhancing military mobility in the EU and provide dual-use compatibility, thus serving both civilian and military purposes.

2023 CEF Transport Calls for proposals

CINEA published the 2023 CEF Transport calls for proposals on 26 September 2023, making €7 billion available for projects supporting new and improved European transport infrastructure.

The calls will fund projects that target increasing sustainability and will help the EU meet the European Green Deal objective of cutting transport emissions by 90% by 2050. The calls support the European Commission's policy of a more sustainable transport system, which should be smart and resilient by taking advantage of interoperable European solutions.

The calls cover the Core and Comprehensive TEN-T networks, focusing on areas such as railways, inland waterways, maritime and inland ports, road safety, rail-road terminals, multimodal logistics platforms, multimodal passenger hubs, smart and interoperable applications for transport, safe and secure mobility and infrastructure resilience.

Regarding the ERTMS topic of the calls, CEF will support track-side and on-board deployment of the systems compliant with the Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI), notably Baseline 3. Support for on-board retrofitting is limited to vehicles put into operation before 31 December 2020 and no support is available for deployment of the system on new rolling stock (commonly referred to as "fitment").

For further information, please visit this website: https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/funding-opportunities/calls-proposals/2023-cef-transport-calls-proposals_en.

Below there is an overview of the calls for proposals.

The deadline to apply for all the calls is on 30 January 2024 at 17:00 (CET).

	General envelope Indicative Budget (EUR)	Cohesion Envelope Indicative Budget (EUR)
Projects on the Core Network For projects addressing railways, inland waterways, maritime and inland ports as well as road, rail-road terminals and multimodal logistic platforms	COREGON COREGON (4 topics) 2 695 000 000	CORECON CORECON (4 topics) 2 800 000 000
Projects on the Comprehensive Network For projects addressing railways, inland waterways, maritime and inland ports as well as road, rail-road terminals and multimodal logistic platforms	COMPGEN COMPGEN (4 topics) 250 000 000	COMPCOEN COMPCOEN (4 topics) 350 000 000
Smart and Interoperable Mobility For projects addressing smart and interoperable applications for transport including River Information Services, VTMIS, EMSWe, ERTMS, SESAR, ITS, eFTI, DATA and New Technologies and Innovation	SIMOBGEN SIMOBGEN (12 topics, incl. ERTMS) 400 000 000	SIMOBCOEN SIMOBCOEN (1 topic, ERTMS) 150 000 000
Safe and Secure Mobility For projects addressing adapting the transport infrastructure for Union external border checks purposes, safe and secure parking infrastructure and improving transport infrastructure resilience	SAFETMOBGEN SAFETMOBGEN (3 topics) 100 000 000	SAFEMOBCOEN SAFEMOBCOEN (3 topics) 150 000 000
Sustainable and Multimodal mobility For projects addressing Motorways of the Sea and multimodal passenger hubs	SUSTMOBGEN SUSTMOBGEN (2 topics) 100 000 000	
	Total: 3 545 000 000	**Total: 3 450 000 000**

In the spotlight – Interview with Carole Coune - Secretary General of AERRL

AERRL is the association of Rail Rolling Stock Lessors. Rolling stock includes passenger trains and freight/passenger locomotives. AERRL's mission is to promote interoperable and safe European rail rolling stock by addressing technical, operational, economic, legal and scientific issues and matters relating, directly or indirectly, to locomotives and passenger trains operated in the European Union and Switzerland.

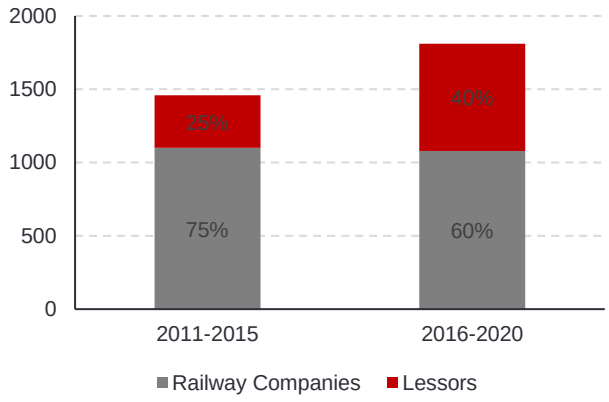
Carole Coune is Secretary General of AERRL since May 2021. She has held various positions in the Belgian transport sector: at the SNCB, in ministerial cabinets and at the Belgian Federal Public Service for Mobility and Transport, which she headed for a few years. Previously, she served as Secretary General of the European Rail Freight Association (ERFA) and of the International Transport Forum (ITF). Her main areas of activity are market opening and competition law, and the management and maintenance of rolling stock.

1. What is AERRL's role in the European rail industry?

Our role is closely tied to the roles of our members. In the railway market, the rail rolling stock lessors act as catalyst for competition, given that more than 70% of lessees are competitors to state railways.

By providing extended access to rolling stock, they create opportunities for new entrants to the rail transport market, as well as for established players. On the other side of the equation, in the rail rolling stock manufacturing market, the AERRL members serve as a catalyst for innovation. Their investments primarily go into the most modern and cross-border rolling stock, and this investment actively fosters and promotes innovation.

Figure 1 - Owner classification of new locomotive deliveries in the EU+ CH/NO [~ 3,300 units] (source: SCI Verkehr, 2021)



As association, we encourage the adoption of innovative solutions that increase rail competitiveness, which is why we actively participate in various European working groups, committees, forums, and more. Our aim is to contribute to shaping the conditions for the widespread adoption of innovations with high added value for rail transport and at affordable price. The AERRL members and AERRL as such are committed to contribute to the Green Deal objective of rail transport growth. We believe that we represent a group of stakeholders that deserves to be listened to, because we represent a fast-growing business (see figure below) that today has a significant share of the new locomotives[1].

2. How is AERRL involved in the overall ERTMS deployment?

The AERRL members have invested heavily in ERTMS. The proportion of locomotives they have equipped with ETCS is high and the total amounts they have invested are enormous, due to the technological and TSI evolutions and the lack of uniform deployment all over Europe. Therefore, promoting a harmonised deployment of ERTMS across Europe is AERRL's priority.

In September 2022, AERRL has published and disseminated a strong position paper titled "Re-funding a sustainable and safe ERTMS deployment that supports competition"[2]. In a nutshell, we consider that in the current context of patchwork of country-specific Control Command & Signalling (CCS) systems[3] and of rapid technological and TSI evolution, CEF ERTMS budget should cover 100% of costs for retrofitting and upgrading rolling stock.

As association, we have made significant efforts to participate in various working groups and forums related to ERTMS since November 2021. We are actively involved in essential working parties of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), such as the TSI Revision Working Party, the topical Control Command & Signalling (CCS) Working Party,

[1] Extract from SCI Verkehr GmbH Report to AERRL, Hamburg, 12.05.2021, European rolling stock leasing fleet, Market overview for freight and passenger assets.

[2] https://aerrl.eu/2022/09/22/re-funding-a-sustainable-and-safe-ertms-deployment-that-supports-competition-2/

[3] According to the European coordinator for ERTMS, only 14% of the Core Network Corridor was in operation with ETCS as of June 2022, ERTMS Newsletter 2/2022.

and the ERTMS control group. We are a member of the European Commission Expert Group on the technical pillar of the 4th railway package. We are also a member of the System Pillar steering group, an advisory body of EU-Rail (successor of Shift2Rail) in charge of providing advice on System Pillar issues. Within EU-RAIL, the System Pillar aims to deliver a unified operational concept and a functional, safe and secure system architecture, for integrated European rail traffic management, command, control and signalling systems. We are currently preparing our priorities for the next revision of the CCS TSI, to be discussed with our colleagues of the Group of representative bodies in January.

This active and growing involvement for more than a year (despite our very recent creation) demonstrates our commitment to contributing to the future roadmap for ERTMS deployment.

3. What are the main benefits of ERTMS for AERRL members?

There should be benefits of rolling out ERTMS for all the players of the railway system. They include improved safety, seamless transport, and optimal utilisation of existing infrastructure, which can ultimately lead to cost reduction and increased market share for rail. Unfortunately, the present situation of varying CCS systems across different countries (including class B and differing ERTMS Baselines) coupled with fast-paced technological and TSI changes positions ERTMS as a factor that primarily diminishes transport capacity while significantly increasing costs, rather than adding value. This offers no cost reduction in train paths for operators or for investors (lessors).

