Focus area:

Rail System Optimization

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Berlin 09.10.2023

1 Executive summary

This report examines the improvement of the European rail system, with a specific focus on the Rail Research and Innovation Agenda (RRIA) as a vital roadmap for fostering sustainable multimodal mobility.

The optimization of the rail system is identified as crucial, necessitating strategic enhancements in various areas of the railway systems, including vehicles, operations, infrastructure, technology, and regulation. All those points are directed to the increase of capacity, reduction of costs, incorporation of advanced technologies, and an increased environmental sustainability and safety.

The background and scope of the report acknowledge rail transport as an efficient and sustainable mode of transportation, playing a pivotal role in urban and suburban mass transit, freight, and long-and-medium-distance travel. Recognizing future challenges, the report points out the importance of collaborative research, referring to ERRAC's Fundamental Reference Documents as a guiding framework for the evolution of European railways.

Central to the report is the concept of rail system optimization, an approach that facilitates the discovery of synergies between subsystems, optimizing the utilization of European research funds. The optimization process strives for advancements in predictive maintenance, real-time monitoring, and the incorporation of cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics among others.

The report then presents specific research needs across various components of the railway system, including infrastructure, electrification, control and signaling systems, rolling stock, and freight/passenger services. The objective is to identify innovative solutions that can drive the transformation and improvement of rail systems on a global scale.

The report concludes with some recommendations that include advocating for adaptive strategies in monitoring and enhancing rail research programs, continued investment in research and development, encouraging a holistic approach and integration of railway subsystems, emphasizing the allocation of funds for fundamental research, promoting technology integration for rail system optimization, supporting environmental sustainability initiatives in rail transport, stressing the importance of safety enhancement measures, facilitating collaborative research and knowledge sharing, ensuring adherence to regulatory compliance and standards, investing in capacity-building programs for rail industry professionals, and promoting public awareness of the benefits of rail transport.

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2 Background and scope

Rail transport emerges as the most energy efficient and least climate-affecting means of transporting large masses over land, optimizing public space and ensuring sustainability. Recognized for its inclusivity, railways are accessible to everyone, irrespective of age or mobility status, offering affordable and reliable transport without the need for a driver's license. Railways, acting as the backbone of multi-modal transport, prove advantageous for urban and suburban mass transport, bulk and long-haul freight, and long-medium-distance travel.

2.1 Future Challenges and Collaborative Research:

To consolidate and enhance these inherent advantages, railways must embrace technological breakthroughs in digitalization and automation, providing even more attractive and affordable services. Collaborative research is deemed essential for developing and delivering innovative solutions.

Building on the legacy of Shift2Rail, the new research Joint Undertaking, Europe's Rail, is set

to accelerate the evolution and transformation of the rail system, increasing its market contribution and fostering the mobility of European citizens while safeguarding the natural environment. However, realizing the full potential of the sector will necessitate additional investments.

2.2 ERRAC's Fundamental Reference Documents:

To guide this transformative path, ERRAC has produced fundamental reference documents, including the "ERRAC 2050 Vision," the "ERRAC 2030 Research & Innovation Priorities," and the "Rail Strategic Research & Innovation Agenda" (SRIA). These documents provide a comprehensive roadmap for the future of European railways, ensuring a seamless, sustainable, and inclusive future for mobility.

2.3 ERRAC research agenda for Framework Program 10 (FP10)

The Rail Research and Innovation Agenda (RRIA) represents a pivotal commitment within the railway sector towards transforming the existing railway system. The vision is to seamlessly integrate railways with other public transport modes, positioning them as the backbone of Europe's mobility and logistic chain. The RRIA envisions sustainable multimodal and personal mobility, challenging the notion that transport is synonymous with individual vehicles. Rail transport, with its higher capacity, is seen as a solution to urban congestion and pollution while effectively serving diverse regions.

