



9th MEETING OF THE EUROPE'S RAIL SSG

12 May 2026

09:00-12:00h
Hybrid meeting

Minutes of the meeting

1. Introduction The Chair, Angela di Febraro, welcomed the participants and officially opened the meeting.	09:00-09:05
2. Approval of the Agenda and previous MoM The proposed agenda of the meeting was approved without amendments. The minutes from the previous meeting were also approved without modifications. Participants were reminded to complete the annual declaration of Conflict of Interest. Giorgio Travaini, the Executive Director (ED) of EU-Rail, welcomed the participants.	09:05-09:10
3. Review of the agreed actions resulted from previous meetings The ED opened the presentation by informing members that a new section had been added to review the status of actions agreed during the previous meeting. It was proposed to continue using this approach in future meetings to improve monitoring and follow-up of agreed actions. The ED continued with updating the SSG Members on the follow-up actions from previous meetings. The ED also informed members that the Grant Agreement Preparation of the call 2025-02, including the FP Wave 2 projects, is ongoing and that the related outcomes and materials will be shared in the coming months. In addition, generic EU-Rail presentations and video materials that could support university courses and academic dissemination activities are being prepared and will be ready to be circulated in the upcoming months. Members were encouraged to explore the possibility of inviting EU-Rail representatives to participate in technical courses, guest lectures, or academic events, where generic presentations and dissemination materials could be shared with students and researchers. The ED also presented the EU-Rail non-Blue Book traineeship scheme, highlighting its flexible framework and its objective to strengthen links with academia and external organisations. <i>See PowerPoint presentation for more details.</i> In this context, Mathijs DE WEERDT raised the possibility of developing research-oriented traineeships linked to specific technical or scientific topics. The ED clarified that Europe's Rail itself is not performing research or providing researchers to its funded projects but explained that depending on the subject and objectives intern could have their own internal project. An example was provided involving a trainee who developed climate-change-related modelling	09:10-09:25

activities assessing CO₂ savings associated with Europe's Rail projects and solutions, that EU-Rail used for corporate visibility matters. The ED further informed the members about the planned hybrid meeting during InnoTrans and invited participants to confirm their physical attendance.	
4. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chair The secretariat confirmed that the quorum is reach and the election could take place. The ED informed the SSG Members about the ongoing process for the election of the SSG Chair and Vice-Chair positions. Following the launch of the call for candidatures, one candidature had been received for the Chair position, while no applications had been submitted for the Vice-Chair role. The ED explained the possible procedural options available to members: - elect the Chair immediately and postpone the election of the Vice-Chair; - identify a Vice-Chair candidate during the meeting and proceed with both elections; - postpone both elections until the September meeting. Members proposed collecting candidacies during the meeting. The proposal was positively received and the Chair suggested postponing the item until after the break to allow further informal discussions among members.	9:25-9:40
5. Update on EU-Rail's activities and discussion: - Outcome of Governing Board meeting of 9 April 2026 The ED presented the outcome of the Governing Board (GB) meeting, including the main decisions adopted in relation to the call for proposals, the update of Flagship Initiative 4, and operational harmonisation activities. In this context, members were informed that the Governing Board approved: - the ranked lists of innovation actions selected for funding and the list of rejected proposals under the Europe's Rail call for proposals HORIZON-JU-ER-2025-02 , - the update of Flagship Initiative 4: Innovative EU high-speed rail corridors to the Annex to the High-Level Paper "A Future Policy-Based Public-Private Partnership for Rail" - the request for the commission agreement for derogation from implementing rules to the staff regulations, The ED clarified that the Flagship Initiative 4 "Innovative EU high-speed rail corridors", of the High-Level Paper, had already been presented to the Governing Board and is available on the EU-Rail website. <i>Additional details are present in the provided PowerPoint presentation.</i> For the GB item of discussion on content, Operational Harmonisation, the ED explained that the System Pillar is progressively developing a full set of harmonised specifications for control-command and signalling systems, including both technical and operational rules. By the end of	09:40-11:00

2027 we will have the full set of specifications, and we shall see further if we are ready to implement them into a new or existing system.

Within this framework, Europe's Rail launched for both System Pillar Steering Group (SP-STG) and System Innovation Programme Board (SIPB), a call to the sector for a pilot to implement the standard specifications that are considered mature enough to be deployed. The objective is to anticipate or identify future pre-deployment activities.

- Report on System Pillar (SP) work

For the SP report, the ED presented the main outcomes of recent System Pillar activities. He started with the updates in cybersecurity specifications, already used by the sector. Further, the ED spoke about the agreement with ERA for part of those voluntary specifications to be transformed into ERA technical documents.

The ED explained that several change requests had been submitted to ERA. He also informed participants that the System Pillar annual release had been presented.

Furthermore, work is ongoing on a new contract scope, with the draft contract expected to be released in July. He updated on the status of the Future Railway Mobile Communication System (FRMCS) Stakeholder Alignment Meeting (SAM) meeting.

