

YOUNG RESEARCHERS SEMINAR 2005

Opening speech

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The Netherlands

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this Young Researchers Seminar (YRS 2005) in the Netherlands on behalf of the Steering Committee of this seminar and on behalf of the three organizations responsible for this seminar: ECTRI the European Conference of Transport Research Institutes, FERSI the Forum of European Road Safety Research Institutes and FEHRL the Forum of European National Highway Research Laboratories.

This is the third edition of an YRS. The first YRS was held in 2001 in Copenhagen and was organized by the Danish Transport Research Institute. If I remember correctly, our Danish colleagues, particularly Kurt Petersen, developed the concept of this seminar. It was an innovative idea to bring together a group of young or at least starting researchers in the field of road safety, to facilitate them on their first steps in the international arena, to allow them to start building their networks and to communicate with more senior and more experienced researchers who were assigned the role of tutor. I remember that first seminar as an interesting event.

This concept, initiated and developed by the Danes, was used again and somewhat adapted and improved for the second YRS in Lyon 2003. The tutor formula was improved and the field of interest was broadened because this time it was a joint effort by ECTRI and FERSI. And as a matter of fact the format for the present seminar was copied from the Lyon-seminar, mainly being developed by the French and the Danes. Back home I asked researchers from my own institute about their experiences. Very positive, very interesting, great opportunity was their response, and perhaps only one minor remark was made with some reluctance. They were told to follow a certain format in their presentations, to remain in their time frame and to present sheets or make Power Point presentations which could be read easily by the audience. In general terms they found that the young researchers performed well, but the tutors...

This Lyon seminar was not only considered very successful by its participants, but also made an important contribution to the creation and elaboration of the European Research Area by supporting young research professionals. Encouraging networking between starting professionals and more senior ones, and among the starting professionals themselves, coming from different environments, professional backgrounds, different cultures and countries, but with similar interests in research in the field of transport, also made the seminar a success.

This seminar in The Hague 2005 is not organized by two organizations, but by three: this time FEHRL also joined. The common vision of all three organizations ECTRI-FERSI-FEHRL is to prepare a new generation of scientists, working in the field of

transport, roads and safety in Europe and to create a group of science based professionals in the area of traffic and transport. All three organizations have a strong interest in the professional quality building of the employees of its members, especially the young researchers.

I also congratulate those who developed the model which we are using in this seminar: a close cooperation between senior staff, the tutors and the young researchers. Not only when reviewing their draft paper to this seminar, but also by supporting the young researchers, by moderating the session and by giving feedback after the presentation. In fact, this seminar is not just a normal conference looking for excellence, but also allows young researchers to develop their presentation skills. And the last component of this seminar is networking.

We prepared for you a full programme of about 60 papers to be presented, actively supported by 20 tutors. This is the moment to thank all tutors for supporting this event. Dear tutors, most of you are rather overloaded with work, inside your own institute but also with duties outside your institute. Most of you are rather active in the international arena as well. On behalf of the organizers I would express my gratitude to you for giving your valuable time, knowledge and expertise to our young researchers and to this event. We very much appreciate your efforts.

Having begun to express my thanks leads me automatically to the four keynote speakers. We shall start with my good Dutch colleague professor Bert van Wee who joined the Delft University of Technology some time ago on the chair Transport and Logistics. He shall introduce you to Dutch research on mobility. It is an interesting period for transport research in this country because we are facing enormous transport problems: large congestion problems on our roads, we face some poor maintenance of our transport infrastructure and, last but not least, our environmental problems related to transport. In order to comply with European legislation on pollution, our country can no longer build anything: no new industries, no residential areas, not even new roads or expand existing roads. Yesterday a new episode was written. A so-called 'polder-report' on road pricing in this country was published, trying to copy the London-model or to use the Oslo-approach to finance infrastructure. But Holland is Holland, and we have to do it our own way. And don't be afraid: politicians have the final word, also in this country.

