

## “A 10-Year Journey of service to the European Transport Research and Policy Communities”

Highlights of ECTRI’s path in the first 10 years of its life: 2003 – 2013

**By ECTRI President Prof. G. A. Giannopoulos**

Dear guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

*I feel particularly privileged today to be able to speak to you as current president of ECTRI – the European Conference of Transport Research Institutes – an Organisation that I helped found at the beginning of last decade and has stayed with it ever since. By some happy coincidence, which I cannot explain, I was the first president of ECTRI back in 2003 when it was instituted, as a non-profit French Association based in Lyon, in April 2003 and I am again its president now when it celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary as a Belgian Association based in Brussels.*

*I can see all these 10 years – and I am sure can also several of my colleagues in this room who were here from the beginning – passing in front of my eyes like a documentary. Successive achievements, highlights, and milestones that are all full of hard work and enthusiasm by many people, responsible for bringing ECTRI to its current status. A status of entering maturity and being right on course in fulfilling our vision of: “making ECTRI the leading European research Association for sustainable and multi-modal mobility”. This vision is gradually and systematically being reached as shown by the increase in membership from the original 15 or so, to 25 full members now representing more than 15 European countries and employing more than 4,000 researchers in the field of transport, and the increased role and influence of ECTRI in European transport research and European Transport policy formulation, as well as its international – global - status and activities in the relevant fields.*

*From the early stages of ECTRI’s creation, our main goal has been to base our activities on the work of **content oriented expert groups** that operated with human resources contributed from our members. While doing so, we strived to promote cooperation both inwards, i.e. within the membership structure of ECTRI, as well as outwards i.e. towards the European Commission, and other policy making Organisations like the ITF<sup>1</sup>, financial Organisations like the EIB<sup>2</sup>, and so on. Primarily, however, we have promoted cooperation with the other European transport research Associations as well as with transport research leaders at the international scene, like – most notably - the US/TRB, and others.*

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<sup>1</sup> ECTRI participated in the public consultations held to prepare the annual positions of the ITF that were devoted to “Seamless Transport” (2012) and “Transport Funding” (2013).

<sup>2</sup> ECTRI has provided an advice to the “European Investment Bank” on transport lending policy.

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*In 2004 ECTRI supported the creation of **four networks of excellence** in the field of transport research. Those networks now are incorporated into legal Associations which strengthen the scientific and technological excellence throughout Europe in four specific domains:*

- ❖ *vehicle passive safety research,*
- ❖ *railways research,*
- ❖ *human machine interaction and human factors, and*
- ❖ *traffic management and optimization.*

*We followed the approach of “content oriented working groups” with excellent results, and today we have in place a strong and effective mechanism for obtaining common positions as well as achieving scientifically sound and well documented solutions to transport problems, supported by the widest possible body of European scientific community. This “mechanism” is the “**ECTRI Thematic Groups**” (formerly “Thematic Working Groups”). The currently active ECTRI Thematic Groups were established in 2008 and are linked to the core scientific competences of ECTRI members. They serve the following areas:*

- A. Mobility** (*Understanding travel behaviour, Inter-modal aspects of urban mobility, Land-use and transport interaction*)
- B. Freight and Logistics** (*E-freight, Door-to-door freight transport and supply chains, Urban logistics, Terminals*)
- C. Economics and Policy** (*Policy analyses e.g. scenarios, foresights, Cost benefit analyses, Public Private Partnership, Pricing and externalities*)
- D. Safety** (*Behavioural adaption and change, Fitness to drive, Evaluation of policy initiatives, Ageing society, Injury data*)
- E. Security and Risk Analysis** (*Risk Analysis and Management, Critical infrastructures, Needs of users/ operators/ owners/ emergency services*).

*We also focused our attention from the early stages of ECTRI’s creation, in promoting the networking of existing research infrastructures starting with the compilation of an inventory of available “**research infrastructures**” in the ECTRI member Organizations. This inventory was reported in an 2005 report entitled: “ECTRI – Research Infrastructures survey results”. We followed on, with work in this area until today with highlight our participation in the EU funded DETRA project (Developing the European Transport Research Alliance) in which ECTRI helped to develop an on-line catalogue for European research infrastructures. Further to this, in just 2 days time, ECTRI co-organises with other partners of the European Transport Research Alliance, a one-day event devoted to the networking and cooperative use of European transport research infrastructures.*

*Increasing the excellence, and helping to shape the future face of European Transport research, has also been one of the highlights of ECTRI’s work these past 10 years. We see it as our main task and contribution to help create the ERA in the field of Transport (the ERA-T for short) and we have worked consistently along this goal through a number of activities and contributions of which I mention only the principal ones below:*

1. *ECTRI gave its full support to the EU French Presidency event organised in Lyon, in December 2008, by the then French Transport research Institute INRETS. In this event ECTRI together with 7 other Associations signed the so called ‘**Lyon Declaration**’,*

