

# Signal

the European Rail Traffic Management System

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## ‘Timely and cost-efficient deployment is the aim’ – Karel Vinck



In an exclusive interview, the European Coordinator for ERTMS **Karel Vinck** updates Signal on the priorities and aims for ERTMS deployment...

**Signal:** Where are we now?

**KV:** ERTMS deployment has entered a crucial phase. Until mid-2008, we focused on technical issues as there was a priority need to settle a common technical standard; in 2009 we agreed on a common deployment methodology. We have the System Requirement Specification 2.3.0d and a European Deployment Plan that sets clear equipment deadlines. Our aim now is to manage a timely and cost-efficient deployment.

**Signal:** What are your priorities to reach this aim?

**KV:** There are three. Firstly, we need to develop a testing strategy that ensures both the compliance of ERTMS equipments with the European specifications and their effective mutual interoperability. Then, the business case for ERTMS needs to be improved for railway undertakings, and equipment costs lowered. Finally, the management of ERTMS deployment along the corridors should be more integrated to improve investment coordination.

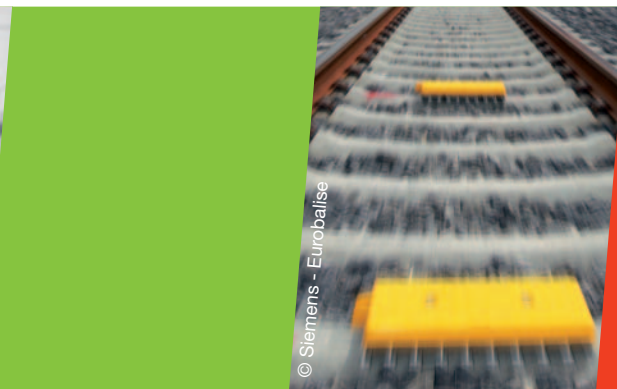
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ERTMS deployment has entered a crucial phase, Karel Vinck tells us. It is a deployment that will be important not least for the competitiveness of rail freight in Europe: as illustrated in this latest issue of *Signal*, ERTMS is at the heart of plans to facilitate rail freight transport along key European corridors and to develop a freight-oriented network.

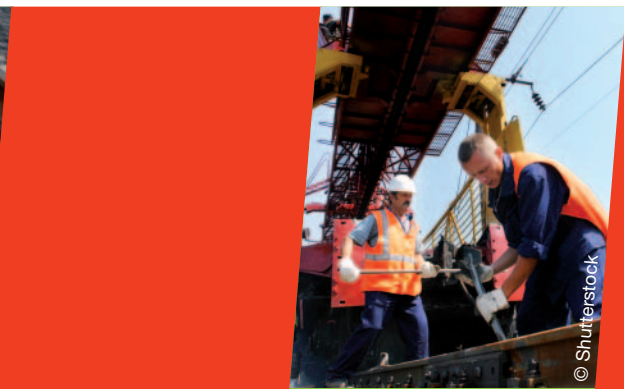
*The Signal team*



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**Signal:** Has the economic downturn had an impact on ERTMS deployment?

**KV:** We cannot deny that there has been an investment slowdown, but it would be rather hasty to link it directly to the economic context. ERTMS investment costs for trackside are a minor share of infrastructure investments in general, especially compared to the economic benefits that can be expected to come from its deployment in terms of market openness and traffic increase. But the economic advantages of ERTMS can only reap their full benefits if the axes that we defined as a priority are continuously equipped.



### A new regulation for a competitive network for freight: corridors are the building block

Having good quality rail infrastructure along an international corridor is essential for the competitiveness of rail freight. The structures for ERTMS corridors A (Rotterdam–Genoa) and C (Antwerp–Basel/Lyon), created on the initiative of the European Commission, have shown the advantages of cooperation for the development of a corridor. But this voluntary approach has also had its limitations, notably in terms of timescales and the scope of measures to be introduced. This type of cooperation should be consolidated and extended to other corridors.

Drawing on the experience and good practices acquired in the ERTMS corridors, particularly corridors A and C, the Commission proposed at the end of 2008 a regulation on a European rail network for competitive freight, to be based on a number of rail freight corridors. The regulation was recently agreed by the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers and is expected to enter into force before the end of 2010.

Nine corridors have been defined which link the main industrial and port regions in Europe. These nine corridors include the six ERTMS corridors and the Railnet Europe (RNE) corridors, which often overlap. They should be operational for the most part within three years.



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## Coordination and consultation

A governance structure will be put in place for each freight corridor in order to strengthen cooperation on investments and operational matters, composed of an executive committee of EU Member States and a management committee of infrastructure managers. This structure is similar to that already in place for ERTMS corridors A and C.

The management committee for the corridor will have to cooperate with managers of goods terminals (maritime and inland ports, marshalling yards, etc.) in order to ensure that these develop in a coherent manner, to coordinate the allocation of train paths between the network and the terminals, and to be able to better manage traffic in case of incidents.