The benefits of ERTMS are currently only on paper due to the lack of synchronised, efficient and coordinated deployment at EU level to the benefit of all the players. Of course, the players who are suffering the most of this situation are the players acting mainly in international transport.

4. Can you provide an overview of the status of ERTMS deployment among the members of the AERRL: do you see any differences in pace of deployment or challenges with some members that others don't face?

It's important to clarify that the equipment decisions for locomotives are primarily laid down in commercial agreements and I do not have access to specific information on the choices made by individual members. However, I can share some general insights. According to data from SCI Verkehr (2021, see the table below), approximately 40% of the locomotive fleet provided by the European lessors is equipped with ETCS. This figure is significantly higher than the average for railway undertakings, which stands at around 10%.[4]

The reason for our higher level of ETCS equipment is mainly due to the fact that 65% of our fleet is used for cross-border international traffic, in particular (but not only) on the freight corridors, which necessitates greater ERTMS adoption. Unfortunately, the locomotives must currently also be equipped with one or several class B systems due to the lack of interoperable ERTMS equipment on track along each freight corridor or international path. The ones who should benefit the most from ERTMS are the ones having the biggest part of locomotives used for international traffic, but under the condition of coordination of trackside deployment. Since this condition is not fulfilled, for them, ERTMS on-board generates very high costs, in addition to the costs of class B systems and uncertainty due to the lack of regulatory stability and transparency.

As a major player in international traffic, we hope to be heard by infrastructure managers who could pay more attention to the conditions for developing competitive international services and by public authorities with a strong European mindset.

Figure 2- Emission-friendly traction and technological status

Criteria	Item	Railway companies[1]	Roling stock lessors
Installed base	Units	25,55	2,85
Electric traction	% of total fleet	47%	64%
Diesel traction	% of total fleet	52%	34%
Alternative drive	% of total fleet	1%	2%
Average age	Years	35	18
ETCS-equipped locomotives	% of mainline fleet	10%	40%
Cross-border locomotives	% of mainline fleet	15%	65%

[1]Including manufacturer leasing pools

[4] Extract from SCI Verkehr GmbH Report to AERRL, Hamburg, 12.05.2021, European rolling stock leasing fleet, Market overview for freight and passenger assets.

5. Are there specific technical or operational challenges unique to rolling stock lessors regarding ERTMS adoption?

The problems experienced by all keepers of rolling stock are amplified for lessors, given that a substantial part of their fleets consists of locomotives equipped with ETCS. Hence, it is crucial to accurately plan and budget for upgrades and retrofits since excessive costs or delays could lead to severe repercussions for the overall business. The AERRL members depend on the industrial capacity of manufacturers and on the trackside deployment of infrastructure managers.
Synchronisation of investments in rolling stock and infrastructure between countries is another issue. Any modification to the ERTMS trackside necessitates compatibility checks, which presents a technical challenge, in addition to causing downtime and incurring extra costs.

Take, for instance, a locomotive operating on the BE-NL-DE-CH-IT corridor. Previously, there were five class B systems that needed to be tested. However, there are now plans for 50 ESC-types that all will be individually tested and validated for each vehicle type. This breaks down as follows: 23 for the Netherlands, 4 for Belgium, 3 for Germany, 3 for Switzerland, and 18 for Italy.

Last but not least, the introduction of a new baseline (BL4) after 2 major changes in the last 15 years, could accelerate the faster obsolescence even of relatively modern rolling stock, which would lead to operational problems due to the long delivery times of new locomotives.

Another significant operational challenge we face is the lack of a single European database for ERTMS deployment on track. AERRL members need to know which ERTMS baseline will be installed on which infrastructure section and when will this installation be fully operational including the decommissioning of the class B system. How could they plan efficiently their investments without accurate, reliable, up-to-date and harmonised information about the European trackside deployment? Such a valuable database doesn't exist for the time being.

6. Can you share what (innovative) solutions AERRL members have come up with to mitigate these challenges?

The AERRL members are taking steps to address these issues internally using their own resources and their networks at national level, and the association undertakes its own actions. Currently, we're working to enhance existing tools and data sources, like the RailNetEurope (RNE) Customer Information platform[5], with the objective of improving the accuracy and accessibility of information available to our members. This platform functions well and should transition from a corridor approach to a network approach.

In addition, there should be more target dates for the ERTMS deployment from 2023 to 2026, 2029 and beyond. Information should also be arranged and showcased on an annual basis.

To mitigate the impact on the risk of obsolescence, we are sharing non-confidential facts and figures with decision-makers as often as we can. AERRL is advocating in the ERA Task Force on Standards for a more thorough economic analysis and for drawing more attention to capital expenditure costs involved with implementing ERTMS. We hope that our involvement and the one of our colleagues in this Task Force will contribute to enhance the quality of the data used in the European cost-benefit analysis, as well as provide figures for the ex-post assessment of the ERTMS deployment.

Resolving these challenges requires action from the EU institutions. Considering that ERA holds the role of system authority, it should have the power -and the corresponding resources- to technically coordinate ERTMS deployment at EU level, by elaborating a European deployment plan to be approved by all the stakeholders concerned. While there already exists a European Coordinator at policy level (Matthias Ruete), the Agency has the technical expertise and knowledge required for effective coordination, between on-board and on-track, rejecting domestic solutions and enhancing cooperation among Member States with the support of the European Commission.

7. When it comes to synchronising investments, do you have any strategies in place, or do you rely on networking and building relationships to overcome this challenge?

The primary step is to coordinate the deployment among all the stakeholders, including infrastructure managers, rolling stock keepers (like Rail Undertakings and lessors), and manufacturers.

Synchronisation must happen on a geographical basis, with a clear priority for the freight corridors. This is a real necessity if Europe aims at increasing the market share of rail transport. Not only must investments be synchronized between infrastructure managers and rolling stock keepers, but they should also be balanced. While ERTMS enables infrastructure capacity improvements via on-board investments, the resulting benefits haven't been shared as yet with asset owners who are bearing the investment risks, such as the lessors. This presents even more of an issue as it extends beyond just the ERTMS problem. We see similar challenges in formulating a unified strategy towards achieving a net-zero rail fleet. Crafting joint strategies to boost rail competitiveness is vital, and perhaps inescapable, in order to eventually attain an increase in market share.

It is also a question of developing a European mindset. One entity must be given responsibility for developing this mindset, for making the European rail network a national priority across Europe, and that responsibility should be given to the European Railway Agency.

[5] What is CIP? - RNE – RailNetEurope | Association For Facilitating Traffic On European Rail Infrastructure

8. Do you see immediate possible improvements to ETCS deployment?

The most immediate improvement we see is the development of a European database that provides complete and timely information on ETCS deployment across infrastructure networks. This would be a significant step forward and could be achieved with the right coordination and commitment. It would also be a proof that the European mindset has taken over from national mindsets.

9. What will be the impact of the of the new provisions of the revised CCS TSI for the rolling stock lessor market?

The effects will be evident on existing contracts and forthcoming equipment orders. In the short term, we are apprehensive about the risks associated with ad hoc efforts by infrastructure managers to rectify unacceptable errors within a limited time period. These risks include potential deficiencies in industrial capacity and downtime linked to re-authorisations. This is also a safety risk for our customers (the railway undertakings). Still for the short term, we fear that equipment that has already been authorised will have to undergo compatibility tests again, following decisions taken by the infrastructure managers, which will further reduce transport capacity.

In the medium term, we fear that the introduction of a new baseline (BL 4), 5 years after the introduction of baseline 3, will further fragment the European rail network, due to the proliferation of multiple ERTMS versions. Everything will depend on the decisions taken by the infrastructure managers in their National Implementation Plans, about which we currently have no information. Baseline 4 provides for Automatic Train Operation (ATO) and Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS) as options, but the TSI has no direct impact on the decisions taken by the infrastructure managers. Nevertheless, it is clear that this TSI could have a negative impact on the cost of locomotives. This is why we are arguing for a balance of investments between infrastructure managers and rolling stock keepers, with advantages for rolling stock keepers that use capacity-saving equipment. There is a market risk, taking into account that the significant costs and capital expenditure related to on-board units and ERTMS are driving freight railway operators into a less competitive position against road transportation.