In response to a question from Luis FERREIRA regarding FRMCS and its links with EULYNX activities, the ED explained that the SP tracksides specification available on the EU-Rail website are derived from the initial EULYNX works.

Mathijs DE WEERDT asked about the possibility of developing open-source codes within the System Pillar that could potentially be shared publicly. **Action** The ED indicated that this possibility would be further investigated and reported back during a future meeting.

Additional details are present in the provided PowerPoint presentation.

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

Sébastien DENIS, Senior Programme Manager at Europe's Rail presented an extensive update on Innovation Pillar activities covering flagship projects, demonstrators and exploratory research. He reminded to the members that public deliverables and dissemination materials are regularly published on the Europe's Rail website.

Updates were provided on the Flagship Project 1, where 81 demonstrators and use cases were reported across several streams, including capacity and traffic management, digital enablers and multimodal mobility. The information was complemented with examples of demonstrators including cross-border planning systems, digital traffic management functions and multimodal passenger services.

Luis FERREIRA raised a question regarding the very large number of demonstrators and the need for stronger convergence towards common interoperable European solutions, rather than fragmented local implementations. He questioned whether there might be too many demonstrators, making it difficult to understand the objective and what each demonstrator is intended to achieve.

Sebastian explained that the demonstrators belong to different projects and therefore address different activities and objectives. He also noted that some demonstrators involve much larger-scale activities and that future developments may move towards more integrated demonstrators.

Further, updates were provided on automation and Automation Train Operations (ATO) functions, communication systems, digital architectures, testing and certification activities, predictive maintenance, infrastructure management, multimodal solutions and innovative operational concepts, including virtual coupling and self-driving freight wagons.

Progress was reported on alternative energy solutions, hydrogen and battery technologies, DAC demonstrators, cybersecurity, circular economy activities and exploratory research projects, including AI applications and resilience-related studies.

Several demonstrators and pilot activities are ongoing across Europe, with upcoming work focusing on prototype development, validation, deployment readiness and system integration.

Further details are available in the PowerPoint presentation.

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

The ED presented the latest developments regarding the High-Level Deployment Group (HL-DpG) and the DAC programme governance structure. It was explained that the DAC Supervisory Board decided to transfer most European DAC Delivery Programme (EDDP) activities under the HL-DpG framework through the creation of dedicated deployment sub-groups.

The future structure will therefore include:

- the high-level Deployment Group;
- the DAC Deployment Group;
- the FRMCS Deployment Group.

The rationale behind the simplification was mainly linked to overlaps in membership and the need for greater efficiency and a final decision on the new HL-DpG structure is expected in July.

The presentation also highlighted the members of the HL-DpG, bringing together key railway stakeholders, infrastructure managers, manufacturers, operators and European associations to support coordinated deployment activities across Europe.

Updates were provided as well on the FRMCS European Deployment Group, where practical deployment guidelines and risk management activities are ongoing.

Additional details are available in the PowerPoint presentation.

- Outcome of 2025-02 call and update on ongoing 2026-01 call

The ED provided an overview of the 2025-02 Call for Proposals and updates on the ongoing 2026-01 Call.

The total budget allocated for the call 2025-02 amounted to EUR 148.2 million, covering flagship projects, exploratory research and coordination activities. The call received 34 proposals across several topics related to digital and sustainable rail systems, automation, freight services, regional rail, innovation in rail finance and exploratory research. The evaluation process took place between 13 February and 23 March 2026 and involved independent experts.

The Governing Board approved the ranked list of projects selected for funding during its meeting of 9 April 2026. The selected projects are expected to proceed to grant signature by 31 July 2026, with activities starting on 1 August 2026.

The ED also highlighted the strong participation of academia in the flagship projects. He noted that participation from universities and academia had increased by approximately 20% compared with previous calls, following specific encouragement measures introduced in the work programme, demonstrating improved geographical balance and broader collaboration across Europe.

In addition, the reserve list mechanism and below-threshold proposals were presented. It was specified that the exploratory PhD topic proposal was not retained for funding because competing proposals under other exploratory topics obtained higher scores during the independent evaluation process and the available budget was insufficient. A possible transfer of unused administrative budget to operational expenditure is currently under investigation to possibly support additional projects from the reserve list.

The 2026-01 Call for Proposals main information was also provided to the members. The call on 4 February 2026, with submission deadline set for 7 May 2026, An Info Day was organised on 9 February 2026, attracting more than 260 registrations and 210 participants. The call has an overall indicative budget of EUR 6.1 million and includes two topics under Destination 6 & 7, with one project expected to be funded for each topic.

Full details are available in the PowerPoint presentation.

- Upcoming communication and dissemination activities

Members were informed about the major dissemination and communication activities planned for 2026, including Europe's Rail recent participation in key events such as the International Transport Forum, the ERTMS Conference, and other major European transport events.

