



## **Scientific Steering Group**

**Meeting 20 February 2024**

**10h00 – 13h00**

*Minutes of the Meeting*

### **1. Introduction**

Welcome by Angela DI FEBBRARO, Chairperson of the Scientific Steering Group (SSG), who kindly reminded members to fill in the Conflict of Interest (CoI) declaration (members attending remotely should send it via e-mail to JU's secretariat). She then gave the floor to Giorgio TRAVAINI, Europe's Rail ED a.i.. No SSG member declared a conflict of interest for the meeting.

### **2. Introduction of new SSG member and observers**

The ED a.i. started by saying that due to Ms SAEEDNIA's self-declared CoI, a new SSG member had been appointed from the reserve list, Mr Martin LEITNER, who was attending the meeting remotely and was welcomed to the SSG. The ED a.i. also informed that, according to Article 3 of the rules of procedure (RoP), the associations ECTRI and ETRA had also been appointed as SSG observers. He pointed out that the representatives of each association were in the process of being confirmed and will be introduced at the next SSG meeting. The list of SSG members will be then completed and updated on EU-Rail's website.

### **3. Approval of the Agenda and previous MoM**

The proposed agenda and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved without changes.

### **4. Recap of the SSG mandate**

Anna TORRES, new Grant & Legal Officer at EU-Rail JU, reminded SSG members about their main responsibilities according to the Single Basic Act (SBA) and SSG RoP. She stressed that SSG members can also be contracted as individual experts for the review of projects and new scientific deliverables not related to the SSG task, but not for the evaluation of projects' proposals as this would constitute a CoI. The ED a.i. invited members who were registered or intended to register in the EC database, to inform the JU in case they were interested in reviewing EU-Rail's on-going projects.

## 5. EU-RAIL activities

### - *General information on status*

The ED a.i. reported on the Shift2Rail (S2R) programme status, the System Pillar and the Innovation Pillar (*for more information please see the PowerPoint presentation*). He reported also on a meeting with SESAR Deployment Manager and the next step is to implement DAC in the European rail network.

He then presented the communication and dissemination activities planned for the upcoming months. Members expressed the importance of communicating/educating because the scope of actions is sometimes not understood, or the link with EU-Rail. Members also expressed their proposals for the improvement of EU-Rail's website (such as including a search functionality and website taxonomy).

### - *Calls for proposals 2023 and 2024*

The ED a.i. gave an overview of the Call 2023 project proposals submissions' results. There was an increased number of applicants compared to the last call, and all topics were covered. The projects' proposals currently are under evaluation, and it is foreseen that the GB will decide the proposals retained for funding in its meeting of 9/04. All the information will be published on EU-Rail website after the GB decision. The 2024 Call, with a smaller number of topics, was launched on 25/01 and the deadline for submissions is 7/05.

### - *Major milestones for 2024*

The ED a.i. presented the main events and key dates foreseen for this year, such as the creation of a Task Force for the Phasing Out plan and the kick-off of the Deployment Group most probably focusing on the FRMCS implementation in its first mandate. He also highlighted the specific check of the first 4 months of activities of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the System Pillar and the deadline for expression of interest for the 100 DAC pilot test trains (29/02); as well as the draft Annual Activity Report to be launched for consultation to both the SSG and SRG at the end of April.

### - *Update of MAWP and Call for AM*

Regarding the Multi-annual Work Programme, the ED a.i. informed members about the creation of a JU members' Task Force. He also stressed the need to identify synergies with other EU programmes and member states. The SRG has prepared a list of projects which can have synergies, including with the JU actions.

SSG members are requested to brainstorm on possible areas of priority, as well as possible refocus of flagship activities. 2 scenarios are possible: remaining with the same budget or, having additional flow of budget following the request of the JU to accede to 30M€ from the UK's association to Horizon Europe in 2024, request to be decided by the EC.

### **Action:**

- ➔ **Individual input from the SSG members requested by 31/03 on upcoming innovations, strategic priorities or focus needs.** A dedicated meeting will be held during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of April, to confront the SSG output with the ones of the Task Force.