10. Are there any upcoming innovations or technologies related to ERTMS that rolling stock lessors are particularly excited about?

For the time being, there are no upcoming ERTMS-related innovations or technologies that rolling stock lessors are particularly excited about. ERTMS remains the key technology for rolling stock lessors to facilitate the creation of a European railway and promote international transport in the EU. This technology is a top priority as it is crucial in achieving the Green Deal objectives. Our members are constantly striving to advocate technological stability until the EU rail network is sufficiently equipped.

If changes to the TSIs are made in the future, it is essential that they are accompanied by financial compensation, re-balance measures and technical solutions to reduce downtime during the modifications, as well as strict, concerted and committed planning at sector level over at least 10 years.

As a second priority, our association supports the Digital Automatic Coupling (DAC) initiative, which aims to develop a fully automatic and interoperable coupling system for railway wagons and locomotives across Europe.

11. Looking ahead, what do you see as the key priorities for AERRL and the industry as a whole to ensure further successful ERTMS deployment? What developments and changes do you expect to see in the ERTMS landscape over the next 5-10 years?

Looking ahead, we see our top priority as ensuring the successful further deployment of ERTMS while addressing the issues we have discussed earlier. We will work towards improving transparency, enhancing coordination between stakeholders, and promoting the adoption of ERTMS technology. Additionally, we are dedicated to advocating for a reasonable lifetime for rolling stock, prioritising upgrades over replacements, and ensuring that spare parts remain available.

The greatest challenge linked to the deployment of ERTMS is perhaps also the greatest challenge for rail transport as a whole, i.e. being able to build common strategies that benefit all the players and serve one or more strategic objectives, taking into account their interdependence.

Our industry is particularly concerned about the frequent changes in CCS technology: more discussions should be held ahead of time and accurate data should be used for cost-benefit analyses in the future. We expect that creating a task force at the level of ERA to provide standard input for economic analyses (on the same model as the airline industry) will help address this issue and ensure that the authority can make better decisions.

Of course, we hope that constraints towards government and infrastructure managers will be increased with regard to the full compliance of technologies in order to allow full compatibility of an ETCS compliant rolling stock with infrastructure. Are we dreamers?

12. Do you consider that AERRL members might be interested in participating in a scrapping scheme (replacing old rolling stock by new green and digital fleet)? How do you see a possible AERRL involvement and what conditions should be met to make it happen?

Our association is not in favour of scrapping schemes as this is contrary to principles of a circular economy. Instead, we promote maintaining the lifetime of existing rolling stock through upgrades and retrofitting. A sustainable planning of implementation of ERTMS baseline 4 should guarantee a life cycle of at least 15 years for renovations/improvements carried out or in progress. Beyond environmental aspects, scrapping schemes also face challenges related to cost and

time (long manufacturing times), in a situation where more and more functions are taken over by on-board units rather than by trackside equipment based on the decisions of infrastructure managers.

Upgrading rolling stock that is 15-20 years old to meet green and digital standards is totally feasible and aligns with our commitment to making rolling stock more environmentally friendly and technologically advanced. Although upgrades may be expensive, they remain cost-effective compared to the production of new rolling stock that requires long delays and high production costs.

In conclusion, keeping rolling stock in service and upgrading it is a more sustainable and economical approach.

Latest developments

Disclaimer

All articles included in this section were sourced from publicly available websites covering the period of October-November 2023.

Authorship of all articles remains with the individual publishers; in case of quotations the original authors of the individual news items should be quoted as source.

The Deployment Management Team and the European Commission do not take any responsibility for the correctness of the information provided.

European Institutions - European Investment Bank signs EUR 992 million loan to support the modernisation of the Czech railway network

October 2023

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed its largest ever loan agreement in the Czech Republic with a CZK 24 billion (EUR 992 million) contract with the Ministry of Finance to support the modernisation of the local rail network. Through the Railway Administration, the national railway infrastructure manager under the Ministry of Transport, the loan will support the modernisation and upgrading of the country's Trans-European Network (TEN-T) railway lines and enable the deployment of the European rail network Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).

"It is gratifying that our meeting last October achieved this important result. This will be the largest EIB loan ever signed in the Czech Republic and the funds will significantly benefit the use of rail transport in the country." EIB Vice President Chris Peters said. "We expect that the improvement in the quality of rail services will support a paradigm shift from road to rail, reducing the negative impacts of the transport sector on the local environment. Lower emissions mean that the project contributes to sustainable transport in line with the EU. In addition, the improved rail link will facilitate access to EU cohesion priority areas, thereby supporting regional development.

As part of a broad programme to be funded by the European Investment Bank, the Railway Administration will improve the safety of level crossings on the network, upgrade maintenance vehicles with ERTMS equipment and strengthen the company's cyber security. The investment also includes work on stations and railway buildings to improve their accessibility for people with reduced mobility and passengers with children.

"The use of a loan from the European Investment Bank is the most economical and effective solution to obtain funds for a strategic investment such as digitalization and automation of railway transport, given the current level of the state budget deficit. We can therefore finance long -term investments of a strategic nature through a suitable loan from the Investment Bank of the European Union at a lower interest rate, while at the same time using funds from the government budget for other equally important priorities", said Czech Finance Minister Zbyněk Stangora.

The signed instrument is the first tangible result of the financing Memorandum of Understanding signed in November 2022 with both ministries to establish a partnership for financing the modernisation of the railway network in the Czech Republic. Under the MoU, the EIB can also provide technical assistance to the Czech railway infrastructure manager, with support already provided under the JASPERS mandate. The financing is expected to accelerate the increased use of rail transport with clear environmental benefits compared to traditional road transport.

"The development of quality railways is crucial for the Czech Republic both domestically and in Central Europe. Multi-source financing of these projects, which are essential for the prosperity of the country, is currently the right choice. Investment in the future should not be held back." EIB loan funds are a key component of the financial portfolio of the projects, thanks to which we can count on other sources such as EU support. We will use it, for example, for the modernisation of the Masaryk railway station in Prague and the railway station "The Karlsztyn-Beroun line is important in the vicinity of the capital," said Transport Minister Martin Kupka.

The modernisation of the railway lines will increase the maximum speed and capacity on sections of the TEN-T network, which is expected to improve connectivity between EU regions. The operation consists of about 40 sub-projects in different parts of the country, which are part of the "Single Railway Framework" plan of the Czech Republic for the period 2023-2027.

The European Investment Bank finances sound investments that contribute to EU policy objectives. In 2022 alone, the European Investment Bank has made more than Euro 1.7 billion available to Czech projects.

Source: https://vplay.cz/evropska-investicni-banka-podepisuje-uver-ve-vysi-992-milionu-eur-na-podporu-modernizace-ceske-zeleznicni-site/

European Institutions - EU funding to renew an important line in Poland

October 2023

The European Commission is supporting the modernization of the Gdynia-Słupsk section with EUR 61 million from the 2014-2020 Cohesion Funds.

The investment, worth HUF 22.5 billion at current exchange rates, will include the reconstruction of 100.5 kilometres of

track substructure between Wejherowo and Słupsk and the construction of a second track for about 50 kilometres, increasing the capacity of the line. New stations will also be created, and existing stations and stops will be renewed. **In addition, the computerized railway control equipment needed for the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS), which is due to be introduced in the near future, will be installed. The upgrade will allow trains to run even faster between Gdynia and Słupsk.**

The Polish national railway infrastructure manager, PKP Polskie Linie Kolejowe (PKP PLK), launched a public tender in February 2022 for the 334-kilometer-long line connecting Gdańsk with Stargard (formerly Stargard Szczeciński). The modernization of the 54 km Gdynia Chylonia-Lębork and 51 km Lębork-Słupsk sections of the 202 railway line will improve the comfort of daily commuters on the line and between the so-called "triple city" (a group of municipalities of Gdańsk, Sopot, and Gdynia) and Szczecin. Once the works are completed and the necessary permits have been obtained, the journey time between Lębork and Słupsk will be reduced by around ten minutes.