The agenda aims to revolutionize customer experience by creating a seamless, affordable, and multimodal mobility network, with rail serving as its backbone. It also seeks to enhance the value of rail transport by making railways intelligent, optimizing system use, increasing capacity, and improving flexibility.

2.4 Rail system optimization

In the pursuit of sustainable and efficient transportation, the concept of rail system optimization emerges as a pivotal solution to address contemporary challenges. Rail systems play a crucial role in mass transit, freight transportation, and overall urban mobility. Optimization, in this context, refers to the systematic improvement of various components within the rail network to maximize efficiency, reduce costs, enhance safety, and minimize environmental impact. More in detail these concepts are presented as follows:

Efficiency Improvement: Rail system optimization involves the strategic enhancement of operational processes and infrastructure to achieve greater efficiency. This encompasses streamlining schedules, minimizing delays, and optimizing routes to ensure timely and reliable transportation services. By leveraging advanced technologies such as predictive maintenance and real-time monitoring, rail operators can preemptively address issues, resulting in improved service quality.

Capacity Utilization: Increasing the capacity of rail systems is a fundamental aspect of

optimization. This involves maximizing the use of existing infrastructure, implementing innovative signaling systems, and adopting intelligent traffic management solutions. By doing so, rail networks can accommodate growing demand, reduce congestion, and enhance overall throughput.

Cost Reduction: Rail system optimization aims to minimize operational costs while maintaining or even improving service quality. This can be achieved through energy-efficient train operations, optimal maintenance practices, and the integration of sustainable technologies. By reducing resource consumption and minimizing waste, rail operators can create a financially viable and environmentally conscious transportation system.

Technology Integration: The integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics, plays a pivotal role in rail system optimization. These technologies enable predictive maintenance, real-time monitoring, and data-driven decision-making, resulting in more reliable and resilient rail networks.

Environmental Sustainability: Rail system optimization aligns with the global imperative of sustainable development. By promoting mass transit over individual vehicular transportation, rail systems inherently contribute to reducing carbon emissions. Additionally, optimizing operations and embracing eco-friendly technologies further minimize the environmental footprint, making rail transport a more sustainable choice.

Safety Enhancement: Optimization efforts extend to enhancing safety measures within rail systems. This involves implementing advanced signaling systems, automated train control, and intelligent infrastructure to mitigate the risk of accidents and improve overall safety standards.

3 Rail research needs

To explore the possibilities for the rail system optimization it is necessary a detailed examination of distinct elements within railway systems. This effort has found crucial research requirements at a high level, encompassing various aspects of these intricate systems. By studying each component individually, it is possible to identify and address key research needs, fostering advancements in efficiency, safety, and overall functionality within the ever-evolving rail transport. This seek for innovative solutions is driven by the overarching goal of propelling the transformation and improvement of rail systems on a global scale.

3.1 Railways Infrastructure

3.1.1 Wheel-Rail interaction

Tribology:

Tribological studies, advanced material coatings, lubrication techniques, and wear-resistant materials.

Noise and Vibration Reduction:

Rail dampers, wheel and rail profiling, resilient track materials, and innovative noise reduction technologies.

Energy Efficiency:

Improve energy efficiency by reducing friction and optimizing traction. Friction management, regenerative braking systems, and technologies for minimizing energy loss during acceleration and braking.

Condition Monitoring and Predictive Maintenance:

Sensor technologies, data analytics, machine learning algorithms, and integration of condition monitoring into maintenance strategies.

Adverse Weather Conditions:

Snow and ice management, water drainage systems, and materials resistant to harsh weather conditions.

High-Speed Rail:

Aerodynamics, thermal management, wheel-rail dynamics at high speeds, and safety considerations for high-speed trains.

Integration of New Technologies:

Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and autonomous systems for monitoring, maintenance, and optimization of wheel-rail domain.

Human Factors and Ergonomics:

Investigate the impact of wheel-rail interaction on the health and well-being of railway personnel and passengers. Ergonomic design, vibration exposure studies, and measures to improve the working environment for railway staff and the comfort of passengers.

