



Fourth meeting of the Shift2Rail States Representatives Group

26 April 2016

White Atrium building, meeting room 4

Avenue de la Toison d'Or 56-60, Brussels 10:00-13:00

Minutes

10:00-10:05	Introduction
	<p>The meeting was chaired by Mr Haltuf, Chairperson of the SRG. In his opening remarks the Chairperson welcomed the participants and outlined the main points of the agenda. He also noted the changes in the representatives of certain member countries. The participants were informed that Israel nominated a representative and as of the next meeting will participate in the works of the SRG.</p> <p>A list of participants is attached.</p>
10:05-10:10	Approval of the meeting agenda and minutes of previous meeting
	<p>The SRG members agreed on the provisional agenda, which had been circulated on 15 March 2016 (document attached). Also the minutes of the previous meeting, as commented by Italy, were approved (document attached).</p>
10:10-11:00	State of play
	<p>Mr Keir Fitch, Interim Executive Director of the S2R JU, presented the latest developments related to the S2R activities including a short summary of the next steps towards S2R JU autonomy foreseen in May 2016 (presentation attached) and some statistical information relating to the applications to the first S2R calls for proposals. The information included also the JU's planning for the evaluation of the proposals submitted under the 2015-2016 call and for the preparation of resulting grants, as well as the actions regarding the completion of the Multi Annual Action Plan (MAAP). The Interim Executive Director also referred to the JU's planning for the establishment of the System Integration Working group and the publication of the tenders described in the AWP 2015.</p>

	<p>The SRG took note of the information provided by the Interim Executive Director.</p> <p>In reply to a question by Germany it was clarified that the evaluation of the submitted proposals is currently in progress by independent experts and neither the SRG nor any other body can interfere with the evaluation process until its conclusion. On a question by Austria concerning the early start date of projects, the Interim Executive Director explained that this is compatible with the H2020 rules but has to be formally requested and justified by the applicants. Normally no project should start activities before the evaluation process has been completed. In any case the JU will make every effort to accelerate the beginning of the projects both for the call for members and for the open calls.</p> <p>Concerning the MAAP completion, the SRG members appeared content with the JU approach, including the involvement of the SRG into this process. Following a question by Austria, the Interim Executive Director explained that the SRG's contribution would be to assess the direction of research described in the MAAP and its relevance with the national needs. UK noted that the latest developments (e.g. digitalisation, data mining, etc.) should be captured in the MAAP in order to reflect the state of the art in the sector. On a question from Germany whether safety should be addressed within a dedicated, new IP, the Interim Executive Director explained that it would be best to exploit all possibilities within the existing IPs but at the same time to seek for synergies as part of the work for delivering the desired system change.</p>
11:00-13:00	ANNUAL WORK PLAN (AWP) 2017
	<p>The S2R JU Programme Office presented the planning of activities towards the finalisation of the 2017 Annual Work Plan (AWP 2017), which will include the description of the topics for the next call for proposals. A draft version of the AWP 2017 was distributed to the members of the SRG and under the coordination of the Chairperson the comments of the SRG members on this draft version were received.</p> <p>With regard to the content of the calls the Chairperson noted that the JU should consider merging some of the topics so as to reduce the number of the calls and to make their budget more attractive to participants. The Interim Executive Director agreed that this is something to be further explored as it includes a number of advantages for the overall administration, however at the same time such a merging should be meaningful and content-wise coherent and should allow for real synergies among topics.</p> <p>Concerning the planning of the calls it was explained that the JU is making every effort to accelerate the process and if possible to publish the call at the end of 2016 rather than in the beginning of 2017. In any case it was noted that the JU is placing emphasis on the good preparation of the AWP and the respective calls and in this context the consultation with the JU bodies, including the SRG, is important. With regard to the submission period it was noted that the JU is planning to publish a draft call, in advance of the official call, in order to allow for more time to applicants to prepare, provided that the consultation with the JU bodies progresses well and such a draft is well elaborated. Alternatively, longer submission period may be foreseen. The JU is also trying to minimise the time to</p>

	<p>grant although the limit of eight months is already a considerable improvement in comparison with the rules applied for FP7 calls.</p> <p>The Chairperson supported by Spain highlighted the importance of a long term planning, covering the whole S2R programme. The Interim Executive Director recognised this need and noted that the JU has already worked on this direction, in cooperation with the JU members and that this is something directly linked with the MAAP, which gives the long term perspective of the programme. The aim is to provide more clarity but at the same time to maintain certain flexibility for the programme, which is still at its initial phase.</p> <p>On various questions related to budget it was explained that the relevant decisions are taken by the Governing Board, in line with the overall financial framework of the Commission and the budget availability. The JU is aiming at making use of the entire available budget but in case this is not possible at the end of the programme the residual budget will return to the Member States. Norway noted that if budget allows, more than one proposal under the same topic should be financed in order to give more incentives to candidates. At a request from France it was agreed that the SRG will be kept informed about the budgetary process in relation to the 2017 AWP (Commission financing decision).</p> <p>Concerning a possible second call for associated members, requested by Italy, Czech Republic, Turkey, who linked the issue with the participation of SMEs in S2R, the Interim Executive Director took note of the request and explained that the JU has reserved certain budget, which could also cover this purpose. The relevant decision may be taken after the outcome of the current evaluation of the proposals, when it will be clear if certain additional expertise is needed. With regard to SMEs the Interim Executive Director noted that SMEs are already associated with the S2R activities and that some SMEs may consider that it is preferable to participate as subcontractors or through open calls, where the funding opportunities may be more attractive than to commit to S2R as members, which may require additional resources and effort from their side.</p> <p>The IP-specific comments of the SRG members were briefly discussed and the JU Programme Office will communicate all these comments to the IP Steering Committees in order to be taken into account during the finalisation of the AWP.</p> <p>The final SRG opinion will be published later after receiving response to SRG's specific comments and a draft SC opinion.</p>
<p>13:00-13:20</p>	<p>Information on ongoing/planned railway research and innovation activities</p>
	<p>Austria and Czech Republic presented their national initiatives on railway research and innovation activities (both presentations attached).</p> <p>In reply to a question by United kingdom, the Interim Executive Director explained that the input from national programmes is very valuable to the JU in order to better align its programme, to avoid duplications and to identify complementarities between the activities at Union level and at national level. In this context it is important if Member States are willing to share this information even though there may be technical problems (e.g. language, as indicated by Germany). During the discussion the Chairperson invited more countries to</p>

	volunteer for similar presentations for the next meeting.
13:20-13:30	AoB
	<p>The Chairperson informed the SRG members about the initiative of the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on the “Competitiveness of the European Rail Supply Industry”. After the vote in the respective committee (ITRE) the resolution will be formally adopted by the plenary.</p> <p>The next meeting will take place in autumn, possibly in September when the finalisation of the 2017 AWP is scheduled.</p> <p>The Chairperson informed about the conference which is planned to Prague for March 22-24, 2017 (see the leaflet attached). The SRG regular spring meeting in 2017 could be included as an accompanying event to the conference.</p>