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## Namur – Luxembourg border, the longest ETCS-equipped railway line in Europe

This safety *must-have* is now continuously operational over 160 kilometres

This Monday, Infrabel officially launched the ETCS (European Train Control System) signalling system between Namur and the Luxembourg border, a line of approximately 160 kilometres. This is a first for Wallonia since it is the longest stretch in Europe – apart from high-speed lines – which is equipped with what is considered the *quintessence* of rail safety. ETCS allows indeed train speeds to be controlled at all times. This achievement of the Infrabel teams is part of the implementation of the system on one of the main freight corridors in Europe.

### Ongoing speed control over 160 kilometres: a record

This is the completion of a project that started in 2009. As of this morning, **ETCS level 1 is officially operational throughout the 160 kilometres from Namur station to the Luxembourg border** (via Dinant and Bertrix), also known as the so called Athus-Meuse railway axis.

Any train equipped with this technology is now monitored by some 1,900 balises carefully placed along the tracks. The exchange of information between these balises and the locomotive, when passing above them, allows the system to check trains' speed, and if necessary, to adapt it depending on several factors: traffic, signal light colours, approaching a switching zone, etc.

ETCS, the European standard for rail signalling systems, is considered the best for safety. **The Namur-Dinant-Bertrix-Athus line can now be considered to be among the safest rail infrastructures in Europe. At the same time this route sets a record: in the European Union today, it is the longest distance on a classic railway line (i.e. excluding high-speed lines) equipped with ETCS.**

### A €24.7 million investment

Two years of preliminary technical studies and a little more than 3 years' field work were necessary to achieve this result. About sixty people (engineers, workers, technicians) have worked on **placing the balises between the rails, configuring them and then connecting them to 250 new signalling cabinets**. These equipment housings, installed along the tracks, the size of a small caravan, shelter all the computer equipment that supports the ETCS technology.

For the last few months, before commissioning, priority has been granted to the indispensable balise programming and test phases: first on a computer simulator, then using Infrabel's specially-equipped ETCS train. This process led to the certification of the infrastructure by an independent safety inspection body.

**In five years, Infrabel devoted €24.7 million – half of which was financed by Europe – to the deployment of ETCS between Namur and the Luxembourg border. By the end of 2015, and in conformity with the commitments made to Europe, the main Belgian route (i.e. excluding alternative routes) in the Rotterdam-Antwerp-Luxembourg-Basle/Lyon Corridor should be completely equipped with ETCS (see attached maps).**

## Freight corridors, a European issue

Wishing to harmonise railway signalling systems, Europe is cofinancing ETCS investments. In total, it should allocate a total of about €29 billion in Belgium that will be assigned to equipping the "**Rotterdam-Antwerp-Luxembourg-Basle/Lyon Corridor (also known as the North Sea/Mediterranean Corridor)**".

The European Union has chosen to provide significant cofinancing for the nine high-priority rail freight transport axes, including, in total, three that will go through the Belgian network. Beyond the safety benefits, this technology is "interoperable". Clearly, it allows a train from any Member State that is fitted with ETCS to use any line that is also equipped with the system, when today, numerous national systems still work alongside each other. In a free market, **ETCS therefore also constitutes a clear gain in mobility and ecology**, because it makes cross-border traffic easier and limits transport by lorries. **Each year, about 7,500 freight trains use the Rotterdam-Antwerp-Luxembourg-Basle/Lyon route and carry about 9 million tonnes of freight, mainly containers to or from the Port of Antwerp. This represents the annual equivalent of around 300,000 semi-trailers.**

Within the context of its ETCS Masterplan, Infrabel intends to equip the whole Belgian railway network with this technology by the end of 2022, investing €2 billion to do this.