Urban cases:

Wheel-rail interaction in curvature and tight turning radii, noise reduction in densely populated areas, and integration with other modes of transportation.

3.1.2 Rails

Developing new materials for improved durability and wear resistance, studying methods to reduce noise and vibration, and enhancing inspection techniques for detecting defects and cracks.

3.1.3 Sleepers or Ties

Exploring alternative materials for longevity and sustainability, optimizing designs for load distribution and reduced maintenance, and developing resistance against degradation factors.

3.1.4 Ballast

Optimizing gradation and shape for improved load distribution and stability, investigating alternative materials for better drainage and reduced fouling, and developing techniques for adequate compaction.

3.1.5 Trackbed

Studying soil behavior under railway loading, developing improved stability and reduced settlement designs, exploring reinforcement techniques, and optimizing drainage properties. Rail transport induced frequent changing loads needs explanation in order to understand durability, describe maintainability and to optimize design.

3.1.6 Fastening Systems

Developing robust and durable designs, exploring materials for fatigue and corrosion resistance, studying their impact on-track performance, and investigating maintenance reduction techniques. Prioritising 2 or 3 universal types of fasteners (including robotized tools).

3.1.7 Rail Joints

Improving joint designs for reduced track irregularities and extended service life, studying collective behavior under different loads and conditions, developing practical inspection and maintenance methods, and optimizing design.

3.1.8 Level Crossings

Developing advanced detection systems, improving visibility and safety measures, studying their impact on traffic flow, and exploring efficient maintenance and repair techniques will not only contribute to optimized rail system but also strengthen other transport modes.

3.1.9 Drainage Systems

Designing effective water management systems, exploring advanced collection and drainage technologies, studying their impact the stability of track and surrounding areas potentially invasive on the track by flood or landslides, and developing predictive maintenance methods will be a key in make rail system robust against with respect to climate changes and extreme weather.

3.1.10 Bridges, tunnels and civil engineering structures

Developing methods for determining more realistic and route-specific models of traffic-induced loads on bridges and noise barriers, with the aim to extend their time in service without compromising their performance. Utilize available information from different levels (object, route, network) and sources (management, inspection, measurement) through tailored data-fusion methods to improve predictive maintenance of structures. Foster methods that will improve availability of accurate structural condition data with high coverage of assets.

Harmonizing efforts on digital twins and development of digital product passport for structures will improve the sustainability of the rail system, save resources, and facilitate re-use of materials.

Coordinate new developments in rolling stock with corresponding safety and durability issues at bridges, fastenings, equipment of tunnels and noise barriers through development of unified compliance testing procedures that will consider resulting changes in aerodynamic effects and dynamic loading.

Improve sustainability of new constructions through innovative materials and integrated sensors with the ability of I2V & V2I communication.

3.1.11 Stations and terminals

Studying passenger movement patterns, peak travel times, and congestion points to optimize station layout, circulation, and platform capacity, improving no-barriers full accessibility for all, including the provision of elevators, ramps, and tactile guidance systems, contributes to a more optimized usage by people with reduced abilities. Development of innovative technologies and design features to enhance passenger safety and security, crowd management, and improve passenger comfort. Exploring strategies for efficient and cost-effective maintenance and cleaning of stations and terminals, including preventive maintenance schedules, cleaning methods, and repairs to infrastructure and facilities, contributes towards a more pleasant journey. Improve all intermodal connections to simplify transfers, increase comfort and minimize time.

3.1.12 Maintenance processes

Develop advanced methods and technologies for continuous monitoring of railway assets such as tracks, bridges, tunnels and signaling systems. This includes the use of remote sensor technologies, networkwide monitoring technologies (distributed sensing), onboard sensing, and methods of sensor integration in structures, as well as data analytics, to detect early signs of deterioration, defects, or failures.

