Railway safety and signalling: Assessing the state of play of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) deployment

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The European Parliament adopted by 667 votes to 11, with 14 abstentions, a resolution on railway safety and signalling: assessing the state of play of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) deployment.

Accelerating the deployment of ERTMS

The European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) is a single European signalling and speed control system launched in the early 1990s with the aim of ensuring the interoperability of national railway systems, reducing the costs of acquiring and maintaining signalling systems and increasing train speeds, infrastructure capacity and the level of safety in rail transport.

The deployment of ERTMS is essential to enable the railway sector to achieve the objective of the European Green Deal and to achieve the milestones set by the strategy for sustainable and smart mobility by 2030 and 2050.

The Court of Auditors reported that the **full deployment of ERTMS on the core network is currently well behind schedule** and will not be completed by the 2030 deadline, with a lack of coordination between Member States being one of the main reasons for this delay.

The resolution makes a number of recommendations to address the main problems identified with the deployment of ERTMS

Governance

Acknowledging the **leading role played by the European Railway Agency** as the single point of contact ensuring consistency in the development of interoperable ERTMS, Parliament deplored the recent reduction in the Agency's annual budget and suggested that it should be provided with the necessary financial and human resources as well as additional expertise to solve the remaining problems.

The resolution stressed that an approach to ERTMS deployment coordinated between all Member States and led by the ERTMS Coordinator is the only way to overcome the current patchwork situation, especially with regard to cross-border projects. The role of the ERTMS coordinator should be strengthened, both in terms of resources and implementing powers.

Members proposed establishing a regulatory framework for the **digital transformation of the railway system** that places ERTMS at the heart of the digital evolution of the railway system.

Interoperability and deployment

Parliament deplored that, compared to the targets set by the European deployment plan, by the end of 2020 only 13% of core network corridors were operating in accordance with ERTMS and that deployment in most corridors was in the range of 7% to 28%.

The resolution suggested **strengthening the corridor approach** to overcome the obstacles to ERTMS deployment, in particular for those corridors with the lowest deployment, such as the Atlantic corridor, especially in the Iberian Peninsula.

The Commission is invited to:

- introduce a regulatory provision to ensure that the ERTMS national implementation plans are legally aligned with the binding ERTMS deployment targets set in EU legislation, in order to complete its introduction within the **core network by 2030 and within the comprehensive network by 2040**;

- maintain and reinforce the **binding nature of the targets** in its revisions of the TEN-T guidelines, the European deployment plans for ERTMS and the on-board and track-side control-command and signalling subsystems (CCS TSI);

- strengthen the role of the **core network coordinators** in the forthcoming revision of the TEN-T Regulation, and integrate measures for a European management of the core network infrastructure

- develop an **overarching decommissioning strategy for Class B systems** with regulatory deadlines aligned with binding targets to be set at EU level;

- take legislative initiatives, including updates of the current implementing regulations, to ensure **streamlined and harmonised authorisation procedures** in order to reduce the time needed to grant conformity-to-type certificates;

- work with the Agency to establish a **common European model for public procurement** on and set out in a legislative proposal all technical aspects for ensuring successful procurement and compatibility with the latest ERTMS baseline available;

- legislative proposal for an **ERTMS industrial strategy** addressing the insufficient industrial capacity, the lack of sufficient workshop for retrofit and of stable and predictably budget and the shortage of qualified staff.

Parliament called for the creation of an **EU platform** for the development of prototypes in order to favour large economies of scale, harmonisation and competitiveness, as well as the creation of a transparent register of solutions that have already been funded. It also underlined the need to ensure synergies between ERTMS and the European Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) as soon as possible is stressed.

Funding

Between 2014 and 2020, the EU budget supported ERTMS deployment with an estimated total budget of EUR 2.7 billion, out of which EUR 850 million came from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and EUR 1.9 billion came from European Structural and Investments Funds (the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund) in the eligible regions.

Members are convinced that the **existing financial instruments need to be improved** to incentivise large-scale investment in the ERTMS. They called on the Commission to draw up all-encompassing guidelines in support of a large-scale strategy for the funding of the ERTMS both trackside and on-board.

They also considered that Member States should make ERTMS a key priority in their recovery and resilience plans.