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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council on 8 June 2026

Unlocking ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System)
Deployment: Stability, Simplicity and Interoperability First

- Information from Belgium, supported by Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and Sweden

During the Informal Meeting of Transport Ministers of 29 April, held at the initiative of the Cyprus Presidency, Member States reaffirmed the strategic importance of ERTMS for the future of European rail while expressing growing concern about the way the system is currently deployed. They highlighted that rising and increasingly unpredictable costs, frequent changes in system requirements, and the proliferation of non-fully compatible standards and baselines are undermining robust business cases, long-term investment planning and the expected returns of European standardisation. Excessive complexity and lengthy certification and authorisation processes were also seen as delaying time-to-service and straining limited technical and human resources. Moreover, several Member States noted that expected system-wide capacity gains have yet to materialise in operational terms. Finally, it was underlined that cross-border interoperability—despite being a core objective of ERTMS—remains incomplete, with diverging national timelines and system evolution continuing to constrain cross-border services and limiting the effectiveness of investments along key European corridors.

Therefore **Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania & Sweden** call on:

- The Commission to table an **“omnibus” administrative simplification package, with the aim to reinforce the role of the European Union Agency for Railways (hereafter ‘ERA’ or the Agency) by building on Article 19(1) of Directive (EU) 2016/797**, so that, within its competences, the Agency: (i) ensures cost control and procedural simplification; (ii) coordinates more harmonised implementation across Member States; and (iii), when preparing draft revisions of the technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs), avoids introducing new technical standards that would call into question previously made investments.
- The Commission, the Agency and relevant authorities **to optimise certification and authorisation processes** while fully preserving safety, by reducing unnecessary complexity and duplication in compatibility testing, applying modular and proportionate assessment approaches, and enabling mutual recognition of test results, where appropriate, to shorten time-to-service.
- The Commission and ERA to **anchor ERTMS system evolution in stabilised and consolidated technical standards**, by introducing clear consolidation periods and limiting changes to safety-critical corrections, identified specification errors, legally unavoidable adjustments and cybersecurity fixes, to preserve predictability and protect investments.
- The Commission and ERA **to define and publish clear, standardised and transparent migration pathways**, to avoid additional reinvestment and disruptive upgrade cycles for recently deployed assets, and to ensure that future transitions are anticipated early and implemented in a controlled manner. **Backward compatibility should be the default principle**, ensuring continuity of operations and protection of existing investments.

- The Commission and ERA to **accelerate and de-risk the Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway (GSM-R) to the Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS) transition** by ensuring timely availability of sufficiently stable specifications and market-ready products, noting that GSM-R obsolescence is projected in the 2035 timeframe and that delayed FRMCS maturity increases the risk of additional investments for fleets already in procurement or deployment.
- The Commission and ERA to **strengthen cross-border coordination as a core element of ERTMS**, by moving from fragmented bilateral solutions towards more standardised, streamlined and corridor-level coordination that anticipates interoperability issues earlier, reduces administrative burden, and supports consistent deployment on key international routes.

In conclusion, Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania & Sweden reiterate that a stable, predictable and interoperable ERTMS framework is essential to develop the full potential of European rail. Only through coordinated action at European level, combined with a strengthened role for the Agency and clearer governance of system evolution, can ERTMS effectively deliver on its core objectives: increased safety and capacity, seamless cross border mobility and efficient use of public and private investments. To achieve this, **we need a system that is simpler, more affordable, more predictable and more secure** — one that enables, rather than hinders, large-scale deployment across Europe.