Improve predictive maintenance models by incorporating real-time data, historical information, and machine learning algorithms to accurately forecast asset performance, optimize maintenance schedules, and minimize downtime.

Develop efficient asset management strategies that consider the entire lifecycle of railway infrastructure, including design, construction, operation, maintenance, dismantling. This involves assessing the cost-effectiveness of different maintenance approaches and prioritizing investments based on risk assessment and criticality analysis.

Define objective and measurable indicators of sustainability, which consider all relevant aspects (materials, resource consumption, construction method, life-cycle, system boundaries), building on the EN 15643-5. Prepare methodology for “sustainability limit state"

for the design of new structures. Foster “digital product passport” technologies to allow re-use of structural components.

Explore innovative inspection techniques, such as robotics, drones, embedded sensors, distributed fiber sensing and advanced imaging technologies, to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness. This includes automating inspection processes, improving data collection accuracy, reducing the need for manual intervention, storing big data for feeding preventive maintenance forecasting models.

Conduct research on materials used in railway infrastructure, including tracks, sleepers, ballasts, and bridge and tunnel components, to enhance their durability, performance, and resistance to wear, corrosion, and fatigue and explore the use of new materials less related to fossil energy for their fabrication. This involves testing new materials, evaluating their behavior under different loading conditions, and developing standards for their use.

Study and anticipate the impact of climate change on railway infrastructure and develop strategies to enhance its resilience. This includes understanding the effects of extreme weather events, flooding, and temperature variations on tracks, bridges, and other components, and identifying adaptation measures to mitigate these risks.

Design and implement decision support systems that integrate various data sources, models, and expert knowledge to assist maintenance personnel in making informed decisions. This includes tools for condition assessment, risk analysis, maintenance planning, and resource allocation.

Investigate human factors in railway maintenance operations, including factors that influence safety, efficiency, and well-being of workers. This involves studying the ergonomics of maintenance tasks, training programs, fatigue management, and the use of automation to improve safety and productivity.

Explore ways to minimize the environmental impact of railway maintenance activities. This includes researching eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient technologies, waste management practices, and strategies for reducing noise, vibration, and emissions during maintenance operations.

Promote collaboration and knowledge sharing among railway organizations to develop common standards, guidelines, and best practices for maintenance. This includes benchmarking performance, sharing lessons learned, and fostering international cooperation to improve maintenance efficiency and effectiveness.

3.1.13 Noise and Vibration abatement

Reduce noise and vibration annoyance levels in urban areas through improved noise barriers, low-noise tracks and bridges or urban planning (vegetation and quiet zones, access and traffic control). Increase accuracy of noise and vibration assessment methods in the process of

mitigation measures design, to make the process more effective. Develop standardized measurement procedures to test the actual performance of noise and vibration reduction measures.

3.2 Electrification and power supply of railways

3.2.1 Overhead Catenary System

Developing more efficient and cost-effective designs, exploring innovative materials for overhead wires and support structures, optimizing contact wire tensioning methods, and improving maintenance and inspection techniques, have potential of reduce unplanned service interruptions and allow for significant cost savings of rail system.

3.2.2 Substation

Develop advanced substation designs for efficient power conversion and distribution, explore alternative energy sources, study grid integration and power quality issues, and investigate intelligent grid technologies for enhanced substation operation.

3.2.3 Feeder Cables

Developing high-capacity and low-loss cables, exploring materials and designs for increased efficiency and reduced electrical losses, studying cable aging and degradation mechanisms, and developing cable diagnostics and condition monitoring techniques.

3.2.4 Sectioning Insulators

Developing insulators with improved properties and mechanical strength, studying their behavior under different environmental conditions, exploring materials and designs for enhanced reliability and safety, and investigating failure modes and mitigation techniques.

3.2.5 Switching Equipment

Developing advanced switching technologies for efficient and reliable operation, exploring alternative materials for improved switching performance, studying fault detection and protection methods, and investigating switching equipment optimization for energy savings and reduced maintenance.