The management committee will also have to coordinate investments, making sure in particular to eliminate bottlenecks and to homogenise the capacity of trains along the corridor notably by harmonising their length and their size. Works on the corridor will also have to be coordinated to both enhance transparency on the use of the rail lines and anticipate capacity restrictions.

An open consultation process will allow railway undertakings and other applicants to express their views on the development of the corridor.

## One-stop shops, train paths and greater priority to freight

The creation of a 'one-stop shop' for each corridor will facilitate and simplify the process of allocating train paths as well as making it more transparent and non-discriminatory.

A catalogue of train paths meeting the needs of rail freight should be established, along with a capacity reserve. Freight trains will benefit on the corridors from train paths that make it easier than it is now to offer a service of quality in terms of punctuality, reliability and journey times, which is necessary to attract clients who demand good quality, reliable paths. These paths will also make it possible to make more capacity available to freight, which despite the crisis has been growing for several years.

As it stands now, freight traffic is systematically discriminated against because passenger traffic always has priority even in the case of disruptions. The regulation envisages that infrastructure managers must define transparent, coherent and non-discriminatory rules for the two types of traffic. They must in particular make sure that freight trains that are running on time can keep their timetable and are not systematically delayed when disruptions occur.



## ERTMS Corridor F: facilitating rail transport between Eastern and Western Europe – by Łukasz Augustowski, PKP PLK s.a.

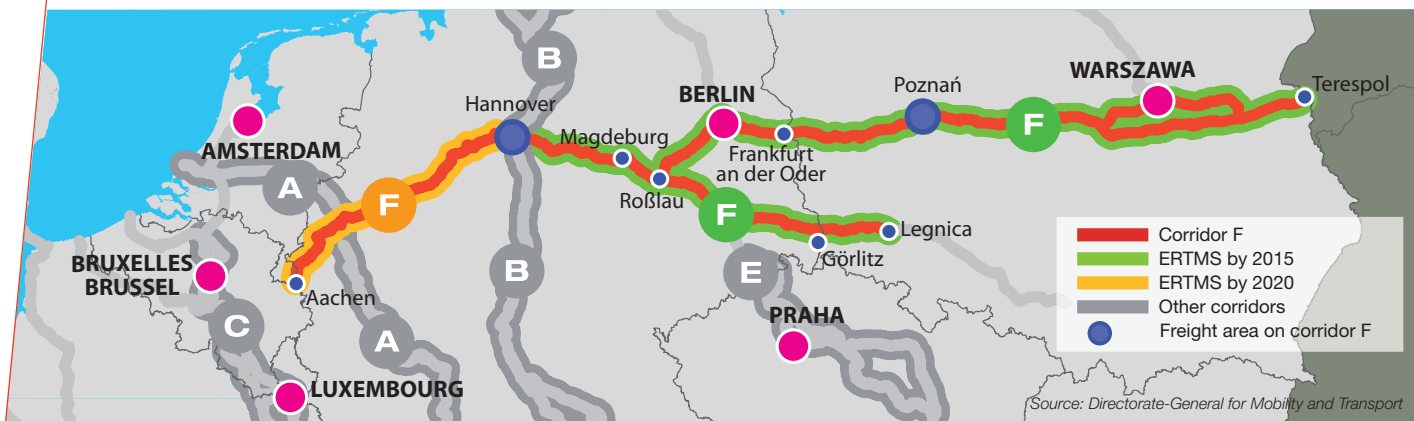
The ERTMS Corridor F was set up to facilitate rail transport on one of the most crucial European East-West routes. It connects Terespol – the border crossing point on the Polish/Belarusian border – via Warsaw, Poznań, Berlin and the Ruhr agglomeration with Aachen in the westernmost part of Germany.

The route has been defined based on traffic and trade predictions and the fact that it is the most convenient West-East link in central Europe. The main goal in developing this corridor is to encourage modal shift of freight from road to rail, as well as to achieve the EU's sustainable development objectives.

The cooperation between Polish and German parties is progressing well and will result in ERTMS implementation by 2015 along most of the Corridor. By 2020, the remaining sections will be equipped.

Version 2.3.0d is being implemented while ensuring the option to upgrade to 3.0.0 when possible. Construction works on a pilot line in Poland and the equipment of vehicles by railway undertakings already started in 2009.

In order better to facilitate freight transport between the West and the East, it has recently been decided that Corridor F will be extended to the North Sea ports of Antwerp/Zeebrugge and Rotterdam. This step results from the increasing trade flows between the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Poland and the former Soviet Union states and Asia. On top of this, links with other ERTMS Corridors will be strengthened which will not only boost the connectivity of Corridor F but will also ultimately make rail freight traffic more competitive overall.



### ERTMS diary

- 19 July, 18 October and 6 December 2010: Brussels ERTMS Corridor Group
- 27 September and 29 November 2010: Brussels ERTMS MoU Steering Committee
- 19 and 20 October 2010: Brussels Committee on the Interoperability and Safety of the European Railway System (RISC)

*Please send us your dates!*

For further information on ERTMS, see: [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/rail/interoperability/ertms/ertms\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/rail/interoperability/ertms/ertms_en.htm)

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