



Minutes of Meeting
Scientific Committee of Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking

Project	SC	Date/Time	21 September 2022
Meeting Type:	Scientific Committee	Location:	Hybrid meeting

Summary of the Meeting	
1	<p>Introduction, approval of the Agenda and previous MoM</p> <p>The Chairperson, Professor Angela di Febraro, welcomed the participants and thanked them for their attendance to the 3rd meeting of the Scientific Committee organised in Innotrans.</p>
2	<p>Approval of the Agenda and previous MoM</p> <p>The Chairperson introduced the agenda, which was adopted with one change: the agenda item on “Information from the European Railway Agency about training and dissemination activities” was postponed to the next SC meeting.</p> <p>The Chairperson reminded participants that the minutes of previous meeting were distributed in advance. With no objections raised, the Scientific Committee adopted the minutes.</p>
3	<p>State of play – information from the EUROPE'S RAIL, including Outcome of the Call 2022-1 and initial proposals on the new Scientific Advice</p> <p>The Executive Director of Europe's Rail provided an overview of the activities of the JU since the last SC meeting.</p> <p>He presented the call for proposals HORIZON-ER-JU-2022-01. On 1 March 2022, the Governing Board (Decision N°03/2022) adopted the amended Europe's Rail Work Programme and Budget 2022-2024 (“WP 2022-2024”). This WP 2022-2024 was the basis for the launch of the call for proposals HORIZON-ER-JU-2022-01, which was published on the Horizon Europe Funding and Tenders Portal on 10 March 2022 with a deadline of 23 June 2022 17:00:00 Brussels time.</p> <p>The Executive Director indicated that the call for proposals HORIZON-ER-JU-2022-01 comprised a total of 6 topics open to entities eligible under the general rules of Horizon Europe Work Programme. Each of those topics had its own dedicated budget line.</p>

In return to its 2022-01 Call for Proposals with a total budget € 234 million, the Europe's Rail received 7 proposals (2 proposals for FA4) with a funding request of € 239.6 million.

He stated that the proposals submitted were evaluated by an evaluation committee composed of independent experts, as set out in Horizon Europe Work Programme (General Annexes - Annex F) and in accordance with the evaluation rules set out in the WP 2022-2024 (Annex VIII).

The evaluation of proposals was carried out between 30th June and 15th July. The evaluation committee/panel was composed of 23 external technical experts and an additional 4 external experts contracted as recorders (one per panel). A total of 27 external experts were involved in the evaluation, in addition to the 3 external ethics experts which intervened in parallel to the technical evaluation.

On the basis of this evaluation, amongst the 7 proposals considered eligible, the experts established a ranking list per topic (Annex 1), providing a recommended priority order of proposals having equalled or passed all the award criteria thresholds (i.e.: "excellence", "impact" and "quality and efficiency of the implementation"), as well as a list of proposals not retained for funding (Annex 2) since they did not meet the overall thresholds and/or one or more of the individual thresholds.

Based on the ranking by the evaluation committee and the budgetary constraints, the responsible authorizing officer drew up the EU call ranked lists (annex I of the Call Evaluation Report), with:

- A main list of proposals to be invited to grant preparation – 6 proposals
- A reserve list – none
- The list of proposals that cannot be funded because below threshold – 1 proposal.

On this basis, GB Decision n° 11/2022 approving the list of innovation actions selected for funding under the Europe's Rail call for proposals HORIZON-ER-JU-2022-01, was adopted during the 4th GB meeting on 3rd August. This GB Decisions also includes annexes - the list of awarded grants, list of grants not awarded because below threshold, and the independent observer's report.

The ED underlined that, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Guide on the procedures from proposal submission to managing grants under Horizon Europe (Online Manual), one independent observer was appointed by the Europe's Rail to observe and offer independent advice on the conduct and fairness of all phases of the evaluation process, on how evaluators apply award criteria and on how to improve processes. He stressed that the report of the independent observer (Annex 3) found that the evaluation was impartial, fair, conducted in full compliance with all Horizon Europe rules and that each proposal received adequate and equal treatment, according to the pre-defined evaluation rules.

The external observer nonetheless pointed to the challenges related to the lump-sum assessment by technical experts. The recommendations would be taken into consideration and followed in light of the second call for proposals.