The renovation will include the renewal of around eighty structures, including bridges, railway and road viaducts. The renewed Słupsk-Lębork section is expected to be inaugurated in 2026.

The Słupsk station will be upgraded under another tender, due to be launched in January 2022. New platforms, rain shelters, lifts to improve accessibility, a modern passenger information system, and a new gateway linking the station to the new bus station will be installed. The station reconstruction works are scheduled for completion in 2025.

When the modernization work on the Gdynia-Słupsk line is completed, passenger trains will be able to travel at speeds of up to one hundred and sixty kilometers per hour instead of the current one hundred and twenty, and even two hundred kilometers per hour on some sections. The higher speeds and double tracking will increase capacity and make trains more punctual, making rail transport in Poland more attractive. This could encourage a shift from road to rail, increasing the use of sustainable transport modes and reducing pollution," reports Railway Pro.

Source: *https://iho.hu/hirek/unios-forrasokbol-ujul-meg-egy-fontos-lengyelorszagi-vonal-231010*

European Institutions - EU gives Asturias another chance and offers 7 billion EUR for works

October 2023

The money will go to the best projects submitted. Companies and administrations in the region did not take advantage of previous calls for proposals.

The variant is not the end of the road. Asturias still has needs to be covered in terms of communication and part of its ambitions have something in favour. The Lena-Gijón railway section is part of the Atlantic Corridor, and that means that its modernisation is a priority for the EU. **With the regulations in hand, the goal is to have the ERTMS traffic management system, which is more modern, safer and increases the capacity of the line, in place by 2030 at the latest.** By the same date, the necessary crossings and sidings should be ready to make the line suitable for longer goods trains of 740 metres in length. The ports of Gijón and Avilés are also part of the priority network recognised by the EU.

What is the substance of this category? Well, in that any project which improves the situation of the priority network has the best consideration if it is presented to the funds of Connecting Europe, the main programme of aid for infrastructures managed by the European Commission. The problem is that neither the administrations nor the companies are responding to the calls for proposals, letting this funding opportunity pass them by one after the other.

Following its usual schedule, on 26 September the Commission opened a new annual call for proposals, the one with the largest budget allocation. This time, 7 billion is up for grabs, to be distributed among the best projects submitted by administrations and companies across the continent by 30 January. The EU money, it should be noted, co-finances the actions, but never covers 100% of them.

The Pajares Tunnels Technological Platform, which brings together technicians who have been involved in the work and in EU management, considers that this is "the last great opportunity to apply for aid for the projects that are to complete the European Atlantic Corridor in its extension to the ports of Gijón and Avilés". Among the Asturian improvements that they believe could have a better entry in this competition is the extension of the international gauge tracks (now arranged in the La Robla-Campomanes subsection, but without continuity either to León to the south or to Gijón and Avilés to the north). They also consider it possible to present road safety projects, improvements in ports, "multimodal logistics platforms, for which it is urgent to include ZALIA in the trans-European network (TEN-T)", multimodal passenger stations, safe mobility and resilient infrastructures.

Since 2013, Brussels has distributed 31.6 billion in aid from the CEF funds, but Asturias has not been able to take advantage of it. There have been years (most of them) without a single project with regional implementation. Occasionally, the call for proposals was made, but with weak quality documentation that was discarded. The few projects that have received funding were of little relevance or did not materialise.

Source: *https://www.elcomercio.es/asturias/ue-oportunidad-asturias-ofrece-7000-millones-obras-20231008004216-nt.html*

Austria - More than 21 billion EUR for rail expansion

October 2023

Faster connections, improvements in local transport, and a push for digitization – these are the key elements of the new ÖBB framework plan presented on Monday by Climate Protection Minister Leonore Gewessler (Greens) and ÖBB CEO Andreas Matthä. Compared to 2022, the infrastructure program has been increased by 2.1 billion EUR to 21.1 billion EUR. Of this amount, 600 million EUR will cover increased energy and construction costs, while 1.5 billion EUR will be invested in new projects. The framework plan, valid from 2024 to 2029, has succeeded in securing the financing of

ÖBB's expansion projects despite the challenging economic environment, according to Matthä.

New additions to the plan include the Köstendorf-Salzburg line and the double-track expansion of the Werndorf-Spielfeld line, which is an important section in the direction of South-Eastern Europe and the port of Koper, as explained by Matthä. Additionally, a section on the Phyrn line between Nettingsdorf and Rohr-Bad Hall will be upgraded to two tracks. A major focus of the plan is on the completion of ongoing projects. The Semmering Base Tunnel on the southern line is in its final stages, with 26 out of 27.3 kilometers of the twin-tube tunnel already excavated. Completion was initially planned for 2030. The Carinthian section of the Koralm Tunnel is set to open before the end of December, reducing travel time between Klagenfurt and Wolfsberg by 30 minutes. In 2025, the Koralm Railway is expected to extend as far as Graz.

Brenner on rail

Construction work on the Brenner Base Tunnel and its access routes is proceeding as planned, with 2.6 billion EUR allocated for this in the framework plan. The ÖBB boss has not confirmed whether the target completion date of 2032 for the Brenner Base Tunnel will be achieved. He emphasized the unpredictable nature of tunnel projects, stating, "The mountain determines the duration." The investment package also aims to improve mass transit, including the modernization of the S-Bahn main line in the greater Vienna area, the use of longer and more double-decker trains, upgrades to the Linz-Wels line, extensions of the Herzogenburg-St. Pölten line, and modernization of the Ossiacherseebahn. Furthermore, 600 additional kilometers of regional trains will be electrified, and stations will be modernized by 2030.

Significant investments in digitization are planned as well, with initiatives such as the European Train Control System (ETCS), automatic train operation, electric interlockings, and improvements to mobile communications. ÖBB also intends to generate more of its own electricity, for instance by expanding photovoltaics on Park & Ride facilities, and to save energy by converting station lighting to LEDs. Climate Protection Minister Gewessler emphasized that transport plays a vital role in addressing the climate crisis, and the infrastructure package not only makes the rail network future-ready but also creates and secures jobs. Matthä estimated that for every billion invested, 15,000 jobs would be created.

Source: *https://austria-times.at/wirtschaft/mehr-als-21-milliarden-euro-fuer-den-bahnausbau/*

Belgium - *More safety on 103 kilometres of rail network*

October 2023

Rail network operator Infrabel has increased safety on the tracks. **Specifically, over 103 kilometres, the so-called ETCS system (European Train Control System) was retrofitted - an innovative railway signalling system that enables constant control of train speed.**

Thanks to this system, the infrastructure communicates with the train. If a driver does not adjust his speed, the system will do so on its own authority," explains Infrabel spokesperson Frédéric Sacré.

Train accidents are to be prevented in this way, as speeding and running a red signal are made virtually impossible.

Infrabel wants to have converted the entire rail network (6,400 kilometres) by the end of 2025. In the meantime, about 4,000 kilometres have been equipped with the modern system, which corresponds to 61 percent of the entire network.

Last weekend, line 37 between Chênée and Hergenrath and the section to Spa were equipped. **The line to Montzen, which is intended for freight traffic, was also equipped with the ETCS system. (belga/sue)**

Source: *https://www.grenzecho.net/97492/artikel/2023-10-23/mehr-sicherheit-auf-103-kilometern-schienennetz*

Bulgaria - Bulgaria opens 54 mln EUR train management system tender

November 2023

Bulgaria's National Railway Infrastructure Company (NRIC) said on Tuesday that it launched a 105.7 million levs ($57.7 million/54 million EUR) tender to implement the European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS) on zero-emission electric locomotives and trains.

The project, divided into two stages, relates to the design, delivery and installation of the European Train Control System (ETCS) Level 2, the core signalling and train control component of the ERTMS, NRIC said in a tender notice published in the public procurement register. It also envisages obtaining permits, commissioning and training staff to operate the ERTMS on-board equipment.

The deadline to submit offers is January 25, 2024. The project is financed under Bulgaria's Recovery and Resilience Plan and is expected to take up to five years to complete.

The ERTMS, consisting of the ETCS and the GSM-R platform for voice and data communication, aims to create a seamless European railway system by replacing national train control and command systems, according to its website.