Perhaps you didn't hear the problem of road safety when I listed our transport related problems. And, to say the least, that is remarkable for someone leading a research institute in this field. Well, the explanation is simple: in 2004 we already reached our road safety target for 2010 by a 20% reduction of fatalities compared with 2003. The French and the Italians, the Spaniards and the Irish had to put in a lot of effort to achieve their reductions. The mystery of our sudden decline is that we implemented hardly any new measures. Some interesting grounds for further research, I presume.

Later today we have Kurt Petersen from DTF as our keynote speaker and he will pay special attention to the Marie Curie programme, an outstanding possibility for our young researchers to work in other countries and work with colleagues from other countries. Hopefully, this programme will be as successful as the Erasmus programme for university students. By the way, an excursion is planned to Rotterdam: the city where Erasmus worked and lived.

On Thursday we have two more keynote speakers: first of all Rune Elvik, from Norway. He is not going to talk about how a political scientist can develop into a successful researcher. That task would be too demanding even for Rune. He is a prominent road safety researcher and some of you are familiar with his Norwegian road safety handbook. Sometimes people call that the bible. The response of our shy Rune is: if you consider that to be a bible, then you are speaking to God. But, besides being a very productive researcher himself, Rune has another important task as well: Rune is editor of the very respected journal *Accident Analysis and Prevention*. He took over the legacy of the famous Frank Haight. Rune will talk about how to write a successful paper or article for a peer-reviewed journal or conference.

The final speaker is from France: Marion Berbineau. The modest title of her presentation will be: how to be a successful researcher. In the meantime, I learned that she would focus somewhat: how to become a successful researcher in European projects.

Again, a word of thanks to these keynote speakers and I do hope you will all enjoy their presentations. All four speakers promised me to stick to their allotted time.

Although we have to wait until the end of our seminar before thanking the organizers of this event, I would like to use this opportunity to express my thanks to both the members of the Dutch organizing committee and to the members of the Steering Committee. The Dutch organizers are from the four Dutch institutes which are represented in ECTRI-FERSI-FEHL, and they are an example of the excellent cooperation between the four. You were able to organize this event in a really short period of time. If my expectations come true, which is what I expect, this will be a successful and remarkable seminar. The Steering Committee met for the first time today with an excellent Dutch breakfast. They did a great job by composing the menu we are going to digest in the coming days. We have one important task left for ourselves the coming three days. We have to shortlist the best three papers of the seminar and to choose the winning one of this event. It makes me nervous on your behalf. But, before finalizing my thanks, I have to mention one more name: Lucile Murier from INRETS and the ECTRI-secretariat. She is a very capable and supportive power behind the whole seminar.

Let me conclude. Recently I learned that the first Chinese motorcar can be bought in the Netherlands: the Landwind, produced by Jiangling Motors Corporation. Not a model developed by one of the well-known international brands, but a Chinese car, with components from all over the world, assembled in China. Cheaper than you think! You can buy this SUV for about € 17.000 in the Netherlands and when you buy this car in China it will cost you as little as € 2000. This illustrates the extent to which Europe has to compete with other parts of the world. We definitely are not cheaper than they are. They produce good products and at lower prices than we can ever do. And still, according to the Lisbon-strategy agreed upon in 2000, Europe wants to be the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy of the world. One of the so-called key-areas of this Lisbon-strategy is 'to expand and improve European infrastructure'. Europe only can only meet this goal if we mobilize all our intellect and creativity, if we foster our young intellectuals and researchers and if we create opportunities for research and developments in this 'old Europe'. We make our small

contribution by this seminar in the field of transport research. I hope this seminar will give inspiration and be a solid basis for excellent performances of you all in the future.

I wish all and everyone a successful, interesting and enjoyable seminar: in the formal sessions, during the breaks and at the social gatherings. I sincerely hope that all our young researchers will later in their careers remember this seminar as a positive, remarkable event, if not a turning point in their careers.