3.2.6 Power Filtering and Compensation

Developing effective filtering and compensation methods to mitigate power quality issues, exploring advanced power electronic devices for harmonic suppression and reactive power compensation, studying their impact on network stability, and investigating control strategies for optimal performance.

3.2.7 Protection Systems

Developing advanced protection schemes for fault detection, localization, and clearance,

studying fault behavior and propagation mechanisms, exploring innovative protection devices and technologies, and investigating cyber-security measures for protection systems.

3.2.8 Control and Monitoring Systems

Developing intelligent control and monitoring systems for efficient operation and maintenance, exploring real-time data acquisition and analysis techniques, studying network-wide monitoring and control strategies, and investigating predictive and proactive maintenance approaches for enhanced system reliability.

3.3 Control and Signaling systems

3.3.1 Signals

Developing advanced signal technologies for improved visibility and recognition, studying the effectiveness of different signal designs and placement strategies, and exploring ways to enhance signal communication and coordination with train operators.

3.3.2 Interlocking System

Developing advanced interlocking algorithms for efficient and safe train movements, exploring interoperability and standardization of interlocking systems, studying fault detection and recovery methods, and enhancing cybersecurity measures to protect them.

3.3.3 Train Detection Systems

Developing reliable and accurate train detection methods, exploring advanced sensor technologies such as axle counters or track circuits, studying the integration of train detection systems with signaling systems, and investigating fault detection and maintenance techniques for train detection equipment.

3.3.4 Control Center

Developing advanced control center technologies for real-time monitoring and management of train operations, exploring decision support systems and automation for efficient control, studying operator interfaces and human factors, and enhancing communication networks for seamless control center operations.

3.3.5 Trainborne Signaling Equipment

Developing robust and reliable frugal onboard signaling equipment, exploring secure and safe wireless communication technologies for train-to-wayside data exchanges (some prototypes existe in X2RAIL4), studying interoperability with trackside signaling systems, and investigating the integration of train-borne signaling equipment with other onboard systems. Studying the cutting-edge concept of signaling in the cloud to avoid trackside equipment and reduce infrastructure cost for example to revitalize secondary lines.

3.3.6 Advanced Data Analytics and AI

Leverage data collected from communication systems, train sensors, and other sources to develop advanced data analytics and AI techniques. This research should focus on extracting valuable insights to enhance train scheduling, predict maintenance needs, optimize energy consumption, and improve overall operational efficiency.

Make Infrastructure Managers and Rail Undertaking aware that sharing data will bring advantage to the entire system, including them. From the data collected, the research should focus on extracting valuable insights to enhance train scheduling, predict maintenance needs, optimize energy consumption, and improve overall operational efficiency.

3.3.7 Power Supply

Developing efficient and reliable power supply solutions for signaling and communication equipment, exploring alternative energy sources such as renewable energy, studying electromagnetic energy harvesting, studying power quality and stability issues, and investigating backup power systems for uninterrupted power supply during outages or emergencies.

3.3.8 Wireless Communication Technologies

Develop advanced adaptable and reconfigurable wireless communication technologies for railway systems that can cope with railways constraints and technology evolutions). This includes investigating and optimizing wireless communication protocols considering wireless standards evolutions 5G, 6G towards higher frequency bands (millimetric waves, Li-Fi) and hybridization with satellite communications considering the launching of Governmental constellations such as IRIS2to provide reliable and high-speed connectivity as “network as a service” on moving trains whatever will be the segment market. Investigate the deployment of Software Defined Network (SDN), Slicing, Network Function Virtualization (NFV)and Edge Computing to permit flexibility, reconfigurability and energy saving at network level to decrease costs.