Source: *http://seenews.com/news/bulgaria-opens-54-mln-euro-train-management-system-tender-840226*

Czechia - ORLEN Unipetrol Transport invests almost CZK 200 million (EUR 8.1 million) in ETCS signalling equipment

October 2023

ORLEN Unipetrol Doprava from the refining and petrochemical group ORLEN Unipetrol is investing in a single European Train Control System (ETCS). ORLEN Unipetrol Doprava, one of the major rail freight carriers in the Czech Republic, will operate ETCS on nineteen vehicles. This step increases the safety, efficiency and interoperability of its fleet both on domestic and foreign lines, and further strengthens cooperation and synergy between the railway

transport companies of the ORLEN Group in Poland and the Czech Republic. The project is co-financed by the State Fund for Transport Infrastructure and the Operational Programme Transport of the Ministry of Transport.

"A total of nineteen vehicles will be equipped with the ETCS system, including four locomotives of the 753.6 series (Bizon), eight locomotives of the 753.7 series (Brejlovec) and seven locomotives of the 383 series (Vectron)," explains Jaroslav Dvořák, Managing Director of ORLEN Unipetrol Doprava, and adds: "The investment in the ETCS amounts to almost CZK 200 million, of which approximately 50% is financed by the State Fund for Transport Infrastructure and the Operational Programme Transport of the Ministry of Transport."

By investing in the modern European Train Control System (ETCS), ORLEN Unipetrol Doprava is not only meeting European and national regulations and standards. It's also aligning with its own safety strategy, which is of fundamental importance to the company. ETCS enhances the safety of rail transport while simultaneously replacing a variety of different, uncooperative, and often outdated national train control systems in various countries."

ORLEN Unipetrol Doprava is one of the major rail freight carriers in the Czech Republic and, with its contractual partners, provides transport not only to neighbouring countries but also to the Netherlands and the Balkans. It offers a wide portfolio of services on the railway market. In addition to the transport of chemical products, it also focuses on freight forwarding, railcar rental, repair and cleaning services and consulting. Its customers are not only members of the international ORLEN Group, but also independent companies, including major rail shippers, foreign carriers and chemical plants with no connection to the holding.

Source: *https://www.spcr.cz/muze-vas-zajimat/z-clenske-zakladny/16352-orlen-unipetrol-doprava-investuje-temer-200-milionu-korun-do-zabezpecovaciho-zarizeni-ETCS*

Denmark - Local stretch is key in runaway billion-dollar project

October 2023

The Nykøbing-Holeby line is the first priority when it comes to a new signaling program at Banedanmark. But supplier problems threaten to delay the project.

The Nykøbing-Holeby line is the first priority in Banedanmark's runaway billion-dollar project.

Project management is struggling at the software supplier for Banedanmark's new signaling program worth over 20 billion kroner. An independent consultant report points to poor communication and planning as the culprit, threatening to delay the railway connection to the Femern tunnel.

Banedanmark will prioritize that the line from Nykøbing Falster to the new station at Holeby on Lolland is ready with a new digital signaling system when the Fehmarnbelt Fixed Link opens. This is the message from Banedanmark following an independent consultant's report that shows there is no control over the development of the software that will control train traffic across Lolland-Falster.

Denmark is first

Denmark is set to be the first country to implement ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System), which will provide more efficient and safe train traffic throughout Europe. The new digital signalling programme has a budget of over DKK 20 billion. But according to a confidential consultant report commissioned by Banedanmark, the ERTMS project is unusually difficult for the French supplier, Alstom, to manage. This is according to femernreport.com.

The project is already significantly behind schedule, and indications are that it's only going to get worse. "The delay in the delivery of functionality for rollout 1 was due to a combination of optimistic planning, underestimated integration efforts, unplanned work, one-off work, limited quality assurance, and the large and complex product," says the report, which FemernReport has been granted access to.

May be further delayed

According to the SIG report, the problems are "systemic to the project" and are due to complex project communication.

"We are nervous about the schedule. We have been critical of the processes, and we are not satisfied. Now we have a good dialogue with Alstom about what specific initiatives need to be taken so that we can move forward together," says Peter Jonasson, Construction Director at Banedanmark, to FemernReport.

Source: *https://folketidende.dk/lokal-nyt/lokal-straekning-er-vigtig-i-loebsk-milliardprojekt*

Estonia - Everybody wants Rail Baltica: strong political and European Commission support highlighted at Rail Baltica Industry Day 2023

November 2023

The third Rail Baltica Industry Day in 2023 continued its tradition of success, reaffirming the enduring appeal of this format among Rail Baltica partners, suppliers, and the market. Held online on 8 November 2023, the event offered an insightful update on project progress and plans to over 900 registered participants from the EU and beyond. This highlighted the steady support from partners and the market, making this annual gathering a reliable and well-received occasion.

Rail Baltica will be a fully electrified, double-track railway with a standard gauge of 1435 mm and will be equipped with ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System) and designed to meet European standards. With a design speed of 249 km/h, Rail Baltica will significantly reduce travel times between the Baltic States and major European cities. It will serve as a modern infrastructure for passenger, freight, and military mobility, promoting accessibility and facilitating business, tourism, and cultural exchange. Additionally, the project will enhance the Baltic region's position as a vital transit hub, fostering stronger trade connections and promoting regional cooperation.

Source: https://www.baltictimes.com/_everybody_wants_rail_baltica___strong_political_and_european_commission_support_highlighted_at_rail_baltica_industry_day_2023/

Finland - Kuopio leaps a hundred years ahead in the development of safety equipment

November 2023

The Kuopio railway yard will be equipped with state-of-the-art safety technology in connection with the upgrade project. The old equipment has reached the end of its life cycle and needs replacement. The Finnish Transport Agency is currently working on several projects to replace the safety equipment.

In the case of the Kuopio railway yard upgrade, the new safety equipment system will be supplied by Mipro. The old crank and relay setters will be replaced by a computer setter, thus leaping almost 100 years ahead in development. The mechanical interlocking system in Kuopio has been in use for over 100 years. The operator was once known as the 'performer' because he turned the crank to ensure the passage of a train through the yard.

New safety devices in use in autumn 2024

Some of the safety devices have been delivered to Kuopio, where they are currently being installed. Software testing has also been carried out and testing of cabinets entering the equipment premises. In the spring, as the snow melts, testing in the field continues throughout the system. The implementation is likely to take place next autumn.

” Our work is affected by the fact that in Kuopio we build and operate at the same time. This requires coordination and causes us and track builders to gain additional knowledge and planning,” says Risto Vallenius.

Kuopio's new safety equipment system has been built in such a way that it can be connected to the Digirata system. **The Digirata project aims to ensure that Finland's safety equipment will continue to meet the needs of traffic in the future. It is based on the application of the pan-European ERTMS (European Train Control System) in Finland. In addition to replacing the aging JKV traffic control system, Digirata will allow an increase in capacity on the network.**

Source: https://vayla.fi/-/kuopiossa-loikataan-turvalaitteissa-sata-vuotta-kehityksessa-eteenpain

France - KfW IPEX-Bank Finances Railpool’s Expansion to the French Market

October 2023

KfW IPEX-Bank provides EUR 37.5 million of a new EUR 150 million CAPEX Facility together with 3 international banks for the German based locomotive lessor Railpool. KfW IPEX-Bank acts as Facility Agent and Security Agent. Railpool will use the new funds to especially procure 50 new modern Alstom Traxx Universal locomotives and increase its presence in new markets, especially in France, and contribute to a more efficient and sustainable freight and passenger transport. The Traxx Universal locomotives can be operated for freight and passenger corridor services, also in cross-border operations.

All locomotives will be equipped with the leading signalling system Atlas, Alstom’s onboard solution for the European Train Control System (ETCS). This system enables operation on extended corridors with the broadest coverage of countries and lines, both in ETCS as well as for legacy system operation. The locomotives will cover operations in eight countries, namely Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg and Poland.

With this financing, KfW IPEX-Bank supports the European economy: The engineering of the locomotives will be done at the Alstom site in Mannheim, Germany, while final assembly is planned to take place in Kassel, Germany. Other sites involved are Wroclaw, Poland (carbody shell production), Siegen, Germany (bogies production) and Zurich, Switzerland (project management).

