



Opening words: Jean Pierre Loubinoux, UIC Director-General

Ladies & gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the International Union of Railways for the official launch of this European research project, SAFER LC as you refer to it amongst yourselves, the acronym standing for Safer Level Crossings.

We are gathered here today in the "house of rail", an organisation made up of 240 railway companies from across the world: they in turn represent 7 million railway employees who work to serve 7 billion customers, our common goal being to develop and further railways as the most secure, safe and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

Since its founding, UIC has inevitably focused on matters technical and technological, but continues to evolve and remains open to new realities. Rail transport's high levels of safety and security are part of its appeal as the sustainable transport mode of choice for our planet, on condition that rail is able to constantly challenge itself, update its requirements, and upskill.

Safety and security are not things tacked on at the end of the process: they are part and parcel of both the operation of rail transport and its efficiency, assuming they are integrated appropriately into the transport service from the design phase on.

Alongside and in sync with the development of international skills, training and research, safety and security are part of what we here call the "fundamental values" of rail, which serve and support the technical work of the rail system, passenger and freight transport departments.

These fundamental values lie at the heart of the SAFER LC project, and I would like to thank in particular all the members of the consortium for being here today and for the work you have done both individually and collectively, which has been coordinated by the UIC Security team and which has made today possible - despite the fierce competition between projects in the 2016 transport call on "Transport infrastructure innovation to increase the transport system safety at modal and intermodal level".

The consortium is a strong one, with five partners having already participated in the RESTRAIL project, plus a number of other expert partners from road transport and the field of smart transport.

The RESTRAIL project's ultimate output was a toolbox of the most effective counter-measures in combating suicide and trespassing on railway property. The project closed in September 2014, but since then UIC has continued to maintain and update the toolbox. Some of our members have asked us for a presentation of it with a view to making frequent use of it: there can be no better endorsement of the quality of your work! RESTRAIL did not address level crossings since it focused on the railways' primary concern in terms of fatality numbers.

To give you an order of magnitude, 4 000 people die on the roads each year in France, whereas 400 die on the railway due to suicide or trespass, 40 are killed in level crossing accidents, 4 are killed in workplace accidents on railway property, and only 0.4 in passenger accidents.

It was therefore logical that, having dealt with the primary cause of fatalities on railway property, we then address the second, i.e. deaths at level crossings, and I have no doubt that the results of SAFER LC will more than live up to the standard set by RESTRAIL.

However, level crossing accidents need to be seen for what they are, and seen in the round: despite often being viewed as rail accidents at first sight, they are first and foremost road accidents which occur at a critical, sensitive part of the network. The SAFER LC project takes an exemplary approach in this respect, since it stresses the need for the rail and road systems to share information and data so that each party can manage disruptions caused by the other in optimum fashion: this balance should be emphasised.

To round off on the subject of level crossings, allow me to take this opportunity to remind you all of the 9th edition of ILCAD ("International Level Crossing Awareness Day"). This year's event will take place on 2 June in Montreal and will be organised by the UIC Safety team and the Railway Association of Canada (RAC).

The week after, from 6 - 9 June UIC will host the third "UIC Security Week", at which the Security team and partners will present to UIC members the outcomes of the additional security work programme they undertook in 2016 to strengthen security cooperation in response to the growing threats I need not elaborate upon further: in this context, too, practical tools will offer everyone the benefits of other partners' chosen solutions or responses. That way, everyone can learn from others' experience, which is the purpose of the cooperation we foster at UIC.

Today, this cooperation is both internal, i.e. between the various UIC departments concerned, and external, since we have non-railway members in the consortium.

This is all the more important given the railways' need to take on board their environment and the risks or threats that can arise from it, and pooling internal AND external skills is vital for progress and success.

It is vital because, the bureaucratic aspects of a European research project aside, the task is to future-proof the railways. It is today, in projects like these, that we will ready ourselves to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

I shall now leave you to get on with the nitty-gritty of the project work, and am certain that today's kick-off meeting will be an auspicious start to a project whose importance in terms of human lives - because lives are at stake here - and in economic terms - because our companies owe their customers reliability and punctuality - must be stressed.

I wish you every success in your work, and thanks for your involvement!