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COVER

The ICE 4 unit 9004 during a test run from Erstfeld to Göschenen on the Gotthard mountain line near Amsteg-Silenen (photo: A. Niederberger, 14 March 2017).

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News

Stadler enters train control business

Stadler is planning to enter the business of developing components in the field of train control. Advertisements for several jobs in the communications-based train control (CBTC) sector provide the basis for drawing this conclusion. The company is looking for a department head but also for various system engineers with a knowledge of automatic train protection (ATP), automatic train operation (ATO) and automatic train supervision (ATS). This not only involves vehicle, but also track-side equipment. On enquiry Stadler confirmed that the company had decided to "strengthen its own expertise in the fields of CBTC and ATO". It added that it was "confronted by increasingly more complex issues related to these systems" in various projects, e.g. the contract to supply underground (metro) trains for fully automatic operation in Glasgow, where the company is cooperating with Ansaldo STS. (lüt)

Reorganisation of conventional mainline traffic in France

The responsibility for the lion's share of conventional mainline traffic (Intercités) in France will transfer from the state to the regions during the next four years. So far, agreements have been signed for a total of 18 main lines with at least seven regions: Normandie, Grand-Est, Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Nouvelle Aquitaine, Hauts-de-France, Occitane and Centre-Val-de-Loire. The agreements all have the same pattern: the state will purchase new multiple units and make them available to the regions; in return, during the coming years the latter will assume an increasing share in the operating deficits, which currently amount to EUR 165 million.

Mainline services on the Paris – Clermont-Ferrand, Paris – Limoges – Orléans – Toulouse, Bordeaux – Marseille, Bordeaux – Nantes, Toulouse – Bayonne / Hendaye and Nantes – Lyon routes will remain under state control; this also applies to both the Paris – Briançon and Paris – Rodez / Latour-de-Carol night trains.

Modern EMUs/DMUs (Coradia Liner, Region 2N and Regiolis) are set to replace the currently still dominant Corail coaches on numerous routes. Some of the new vehicles have already been ordered during the last few years; Alstom and Bombardier, however, can probably look forward to more orders. No major investments are planned for the remaining night train services. (meil)

ÖBB, Stadler and Westbahn cooperate in Vienna

The Westbahn railway operator will be receiving ten more double-deck EMUs this year, thus more than doubling the size of its fleet. Previously the trains had been serviced at a maintenance centre in Linz operated by Stadler. However, its capacity is not sufficient to cope with the number of vehicles in future. As ÖBB faces a similar problem with the expected strong growth in short-distance EMUs, initial discussions were held with Stadler last year about possibly cooperating

in this field. The negotiations have now led to the launch of a joint venture between ÖBB Technische Services GmbH (ÖBB TS) and Stadler in early March. A new centre designed to service complete EMUs will be constructed on the traction site at Wien (Vienna) West next to the old locomotive workshops by the end of 2018. ÖBB TS will be responsible for three, Stadler for two fifths of the building costs. Around 40 employees of the joint venture will be servicing all 17 Westbahn Kiss EMUs there in future. Any free capacities can be used to service the new ÖBB short-distance EMUs. The existing Stadler works in Linz are expected to be increasingly used to serve third-party customers once the complete Westbahn maintenance services have been moved to Vienna. (ho)

PKP Pendolino units in Germany

PKP Intercity put into service 20 seven-car Pendolino EMUs built by Alstom as Class ED 250 between 2013 and 2015. The multi-system trains designed for speeds of 250 km/h but without tilt technology have been used for domestic express services since the end of 2014, mainly as "Express Intercity Premium" trains on the north – south corridor from Gdynia – Gdańsk to Wrocław, Katowice and Kraków via Warszawa (Warsaw). Some day the ED 250 units, which are equipped with the PZB, LZB, SHP, Mirel as well as ETCS Level 1 and 2 train control systems, are expected to be used on services to Berlin, Wien (Vienna) and Prag (Prague). As the EU subsidised the purchase to the tune of approx. EUR 17 million, any change in their deployment schedule requires approval until 2024.

Alstom is contractually bound to ensure certification in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic at the latest five years after the delivery of the final train. The transfer of ED 250-001 to Germany on 3 January 2017 marked the start of the test runs there. Once certification is achieved and the EU agrees, PKP Intercity would like to replace at least some of the conventional locomotive/coach compositions on the Berlin – Warszawa / Gdynia route with these EMUs. (schr)

Questionable TGV order finalised

French politicians sprang into action after Alstom announced in the late summer of 2016 that it was going to close its long-standing factory in Belfort: within a short time, a rescue package was put together, which aims to safeguard the capacity at the Belfort site for the next few years. An order worth approx. EUR 480 million to supply 15 TGV units for SNCF was signed in February 2017 as an initial measure. The trains will have newly developed ETCS on-board devices from Ansaldo STS, according to the SNCF press release.

So the railway company itself and not the state is the ordering party here, in a move that differed from initial plans; it will also finance the purchase from its own funds. In return, the state is reducing a tax charge, which enables SNCF to increase the degree of in-house financing for the TGV network. Apparently