This financing is another example how KfW IPEX-Bank supports the transformation towards a CO2 neutral society and economy.

About RAILPOOL

RAILPOOL is one of the leading railway vehicle leasing companies offering real expertise for full service from a single source. The company was founded in Munich in 2008 and now operates in 18 European countries.

RAILPOOL is one of the largest providers in Europe with around 500 locomotives and 148 passenger vehicles (and an investment total of 2 billion EUR). The RAILPOOL fleet covers 85,000,000 kilometers every year and makes an important contribution to the modal shift to rail. RAILPOOL has its own warehouse with approx. 4,000 different spare parts and components.

Source: https://railway-news.com/kfw-ipex-bank-finances-railpools-expansion-to-french-market/

Germany - Federal government and Deutsche Bahn launch largest infrastructure programme for rail

October 2023

The rail summit of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Transport (BMDV) held in Frankfurt am Main in mid-September marked a significant development in Germany's rail infrastructure. The federal government, in collaboration with Deutsche Bahn (DB), unveiled an ambitious and comprehensive infrastructure program aimed at improving the punctuality and efficiency of rail transport, addressing both passenger and freight needs.

The key highlights of the program include:

Rehabilitation and Expansion: Rehabilitation of the heavily utilized rail network and its expansion into a high-performance network, spanning a total length of 9,000 kilometres.

Investment Backlog: Elimination of the existing investment backlog and the modernization of rail infrastructure across the nation.

1) Capacity Enhancement: Implementation of capacity-enhancing measures, including additional transfer points, switches, and denser signalling to enhance stability and overall train services.

2) Digitalization: Nationwide rollout of the European Train Control System (ETCS) for the digitalization of the rail network. This upgrade is expected to increase network capacity by up to 30%.

3)New Lines: Targeted expansion and construction of new rail lines to address bottlenecks and facilitate the implementation of an efficient German timetable.

4)Station Modernization: Large-scale modernization of railway stations across Germany, transforming them into stations of the future with improved passenger comfort and a broader range of services. This modernization will mainly focus on high-performance corridors and regional networks.

A critical component of this program is the extensive renovation of 40 sections of heavily congested rail tracks by 2030. During these renovations, the affected rail sections will be temporarily closed for several months to carry out the necessary upgrades. The first phase of renovation will commence on the Riedbahn between Frankfurt/Main and Mannheim in the coming year, with the Hamburg–Berlin and Emmerich–Oberhausen routes to follow in 2025.

This initiative includes the significant upgrade of 20 stations along the Riedbahn route as part of the renovation process.

Throughout the general refurbishment period, DB is actively collaborating with the involved railway companies and local transport authorities to develop a high-performance transportation plan. This plan encompasses various aspects, such as enhancing diversion routes, with the goal of minimizing disruptions for passengers and freight transport customers during the construction phase. The ultimate aim is to improve the reliability and efficiency of Germany's rail network, making rail travel a more attractive and convenient mode of transportation.

Source: *https://www.zevrail.de/news/bund-und-deutsche-bahn-bringen-grosstes-infrastrukturprogramm-fur-die-schiene-auf-den-weg*

Greece - Mytilineos signs 3 new major projects worth EUR 460 million

October 2023

Three major projects are expected to be signed by Mytilineos in the coming period. The total of three projects will add EUR 460 million to the large engineering company's backlog.

Western Attica suburban railway

The West Attica Suburban Railway project concerns the reactivation of part of the old Athens-Corinthos railway line. The cost of the project is EUR 132 million and Mytilineos is the provisional contractor in the OSE tender. The contract is expected to be signed by the end of the year.

The project entails the renovation of the superstructure of the railway track with new materials and compliance with Interoperability requirements. It includes the installation of an overhead contact line system of the trolley type at 25kV/50Hz, the implementation of an ETCS L1 signalling system with remote control, and information systems at stations, as well as telecommunications and E/M installations at the project's stations and stops (ELPE Aspropyrgos, Aspropyrgos, Elefsina, ELPE Elefsina, Loutropurgos, Nea Peramos, Megara (SGYT), and Old S.S. Megaron).

The other projects entail the building of 17 schools, and the completion of a 6th in the port of Thessaloniki.

Source:

https://www.michanikos-online.gr/%cf%85%cf%80%ce%bf%ce%b3%cf%81%ce%ac%cf%86%ce%b5%ce%b9-3-%ce%bd%ce%ad%ce%b1-%ce%bc%ce%b5%ce%b3%ce%ac%ce%bb%ce%b1-%ce%ad%cf%81%ce%b3%ce%b1-460-%ce%b5%ce%ba%ce%b1%cf%84-%ce%b5%cf%85%cf%81%cf%8e-%ce%b7/

Hungary - MÁV's plan fails: the tender for the purchase of rolling stock is reopened

November 2023

MÁV-START had planned to conclude a framework agreement for the purchase of 80 electric motor trains, but now it turns out that the project will not be realized.

The first stage of the procurement process was the preliminary market consultation (PMC), which started on 11 July 2023. A total of four economic operators responded to the consultation:

-Siemens Mobility Ltd.

-Stadler Trains Hungary Vasúri Service Ltd.

-ALSTOM Hungary Ltd.

-Strong current 2001 Ltd

The comments and questions received were examined by the contracting authority, but in the meantime, the contracting authority made a strategic and business policy decision, as a result of which the procurement request in the form published in the preliminary market consultation became redundant. The Contracting Authority does not wish to enter into a framework agreement on the above subject. In view of the above, the Contracting Authority has decided to close the pre-market consultation - as stated in the document uploaded on the Notice of Procurement.

The planned vehicles must be able to run at a speed of 160 kilometres per hour, ERTMS, an air-conditioned passenger compartment, low floor, bicycle transport, accessible toilets, audio-visual passenger information, Wi-Fi, and sockets for charging electrical devices, said László Mosóczi, CEO of MÁV-START, the ministerial commissioner responsible for the development of the Hungarian rolling stock industry, in the summer.

Update: Shortly after the publication of our article, MÁV responded

The preliminary market consultation (PMC) for the procurement of rolling stock will not be cancelled but will be published with extended content. The content of the letter is unchanged. MÁV-START closed the previously mentioned EPC because the conditions of the planned vehicle procurement have changed in the meantime and have been partly extended. Instead of the idea of solely procuring its rolling stock, the procurement will now also include leasing, which offers greater flexibility, and availability-based maintenance. Thus, the content of the previous SPD has become understandably narrow and - in several key points - outdated: a new SPD is now justified. This will be tendered

for 95 regional motor trains, as included in the rolling stock development strategy, which also means that a significant improvement in the quality of not only domestic but also international cross-border regional transport can be expected.

Source: *https://www.hellovidek.hu/gazdasag/2023/11/11/kesz-vege-befuccsolt-a-mav-terve*

Italy - A new beginning for the Avezzano-Sora-Roccasecca railway: after 50 years ATR 220 replaces the 'littorine' railcars

November 2023

Emilio Cancelli and Rosaria Villa, who have been in the front line for more than ten years defending the route, explain the latest news.

Sunday 19 November 2023: a date to be marked in the history of the Avezzano Roccasecca railway. For the first time after 50 years of absolute dominance of the ALn 668 (in the various series assigned to the locomotive depots of reference), a new train will be used in ordinary service: it is the ATR 220 'Swing', purchased by Trenitalia a few years ago for the renewal of the regional fleet to be used on thermal traction lines. The ATR 220s are three-car trains, with easy access and a platform for the disabled, air conditioning, two toilets, information displays, and sockets for recharging devices on each seat. For now, due to the still small number of new trains available at the Sulmona depot, they will mainly be used for the Avezzano Capistrello 'runs' and for the two Avezzano Cassino and return trains run only on holidays.

