

Road Asset Management Congress (KZID) in Warsaw from 4-5 December 2019

Opening speech by Dr. Sławomir Heller, founder of INFRAMA



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

This congress – the very fact that it is taking place and attracting so much interest – is another stage victory. It is about nothing less than efficiently managing the assets frozen in the national and local road infrastructure. It is about a management that always keeps the needs and expectations of society and the economy in mind. And all this in times of increasingly complex

decision-making environments, changing external conditions and new threats.

The discipline that supports us in this process is asset management. It was established at the beginning of our century as a response to the new challenges that infrastructure managers around the world are increasingly facing. So, let us use the full range of methods and tools that asset management has to offer.

However, I would like to warn you not to misunderstand the nature of this new discipline. Asset management is neither a pavement management system nor any other planning tool. It is indeed, and not just because of the name, about management. It is a discipline that focuses on the organization.

So, when we hear about asset management outside the organizational context and only in terms of technical or economic solutions, it is not asset management. This new approach, which evaluates every technical solution from the perspective of the respective organization, has opened up incredible new perspectives in recent years - and the potential of this new approach is enormous.

However, to be able to use this potential optimally, people are needed. People who combine engineering knowledge with management skills. Who understand the goals of the organization and its limitations. People who are ambitious, innovative and open to new challenges. In other words: we need asset managers.

The Polish road infrastructure, like all highly developed economies in the world, urgently needs such people. This was a decisive argument for us to establish the Infrastructure Asset Management Academy, INFRAMA for short.

Some people claim that these asset managers are a new type of engineers that the highly developed economies of the 21st century desperately need. Others say that it is a return to the model of an engineer from the mid-19th century. An engineer who, like the people of the Renaissance, is always open to the combination of technical, organizational and social solutions.

In my lectures, in which I explain the nature of asset management, I often use an anecdote that some of you have heard from me several times before. Imagine two stonemasons working on two blocks of stone on a construction site. A stranger asks them what they are doing. The first stonemason replies that he is working on a stone, while the second says he is building a cathedral. The second stonemason, the one with the cathedral, is the prototype of an asset manager.

In recent years, a lot of bright minds from more than 60 countries and many different disciplines have come together to develop and establish this new discipline, asset management. The basic principles of the discipline were integrated into the ISO 55000 series of standards published in 2014. For those who are looking for ways to quickly become asset managers, this standard is an excellent guide.

But really just a guide. The standard is universal and relates to the management of all infrastructures. It is therefore necessary to apply these universal principles and rules to a specific discipline, in our case to road infrastructure. For this, you can use the experience and the enormous potential of PIARC. PIARC is the very essence of the wisdom of road engineers from all over the world. Let us use this wisdom, but also actively contribute to its further development and dissemination.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fact that we have succeeded in organizing this congress is proof that the awareness of the need for a new approach to road infrastructure management is growing. This is particularly necessary at a time of dynamic change taking place around us, at a time of new threats that we do not even know all about, and at a time when decision-making processes are becoming increasingly complex.

I am very pleased that the Polish Road Congress is also aware of this challenge and that we have such a strong partner and ally to fulfil our common mission.

Today's congress offers the opportunity to present and discuss many topics related to road infrastructure management. We have won outstanding experts on this topic as speakers. People who have influenced and continue to influence this discipline, which is so important for the entire economy. And the four workshops tomorrow will offer the opportunity to practice many decision-making situations with which road managers are confronted in their everyday lives by means of business games in small groups.

I wish you, ladies and gentlemen, on both days of the congress a lot of good impressions, some pleasant surprises and many positive emotions.