

Innovation partnership with 12 companies for speeding up ERTMS in the Netherlands

The deployment of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) has the objective to ensure that more passenger and freight transport can be accommodated on the network. It achieves improvements in interoperability, safety, reliability and higher speed demands. The programme in the Netherlands is also driven by the need to renew, due to end-of-life of the Class B signalling assets, and in particular the future shortage of workforce needed for maintaining and engineering.

The ERTMS programme is a major technical and realisation task. Following the current way of executing projects the complete roll-out of the ERTMS system is planned towards 2050. This does not meet the core growth ambition of infra manager ProRail. There is need to speed things up.

To encourage the industry to develop innovations that are not yet known ProRail has entered into an 'innovation partnership' with twelve companies in order to boost the introduction of ERTMS. This is the result of ASAP: the faster tender approach for ERTMS, aimed at accelerating the deployment of ERTMS. ProRail has asked the market to come up with innovative solutions for smart construction along the rail track, faster design, smart enclosures, and faster cable and pipe construction. In addition, there is the 'wildcard' for ideas that do not fit into one of these categories.

"ASAP is a different approach to our market," explains Innovation Programme Manager Carla van Ee. "ProRail has sometimes played a dominant role in tenders. But companies are now invited to share their ideas, to help us, and to come up with smart solutions to speed up the introduction of ERTMS. We did not only approach our regular suppliers, but also new parties, large and small."

For ProRail this is an opportunity to develop and fine-tune innovative products and services, including the transition to circular and climate neutral processes. Carla van Ee: "This concerns ideas that are realistic and workable. For example, in the context of ERTMS we are going to install tens of thousands of 'balises' between the rails. These are transponders that transfer messages to and from the train. Maybe it is possible to use robots to install the balises? The innovation partnerships are all about collaboration, in which risks and opportunities are shared, resulting in a win-win for all parties."

Now that the contracts have been signed, the next decision moment will be in July, when the partners will be pitching their ideas and business cases to the evaluators of ProRail. Once the business cases have been accepted, a test phase and a commercial phase will follow, during which ProRail examines which innovations are eligible for actual use.

Innovation partners

The partnerships are with the following companies: Rail Connected, Heijmans Infra, Allinq Group, BAM Infra Rail, VRS Railway Industry, Tizzin, Movares, GeoNext, VolkerRail, Strukton Rail, Pilz, and Delta Pi.

Because the further development of the ASAP business cases is confidential, ProRail can at this time only disclose the names of the innovation partners. More information on the actual solutions will be available in the autumn. Would you like to know more or do you have suggestions? Please contact carla.vanee@prorail.nl or ertms@prorail.nl