For the Comitato Interregionale Salviamo la Ferrovia Avezzano Roccasecca (Interregional Committee to Save the Avezzano Roccasecca Railway) and, before that, for all the territories through which it passes, this new element represents a further step towards the definitive modernisation of the line, which began with the renewal of the track equipment in 2014 with the reopening of the line (concluded in these days with the replacement of the tracks between Roccasecca and Colfelice) **and will culminate with the activation now scheduled for autumn 2024, of the ultra-modern ERTMS system, which will bring with it not only the definitive modernisation of the rolling stock but also - according to RFI - the adoption of a user information system in the various stations in step with the times.**

At last, after the pressing requests made at every meeting with the various actors that ensure the train service, the requests that we, as a committee, have been promoting in the sole interest of all those, including ourselves, who use this train to travel safely and efficiently, are beginning to be met. This first journey certainly represents the beginning of a new era, just as it represents a clear sign of interest on the part of the central apparatus, which in any case invests in our infrastructure and therefore in our areas, too often not considered because they are peripheral to Rome and the Abruzzo coast.

A railway that may not be liked, but which nonetheless represents an integrated and fundamental element of the social fabric of the province of Frosinone, the Roveto Valley and Marsica. Precisely because it is a beginning, not a point of arrival, the Committee will continue its interface activity with the authorities in charge, so that the definitive renewal of the entire railway service will be completed within the promised timeframe, through the adoption of more modern trainsets and an efficient and effective system of railway traffic management and user information in stations. But it is also necessary to get to grips with timetables, which often do not coincide with the real needs not only of current users but also of those who would like to take the train but cannot. We therefore invite all those who would like to make their contribution to write to us at the e-mail address salviamo.avezzanoroccasecca@gmail.com, on our Facebook page "Salviamo la ferrovia Avezzano Roccasecca" or on the Facebook group "I Servizi della Avezzano Roccasecca".

Source: *https://www.sora24.it/un-nuovo-inizio-per-la-ferrovia-avezzano-sora-roccasecca-dopo-50-anni-gli-atr-220-al-posto-delle-littorine-156417.html*

Netherlands - SNCB: Type I11 control cars to be converted for NL traffic

October 2023

The Belgian state railway SNCB is now dismantling the 21 I11 control cars for use as the lead vehicle in the Netherlands.

This concerns the train protection technology: ETCS will be installed for HSL-Zuid in the Netherlands and an STM for the first-generation ATB (the Dutch class B system) for the conventional NS (Dutch Railways) network. The project is scheduled to start in 2024 and be completed in 2026. The conversion will be carried out in the workshop of B-Technics, a subsidiary of SNCB, in Mechelen. The cars are needed for the IC trains Brussels – Rotterdam. For the 2025 timetable, a new concept will be used on the Amsterdam-Brussels axis, with SNCB using push-pull trains at 200 km/h on the IC line. For this purpose, Vectron was also ordered from Siemens for 200 km/h;

Source: *https://www.eurailpress.de/nachrichten/fahrzeuge-komponenten/detail/news/sncb-steuerwagen-typ-i11-werden-fuer-nl-verkehr-umgebaut.htm*

Norway - The plan for a digital signalling system on the railways has been updated

October 2023

Bane NOR revised the plan for the introduction of the new digital signalling system ERTMS. The replacement of the signal system in Oslo is being postponed so that we can prioritize sections where renewal is more urgently needed.

The national signaling plan describes the order of development for new signaling lsystems. In the plan, we give first priority to the lines with the greatest need for renewal, followed by the lines requiring remote control and new projects.

This reprioritization also offers us the opportunity to gain important experience from other countries that are implementing ERTMS at larger stations. In Denmark, ERTMS is scheduled to be introduced at Copenhagen Central Station in 2030.

The new signalling system will initially be implemented on the Gjøvik Line (Roa-Gjøvik) in 2024 and subsequently on the Nordland Line (Grong-Bodø) in 2025. The goal for the Nordland Line is to have the technical facility ready in 2024 and to put the system into operation as soon as possible.

To accommodate this transition smoothly, train companies will need to rebuild nearly 400 trains to ensure compatibility with the new signalling system.

Bane NOR is also focusing on replacing old signalling systems for major development projects to avoid the costly construction of temporary systems.

Simultaneously, efforts are being made to reduce train traffic delays caused by faults in the current facilities, particularly at Oslo Central Station and Skøyen. Maintenance has been increased, and old signalling system components are being replaced. The goal is to enhance traffic flow flexibility, allowing safe operation on one track in the Oslo tunnel even in the event of a fault on the other track. This is crucial due to the increased density of train traffic compared to when the signalling system was originally designed in the 1970s

Source: *https://www.banenor.no/prosjekter/alle-prosjekter/nytt-digitalt-signalsystem/planen-for-digitalt-signalsystem-pa-jernbanen-er-oppdatert/*

Poland - PKP Intercity will buy 46 locomotives from Newag

November 2023

PKP Intercity has won a tender for the acquisition of 46 new electric locomotives for domestic services and has opted to place the order with Newag, the sole bidder in the tender, as announced by PKP Intercity on Wednesday.

The company called for bids for the purchase of 46 single-system locomotives capable of reaching speeds of 160 km/h in August of this year. Newag submitted the only bid, valued at 1.173 billion PLN.

As per the tender's terms outlined in August, the locomotives are expected to attain speeds of 160 km/h and should feature a level two (L2) ETCS safety system.

The new PKP Intercity locomotives will take to the rails in 2025

PKP Intercity anticipates that the locomotives will be operational on national tracks by 2025. According to the order, the vehicle manufacturer will be responsible for their maintenance in the first cycle - up to and including the first repair at the P4 maintenance level, with the assistance of the carrier's employees.

The railway carrier is consistently expanding its locomotive fleet. In October 2022, it entered into a contract with PESA in Bydgoszcz for the manufacture of 16 new electric-diesel locomotives, capable of maximum speeds of 160 km/h in electric traction and 120 km/h in diesel traction. The gross value of the contract is 554.6 million PLN.

In March 2023, an agreement was concluded with Newag for the purchase of 20 Gryffin electric locomotives. In June this year, PKP Intercity exercised its option right and decided to extend the purchase of 10 multi-system electric locomotives by another 5 units. The value of the order with the New York producer thus increased from PLN 258.6 to nearly PLN 388 million gross.

Will they also buy another 63 electric locomotives from Newag? The offer is in the budget

In addition, last week PKP Intercity opened an offer in a tender for the purchase of 63 electric multi-system locomotives to run trains at a speed of 200 km / h. It was then informed that the offer was within the carrier's budget. The tender also provides for the so-called option, which assumes the possibility of increasing the order by another 32 locomotives. The offer was made by Newag, who proposed without option 2 billion 289 million 829 thousand. PLN 500 for 63 locomotives, and with option right 3 billion 452 million 917 thousand PLN 500 gross.

Source: *https://www.portalsamorzadowy.pl/finanse/pkp-intercity-kupi-46-lokomotyw-od-newagu,505631.html*

Portugal - Investment announced for Portuguese railway network in 2024

November 2023

Portugal's Minister of Infrastructure, João Galamba, has announced that the 2024 governmental budget will deliver an investment of EUR 700 million to complete ongoing works on the Portuguese railway network and EUR 1.34 billion for the expansion of public transport infrastructure and fleet procurement.

One of the actions covers the conclusions of the studies and projects and the release of tender procedures for the construction of the first section of the Porto – Lisbon high-speed line between Aveiro (Oiã) and Porto (Campanhã).

In 2024, rehabilitation works on Beira Alta Line between Pampilhosa and Guarda (190 km) will also continue. Besides comprehensive track renewal, the project also includes the installation of ETCS Level 2, the modernisation of 10 stations to allow 750-metre-long strains, the removal of the level crossings as well as the construction of Mealhada branch providing direct rail connection between Northern Line (Linha do Norte) and the Beira Alta Line.

Source: *https://www.railwaypro.com/wp/investment-announced-for-portuguese-railway-network-in-2024/*

Romania - Port of Constanta railway upgrade proceeds with first tender

October 2023

The state-owned Romanian Infrastructure Manager CFR Infrastructura has received five bids in the open tender for the railway modernisation of the port of Constanta. The bid of preference will determine the company which will undertake the modernisation's first stage at the Valu lui Traian station, which functions as an entry point for trains heading to the port of Constanta.

According to CFR Infrastructura, the companies who submitted a tender bid are the US Rail Works association company, the Romanian companies Bawi SRL – Swietelksy

CF and Porr Construct SRL, the Hungarian STRABAG Vasútépítő Kft., and the Kazakh Temirzhol Zhondeu LLP. The tender winner will have to carry out the modernisation of the Valu lui Traian station and its vicinity to make it more efficient for freight transport.