## SNCB: 19% of trains equipped with ETCS

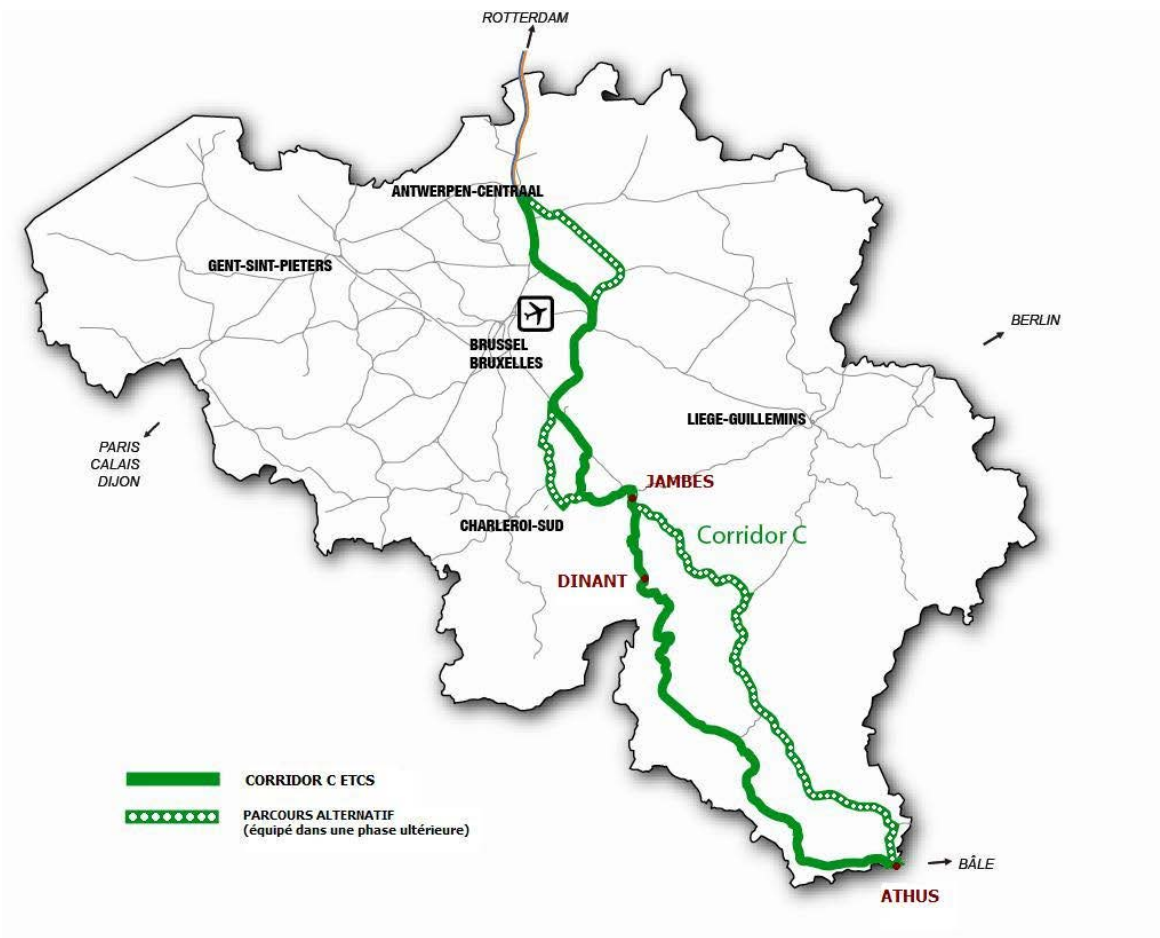
In 2009 SNCB started equipping its rolling stock with the emergency braking system TBL1+. If a train runs a red signal this system will activate an emergency brake. If a train is still travelling at more than 40 km/h (25 mph) when it is 300 metres (350 yards) from a red signal, it will be stopped automatically. Since 2013 the whole SNCB fleet has been equipped with the driving support system TBL1+.

For its part, SNCB adopted its ETCS Masterplan in 2011 with the aim of improving the safety level by introducing the most recent interoperable technologies. Substantial human and financial resources have been allocated for this purpose. In its Masterplan, the SNCB will invest €2.063 billion (including €1.499 billion for replacing equipment on which it is impossible to install ETCS).

As a result, **today, 19.1% of SNCB's fleet is fitted with the ETCS level 1 system.**

**Recently, SNCB signed a €70 million euro contract with Alstom for the supply of 449 ETCS level 2 systems that, with the help of GSM-R (railway), will allow the trains' speeds to be constantly controlled, and this with greater accuracy.**

From 2025, only ETCS-equipped trains should be permitted on the Belgian rail network. SNCB aims to fit its entire fleet with ETCS level 2 by 2023.



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