

Date: 27 February 2017

Audit carried out by the Supreme Audit Office did not find any law infraction on the side of SŽDC while preparing and implementing GSM-R and ETCS projects

The course of action of Správa železniční dopravní cesty during preparation and construction implementation of the projects concerning ensuring interoperability of existing railway lines with focus on public tendering procedure was in accordance with the law and without any system deficiencies. Such was the conclusion of the Supreme Audit Office (SAO) after an audit which took more than half a year.

The audit concentrated on the period since 2009 up to the audit's end, i.e. till 30 November 2016. Inspectors of the SAO were auditing the SZDC Headquarters, the Civil Engineering Administration West, the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic and the State Fund for Transport Infrastructure for this whole period.

The Czech Republic is building GSM-R and ETCS systems based on respective Directives of the European Parliament on railway system interoperability in the European Union and in accordance with the implementation plan in force which is set in such a way to achieve planned objectives in the year 2030. Construction of the GSM-R system which serves as a communication platform for the ETCS system is much faster in comparison to the ETCS system implementation. GSM-R is an autonomous system which is independent on neighbouring systems operated on the railway infrastructure. All railway lines can be equipped GSM-R technology regardless of their age and technical level of neighbouring safety equipment being operated on these lines. In comparison with GSM-R technology, the ETCS system must be directly connected to safety equipment in operation. In order to implement this connection, the safety installations being concerned must be equipped with the necessary technical and communications devices. This procedure is extremely demanding as such from a technical, operational and financial point of view. In many cases, complex reconstruction of these systems must be carried out and the necessary infrastructure and technology must be built within previous constructions as a connection of the ETCS systems to older technologies of safety installations is not possible. The correction of the assumed ETCS extension carried out in 2015 was based on experience acquired from construction in the previous period. At present, construction of the ETCS system is being implemented in the section Petrovice u Karviné – Přerov – Břeclav; the infrastructure manager expects opening a tender for the implementation of line sections Kralupy nad Vltavou – Praha – Kolín and Přerov – Česká Třebová in March and April this year.

Fixing an objective assumed price is possible based on preparatory documents or the construction project respectively. The introduction of the GSM-R and ETCS systems as such is a considerable and unambiguous contribution for railway operation safety as by implementing these technologies, many railway accidents with fatal consequences can be prevented or such consequences can be mitigated. The fact of implementation and operation of the ETCS system as such and its contribution to a railway safety increase is one of the factors leading to higher attractiveness and competitiveness of railway transport.

Specific technical requirements exerted by SŽDC were based on binding technical specifications of the GSM-R system valid throughout Europe. Another reason for applying specific technical requirements is the fact that GSM-R is a communication platform for the ETCS system and the issue of safe and reliable functioning of this system has always had top priority. In order to ensure safety and reliability of the system, delivery of a technology fully compatible with technology already in operation - confirmed by an independent body – was required. No law infraction while tendering public orders was demonstrated from the side of SŽDC. All incentives submitted by applicants to the Office for the Protection of Competition (ÚOHS) and their results confirmed a correct procedure of SŽDC. This has been confirmed by the European Commission as well.

Compared to classical cell phones used within network of public phone operators, GSM-R mobile phones are not produced in millions but in very small production runs given their real operation needs. Another specific aspect of these devices is the implementation of special functions used only in railway operation and for some types also requirements for very high mechanical or climate resistance. Special mobile phones designed for operation in difficult conditions must cope with demanding long-term operation without the necessity to recharge batteries during shifts. These factors influence considerably the price of each mobile phone type. The price range for some mobile phone types depends on the number of pieces manufactured in each specific production run.

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