The ED Decision with its Annex, the Call Evaluation Report, was also submitted to the Governing Board. The Call Evaluation Report contains the results of the evaluations, including statistics related to the proposals submitted, results of the technical evaluation, the proposed call ranked list(s) based on independent experts ranking, as well as those proposals which are below the threshold.

The Executive Director concluded by presenting his recommendation to the GB:

1. to finance one activity per topic in the ranking order stemming from the independent experts' evaluations (see "Main list" flagged proposals in the "ANNEX 1: EU ranked list(s)" of the Call Evaluation Report) for an indicative total amount of EUR 232.764.699,37;
2. to consider the unclaimed budget of EUR 1.235.300,63 (compared to the total budget appropriation of EUR 234.000.000,00) for other operational activities of the JU in 2022 or future years;
3. in addition, and considering
 - the provisions of the Call 2022-01;
 - the intrinsic link and interdependencies of the proposed Flagship Projects within the Innovation Pillar and System Pillar activities;

to take note of the fact that any substantial misalignment or inconsistency not satisfactorily addressed during the Grant Preparation Phase will be reported back to the Governing Board to establish a possible way forward, including the termination of the preparation phase without signature of the concerned Grant(s).

He emphasized that the aim will be to crystallise the Grant Agreements' signature by end of November 2022 with a start in December or an early start date.

The Executive Director indicated that in terms of budget, the request was lower than the available budget (1,2 Million euros), because one founding member decided to reduce its participation in the first call. This had an impact on the available funding.

Furthermore, the Executive Director presented the SC members with the statistics regarding the call for proposals 2022-1. He stressed that due to technical problems, there was no automatic information on certain aspects. He presented the figures on the ratio of the JU members' participation in the call as well the participation of non-JU entities. He also commented on the relationship between the members' participation and allocation of eligible costs (*for details, please refer to presentation*). As underlined, the presented figures were subject to final confirmation after the GAP.

In addition, the Executive Director presented the call 2022-02 published on 13 September 2022. He stated that the call 2022-02 is fully open and the deadline for submission is set until 14 December 2022. Projects worth €35.8 million, against €14.7 million funding, are expected to be funded under the 2022-02 Call for Proposals for Exploratory Research and Other Activities, within the framework of the Europe's Rail Amended Work Programme 2022-2024.

He presented the various topics, which have been designed taking into account the SC members' contribution, with three topics under Destination 7 (Innovation on New Approaches for Guided Transport Modes) and seven topics under Destination 8 (Exploratory Research and Other Activities).

He stated that with this Call for Proposals 2022-2, the Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking also intends to build a network of the rail scientific and research community, including the funding of PhD programmes. It will strengthen, expand and optimise railway research and innovation capabilities through the sharing of world-class national facilities in Europe to contribute to the Europe's Rail programme or other funded multi-national programmes. As from 2023, all the activities launched during 2022 will be operational and start delivering results.

He indicated that the press release on the call had been released: <https://rail-research.europa.eu/press-releases/europes-rail-announces-its-call-for-proposals-2022-2-at-innotrans/>

The Chairperson of the SC wished to have more information on topic HORIZON-ER-JU-2022-ExplR-04 “Building a community of scientific research and enabling a network of PhD (academia teaming with industry)”. The Executive Director indicated that there are two aspects: 1) setting up a network of research; and 2) PhDs. There is no fixed duration for the PhDs. He indicated that from EU-RAIL side, economist participation would be of interest, as well as interest to take responsibility to run the KPIs in the JU for the next years. The JRC in Petten would be ready to host this PhD. The KPIs of the JU would not be run by private companies anymore, but the JRC resources would be mobilized via this PhD. The ED nonetheless stressed that this is a mere indication, and that the call is fully open.

In response to Professor Juan Sanz Bobi’s question, the ED indicated that amendments can be made to the Lump Sum grants in order to extend the deadline, and therefore there is room for flexibility. The funding is for the PhD student.

