EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

EN

Press Release

Luxembourg, 3 October 2017

EU-wide railway signalling system still a "patchwork", say Auditors

The deployment of an EU-wide railway signalling system is at a low level so far and represents a patchwork, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. This is despite the fact that the concept is not generally questioned by the rail sector, say the auditors. They found that many infrastructure managers and railway undertakings are reluctant to invest in the system due to the expense entailed and the lack of an individual business case.

The European Rail Traffic Management System is designed to replace the diverse railway signalling systems around Europe with a single system that enables trains to travel uninterrupted across different countries and facilitates rail competitiveness. To help the Member States deploy the system, approximately €1.2 billion was allocated from the EU budget between 2007 and 2013.

The auditors assessed whether the system had been properly planned, deployed and managed, and whether there was an individual business case. They visited six Member States (Denmark, Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland) included in the network corridors where the system has to be fully deployed by 2030.

They found that the current low status of deployment may mainly be explained by the reluctance of many infrastructure managers and railway undertakings to invest in the necessary equipment due to the expense entailed and the lack of an individual business case for many of them. EU funding, even if better managed and targeted, can only cover a limited amount of the overall cost of deployment.

"*The current situation puts at risk not only the achievement of the deployment targets set for 2030 and investments made so far, but also the realisation of a single railway area as one of the European Commission's major policy objectives*," **said Mr Ladislav Balko, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report**. "*In addition, it may adversely affect the competitiveness of rail transport as compared with road haulage*."

Despite the strategic political decision to deploy a single signalling system in the whole EU, no

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report by the European Court of Auditors.
The full report is on www.eca.europa.eu.

ECA Press

Mark Rogerson – Spokesperson **T: (+352) 4398 47063** **M: (+352) 691 55 30 63**
Damijan Fišer – Press Officer **T: (+352) 4398 45410** **M: (+352) 621 55 22 24**
12, rue Alcide De Gasperi - L-1615 Luxembourg
E: press@eca.europa.eu **@EUAuditors** **eca.europa.eu**

overall cost estimate was performed to establish the necessary funding and its sources. The legal obligations introduced did not cover the decommissioning of national systems, nor are they always aligned with the deadlines and priorities included in EU transport policy. As of today, the level of deployment across the EU is low.

The system entails costly investments with no immediate benefit for those who have to bear the cost, say the auditors. Problems with compatibility of the different versions installed, as well as the lengthy certification procedures, also adversely affect individual business cases.

The auditors make a number of recommendations to the European Commission, the Member States and the European Union Agency for Railways concerning the assessment of deployment costs; decommissioning of national signalling systems; individual business cases for infrastructure managers and railway undertakings; compatibility and stability of the system; the role and resources of the European Union Agency for Railways; alignment of national deployment plans, monitoring and enforcement; improved take-up of EU funds for rail signalling projects; and better targeting of EU funding.

Notes to Editors

To run trains on a rail network, a signalling system is needed to manage traffic safely and keep trains clear of each other at all times. However, each European country has developed its own technical specifications for signalling systems, gauge width, and safety and electricity standards. There are now around 30 different signalling systems across the EU managing railway traffic, which are not interoperable.

To overcome this and to help create a single European railway area, the European rail industry started developing a European control-command, signalling and communication system - ERTMS - in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the European Commission supported its establishment as the single system in Europe. The objective of ERTMS is to replace all existing signalling systems in Europe with a single system to foster the interoperability of national rail networks and cross-border rail transport.

Special Report No 13/2017: “A single European rail traffic management system: will the political choice ever become reality?” is available on the ECA website (eca.europa.eu) in 23 EU languages.