3.3.9 Train-to-X Communication

Explore robust, reconfigurable, adaptable and frugal T2X communication systems resilient to technology evolution that enable direct communication between trains (T2T), facilitating coordination and information sharing. This can enhance train operations, improve traffic management, and support features like platooning and virtual coupling on fly, where trains can travel closely together or when convoys composition can be changed dynamically to improve efficiency. The integration of long-range and short-range wireless communication systems is also important. The use of anti-collision radar systems as communicating systems should be investigating as this a trend in the automotive domain, avoiding the installation of another system.

Improve communication between trains and the railway infrastructure (T2I), including signaling systems, trackside equipment, and control centers. This research could involve developing adaptable and reconfigurable standardized communication interfaces able to cope with technology evolution, investigating the use of satellites in order to complement terrestrial communications systems, developing solution to minimize communication disruptions and maintain uninterrupted connectivity, particularly in areas with limited coverage or during high-speed train operations. The research should include investigating the use of sensor networks and new techniques for data collection and forwarding and exploring ways to integrate communication systems with existing railway infrastructure.

3.3.10 Cybersecurity

Address the unique cybersecurity challenges posed by railway communication systems. Investigate methods to secure wireless networks on trains, protect communication channels from unauthorized access, and ensure the integrity and authenticity of transmitted data. This research should also focus on developing intrusion detection and prevention mechanisms to safeguard critical railway infrastructure. Cutting edge solutions based on Block Chains and Edge computing concepts should be investigating to increase efficiency and energy saving of cybersecurity processes.

3.3.11 Seamless Handover and Roaming

Design communication systems that enable seamless handover and roaming for trains moving across different cellular networks or Wi-Fi hotspots. This research should aim to minimize communication disruptions and maintain uninterrupted connectivity, particularly in areas with limited coverage or during high-speed train operations.

3.3.12 Spectrum Allocation and Interference Mitigation

Investigate efficient spectrum allocation methods for railway communication systems, taking into account the increasing demand for wireless services. In collaboration with spectrum regulation bodies, explore robust and safe cognitive radio concepts and dynamic frequency allocation over Europe in order to allow trains to be able to access dynamically to larger frequency bandwidth when necessary for train operations.

Additionally, explore techniques to mitigate interference from other wireless systems, both within and outside the railway environment, to ensure reliable and interference-free communication.

3.3.13 Human-Machine Interfaces

Study human factors and user experience aspects of communication systems for railway personnel and passengers. Investigate intuitive and user-friendly interfaces, wearable technologies, and voice-based interaction methods to enhance communication, information dissemination, and emergency response capabilities.

3.4 Rolling stock

3.4.1 Locomotives

Developing more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly locomotive designs, exploring alternative propulsion systems. The following subsections are identified:

Energy Efficiency: Develop more efficient propulsion systems and explore alternative fuels.

Sustainability: Investigate electric, battery-electric, and hybrid locomotives. Integrate renewable energy sources.

Digitalization and Automation: Implement IoT, AI, and sensors for predictive maintenance and automated operations.

Safety and Collision Avoidance: Research collision avoidance systems, advanced signaling, and improved braking.

Materials and Design: Explore lightweight and durable materials for improved efficiency and durability, aerodynamics.

Rail Infrastructure Integration: Study rail dynamics, track condition monitoring, and optimize rail network layouts.

Interoperability and Standardization: Develop common standards for systems and communication protocols.

Human-Machine Interaction: Design user-friendly interfaces and improve operator training programs.

Cybersecurity: Focus on protecting critical systems from cyber threats as locomotives become more connected.

Regulatory and Policy Research: Assess the impact of regulations on locomotives and propose frameworks for innovation and sustainability.

3.4.2 Running Gear

Improving the performance and efficiency of running gear components, developing new materials, studying the sources of noise and vibration in running gear, assessing the impact of environmental factors, exploring the aerodynamic characteristics of running gear and the slipstream effects, developing measures to enhance stability, mitigate derailment risks, and improve the overall safety of train operations.

3.4.3 Passenger/Freight Car's body

Developing lightweight, durable car body designs, exploring materials for improved energy efficiency and crashworthiness, studying interior comfort and accessibility features, and investigating aerodynamic optimizations for reduced energy consumption.

