



8th MEETING OF THE EUROPE'S RAIL SSG

18 February 2026

09:00-13:00h
Hybrid meeting

Minutes of the meeting

<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>The Chair, Angela di Febraro, welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.</p>	<p>09:00-09:05</p>
<p>2. Approval of the Agenda and previous MoM</p> <p>The proposed agenda of the meeting was approved without any changes.</p> <p>The minutes of last meeting were approved with minor changes.</p> <p>Participants were reminded to complete the declaration of Conflict of Interest.</p> <p>Giorgio Travaini, the EU-Rail's Executive Director (ED), welcomed the participants and presented the new designated EU-Rail SRG secretariat: Ms. Florentina Laptuca.</p>	<p>09:05-09:10</p>
<p>3. Update on EU-Rail's activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Information <p>The ED welcomed and updated SSG Members on the outcome of Governing Board meeting of 2 December 2025 & General Assembly.</p> <p>The Executive Director informed the members about the key decisions adopted by the Governing Board, including the amendment of the Work Programme 2025-2026, the adoption of the Work Programme 2026, the annex of the High-level Paper on "A Future Policy Based Public Private Partnership for Rail" and the application by analogy of Commission Decision C(2025) 2495 on implementing provisions related to staff travel.</p> <p>During the General Assembly the 2025 achievements have been reviewed and priorities for the year ahead have been outlined. DG Move reiterated its continuous support for EU-Rail activities and the private members confirmed their commitment to further engage in programme activities. Discussions were focused on the use of data across the programme and progress on interoperability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report on System Pillar (SP) work <p>Karel Van Gils, Seconded National Expert at EU-Rail, presented an update on the System Pillar activities and the outcome of recent SP Steering Group meetings. The presentation covered the strategic direction for the next System Pillar contract, the status of key technical developments, including Train Control and Signalling architecture and the End-to-End process, as well as the</p>	<p>9:10-10:30</p>

pre-assessment and preparation of Change Requests for future approval. Status Summary was presented on the slides to ensure transparency on the progress accomplished.

From the next contractual period onwards, System Pillar activities will build on the consolidated outputs of the first three years, while ongoing coordination with ERA will support standardisation activities and the management of Change Requests.

Additional details are present in the provided PowerPoint presentation.

Juan de Dios Sanz, Vice-Chair, asked about the standardisation of the processes and the possibility of having a roadmap with a timeline of activities. Karel Van Gils explained that the standardization and the roadmap are under close discussion with ERA and Standardisation bodies and that it is provided to the Commission for launch of possible TSI mandate to ERA and standardisation items to European Standard Setting Organisations.

- High-level overview of Innovation Pillar (IP) activities

Léa Paties, EU-Rail Senior Programme Manager, provided a high-level overview of IP activities. Nine projects are ongoing and progressing according to the plan. Activities have entered the demonstration phase, with demonstrations planned, including cross-border operations and digital enablers.

Specific information on each project is provided in the PowerPoint presentation.

Following the exchange on the need of ensuring future training of successful demonstrated solutions, it was agreed to consider this aspect in the 3rd wave of flagship projects, as SSG input to the Work Programme 2027 in view of the related call for proposals - Action

- Report on High-level Deployment Group (DpG) work

Karel explained the latest development of the High-level Deployment Group, focusing on the FRMCS European Deployment subgroup and the future governance of the European DAC Delivery programme (EDDP).

Work within the FRMCS is advancing, including updates to functional and system specifications, preparation of FP2-MORANE 2 laboratory tests and ongoing standardization activities with ERA and ETSI.

Industry noted risks related to timeline and availability of stable specifications, while Member States called for stronger European coordination on GSM-R system extension and product availability.

The 2026-2027 work plan has been defined, covering scenario analyses, cost drivers, technical guidance, and increased communication and dissemination.

Additional details are present in the provided PowerPoint presentation.

- Outcome of call for proposals 2025-02 and launch of call for proposals 2026-01

The ED informed that for the call for proposals 2025-02, we received a total of 34 submissions across different topics with several areas attracting multiple proposals and overall good interest from the sector. The evaluation process is ongoing, and results will be published after completion. For exploratory actions, no minimum number of projects is required, and the best proposals will be selected based on quality.

Preparations for the next call for proposals 2026-01 are underway, with the call opening on 4 February 2026 and a deadline of 7 May 2026. The topics focus on regional rail services and

innovation for guided transport modes, with strong interest expected and successful participation already observed in related information events, including high online attendance.

- **Status of the High-Level paper on the Future of Rail**

The ED recalled that the High-Level paper on a Future Policy-Based Public-Private Partnership for Rail, adopted by the Governing Board (GB), defines the strategic framework for the next phase of Europe's Rail. The initiative aims to simplify and harmonise the European Rail system, strengthen the Single European Railway Area (SERA), and support a coordinated EU-level partnership approach.

The ED highlighted that strengthening the pre-deployment is essential to reduce fragmentation, ensure interoperability and support harmonised solutions across Europe. Coordination with ERA is ongoing to support standardisation efforts and avoid multiple national solutions.