Professor Sanz Bobi asked whether there would be a conflict of interest if the PhD student is a student from an SC member. The ED and John Cleuren (DG RTD) referred to the SC Rules of Procedure and the HE Code of Conduct for experts. In accordance with Article 11 of the SC Rules of Procedure, members of the Scientific Committee may not be contracted as experts in the evaluation of a project proposal. According to Art 11(6), they must refrain from participating in the preparation of any proposals for calls launched by the JU, or from taking part in the activities to be co-funded by the Joint Undertaking. This does not prevent the organisation that directly or indirectly employs the person from participating in the preparation of any proposals for calls launched by the JU, or from taking part in the activities to be co-funded by the Joint Undertaking. Therefore, they concluded that the members of the SC shall not be involved in any way in the preparation, evaluation or selection of individual proposals for funding under the JU. However, after the independent evaluation and selection of proposals has taken place, it needs to be assessed whether they can then be advisors of a thesis selected for funding. The ED indicated that this question would be included in the official call Q&A published on the Funding & Tenders portal in order to provide all applicants with a clear answer.

In response to the question on whether it is relevant to integrate post docs in addition to PhDs, the ED stated that it is up to the scientific community to evaluate the best set-up for proposals.

Professor Sanz Bobi asked what the relationship can be with industry in the creation of consortia within the submission of proposals. The ED highlighted that collaborations are welcome.

Furthermore, the ED and John Cleuren (RTD) both clarified that double funding of costs is not possible.

Indeed, according to Art 191(1) on the principle of non-cumulative award and prohibition of double funding, each action may give rise to the award of only one grant from the budget to any one beneficiary, except where otherwise authorised in the relevant basic act.

Furthermore, the Executive Director presented the upcoming events the JU will be participating in, as well as the various communications activities.

In terms of upcoming events, he indicated the following:

- TRA 2022, 14-17 November, Lisbon: with 36sqm stand in the European Village showcasing some of the latest innovations coming from the R&I programme; and participation in panel discussions and events;
- Rail Live 2022, 29 November – 1 December, Malaga – with a 12sqm stand with key information about Europe’s Rail, and participation in panel discussions, presentations and keynote speeches
- Call 2022-2 Info Day, Online
- Europe’s Rail Innovation Days, December (exact dates to be confirmed), Online - with expert led technical sessions across several days, and latest results and progress of the Shift2Rail projects

The full list of events is available here: <https://rail-research.europa.eu/events/>

In terms of communication, he highlighted the following activities:

- Enhanced social media, website, newsletter promotion
- Publishing articles in specialised railway press, such as Railway Gazette, International Railway Journal, Global Railway Review and others
- Increased engagement with stakeholders (i.e., organising Members Communication Network Meeting in October) and reaching out to new audiences
- Developing internal communication using Microsoft Teams environment

Regarding the proposal for scientific advice, the Executive Director reiterated he had been provided with a mandate to explore solutions for scientific advice to the Europe’s Rail programme in accordance with the provisions of the Single Basic Act.

He put forward the proposal to move the scientific advice from the individual assessment and evaluation of the projects towards more collective knowledge, with the potential involvement of the scientific experts in the full cycle of programme (e.g. input to the work programme, periodical evaluation). The future scientific advice should be more engaged in the assessment of the status of programme, for example, in a form of the yearly scientific assessment. The members of the SC will be contracted to bring input on a collective basis to shape the programme. The second and third phase will have to be assessed in terms of scope and budget.

After consultation with the current Scientific Committee, the Executive Director will report back to the Governing Board, either at its meeting in November 2022 or at its first meeting in 2023. On 30th November in the afternoon,

	<p>the General Assembly of the JU will be held, to discuss the progress of the programme. The Chairperson of the SC will make a presentation on the status of the SC role.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Request for the Review of the ComplexTrans project</p> <p>The Executive Director confirmed that the JU identified the Scientific Committee members in the experts' EMI database, except for Professor Chris Nash, who had previously expressed his interest to contribute to the evaluation of the project without payment.</p> <p>However, he indicated that the JU is currently investigating the best option for the creation of contracts in order to launch the evaluation process, in light of an IT issue with contracting.</p> <p>Therefore, the dates of 27 September and 3 October will need to be rescheduled. The ED proposed to fix the meeting to 27 October AM and PM in hybrid mode, as well as 8 November PM, as a follow-up to the SC meeting in the AM.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Closing remarks and AoB</p> <p>The 4th SC meeting will be organized on 8 November AM in hybrid mode.</p>