On 3 October 2017, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published its performance audit on how efficiently and effectively the European Commission and Member States have used EU co-funding instruments for the European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS) deployment. This was a timely review, as it came following significant steps we made towards our main objective of an interoperable rail system in Europe (adoption of the technical pillar of the Fourth Railway Package, stabilisation of ERTMS specification, review of European Deployment Plan on ERTMS etc.).

As European ERTMS Coordinator I was involved in this ECA analysis and I would like to use the opportunity to thank Mr. Ladislav Balko, Member of the Court, and his team for their good cooperation with the European Commission, and in particular for the constructive recommendations they made as conclusion of their investigations. I welcome this performance audit, which confirms the full acceptance and the value of ERTMS by all stakeholders as the universal signalling system in Europe. It also identifies the actual challenges and makes recommendations for immediate actions to be carried out by the European Commission and all involved stakeholders. I highly appreciate that a special importance has been given to some core actions:

- **A business case analysis** has been carried out that clearly shows the benefits of ERTMS deployment on the Core Network Corridors. We are continuously developing it with additional assumptions and models. One of the main conclusions of this analysis is that a **coordinated deployment** is a key success factor for EU-wide ERTMS implementation.

- **Decommissioning of national systems** should become a key catalyst for ERTMS migration that gives a final boost for on-board deployment. Some smaller Member States have already identified dates for final removal of their national system, but big Member States with dense network will have to overcome major challenges to reach that target.

- The European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), as the system authority for ERTMS specifications, has been playing a crucial role in defining, stabilising and guaranteeing the compatibility of the system in close cooperation with the sector. **ERA’s role** and responsibilities will further increase as of 2019 as foreseen under the Fourth Railway Package. Therefore **necessary resources** need to be ensured to ERA as of now, so that they can act as an efficient and effective system authority.

- From past experiences we have learned that we can only focus on **realistic and feasible short-term priorities** when defining the ERTMS implementation target dates as legally binding. The recently **adopted European Deployment Plan (EDP)** followed this approach and set out dates to 2023. When defining the network-wide implementation, Member States have to align their National Implementation Plans with the EDP. We can only tackle the long term challenges, once we have made significant progress on the short-term ones.

- **The uptake of EU funds** under Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) has increased over the last years, thanks to the changes the Commission has made to the Call process and to the introduction of the Deployment Management Team that has been providing technical and operational support to beneficiaries. However, in order to have the guarantee of interoperable ERTMS deployment throughout Europe, I plead on one hand for **substantial funding to be provided by the Commission** also in the future, on the other hand for **ERA’s involvement in ensuring interoperability of all EU co-funded projects as of now**, regardless of the management mode.

**ERTMS** is a European system, it was a strategic political choice of the European Commission based on a technological development initiated by European railways (main initiators were Deutsche Bahn and SNCF) in the late 1980s. Later on it was complemented with industrially-led research and development work, including an initial financial analysis. Our common responsibility is to make the ERTMS deployment a success. What we further need is a shared vision, strategy and a well-planned deployment, supported by all stakeholders: railway undertakings, infrastructure managers, supplier industry, Member States, and the European Commission.

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1 European Court of Auditors' Special Report "A single European Rail Traffic Management System: will the political choice ever become reality?"