Further activities planned include the Transport Research Arena in Budapest, the InnoTrans 2026 (22-25 September, Berlin), the Women in Rail events and additional dissemination workshops.

At InnoTrans, Europe's Rail, the European Commission and ERA will share a common European stand including demonstrations from flagship projects and the System Pillar. A dedicated high-speed train initiative that will circulate from Brussels to Berlin, hosting dedicated webinars linked to InnoTrans is also being organised with support from several companies.

The Executive Director additionally highlighted the success of the recent CEO video campaign supporting the continuation of Europe's Rail activities, with participation from 24 companies.

The campaign was described as an important signal of industrial commitment and support.

Full details are available in the PowerPoint presentation.

- Other information points

Under other information points, the overall status of the High-Level Paper was provided, with the new version being scheduled for mid-May and ready for endorsement at the GB in June. It was also agreed to prepare a lighter version of the High-Level Paper to make the document more accessible and easier to digest for the wider railway sector. *See powerpoint presentation for further details.*

Luis FERREIRA expressed strong interest in the DAC projects, particularly with DAC feet, due to the large number of legacy systems across Europe and the high associated implementation costs. He further underlined the importance of EU-Rail activities and

highlighted the need for stronger harmonisation of cross-border activities under FP1, as well as the importance of connections between rail and ports.	
<i>Coffee break</i>	11:00-11:20
Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chair - continuation The Chair first invited members attending remotely to indicate whether anyone wished to present a candidacy for the Vice-Chair role. No additional candidacies were proposed remotely. The Chair then informed participants that, following consultations held during the break, Alessandro had agreed to stand as candidate for the position of Vice-Chair. The Chair thanked Alessandro for accepting the proposal. The Chair therefore proposed proceeding with the election by consensus for: • Juan de Dios Sanz, currently Vice-Chair, as Chair of the Scientific Steering Group. • Alessandro Fantechi, IT representative as Vice-Chair of the Scientific Steering Group. The ED recalled the applicable procedural provisions and explained that, in the absence of objections or requests for a formal vote, the election could proceed by consensus. The members confirmed the consensus and formally endorsed the election of both the Chairperson and the Vice-Chair of the Scientific Steering Group. The Chair thanked all members for the constructive and pragmatic handling of the situation and noted with satisfaction that the issue had been resolved smoothly. The Executive Director congratulated both newly elected representatives on behalf of Europe's Rail team.	11:20-11:30
6. SSG first general scientific feedback The ED presented the main highlights of the Draft Consolidated AAR 2025. Positive progress was highlighted regarding the implementation of commitment appropriations, governance arrangements and in-kind contributions, with overall results improving compared to 2024 and projections indicating that targets will be exceeded following the third wave of implementation. During the discussion on the scientific advice related to the AAR, Juan de Dios SANZ stressed that the document should better reflect the evolution and achievements of the programme, including the transition from Shift2Rail to Europe's Rail, the achieved TRLs and the concrete impact of the flagship projects. Angela di Febraro considered the document well-structured and proposed including a clearer summary of the positive outcomes and achievements. It was agreed that a dedicated presentation on maturity achievements and project results would be included in a future SSG meeting. - <i>Action</i> The ED confirmed the possibility for a more detailed maturity analysis for future AAR exercises, including achievements, TRLs and implementation status. Further discussions focused on dissemination, attractiveness of the railway sector and engagement with students and universities. Alessandro FANTECHI highlighted the need to strengthen cooperation with universities and to improve the visibility of EU-RAIL opportunities for students and researchers, especially in fields such as AI, computer science and automation. Both Alessandro FANTECHI and Luis FERREIRA underlined the importance	11:40-11:55

of making rail innovation more attractive and visible, while linking dissemination activities with sustainability and climate-related topics that resonate with younger generations. The meeting also covered possible future collaborations with external stakeholders, including a Luxembourg-based company offering facilities and physical space for research and innovation activities in automation and mobility. Members agreed that additional discussions may follow to assess possible cooperation opportunities.	
7. Closing remarks and AoB Under Any Other Business, the ED informed members that the next SSG meeting will take place on 24 September 2026.	11:55-12:00
Attendance: <u>SSG Members present:</u> <i>Angela di Febraro (Chair), Juan de Dios Sanz (Vice-chair), Alessandro Fantechi, Mathijs De Weerd, Luis Ferreira,</i> <u>SSG Members online:</u> <i>Matthias Landgraf, Martin Leitner, Nacima Baron-Yelles, Klaus Moessner, Stoelinga Marielle. Sébastien Denis.</i> <u>Observers:</u> <i>Torben Holvald (ERA),</i> <u>EU-Rail:</u> <i>The Executive Director (Executive Director), Isaac Gonzalez (acting Head of Corporate Services), (Senior Programme Manager, Florentina Laptuca (Assistant to the Corporate Service Unit)</i>	