

Recommendations for planning and carrying out PIARC Seminars

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By
Michèle Cyna, Member of the C3 (France)
and
Patrice Retour, PIARC

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Aims and use of this guideline

The following recommendations are particularly intended for Chairpersons and Secretaries of PIARC Committees and Working Groups. They aim to convince them of the desirability of organising seminars in conjunction with certain plenary meetings of their Committees or Groups and to give them some advice for this purpose.

Basic principles

In 1992-1993, during the preparatory phase of the Strategic Plan that was to be adopted by the World Road Association in 1995, it was stressed that PIARC's visibility was rather limited, apart from the high points formed by the World Congresses and Winter road Congresses. Three years later, PIARC still appears

as a relatively closed "club".

The seminar format enables a public interested in a well-defined subject to come together for a limited period (generally between one and three days). For the Committee, and further, for PIARC, the main aim of seminars is to improve the dissemination of information to a wider public; and above all in return, to better stimulate exchanges of experience with countries in the region where the seminar is organised. Incidentally, when the objective is to discuss an interim report, the seminar may increase the number of people consulted and thus eventually form a better basis for the Committee's final report.

In more prosaic terms, we only have to calculate all the expenditure incurred by a single plenary meeting of a Committee or Working Group (salaries, participants' travelling and living expenses, preparation and interpretation expenses, etc.) to be satisfied of the advantages of optimising this expenditure and enabling more people to benefit from it. The Committee or Working Group meetings would soon become very difficult to manage, if not impossible, if they had to be opened up to everybody. But because of the hermetic nature of these meetings, there is a risk of users' needs not being identified closely enough through being based on a limited number of opinions: those of the Committee members alone. This is why the openness generated by the seminar is beneficial, especially if it enables nationals from developing countries or those in transition to make themselves heard.

Seminars are particularly appropriate for exchanges with developing countries and those in transition because these are precisely the countries with the greatest difficulties in regularly sending representatives to the Committee meetings. As they do not participate - or not enough - in the meetings of the PIARC Committees and Working Groups, their points of view are all too often not known and in fact scarcely or not at all taken into account in the work of the Committee.

Aims of the seminar

Besides the above general aims, each seminar will have a specific aim that will depend on the period in which it is organised in the Committee's work cycle between two World Congresses. The aim in the preparatory work stage will be to identify needs on the seminar theme and to validate the work schedule; in the development stage it will be to perfect the result; and in the final stage to better ensure its dissemination.

Selecting seminar themes

The selection of the theme is the key to a successful seminar. It is essential that the themes should have a mobilizing capacity and an obvious interest that will induce people outside the organising Committee to attend the seminar.

The seminar theme must be chosen to be directly linked to the work programme

of the organising committee. The seminar must give all its participants an opportunity to express themselves, and must not be in the form of a lecture. Particular importance will therefore be given to topics of current interest giving rise to research, or technological or institutional changes, on which exchanges of experience are constructive for all the participants and contribute to the specific Committee objective.

Choice of the host country

The host country will have a major task, therefore it cannot be chosen on a solely voluntary basis. The selection criteria are as follows:

- The country will be a volunteer;
- It should have a particular interest in the seminar theme, either because it carries out research or is making very advanced changes in the relevant field, or on the contrary, because it wishes to initiate changes and to gather information from the rest of the world before its starts;
- It should have the physical capacity to organise a seminar.

The countries which help PIARC to prepare the seminar gain a benefit from it because they can take this opportunity to put a large number of their nationals in contact with foreign experts who are Committee members. This advantage is broadened to the entire region if neighbouring countries, which share the same language and/or needs as the host country, also send participants. For the venue, as far as possible, priority must be given to those regions where PIARC is scarcely present, if at all.

The selection of the theme initially defined by the Committee may be slightly modified to adapt to specific objectives of the host country. However, it is important that such adjustments are not prejudicial to the interest of the seminar for the participants.

The choice of date must take account of the minimum time required for preparing and, above all, giving notice of the seminar. This time requirement is six months to enable the press and other information channels to give notice, but it is recommended to determine the place and date one year ahead.

