

**Opening speech Sonja Sporstøl  
IRU Academy Driver competence Seminar  
28 January 2010, Brussels**

Good morning ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear Mr. President,

A warm welcome to Brussels and to today's IRU Academy Seminar on professional driver competence which is organised in partnership with CIECA. CIECA is delighted to be involved in this cooperation which highlights the increasing importance of professional driver training and competence worldwide. I am particularly pleased that Ms Canel from DGTREN can be with us.

CIECA, the International Commission for Driver Testing Authorities, and IRU Academy are a good match. CIECA represents expertise in driver training and testing and is setting and assuring standards throughout its 49 members in 40 countries. IRU, on the other hand, represents the goods and passenger transport sectors and its Academy ensures professionalism on the road. The two of them together ensure high standards and increase the safety on the road for all.

CIECA's members are emerging from busy times in terms of implementing legislation, new assessments and operating systems for training and testing of professional drivers. Not all CIECA members are responsible for the "Certificate of Professional Competence" CPC required by the Directive 2003/59 EC. But many of them are. There was a big rush to ensure all systems for initial training were in place for bus and coach drivers by September 2008 and another final spurt around the same time last year to put in place, if not already done, the last adjustments for drivers of goods vehicles.

CIECA's workshop on CPC for bus and coach drivers in December 2008 allowed for a first exchange of experiences and addressing of crucial questions raised so far in the process. I would like to invite you to continue this exchange at this excellent opportunity today.

On the European level the Directive 2003/59 EC was designed both to improve road safety and to improve the competence of professional drivers, which also reflects the core aims of CIECA. And also across the borders of Europe the continuous information exchange between the CIECA members and other parties enables learning from each other and contributes to the creation of solid best practise examples.

With an increase in the mobility of persons and goods travelling throughout different countries it becomes also increasingly important to work together on road safety starting from the same basic values and standards. This is where driver testing comes in – a solid test comprising a mix of theoretical and practical assessments, valid and reliable, that ensures that all have reached the required standard. This is why it is crucial to continue working towards shared high quality standards for testing. That establishes the context for good quality training across the syllabus. Appropriate training can also address aspects which are difficult to test – such as elements related to the personal habits and characteristics.

We will start off this morning with a global perspective on driver competence and the views of the European Commission.

We will also hear some case studies on the different training and testing models in place in the CIECA member countries of Croatia, France, Great Britain and Lithuania which will show quite well the different approaches and also provide you with the opportunity to get insight in the proceedings of a Non-EU member country.

Preceding this workshop, CIECA carried out a survey amongst its members about the different training and testing models for professional drivers applied in the European Union. I am sure it will be interesting for you to hear the results later on this morning. Evidence-based arrangements are a key to successful delivery. All of us represented in this room – CIECA, IRU, our members, the Commission – have a common interest in good information and good research.

We know from experiences in our own countries as well as from the exchange with other members that the financing of driver education is not always easy and costs can be an issue. It will therefore be interesting to hear more about the different financing models for professional driver education this afternoon and to see how modern technologies can contribute.

Finally, to conclude with, I would like to remind you that competence and professionalism are two crucial elements of road safety and therefore two elements we should constantly seek to achieve on the highest level possible.

I am delighted to see so many of you today contributing with your participation to the discussion of competences for professional drivers and helping to improve road safety for all.

I would like to wish you a very productive and pleasant day.