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FEHRL's fifth SERRP to drive road transport in the 21st century

Today FEHRL launches its fifth Strategic European Road Research Programme (SERPP V) for 2011-2016, which tackles the research and innovation challenges facing the road and transport system now and in the future. This programme details the technical issues as well as the programming and instruments for delivery. SERRP V considers implementation, international cooperation and multi-modality. A core element is Forever Open Road, a revolutionary concept to produce the fifth generation road.

Research and innovation challenges

In these times of austerity, many road authorities across Europe and indeed globally are facing ever tougher challenges to cope with the needs to accommodate increased traffic growth, minimise congestion and maintain services in the face of increasing climate change effects, as well as deliver on environmental and societal objectives. This is the time when innovation for road infrastructure is absolutely essential. We cannot continue to allow our road networks to degrade to the level that they become a limiting factor to the continent's growth. SERRP V sets out the core challenges and the solutions, addressing the needs from the perspective of national and European stakeholders.

Technical issues addressed with Forever Open Road

SERRP V reflects the technical and policy needs for road infrastructure to become a key asset to a competitive Europe and puts forward methods of delivering the needed research and innovation. With four phases of SERRP complete, the fifth features at its core the Forever Open Road programme which provides a truly inspiring vision for how roads will be built, operated and maintained.

Forever Open Road will enable the next generation of roads that is capable of meeting demands on the reliability, availability, maintainability, safety, environment, health and cost of road operations. The Forever Open Road is **adaptable, automated and climate change resilient**; based upon a concept for building and maintaining roads that can be applied whether motorway, rural or urban, and regardless of region or country. The programme will result in a portfolio of innovative solutions that are proven in practice and that are 'ready to implement'.

So far, Forever Open Road has been developed into a concrete plan featuring roadmaps and detailed implementation milestones that will be achieved through a combination of:

- current best practice in construction and technology (to be disseminated by 2013),
- transfer of technologies and methods from other sectors (to be enabled by 2016),
- use of early stage and emerging techniques and products (to be enabled by 2020), and
- new research into technologies and products (to be enabled by 2025).

Programming and instruments for delivery

In the past, many well-established instruments have been used to carry forward research. In the future, the scale of effort that will be required will increase considerably. For this reason, new approaches will need to be developed. These will include the further development of FEHRL's role in a programming capacity as well as a larger role in the Public-Private partnerships (PPP) established between the European Technology Platforms and the European Commission.

Implementation, international cooperation and multi-modality

In addition to Forever Open Road, SERRP V details greater research cooperation between experts in all transport sectors and gives greater attention to a broader range of infrastructure topics in both transport and other sectors. Considerable emphasis will also be placed on knowledge transfer and the implementation of innovation by field testing the proposed solutions in every practice of road operations, in close cooperation and collaboration with our stakeholders.

Background to FEHRL

Formed in 1989 as the Forum of European National Highway Research Laboratories, FEHRL is a registered international association comprising more than 40 national research/technical centres. Associates from non-European countries provide FEHRL with strong links to the considerable research capacity available globally. With a permanent Secretariat based in Brussels, FEHRL is directly governed by the General Directors of the national road research institutes and laboratories.

Through the specification and delivery of research, FEHRL's main objectives of FEHRL are to:

- Provide scientific input to European and national government policy on road engineering and road transport matters.
- Create and maintain an efficient and safe road network in Europe.
- Increase innovation in European road construction and road-using industries.
- Improve the energy efficiency of road engineering and operations
- Protect the environment and improve the quality of life.

For more information on FEHRL, see <http://www.fehrl.org> and for the Forever Open Road programme see <http://www.foreveropenroad.eu>.

Background to SERRP

Since 1993, FEHRL has developed an ongoing Strategic Road Research Programme (SERRP) defined by a series of detailed implementation plans. SERRP I was launched to ensure that many of FEHRL's research topics were pursued with the assistance of the EU RTD Framework Programme and the COST Programme. This was followed by the preparation of SERRP II and III in consultation with the Conference of European Directors of Roads (CEDR) – one of FEHRL's main stakeholders – and the industry. This longer-term approach was adopted in SERRP IV for 2006-2011. SERRP IV was also a major part of FEHRL's contribution to the strategies of the European Road Transport Research Advisory Council (ERTRAC) and the European Construction Technology Platform (ECTP).

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