Planning the seminars

A seminar organisation committee (formal or informal) must be set up. It will include: members of the PIARC Committee or Working Group, members from the host country (PIARC National Committee where it exists) and possibly a representative of the Secretariat General (for seminars that are the most complicated to organise).

PIARC must seek to improve co-operation with related organisations. Seminars

provide good opportunities for this. They may be included in a more large-scale event (organised by others) or form a specific joint event. The seminar organisation committee will take such partnerships into account.

The seminar organisation committee may work as follows:

- Identify work sequences that will enable the specific seminar objective to be met. The overall architecture of the seminar will be built up first. Then the seminar will be divided into more detailed sequences. The objective will be defined for each sequence.
- Choose one or more speakers and/or moderators for each sequence. The speaker must be capable of meeting the objective of the sequence. It must also be ensured that speakers of different nationalities are chosen. Contributors from developing countries or those in transition must be encouraged. It is preferable to make provision for several possible speakers for each sequence, so as to have alternatives if the speaker originally chosen is not available on the seminar date. If the round table formula is decided for some sequences, a moderator will be designated. A member of the organisation committee will often be the most suited to this role. It is preferable to choose moderators with an adequate command of French and English. The overall chairing of the seminar will be performed by an organisation committee member or by a chairperson internationally known for his role in connection with the seminar theme.
- Contact each proposed contributor. Each contributor can be contacted by the organisation committee member by whom he was suggested or by a member who knows him personally. In some cases, contact can be made by the host country organisation. To facilitate this work, the organisation committee will appoint a secretary from its membership, who will co-ordinate replies and adapt the programme according to the acceptances or refusals of the contributors.
- Validate the final programme after iteration. When the name of each of the contributors is known, the organisation committee will check that the programme is consistent with the general PIARC aims and with the specific aims of the seminar.

To limit travelling abroad, the organisation committee will meet together during the meetings of its PIARC Committee of origin and will use the customary communication methods to inform its members between meetings. Preference will be given to electronic mail, which enables copies to be sent easily to all its members. A physical meeting of the organisation committee is preferably for the first two stages, which are usually dealt with during the same meeting. The two subsequent stages can be accomplished without a meeting.

Physical organisation and financing

The expenditure items are as follows:

- time taken to plan the seminar
- time taken to manage the physical execution of the seminar
- reception of the participants
- printing of the circular for notice of seminar and the registration form
- printing of specific documents to be given to the participants
- hiring a room
- simultaneous interpretation
- social expenses (technical visits, meals).

The seminar budget, established by the organisation committee, must be balanced. It must allow for the distribution of any variance (deficit or surplus) at the end of the operation. The organisation committee members usually make their time available to organise the seminar on an unpaid basis. The host country is responsible for the time spent on the physical organisation and reception of the participants and makes a room available free of charge. This room can also be in a hotel . The choice of the venue must take accessibility into account (particularly by plane).

If the various organisations involved in the organisation committee do not cover all the costs, the participants must be asked to contribute. The charge should not be more than 100 euros or 100 USD per day. It can be varied according to the origins of the participants (representatives of developing countries, PIARC members, etc.). The number and identification of the persons exonerated from the registration fee must be determined in advance by the organisation committee.

Special Fund

The PIARC Special Fund can cover transport or living expenses of participants from developing countries or those in transition (those with a GNP/inhabitant lower than 3,100 USD per year), on the basis of one participant per country, subject to the agreement of the First Delegate, or his/her equivalent if the country of origin is not a PIARC member.

Seminar action **follow-up**

To contribute more effectively to PIARC's reputation, there must be follow-up to these seminars, at least in written form. This follow-up may be in the form of autonomous publications such as articles in national magazines, articles in Routes/Roads, records of the seminar. When the aim of the seminar is to validate Committee recommendations, the seminar must be mentioned in the Committee's final report.

These seminars can also provide an opportunity to create regional associations

between several countries in the host country's regions, or associations on roads in general or on the specific seminar theme.

