

# Meet the new President of ERF

**A**t its annual plenary meeting held on 25 May 2010, during the 16th IRF World Meeting in Lisbon, the European Road Federation (ERF) elected a new President in the person of Jacobo Díaz Pineda.

Mr. Díaz Pineda has been the Director General of the Spanish Road Association (AEC) since September 2006, and is also President of the Ibero-American Road Institute (IVIA). We took advantage of his presence in Lisbon to ask him a few questions about his new responsibilities:

## *What do you see as the main objectives and challenges for your mandate?*

"Whilst from an economic perspective we are bound to face difficult situations during the next two years, it will also be a period of fruitful work and ambition. In particular, we need to identify our action lines for the future.

First of all, road transport must continue to evolve in a manner that ever more corresponds to the needs and aspirations of users. In this respect, our sector must offer high quality services for all, confront new energy challenges and also improve safety.

Secondly, European companies need to internationalise their activities, as well as tap into new markets to provide knowledge and



technologies. Technology sharing of is one of the core elements of ERF's activity.

Finally, research efforts need to be boosted and ERF's position as a leading reference in the field of European roads consolidated."

***You allude to the economic downturn. How can the road industry boost economic growth?***

"We need to focus our efforts on two key aspects: road maintenance and new Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

European roads have evolved over recent years as a result of greater investment by governments. If, however, levels of maintenance fail to keep pace, the benefits will be compromised and eventually eroded. In the current climate, we cannot allow roads to deteriorate. Given prevailing economic realities, it is necessary to search for new formulas to finance both the construction and maintenance of roads. Whilst we have all the necessary cutting-edge technologies at our disposal, we are confronted with an unprecedented economic crisis that is severely limiting the financial possibilities of public administrations. This calls for the emergence of new PPP mechanisms to fill the funding gap, and cover dimensions that public institutions are no longer in a position to satisfy alone."

Finally, it is important to emphasise that roads represent the most universal transport mode, and complement all others. We need to warn governments about the dangers of inadequate investment in road infrastructure. While seemingly cheaper in the short-run, decisions that fail to take into account this dimension can turn out to be more expensive in the medium to long term."

***The European Commission will be launching a White Paper on Transport at the end of the year. What are your views?***

"In my opinion, it is necessary to analyse all transport modes together, in a holistic manner. In previous years, some countries have tended to put different modes in competition with each other rather than seek integration. Economic analyses have been undertaken unilaterally with respect to each mode, rather than consider them all together.

The White Paper needs to lay out the social and economic benefits of transport within an overall perspective, and without putting the different modes in competition. Mobility must serve citizens and, in this context, we need to identify the best combinations between different elements of transport systems. Once we know how to get to this point, we can talk meaningfully about true co-modality, where roads can be considered as a tool to integrate all transport modes."

***You will share your new role as President of ERF with ongoing responsibilities with other influential organisations linking Europe and South-America. What will be your strategy to extend EU good practices in the domain of roads?***


"The ERF was created to focus on Europe. For me, it is an honour to hold in parallel the

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Presidency of the ERF and that of the IVIA. With the support of the new Board, I will endeavour to seek new market opportunities to develop our European infrastructure. The possibility of working closely with the American continent is very interesting for the European Union (EU). Similarly, many steps taken by the EU are focused on the Americas.

Furthermore, we enjoy excellent relations between the two continents and this can pave the way for economic exchanges, and opportunities to tap into each other's respective markets. The Ibero-American region is a very interesting business area for many of our members so we will try to improve our action line there. Also, we should not forget about the possibility of expanding relations with African countries, using notably existing good relations with the Portuguese Road Centre (CRP).

We have to set ourselves a real and affordable internationalisation strategy for the coming years. Once this has been achieved, we need to focus our efforts in those countries where we consider that our members can provide an added value." ■




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