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Three EU projects link transport infrastructure research with Central and Eastern Europe: CERTAIN.



The European project CERTAIN facilitated integration of the EU New Member States (NMS) and other Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) into the established research and development community of the European Union. The main objectives of the project were to create a platform for exchanging future technologies of the road infrastructure industry, particularly those dedicated to the New Member States: SPENS on pavements and ARCHES on highway structures. CERTAIN reinforced links with stakeholder in NMS and CEEC by organising workshops and providing project deliverables in multiple languages, as well as organising training courses for

research project managers, promoting more efficient incorporation of partner's in future European research.

Greater integration of the NMS and CEEC into the European R&D, the ERA (European Research Area), and better implementation of road research require more active participation from these countries in international research activities. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia have contributed to European research activities in the area of road transport, however, at the start of this project, none had held the role as Project Coordinator. Many of the NMS and CEEC countries have not had adequate support or funding to successfully deliver large multinational projects. To facilitate this obstacle, three clustered STREP (Specific Targeted Research Projects) proposals on road materials, pavements and structures were prepared by the national road research institutes of three NMS, partnering with FEHRL – The Association of National Road Research Institutes. This developed into the projects now known as CERTAIN, ARCHES, and SPENS.

CERTAIN – Central European Research in Transport Infrastructure, is a Coordination Action funded by the Directorate-General for Research under its *Sustainable Surface Transport* priority, of the European Community's Sixth Framework Programme. The project consisted of four European partners, running over a period of 4-years. It began on 1 July 2006. The final seminar of the CERTAIN project took place in Brussels, Belgium, on 10 June 2010 in the framework of the Transport Research Arena 2010. The assembly was organized around different workshops, reports, and presentations of the projects developments from the past four years.

The main contributions from CERTAIN consist of the Project Management courses, provided by experienced project and industry leaders to train and better prepare NMS and CEEC country institutes to lead research projects. Participants were therefore primarily from the NMS and CEEC. These courses encouraged the joint development of proposals with peers from Western European countries and accelerate integration into European RTD activities.

Language poses an additional obstacle for efficient transferring and dissemination of European research results. CERTAIN condensed this barrier by providing workshops in Estonian, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Czech, and Polish; attracting interested end-users from these countries. A multi-lingual internet platform to foster and organise clustering and knowledge sharing was prepared to support cohesion and promote excellence. From this platform, the FEHRLopedia was developed to support this objective by providing a common place for dissemination and exploitation of results of clustered projects in many different languages.

The FP6 projects SPENS, ARCHES, and CERTAIN form a cluster worth almost 7 million EUR, tackling the measures necessary to reduce the gap between the levels of road infrastructure systems in the NMS and other CEEC. The results of ARCHES (Assessment and Rehabilitation of Central European Highway Structures) consisted of guidelines and solutions for a more cost-efficient, rapid, and sustainable management of highway structures, including bridges, viaducts, underpasses. The implementation of the ARCHES results aims to reduce the number of unnecessary interventions (repairs / replacements) of highway structures, shortening the time necessary for rehabilitation measures, providing longer-lasting repairs, and therefore strengthening deteriorated or obsolete structures.

The SPENS (Sustainable Pavements for New Member States) project developed materials and technologies for road pavement construction and rehabilitation that behave satisfactorily in typical climates of NMS and CEEC. The new technologies have an acceptable environmental impact, are easy to incorporate within existing technologies, and are cost-effective, while being easy to maintain.

These three projects together, have assisted in enabling partners from NMS and CEEC, to play a much more active and predominant role in the future of European research activities, as a result, narrowing the gaps in future participation and integration of the EU NMS and other CEEC.

Additional information is available on the project website: <http://certain.fehrl.org/>

Link to the FEHRLopedia: <http://www.fehrl.org/fehrlopedia>

The website contains documentation available for download by visitors. These include CERTAINS public deliverables, other project reports, project presentations, invitations to CERTAIN events, promotional material, and newsletters.

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