



Ms. Jacqueline Galant

Belgian Minister of Mobility



Ladies and Gentlemen CEO's
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In my turn, I have the honour to welcome you on the 12th ERTMS world conference in Brussels.

Belgium, situated at the heart of the European Union, possessing a very developed economic sector of logistics, is abundantly conscience of the challenges, present and future, of the transport sector. We are often pointed at as Belgium still resides in the top of the ranking of most road congested European countries .

The transport sector has to continuously reinvent and adapt itself to become effective and efficient to be able to accommodate ad-hoc demands. For instance, the transport sector still has a long way to go to reduce its ecological footprint.

Yet, rail transport is a sustainable transport mode. However, it may fall victim to its intra-communal territorial fragmentation that, *de facto*, limits the interoperability and forms a risk to the development of the single European railway area.

This is why one of the objectives of the 4th Railway Package is to eliminate these obstacles which impede the creation of the a single European railway area. In doing this, it will contribute to a more competitive railway sector.

The text approved during the European Transport Council in October 2015, is now subject to the negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council.

Railway transport has to be the key shackle in the transport chain, integrated with the other mode of transport.

The globalisation of the production and commerce are part of the defining characteristics of our time. All means of transport, and in particular rail, deliver the vital distribution of products and the essential mobility of travellers, creating a direct link between enterprises and the global market.

The railway sector is a key element to economic growth and competitiveness.

And yet more than 20 different signalling systems coexist in Europe. This is not without consequences. This incompatibility constitutes a major technical obstacle for international traffic and goods transport. While the railway transport should be more competitive on long distances, every border adds overhead costs and delays, which translate in loss of market share and saturation of the road network.

ERTMS has imposed itself naturally as the best adapted technical solution. Thanks to this ingenious system, we will be able to significantly increase the competitiveness of the railway transport. This is in particular true for freight.

ERTMS is a big industrial success for Europe. It has become at this date the global reference system! ERTMS goes hand in hand with safety and interoperability.

The Belgian railway sector, at the image of the European railway sector, is engaged in an important mutation.

The challenge to which Belgium has to rise, just as most other European countries, is to succeed in a transition from the national signalling system to ERTMS without jeopardising the safety, capacity and continuity of its railway systems.

It heartens me that Belgium is one of the countries most progressed in the deployment of ETCS on its railway network. Safety, it's my priority.

Unfortunately, at the same time I was forced to conclude at the end of 2015, that many of the locomotives of operators running on those lines still haven't been equipped with ETCS.

The homologation of ETCS (on the rolling stock), followed by the roll-out on all concerned locomotives during 2016, is indispensable to increase the safety of railway operation in our country.

The involvement of all stakeholders – infrastructure managers, railway operators, national and European authorities, and industry – is the condition sine qua non to make sure the migration of the European railway system to ERTMS will be done in a coordinated way and unambiguously.

This system would lose a lot of its benefits, if it should be deployed in isolation by one single country. To allow trains to circulate on the entirety of the Belgian and European network, we all have to work in concert, without exception.

It will be never said enough, but the deployment of ERTMS on the railway network will lower functioning costs and will better substantially the effectiveness on long cross border routes!

I'm particularly proud that Belgium, with the aid of the European Commission and the Innovation and Networks Executive Agency (INEA), has been able to complete the section between Antwerp and Luxembourg fully in line with the European deployment plan.

After the dramatic railway accident in Buizingen in 2010, Belgium has well caught up in terms of safety in respect to its neighbouring networks. Bu the work is not finished. The effort has to be continued.

I want to underline the fact that at the horizon 2022, conforming to the masterplan, Belgium will have equipped the whole of its railway network with ERTMS. This will mean: an increase in safety, reliability and capacity for the national network.

To conclude, I want to confirm the commitment of the government and my services to support this transition to the ERTMS system and to maintain the this dynamic proactivity amongst the stakeholders involved in this vast project.

At this moment, we contribute to constructing the architecture of the a performant trans-European network, that will allow the establishment of a single European railway area.

It is my pleasure and honour that I can officially open this conference with Mr. Loubinoux and Mr. Lallemand. Welcome in Belgium, welcome in Brussels and keep up the good work.

Thank you.