The project will cost 402.343.706 Romanian lei (about 81 million EUR), and the winning bidder will need to implement a design study that will last six months while the works will last about 20 months. The financing will be secured via the EU's CEF and Romanian state funds.

First round objectives

As mentioned, the railway modernisation of the Valu lui Traian station and its vicinity is just the first part of a broader rail modernisation project targeting a much-needed upgrade of the port of Constanta. During this modernisation stage, the primary objective is the construction of a railway yard at the station that will comprise 32 fully electrified lines. Additionally, existing lines of the railway station will be electrified, and the same will apply to lines that will connect the station's main facilities with the new railway yard.

Moreover, the facility will ensure TSI and ERTMS 2 implementation and compliance through these works. According to CFR Infrastructura, the upgrade will increase transit capacity and improve interoperability. As for the broader Constanta port modernisation project, it will include two more stages before completion and costs that will reach the amount of 4.5 billion Romanian lei (905 million EUR).

Source: *https://www.railfreight.com/infrastructure/2023/10/03/port-of-constanta-railway-upgrade-proceeds-with-first-tender/*

Slovakia - Siemens Mobility bought the Slovak company HMH, manufacturer of the MIREL train interlocking system for the V4 countries

November 2023

Siemens Mobility has completed the acquisition of the Slovak technology company HMH, s.r.o., the manufacturer of the national train interlocking system MIREL for Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

The system can receive signals from beacons on the line, measure the instantaneous speed of the train, the distance travelled, check the driver's alertness, and other data necessary for safe driving.

With this acquisition, Siemens Mobility can now offer a complete portfolio of train protection systems for all Eastern European rail corridors. HMH will continue to be based in Bratislava after the acquisition, and its 77 employees will be integrated into Siemens Mobility's Rail Infrastructure business unit.

"HMH is a strategic addition to our rail infrastructure portfolio and strengthens our position in the market. This acquisition represents an important milestone in our drive to provide comprehensive, single-source solutions for all rail providers in Europe. We are delighted to welcome our new colleagues from Bratislava to Siemens Mobility," said Andre Rodenbeck, CEO of Siemens Mobility Rail Infrastructure.

"Siemens Mobility is an ideal partner for us. Together we can build and expand our portfolio of train protection systems, which has been dictating trends in this field for two decades. The future lies in European cross-border rail transport. As HMH is now an integral part of the Siemens Mobility family, we will be at the heart of this development for the Eastern European market. This is an important step for our future," says Tomas Horváth, CEO and founder of HMH.

The MIREL VZ1 system manufactured by HMH is a unique and comprehensive solution with a long history not only on Slovak railways but also supporting safe operation in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. MIREL VZ1 is designed as a harmonized system with an interface working according to European railway standards and can also be integrated with the European ERTMS system, which will in the future become the train protection system for all European Union member states.

HMH was founded in 1993 and has been developing, manufacturing, and maintaining train protection and train control monitoring systems since 1999.

Source: *https://touchit.sk/siemens-mobility-kupila-slovensku-spolocnost-hmh-vyrobcu-vlakoveho-zabezpecovaca-mirel-pre-staty-v4/556124*

Spain - The government will invest 11 billion in the Mediterranean corridor and 16 billion in the Atlantic corridor

October 2023

The Secretary of State for Mobility, David Lucas, points out the importance of the interest and commitment of the private sector to develop freight and passenger transport services on these routes and for the corridors to reach their full potential.

The Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda (Mitma) confirms its commitment to the future of the Atlantic and Mediterranean Corridors, a key multimodal infrastructure for the economic and social development of Spain and connections with Europe and for the decarbonisation of freight and passenger transport. A commitment that is evident in the more than 27 billion EUR that are planned to be invested in its deployment and improvement until 2030 and with the 3.3 billion EUR allocated in the 2023 PGE to complete and expand both trans-European corridors. Of this, 11 billion EUR correspond to the Mediterranean corridor, while 16 billion EUR will go to the Atlantic corridor.

The almost complete renovation of the León-Vigo line and the improvement of the Vigo-A Coruña line, with new ERTMS safety systems and improvements for traffic, the major renovation works on the Madrid-Seville high-speed line, the complete renovation and electrification of the Algeciras-Bobadilla line and the Mérida-Puertollano line are also underway; implementation of the León-La Robla third rail; Valladolid east goods bypass; electrification of the Guillarei-Tui-Portuguese border line; electrification of the Salamanca-Portuguese border line; new freight terminal at the Southwest European Logistics Platform (Badajoz) and the Júndiz intermodal and logistics terminal.

Source: *https://mediterraneopress.com/2023/10/27/el-gobierno-invertira-11-000-millones-en-corredor-mediterraneo-y-16-000-en-el-corredor-atlantico/*

Sweden - Preparations for the railway's new signalling system between Nässjö and Hässleholm completed

October 2023

The Swedish Transport Administration is modernizing and digitizing the railways in Sweden, with preparations and work underway for a new signaling system, ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System). The preparatory work for this system on the railway line between Nässjö and Hässleholm has now been completed.

ERTMS aims to provide more trains running on time and to facilitate maintenance. In the long term, it will also simplify cross-border train traffic between European countries.

The Swedish Transport Administration has been working along the railway between Nässjö and Hässleholm in stages since the project commenced in the summer of 2021. According to the forecast, the work is expected to be completed in the autumn of 2023.

Source: *http://www.jarnvagsnyheter.se/20231023/15375/forberedelserna-jarnvagens-nya-signalsystem-mellan-nassjo-och-hassleholm-ar-klara*

Switzerland - Switzerland rolls out new ERTMS plan

November 2023

The Swiss Federal Office of Transport (FOT) has updated the country's strategy for the deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS). The new programme focuses on implementing cab-signalling with European Train Control System (ETCS) Level 2 and migrating to the so-called Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS).

The involved parties will have to provide their plans on how to carry out these initiatives by 2025. The FOT specified that, when it comes to freight and long-distance trains, the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) are responsible for rolling stock modernisation. In other words, it will be up to SBB to finance the projects concerning these types of convoys.

ERTMS Level 2 allows for higher speeds.

Currently, the Swiss standard gauge network is mostly equipped with ETCS Level 1 Limited Supervision, as the FOT explained. With this system, train drivers still have to be on the lookout for trackside signals. On the other hand, the cab-signalling system within the ETCS Level 2, which is already deployed on some north-south and east-west axes, displays the information on a screen inside the driver's cabin. This would allow trains to run faster since the on-board computer continuously monitors the transferred data and the maximum permissible speed.

From GSM-R to FRMCS

Moreover, Switzerland is setting the stage for migrating from the Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway (GSM-R) to FRMCS. As explained by the European Railway Agency, GSM-R is nearing the end of its time due to obsolescence risks. This system was designed over 20 years ago and the technology will gradually be phased out over the next decade or so. The International Union of Railways claims that FRMCS will also enable railway digitalisation, as it will process increasing volumes of data.

Look ahead – Railtech Europe conference

On 6 and 7 March, Jaarbeurs Utrecht in the Netherlands hosts the 2024 Railtech Europe event. This major bi-annual railway infrastructure and technology event entails a combined exhibition and conference, which provides an international platform where technology and the railway market meet in order to discuss policy and practice. RailTech Europe is the largest railway event in the Benelux area.

The main conference hosts a session on 'shaping the digital railway', focusing on modern signalling and train control systems – like ERTMS- and the importance of Artificial Intelligence on rail transport.

Throughout both days of the event, there are multiple ERTMS related workshops:

- **Data science and sensoring (ERTMS)**, during which an overview is presented of the deployment of ERTMS in Europe, the results so far and the challenges that still lie ahead.
- **Cyber risks, security architectures and attack vectors**, which focusses on the additional cyber risks ERTMS brings.
- **Automatic Train Operation (ATO)**, which handles the current status, challenges and obstacles regarding automated railroad operations.

For further information, please visit the website below: https://www.railtech-europe.com/

Contact details

For further information on ERTMS, please visit our website: ERTMS (europa.eu)

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