The Chair asked about the KPIs to which the ED replied that technical KPIs are defined at the level of flagship projects. Socio-economical KPIs are defined in each cycle of FP demonstrations, and it is foreseen the support of JRC for this work.

On the Call for Associated Members, the ED a.i. stated that the Call is planned to be launched at the end of the first half of 2024, as decided by the GB in June 2023. A Task Force has been set up to define the evaluation process and the selection criteria.

**Action:**

➔ **The SSG members are requested to reflect on how they collectively would like to “*support the assessment of applications of potential associated members and contributing partners*”, in accordance with the Article 21 of the SBA, in view of the next 15/05 meeting.**

- *Amendment Nr 1 of WP 2024*

The ED a.i. informed the members on the first amendment of the Work Programme 2024 to shift part of the budget appropriations from last year to this year 2024 for the completion of the pending payments of S2R projects. He emphasized that the SSG scientific advice was not asked on this topic because there was no content change.

- *Draft WP 2025-2026*

The ED a.i. asked for SSG advice on the early draft Work Programme for 2025-2026 already distributed. It is a biennial work programme due to the foreseen launch of the second wave of Flagship Projects. He asked members to focus on Annex VII which is the call(s) topic text. For the moment being, in this first draft, only a copy/paste of the MAWP is done for the call for Flagship Projects, while the call for Exploratory research and other is to be filled. A request for input will also be provided for this later. The final SSG scientific advice will be based on a later draft version of the MAWP and it will be needed by the meeting of October. A final draft version is scheduled for adoption at the Governing Board on 21 November.

**Action:**

➔ **The SSG members are invited to provide initial scientific feedback about the early draft WP25-26.**

## **6. Open discussion on SSG actions for 2024**

The Chair, Ms DI FEBBRARO, proposed anticipating the SSG meeting of October to celebrate it during InnoTrans event in Berlin. She considered that it would be a great opportunity for the group to gain visibility and support the JU. The ED a.i. welcomed the idea and offered to check possibilities in terms of room availability and other aspects. Some document for the SC scientific advice might not be ready for the SSG to be discussed during the meeting, so the ED a.i. asked for some flexibility, confirmed by the SSG Members.

### Action:

- ➔ **A survey will be launched asking SSG members for their acceptance of the meeting date change and confirmation of their availability to attend the meeting in-person in Berlin (the JU recommends the SSG members to already check for hotel room possibilities).**

At the request of members, the ED a.i./Secretariat will send the presentation including a specification of the points for which SSG input is required for each meeting at least a week before the meeting.

The ED a.i., apart from the actions already mentioned, indicated that the SSG could also work on dedicated studies or initiatives, with a longer-term reflection as well on R&I on top of contributing with scientific advice on JU working documents.

The Chair also highlighted the importance of the SSG input on the WP 2025-2026 in order to prepare a list of exploratory research calls.

### **7. Closing remarks and AoB**

He ED a.i. informed of the end of the ED a.i. mandate at the end of February, and that – in accordance with the GB decision on deputing rules – he will be performing the job as acting ED until the Executive Director will be entering in place.

The dates of the next meetings are:

- May 15, 2024 – Members proposed to meet with the SRG which meeting is scheduled on the day before – to be confirmed.
- October 8, 2024 (potential change for a meeting at InnoTrans – see above)

The Chair thanked all members for their participation in the meeting and encouraged them all to attend SSG meetings physically, when possible, to ensure fruitful discussions.

### ATTENDANCE LIST:

- DI FEBBRARO Angela
- SANZ BOBI Juan de Dios
- BARON Nacima (*remotely*)
- CARBONI Michele (*remotely*)
- DE WEERDT Mathijs
- FANTECHI Alessandro
- FERREIRA Luis
- LANDGRAF Matthias
- LEITNER Martin (*remotely*)
- MOESSNER Klaus (*remotely*)
- RUTIL Ladislav (*remotely*)

### ABSENCES:

- STOELINGA Marielle