

The 2nd European Forum of Road Tunnel Safety Officers was successfully held in Brussels on 18 January 2012!

The EU Directive 2004/54/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum safety requirements for tunnels in the trans-European road network has created the position of Tunnel Safety Officer. This independent professional is in charge of coordinating all preventive and safeguard measures to ensure the safety of tunnel users and operational staff. After transposition of the Directive by EU Member States in 2004-2006, Safety Officers have been appointed throughout Europe and are now performing their tasks to improve road tunnel safety.

A first European Forum of Road Tunnel Safety Officers was held in Lyon in 2009 and gathered Safety Officers from 16 countries. Among other conclusions, it was wished that such forums should be held on a regular basis so as to help the Safety Officers perform the tasks and functions prescribed in the Directive.

This is the reason why ITA COSUF, together with the European Commission and PIARC (the World Road Association), organised a second European Forum of Road Tunnel Safety Officers, which took place in Brussels on 18 January 2012. This forum had been prepared by a devoted Activity Group (AG4) of ITA COSUF, which had convened several times since the first forum.

After the welcoming addresses of the European Commission, ITA COSUF and PIARC, three sessions were devoted to:

- Strategic issues regarding Tunnel Safety Officers' tasks and functions;
- Feedback from experience as a key issue to facilitate Safety Officers' activities;
- Tunnel safety inspections.

More than 40 Safety Officers from 18 European countries attended the forum and took part in the lively discussions which followed presentations by Safety Officers and experts of various countries. The forum was the opportunity for a wide exchange of points of views and practices from all over Europe and a new step to deepen the general approach, technical tools and organisational aspects of Safety Officers' activities.

Plans for the future were discussed. Although differences in the administrative context and daily practices were recognised between countries, it was recommended that the Activity Group (AG4) of ITA COSUF devoted to Safety Officers should continue its work in order to produce best practice documents aimed at facilitating Safety Officers' job. Further forums were wished to continue the exchange of experience and help maintain links at European level between Safety Officers, who are few in each country.

In their closure speeches, the representatives of the European Commission and ITA COSUF encouraged Safety Officers to continue their difficult but very important task to ensure safety in European road tunnels and take profit of the experience of European colleagues. They confirmed their wish to support further activities in this field.