



## Scientific Steering Group

Meeting 15 November 2023

11h00 – 14h00

*Minutes of the Meeting*

### 1. Introduction

Welcome by Giorgio TRAVAINI, Executive Director ad interim, EU-RAIL Joint Undertaking.

### 2. Introduction of the members of the Scientific Steering Group (SSG)

The newly appointed members of the Scientific Steering Group (hereinafter SSG) had the chance to introduce themselves. On behalf of the JU, Giorgio TRAVAINI stressed that the declaration of conflict of interest was already requested to each of the members before the meeting, and informed that one of the appointed SSG members, Mahnam SAEEDNIA, declared a conflict of interest, so that the Group now consists of 11 members.

**→ No SSG member declared a conflict of interest during the present meeting.**

Elena Mihaela WILLIAMS, representing the Rail Safety and Interoperability Unit of DG MOVE within the European Commission, and Holvad TORBEN and Emmanuel RUFFIN, representing the EU Agency for Railways, further introduced themselves.

Giorgio TRAVAINI explained to the members the main characteristics of the SSG and the functioning of the upcoming SSG meetings. He also stressed that the names of the SSG members will be published on the EU-RAIL website, alongside a summary of each member's curriculum vitae (*for more information, please refer to Article 1 of the SSG RoP*).

Giorgio TRAVAINI informed the members that the GB will be asked, by a written procedure, to appoint a new SSG member from the candidates of the reserve list, and the two research associations that will have the chance to formally attend the SSG under observer status.

### 3. Approval of the Agenda

Giorgio TRAVAINI presented the agenda and the members approved it by consensus. He also highlighted that the JU would try to make sure that the next meeting is in-person, for more qualitative interaction.

#### 4. Role of the SSG

Giorgio TRAVAINI informed the SSG members about their main responsibilities (*for more information, please refer to Article 6 of the SSG RoP and Article 21(7) of the Single Basic Act*). He 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.

➔ **Interested members can register in the expert database of the European Commission. Giorgio TRAVAINI informed the members that the link would be provided after the meeting.**

Giorgio TRAVAINI pointed out that the involvement in such reviews, as a contracted expert, is not a matter of conflict of interest affecting members' activity in the SSG. However, he highlighted that for project proposals, SSG members cannot be contracted because this would imply involvement in a Call for Proposals, which automatically signals a conflict of interest. Giorgio TRAVAINI stressed that these rules are taken from the European Commission and applied to the Scientific Committees of all JUs. Hence, they are not specific to EU-RAIL.

#### 5. Discussion and adoption of the rules of procedure

Giorgio TRAVAINI summarized all the points established in the draft RoP document, that the SSG members already received before the meeting. He also informed the members of a change in Article 3(2), and in the latest version is adding that the SSG meetings shall be attended by “*Maximum two representatives of different European research associations, not beneficiaries of Europe’s Rail grants or contracts, as observers.*”

➔ **The SSG members did not add further changes to the draft document and the SSG Rules of Procedure were adopted by consensus.**

#### 6. State of play – Information from the EU-RAIL

Giorgio TRAVAINI explained to the members the main activities of EU-RAIL and the main challenges of the JU for 2024 (*for details, please refer to the presentation*). He also presented the JU founding members and the EU-Rail key documents (i.e., EU-Rail Regulation (SBA); EU-Rail Master Plan; EU-Rail Multi-annual Work Programme; EU-Rail Annual Work Programmes). Giorgio TRAVAINI informed the SSG members about the activities of the System Pillar, Innovation Pillar and Deployment Group (to be set-up in 2024) and stressed that the JU is pushing for a high TRL on most of these activities, expecting to make a difference in the rail system.

Giorgio TRAVAINI introduced the Call for Proposals 2023, open until Call Closure the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, and explained to the SSG members each of the seven DESTINATION topics. He also encouraged the members to advertise the call for proposals and reminded the group that they cannot be part of a project proposal, as it would be considered a CoI (*all the information is published on the EU-RAIL website*).

He updated the members on the current and upcoming communication activities in Europe’s Rail, including the Space for Innovation in Rail – Towards a Satellite Based ERTMS and the EU-RAIL Info Day.