The High-Level paper, including its annexes on KPIs and objectives is currently under preparation. If updates are required, a revised version of the Annexes is expected by March. The objective is to ensure alignment with stakeholder consultations and to integrate the outcomes of ongoing consultations.

For Flagship Initiative (FI) 4 (High Speed) a final draft is expected by March, for submission to the GB meeting of 9 April. Working groups FI1-3, will be reactivated and updates are expected by April.

The indicative timeline table for the possible next partnership, including Single Basic Act development and adoption by the EU Council, a new GB partnership scheduled for Q4 2027 and the launch of the respective 1st Call of proposal in 2028, was presented.

The NL representative asked whether the future partnership approach would follow the same framework as Horizon Europe and sought clarifications. The ED noted that there is currently a gap between research results and deployment and the need for appropriate financial and implementation mechanism. The Vice-Chair stressed that standardization and stakeholder alignment are critical to avoid fragmentation and support effective deployment.

The ED reminded that although there are preparatory works ongoing and a strong commitment from all EU-Rail Members, no decision has been taken yet by the European decision-makers on the EU-Rail continuation, budget and setup.

- **Other information points**

For the recent operational call for tenders the ED informed members that several operational procurements have progressed, including the conclusion of framework contracts for DAC locomotive retrofit engineering solutions and for external strategic advisory support to programme management, with contracts being launched or signed. The call for tenders Strategic Advice to Europe's Rail, has been cancelled.

The ED presented the planning for 2026, including the indicative calendar for GB meetings and decisions scheduled, related document submission deadlines, as well as 9 main external events where EU-Rail will be represented throughout the year.

- **Upcoming communication and dissemination activities**

Members were informed about the main communication and stakeholder engagement activities planned for 2026, including participation in key events such as TRA 2026 and InnoTrans.

<p>At TRA 2026 (18-21May, Budapest), EU-Rail will participate with other Joint Undertakings, act as a sponsor of the TRA Vision Award Rail category and contribute to the programme through plenary interventions and project presentations.</p> <p>At InnoTrans 2026 (22-25 September, Berlin) will represent a major visibility opportunity , with preparations underway for a dedicated stand presence and stakeholder dedicated activities, including the organization of an innovation train initiative that will circulate from Brussels to Berlin, hosting dedicated webinars and the Woman in Rail Award Ceremony to be held in the framework of the event.</p> <p>The ED also highlighted the European Railcast series available on the website, on Spotify and Youtube. EU-Rail continues to strengthen its communication activities through digital publications and further website development that now features a new interface.</p> <p>In addition, stakeholder engagement has been intensified, with a joint letter from the rail sector, contributions from several members, as well as a letter from EURNEX, demonstrating the broad sector backing the EU-Rail initiative.</p> <p><i>Full details are available in the PowerPoint presentation.</i></p>	
<p>Coffee break</p>	<p>10:30-11:00</p>
<p>4. SSG first general scientific feedback</p> <p>The ED presented the main elements of the Draft Working Programme 2027, included the planned budget, the operational priorities under the Innovation and System Pillar and the timeline for submission and adoption by the Governing Board. It was noted that the final version of the Work Programme will be submitted for approval in November with a refined draft expected to be available for InnoTrans (or circulated by e-mail in October).</p> <p>The SRG members suggested to better clarify the innovation process and to strengthen the visibility of the scientific dimension of EU-Rail activities, ensuring that research results and dissemination outputs are more accessible and understandable for the academic community.</p> <p>Action EU-Rail based on the results of Wave2 will analyse if the provision added in that call are sufficient to ensure sufficient academia participation in flagship projects.</p> <p>The importance of outreach to universities was highlighted, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving communication on EU-Rail activities and results, - Providing a general presentation of EU-Rail, and information materials for students, - Organising possible technical lectures or course contributions, subject to interest and available resources, - Raising awareness of career opportunities, including EU bluebook traineeships or traineeships supported partially by universities through increased scholarships addressing studies abroad, and future employment in the rail sector. <p>Members also underlined the limited awareness of the rail sector among students, particularly regarding technologies such as DAC and other system innovations and highlighted the importance of dissemination activities, to improve sector’s attractiveness. Gender balance and the promotion of diversity were also mentioned as to be considered for the future of the rail sector.</p> <p>The ED took note of the suggestions and indicated that follow-up actions Action EU-Rail will provide to the SSG Members a generic presentation on EU-Rail, including links to videos, and its activities for the SSG members to use – in full or part – in university courses.</p>	<p>11:00-11:30</p>

