

## Kristian Schmidt, Director Land Transport of DG MOVE

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### Wishing EIM a happy 20th birthday!

So it is 20 years! Sounds like a long time, but in a sector where most things go back a century at least and the assets you invest in today are likely to still be around in 2050, twenty is still really very young.

EIM's story is closely linked with the story of European rail policy. It was the idea of a Single European Rail Area that sparked the creation of EIM - the vision of a rail system in which independent infrastructure managers are a neutral player, dedicated to the smooth running of a highly performant rail network that is there to serve society, but not tied to any given operator. A system in which rail operators are allowed to compete with each other to offer better services for passengers and freight. A European rail area, in which infrastructure managers work together on questions like interoperability, capacity planning and charging so that trains can run seamlessly across borders. A system in which infrastructure managers are not afraid to compare their performance to learn from each other and build a common understanding of how to optimise networks.

EIM's ambition has not just been to influence EU-level discussions on rail policy, but to offer critical analysis and a place for its members to exchange on solutions, to bring in fresh ideas, to help to shape the new European rail area and make it work for people all over Europe.

20 years on, the European rail area is still work in progress, but we have come a long way: Between 2001 and 2016, four regulatory packages for railway transport have created an enabling legal framework at Union level by gradually opening up rail markets for competition, promoting interoperability of national railway systems, and offering the conditions for the development of a single European railway area, where competition and the harmonisation of rules aim to increase and to improve the market offer. Following the opening of domestic passenger markets to competition in 2020, we are beginning to see new services in a number of countries like Spain, Sweden, Germany and Italy – bringing more choice and more attractive offers to passengers. But many obstacles remain, making it difficult for trains to cross borders.

The challenges we are facing today – the need to decarbonise transport to make it greener, the need to become less dependent on fossil fuels, the need to provide affordable transport for large numbers of people – make rail an obvious solution. As we expect growing numbers of people and goods to go by train, the question how we manage our networks is becoming more pressing. With no capacity to spare, there is a strong need to digitalise and modernise the way capacity is planned and managed. Infrastructure managers will be the heart and soul of the single European rail area!

We wish EIM a happy birthday and look forward to continuing our common journey!



Kristian Schmidt is the Director for Land Transport at DG MOVE (European Commission).