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- aimed at strengthening the cooperation between these Organisations and to extend this cooperation with other Organisations which are active in transport research*
2. *ECTRI has consistently contributed ideas to the relevant quarters in order to help define the most relevant and needed transport **research agendas** that can promote a truly integrative and multimodal transport system in Europe. ECTRI has put forward a number of more than 25 dedicated position papers describing its particular vision for an integrated, efficient, and sustainable European transport system<sup>3</sup>.*
  3. *Our individual members are major “players” and most valued “providers” of research capacity in an ever increasing number of transport research projects and programmes at National or European level. Taking EU funded research as an example, ECTRI members are partners in an average of 150 – 160 research projects every year, for the past 6 years.*
  4. *ECTRI together with other 4 Associations (EURNEX, FERSI, FEHRL, HUMANIST) created in September 2012, the **European Transport Research Alliance (ETRA)** with the prime goal to promote cooperation among these and other similar Associations towards achieving the ERA-T. The “Alliance” is already quite active and has put in place an ambitious 4-year plan of activities to achieve its goals.*

*In all the above avenues of activity, nothing is of course more important or more necessary for their fulfilment, than the “high quality European transport researcher” – our human resources. ECTRI has consistently worked to ensure the ‘promotion of human resources and mobility’ in the field of transport research, i.e. to help develop the new generation of transport scientists and to increase their skills and “employability”. Our goal has particularly been to improve the “transnational mobility”, networking, and ability to work in a multicultural and multidisciplinary context of our young researchers and in this sense we are proud that ECTRI initiated, in cooperation with FEHRL (the Forum of European National Highway Research Laboratories) and FERSI (the Forum of European Road Safety Research Institutes), the biannual **Young Researchers Seminar (YRS)**. This “Seminar” offers the opportunity to gather and interact with, in the form of dedicated workshops for 3 days, of a number of some 60 – 70 young transport researchers from members of the three cooperating Associations, and recently from research Organisations across the US through the active support of the US-TRB. During the Seminar, young researchers are able to improve their presentation skills in written and oral scientific communication by tutorial means and on a retroactive basis. Their tutoring is done by senior researchers who themselves are acting in a truly international scientific culture. So far 6 YRS’ have been held in: Lyon (2003), The Hague (2005), Brno (2007), Torino (2009), Copenhagen (2011) and Lyon (2013).*

*ECTRI has also been involved in the **Young European Arena of Research (YEAR)** competition associated with the TRA Conference, in both 2010 and 2012.*

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<sup>3</sup> For example, ECTRI has produced a position paper in response to the European Commission’s Communication on “**The Future of Transport**” (2009) and recommended some specific fields of action: “ foresights, technology assessment, an integrated approach to urban issues in view of CO2 reduction, inclusion of air travel (and tourism) in statistics and modelling robustness and adaptability of transport systems, behavioural aspects, economic effects on globalisation, especially on decoupling aspects”.

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*Through another medium, but always as part of our commitment to helping our research personnel, ECTRI has initiated and is continuously supporting the open access scientific journal in the field of transport, called: **European Transport Research Review (ETRR)**. Its development began by ECTRI in 2004 and its first publication was achieved in 2008. The ETRR is a multidisciplinary scientific journal dedicated to transport research and covering all fields of transport. The publisher is Springer.*

*Last but not least, I consider one of ECTRI's most valuable achievements these past 10 years, its success in representing European transport research at the international arena. Actually, we started promoting international transport research cooperation right from our beginning quite ahead of the current emphasis given to such activities by the European Commission and other governmental Organisations. In 2006, ECTRI formally signed an MoU of cooperation with the US/TRB in Washington DC, and ever since it cooperates with the TRB through specific biannual "Action Plans" composed and executed by both Organisations in cooperation. One of the outstanding results of this cooperation was the report "**EU/US Transport Research Collaboration: Challenges and opportunities**" issued in 2009 through the 2 year work of a working group of some 30 experts from both sides of the Atlantic. The report was very positively accepted by the research community in the US and the EU (and more widely) and it formed the basis of several international cooperation activities ever since. One of these, is the EU funded project EUTRAIN (European Transport Research Area International Cooperation Activities) which ECTRI coordinates and which is now putting forward its draft recommendations to the EU for future international cooperation activities and actually tomorrow holds here in Brussels its final Conference to present and further discuss these recommendations, to which you all are invited.*

*In all these years many individuals as well as Organisations have played a key role in ECTRI's success and I want to acknowledge a representative small number of them here, with a special word of thanks and appreciation for their contribution to bringing ECTRI to this milestone day today:*

*First, I wish to acknowledge the French Transport Research Institute IFSTTAR whose one of the predecessor Organisations, the INRETS, was the Organisation that initiated it all and invited us for the first meeting in Lyon back in 2001.*

*Central to the ECTRI initiative of INRETS was Jean-Pierre Medevielle the now retired deputy director general of IFSTTAR, who has also served as ECTRI Secretary for many years. Jean-Pierre is the man whose idea was ECTRI in the first place ...*

*Our secretariat is relatively small but still manages to deliver services to members across a wide spectrum, and I would like to acknowledge their significant contribution to the current success of ECTRI. From the very beginning ECTRI was fortunate to have as assistant Secretary a young lady who soon became a major contributing factor to ECTRI's success and who is now ECTRI's Secretary General. I refer to Mrs. Caroline Alméras who, also as head of ECTRI's permanent secretariat, is the true moving force of ECTRI. Of course many thanks and appreciation are also due to the other participants of ECTRI's secretariat especially Willy Diddens and Delphine Poiré.*

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*Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of ECTRI's past presidents namely Guy Bourgeois of IFSTTAR (who succeeded me to become the second President of ECTRI), and Christian Piehler of DLR the previous president.*

*Thank you all for being here!*

*Thank you all for supporting ECTRI!*

*See you here in our next 10 years celebration!*

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