3.4.4 Couplers and Buffers

Developing advanced coupler and buffer designs for safe and efficient train coupling, studying compatibility and interoperability between different coupling systems, exploring energy absorption technologies for enhanced safety, and investigating wear and maintenance issues.

3.4.5 Braking Systems

Developing advanced braking technologies for reliable and efficient train stopping, exploring regenerative braking for energy recovery and re-use optimization, studying braking performance under different operating conditions, and investigating maintenance and fault detection techniques for braking systems.

3.4.6 Electrical Systems

Developing efficient and reliable electrical systems for train operation, exploring advanced power distribution and management techniques, studying onboard energy storage systems, and investigating ways to enhance electrical system integration with other onboard systems.

3.4.7 On board Communication and Safety Systems

Developing advanced communication systems for seamless train-to-train and train-to-wayside communication, exploring enhanced train control and signaling technologies, studying safety systems such as automatic train protection and collision avoidance, and investigating cybersecurity measures for safeguarding communication systems.

To enhance rolling stock, allow easy maintenance and to cope with technology evolution, it is urgent to replace wired on-board communication network (TCMS) by a wireless reconfigurable solution (Wireless TCMS) allowing inter-consists and inter-carriage wireless communications, easy reconfiguration of train structure and network capacity adaptation thanks to the use of AI coupled with SDN and slicing techniques.

3.5 Freight and passenger services

3.5.1 Operations

Optimizing train scheduling and timetabling algorithms, studying operational efficiency and capacity management, exploring simulation and modeling techniques for operational planning, investigating ways to improve performance and reliability of services, and enhancing operational decision-making processes for planning and rescheduling to minimize the effect of disruptions. Search for transport services capable to maximize the decarbonization effect of rail mobility, both in passengers (e.g., high speed night train) and freight traffic (e.g., automation of marshalling and composition to compete in wagonload).

3.5.2 Ticketing and Fare Systems

Developing intelligent ticketing solutions, studying fare pricing and revenue management strategies, exploring mobile ticketing and contactless payment technologies, investigating

interoperability and integration of ticketing systems, and enhancing ticketing system security and fraud prevention.

3.5.3 Customer Service

Studying passenger behavior and preferences, exploring personalized travel experiences and passenger information services, investigating customer satisfaction and feedback mechanisms, developing service quality assessment tools, and enhancing accessibility and inclusivity for all passengers.

3.5.4 Safety and Security

Developing advanced safety and security technologies, studying risk assessment and mitigation strategies, exploring surveillance and monitoring systems, investigating emergency response and crisis management protocols, and enhancing cybersecurity measures to protect critical railway infrastructure.

3.5.5 Freight and Passenger Information Systems

Developing real-time information systems for passengers and freight operators, studying data integration and interoperability, exploring predictive analytics for operational decision-making, investigating dynamic routing and tracking technologies, and enhancing stakeholder communication and information exchange.

3.5.6 Regulatory Compliance and Standards

Studying regulatory frameworks and compliance requirements, exploring international standards and interoperability, investigating safety regulations and certification processes, developing guidelines for sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, and enhancing industry collaboration and knowledge sharing in regulatory matters.

3.5.7 Cross-operated, Cross-Borders and Cross Modals Services

Developing frameworks and procedures for seamless operations and service integration across different railway operators, borders, and modes of transportation. Creating integrated systems for real-time tracking, monitoring, and coordination of services using IoT, data analytics, and digital platforms. Optimizing freight routing, cargo handling, customs procedures, and documentation to streamline operations and enhance efficiency. Addressing regulatory barriers and establishing frameworks for seamless operations and legal alignment. Fostering collaboration among governments, railway operators, freight forwarders, and shippers to develop joint strategies and share resources to mitigate risks due to voluntary physical- or cyber-attacks without penalizing the efficiency of freight traffic and the comfort of passengers.