In some cases, these seminars may result in the organisation of a complete work programme on the seminar theme.

Conclusion

Seminars, symposia and other workshops provide good opportunities for the PIARC Committees and Working Groups to:

- promote exchanges of experience between countries, whether or not they are PIARC members,
- enabling non member countries of PIARC to be involved in their work by causing the proposals of the Committees' final reports to be validated or adjusted.
- share the results of their work,
- collaborate with other international organisations.

Each Committee or Group should be invited by the PIARC Executive Committee during the 2000-2003 period, to organise at least one seminar, preferably in a developing country or a country in transition.

Examples of seminars

In the past, several Committees (C1, C8, C10, etc.) have organised special sessions during the annual meeting of the TRB (Transportation Research Board), which is held in January each year in Washington. The formula is interesting because it enables interchange between the PIARC Committee and many North-American experts. The TRB programme is decided in August each year. The necessary steps must therefore be taken one year ahead.

C1 (Surface Characteristics) has introduced a series of international symposia on Surface Characteristics (State College 1988, Berlin 1992, Christchurch 1996, Nantes 2000, etc.). Each of them is organised in close collaboration with national bodies (ASTM, Forschungsgesellschaft für Strassen und Verkehrswesen, Austroads, PIARC French National Committee).

C3 (Technological Exchanges and Development) took advantage of the meetings in Manchester (1997) to organise a seminar in Birmingham, with the British National Committee, on the needs of developing countries. This seminar took place the day before the Manchester meetings. With funding shared between PIARC and the United Kingdom, several representatives of English-speaking Africa benefited from aid (Special Fund). This aid enabled several of them to subsequently participate in PIARC Committee meetings.

To further the consolidation of ADAR (Association of African road directors), France and PIARC joined forces for a seminar on rural tracks organised in Rabat

by the PIARC Moroccan National Committee (1997). A similar operation was again undertaken in 1998 in Morocco for the General Assembly of WIN (World Interchange Network) in conjunction with the C3 plenary meeting. In November 1998, in Zimbabwe, C3 held a plenary meeting preceded by a seminar organised jointly with the ASIST programme (Advisory Support, Information Services and Training) of the International Labour Organisation. On this occasion, co-operation was sought with SADC (Southern African Development Community) which brings together the countries of southern Africa.

C3 organises seminars on rural roads (Netherlands, 1987, Romania, 1994, Poland, 1998) jointly with CIGR (International Commission on Agricultural Engineering).

C8 (Flexible Roads) has organised a seminar to discuss the wording of a report prepared by C8 on modified binders (Rome, June 1998, 300 participants). This seminar was original in that only the registered participants received the interim report before the seminar. A call for papers accompanied the operation (reactions to the interim report). Two circulars were issued. Financing was entirely managed by the PIARC Italian National Committee. The seminar fees amounted to around 350 USD, (+23% for late registration). Private Italian companies participated in the financing.

C7 (Concrete Roads) has a long tradition of co-operation with CEMBUREAU (European Cement Association). At the 8th CEMBUREAU Symposium, (Lisbon, 1998), as before, C7 has ensured a very strong presence of PIARC.

C12 (Earthworks, Drainage, Subgrade) has organised the first International Symposium on Internal Drainage of Pavements and Capping Layers (Grenada, Spain, 1998).

C14 (Environment) has organised with OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) a seminar on the Environment (Helsinki, 1998).

The G2 Working Group (Natural Disasters) is organising a series of three seminars in 1997-1999, to present and discuss the report it drew up for the Congress of Montreal. One seminar took place in India (New Delhi, 1997), the second in Turkey (Istanbul, 1998) and the third will be held in Colombia (Cartagena, 1999). REAAA (Road Engineering Association of Asia and Australasia), Japan and the PIARC Special Fund have joined forces for the seminar in New Delhi. For the Istanbul seminar, IUTA (International Union of Technical Associations and organizations) has been contacted so that both seminars (one specific to roads, the other more general) can be organised in concert.