#### 7. Election of the Chairperson and Vice-Chair

Giorgio TRAVAINI reminded the SSG members that they had to propose candidates for each of the two positions, by November 8, 2023, by either proposing themselves or other candidates. He stressed that the JU received two candidacies, one for each position, and that they were distributed to the rest of the members along with candidates' curriculum vitae, as follows:

- Angela DI FEBBRARO: candidacy for Chairperson;
- Juan de Dios SANZ BOBI: candidacy for Vice-Chair.

Giorgio TRAVAINI mentioned that the voting would be performed through a show of hands and confirmed that the 50% quorum to be able to vote was attained.

The two candidates introduced themselves and motivated their candidacy.

**→ Angela DI FEBBRARO was elected as the Chairperson of the SSG via consensus. Juan de Dios SANZ BOBI was elected as the Vice-Chair of the SSG via consensus.**

## **8. SSG advice on:**

### **- Work Programme 23-24 amendment and Work Programme 24**

Giorgio TRAVAINI introduced to the members the main activities that the JU will conduct next year, including three meetings foreseen for the SSG. He also mentioned that the Annex of the WP 2024 deals with the Calls for Proposals that the JU plans to launch.

Giorgio TRAVAINI presented the call topic concerning EU-RAIL's Flagship Area 5, and mentioned that it will address activities on full digital freight train operations, which are also tackled within the project FP5-TRANS4M-R. He stressed that the estimated project cost is 13M, from which the JU is providing 5.9M.

Marielle STOELINGA asked about the rules for standardisation. Giorgio TRAVAINI mentioned that there will be a need of TSI in the DAC project to avoid interoperability issues.

Giorgio TRAVAINI introduced the Hyperloop topic, stating that EU-Rail launched a call topic on Hyperloop in 2022, which resulted in an unsuccessful output. He stressed that the GB decided to set aside 2.3M to launch a future Hyperloop topic call that would include the lessons learned while also considering the evolutions in the hyperloop scene.

Giorgio TRAVAINI added that the project will be funded with 2.3M as a research and innovation action, which could be funded up to 100% of the eligible costs, in accordance with the Horizon Europe rules.

Regarding the topic in the call text 2024 on FRMCS testing and validation, Giorgio TRAVAINI explained that it is addressing the next generation of communication system and moving away from the current system using GSM solution and towards 5G solutions and beyond. He highlighted that the possible project value may come up to 70M, depending how much telecom industrialisation is needed, but that on the R&I call topic side the JU is proposing to fund 13.5M and the consortium will have to work on a leverage effect of up to 5x.

**→ The SSG members gave a positive scientific advice to the WP24 and asked to the JU to have more time between the SSG and the GB meeting next year, in order to give a real contribution. Giorgio TRAVAINI confirmed that this is now planned as such.**

## **- Phasing-out plan**

Giorgio TRAVAINI presented the JU Phasing out plan, stating that the SBA establishes that the GB needs to approve a phasing out plan for the JU by the end of this year. He stressed that the EU-RAIL will formally cease to exist in 2031, the possibility of a third generation of the JU is in the hands of the legislator. A Phasing Out Plan is needed also to anticipate how the closure of the R&I programme, in particular from an administrative perspective, will happen once Horizon Europe framework closes.

Giorgio TRAVAINI informed the members that the EC sent a draft template for all JUs to fill in. He stressed that by the end of 2023, Chapter 5 concerning administrative and operational adaptations should be finalized and added that all other chapters are to be drafted and concluded in 2024.

Mihaela WILLIAMS said the Phasing Out Plan preparation does not preclude a future decision on whether the JUs will continue. She stressed that it is meant to prepare the JUs and to develop an idea on how they could evolve in the absence of Horizon Europe funding.

**➔ The members gave a positive scientific advice to the first version of the Phasing Out Plan.**

## **9. Closing remarks and AoB**

Giorgio TRAVAINI shared with the members the dates of the next meetings:

- February 20, 2024
- May 15, 2024
- October 8, 2024

The members accepted the dates with no further comments and the Save-the-date invitations were sent after the meeting.

Giorgio TRAVAINI mentioned that the upcoming meetings are foreseen to be hybrid to give all members a chance to participate.