3.6 Externalities of railways

Rail system optimization significantly impacts railway externalities, both positive and negative. Optimization improves performance, efficiency, and sustainability, reducing traffic congestion,

air pollution, and energy consumption. Enhanced rail systems promote economic development, job creation, and social inclusion. To minimize negative externalities, optimization mitigates noise, vibration, negative impacts on biodiversity and land use. Optimization manages and mitigates negative externalities, maximizing positive implications for a sustainable and environmentally friendly transportation system at full lifecycle level, benefiting the industry and society.

4 Conclusive remarks and recommendations

This report presents the need for a comprehensive approach to optimize the European rail system. The Rail Research and Innovation Agenda (RRIA) sets the vision for sustainable multimodal mobility, with railways as the backbone. The concept of rail system optimization is pivotal to that, involving strategic enhancements in operations, infrastructure, technology, and sustainability. Key aspects include increasing capacity, reducing costs, integrating advanced technologies, and prioritizing environmental sustainability and safety.

To that aim continued investment in fundamental research and development, regulatory compliance, and standardization are essential for positioning railways as integral components of the transportation sector.

4.1 Recommendations

Based on the information provided in the report, here are some recommendations:

4.1.1 Adaptive Strategies for Monitoring and Enhancing Rail Research Programs:

Implement a dynamic and adaptive approach to monitor research necessities within the rail sector. Foster flexibility in the deployment of research programs, allowing for responsive adjustments based on emerging trends, technological advancements, and evolving needs. This adaptive strategy ensures that the rail industry remains agile in addressing current challenges, seizing new opportunities, and consistently advancing the optimization of the rail system.

4.1.2 Continued Investment in Research and Development:

Advocate for sustained investment in research and development to address fundamental aspects of the rail system, including infrastructure, electrification, control systems, rolling stock, freight, and passenger services.

4.1.3 Holistic Approach and Integration:

Encourage a holistic thinking approach where different railway subsystems are considered as cooperating and fully integrated entities. This approach helps in optimizing the rail system as a whole and discovering synergies between subsystems.

4.1.4 Allocation of Funds for Fundamental Research:

Emphasize the importance of allocating funds for fundamental research, particularly on topics

like the interaction between steel wheels and rails. Foundational research is crucial for long-term progress of rail research leading to advancing understanding and improving the efficiency of the rail transport system.

4.1.5 Technology Integration:

Advocate for the integration of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things (IoT), and data analytics, to enhance rail system optimization. These technologies enable predictive maintenance, real-time monitoring, and data-driven decision-making.

4.1.6 Environmental Sustainability:

Promote initiatives that align with the global imperative of sustainable development. Encourage the use of rail transport over individual vehicular transportation to reduce carbon emissions. Embrace eco-friendly technologies and practices to minimize the environmental footprint of rail operations.

4.1.7 Safety Enhancement:

Stress the importance of implementing advanced signaling systems, automated train control, and intelligent infrastructure to enhance safety measures within rail systems. Prioritize research and development efforts that contribute to mitigating the risk of accidents and improving overall safety standards.

4.1.8 Collaborative Research and Knowledge Sharing:

Promote collaborative research initiatives within the European railway community. Facilitate knowledge sharing and cooperation between different stakeholders, including industry players, research institutions, and regulatory bodies.

4.1.9 Adherence to Regulatory Compliance and Standards:

Emphasize the need for strict adherence to regulatory compliance and standards in the development and operation of rail systems. This ensures consistency, reliability, and safety across the entire rail network.

4.1.10 Capacity Building:

Invest in programs and initiatives that contribute to the capacity building of professionals involved in the rail industry. This includes training programs, workshops, and educational opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge of individuals within the sector.

4.1.11 Public Awareness and Support:

Promote public awareness of the benefits of rail transport and garner support for initiatives aimed at optimizing rail systems. Highlight the efficiency, sustainability, and inclusivity of railways in transportation.

5 Disclaimer

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