<p>Action SSG Members will look into the possibility for the ED or a JU representative to participate live or online in some courses presenting EU-Rail or a specific aspect of it.</p> <p>Action SSG Members will look into the interest of having Flagship Project to come and present technical results in university courses. Only if confirmed, then EU-Rail will look into this dissemination possibility with the successful 3rd Wave of Flagship Projects.</p> <p>Action SSG Members who would like to propose to their student an internship experience in EU-Rail, can encourage student to apply to the Bluebook traineeship programme of the EC (student should indicate EU-Rail as their first preference):</p> <p>https://traineeships.ec.europa.eu/index_en for a paid internship on fixed calendar timing. Alternatively, also explore the possibility with the JU of an unpaid internship possible at any time, with an agreement with the university.</p>	
<p>5. Advice on Flagship Projects</p> <p>The advancement on the Flagship Projects has been presented. The assessment highlighted the need to enforce the development of scientific knowledge thought targeted publications, clearer KPI definitions, improved tracking of results and efforts, and enhanced engagement with project consortia to support implementation.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the opportunity for reflection and suggested Action interactions with project consortia through dedicated meetings, follow-up activities and possible tutoring or awareness actions to better support the next Flagship projects.</p> <p>The NL representative underlined the difficulty in clearly understanding the overall progress and outcomes of the projects due to the large number of parallel outputs. He stressed the need for greater clarity on starting points and achieved results, better defined KPIs, and more quantitative information linking deliverables, effort and impact.</p> <p>The IT representative noted that, for projects building on previous initiatives, such as Shift2Rail, it was not always easy to understand what had already been completed and how current activities relate to earlier work. He highlighted the need for clearer outcome definitions and improved continuity between programmes.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair emphasised the importance of improving traceability between work programmes to understand how activities and results are carried forward from one programme to the next. He observed that current monitoring provides limited visibility on the sequence of activities and does not allow members to understand what preceded or followed a given deliverable. He suggested improving activity descriptions and organising a dedicated status discussion to enhance transparency and understanding of expectations.</p> <p>The IT representative provided positive feedback on the exercise, highlighting the value of the review activity and the overall quality of the documentation. Having been assigned to FP2, he confirmed the usefulness of the work and expressed his willingness to participate in future exercises. He noted that, while he was comfortable with the technical aspects, additional visibility on managerial progress would be beneficial.</p> <p>The Chair further noted that the time invested by members was higher than initially anticipated, likely due to the pilot nature of the exercise and the learning curve associated with its first implementation.</p> <p>The ED proposed, as an immediate next step, Action the organisation by EU-Rail of a possible face-to-face meeting with Flagship Projects representatives to align on the findings and prepare</p>	11:30-11:40

<p>the next phase. Members were informed that the funding decision for the next wave is expected at the April Governing Board, with the subsequent phase planned to start in September.</p>	
<p>6. Closing remarks and AoB</p> <p>Under Any Other Business, the ED informed members that the next SSG meeting will take place on 12 May 2026.</p> <p>Members were informed of the possibility to hold the 3rd dedicated meeting of the year during the InnoTrans fair, Action subject to confirmation of the date and practical arrangements at a later stage. In addition, members were informed of the SRG request for a joint meeting to be held in May and the Chair informed members that her mandate will expire at the end of the year and indicated her intention to address the election at the May meeting.</p> <p>Juan de Dios SANZ indicated that, if needed, he could stand as a candidate, but he could also remain Vice-Chair until the end of his current mandate.</p> <p>The ED explained the steps that EU-Rail will undertake for Chair election which include the launching the request for candidate prior to the next meeting. The ED asked to the SRG Members if they would like to launch also the Vice-Chair at the same time, the Chair confirmed.</p> <p>– Action</p> <p>The Executive Director presented the proposal to amend the SSG Rules of Procedure, following consultation with DG RTD, with the aim of simplifying the requirements related to confidentiality and conflict-of-interest declarations. The proposed changes include the signature of a declaration upon appointment, an annual renewal by SSG members, the obligation for external participants to sign a declaration prior to each meeting, the use of a single template, and the immediate declaration of any new potential conflict of interest.</p> <p>New templates (Annex 1 and Annex 2) were introduced to support the revised process.</p> <p>The quorum being met, members agreed to proceed by consensus. The amendments to the SSG Rules of Procedure were approved and formally adopted at 11:50.</p>	<p>11:40-12:00</p>
<p>Attendance:</p> <p><u>SSG Members present:</u> <i>Angela di Febraro (Chair), Juan de Dios Sanz (Vice-chair), Alessandro Fantechi, Mathijs De Weerd, Luis Ferreira, Matthias Landgraf, Martin Leitner, Ladislav Routil, Claude Marin- Lamellet,</i></p> <p><u>SSG Members online:</u> <i>Michele Carboni, Klaus Moessner, Martin Leitner</i> <u>Observers:</u> <i>Torben Holvald (ERA), Elena Mihaela Williams (DG MOVE)</i></p> <p><u>EU-Rail:</u> <i>Giorgio Travaini (Executive Director), Isaac Gonzalez (acting Head of Corporate Services), Karel Van Gils (Seconded National Expert), Lea Paties (Senior Programme Manager), Ariadni Matraka (Programme Assistant), Cosimo Serpolla (Corporate Legal Assistant), Florentina Laptuca (Assistant to the Corporate Service Unit)</i></p>	<p>12:00-12:10</p>