RAIL TRAINING
The 1st UIC World Congress on Rail Training was successfully held from 6th to 8th April at the Higher Technical School of Industrial Engineering within the Technical University of Madrid (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid – UPM). Some 170 delegates representing 34 countries from all continents attended this first UIC congress dedicated to rail training and educational issues, among them heads of railway human resources departments, railway training centres and academies, consultancies, universities, national rail safety agencies, regulatory authorities and railway manufacturers.

This first worldwide event on rail training was organised at the initiative of the UIC Expertise Development Platform – chaired by Alexander Netolicky from Austrian Federal Railways ÖBB – and sponsored by DB Training, CITEF, Funkwerk, Lloyd’s Register and CETREN.

This two and a half days’ congress featured a combination of plenary sessions, workshops and technical visits. An exhibition supported by training providers and technology specialists was held in parallel. The congress offered an opportunity for delegates to explore examples of best practice in different areas, such as defining training needs, training methodologies, training design and delivery, assessment, skills fade and optimisation of competence retention. The results of the comparative study on railway training provision for safety critical job positions in Europe which was commissioned from the University of Würzburg by the UIC European network of rail training centres was also presented and discussed.

Throughout the different presentations, workshops and discussions, the following topics were raised as fundamental issues that world rail training providers will have to tackle in the near future:

- The demographic challenge and the need to secure the next generation of rail transportation employees;
• The need to define training needs, integrating non-technical skills in order to optimise learning;

• The need for rail training providers to address the topic of measuring ROI (Return On Investment). Training is an investment which delivers measurable benefits in relation to business performance, financial returns and workforce productivity, and its ROI can and should be calculated like any other investment. The lack of systematic and empirical studies on transfer-of-training effects has a negative impact on the perception of training;

• The loss of “corporate memory” in railway companies and the need to optimise competence retention, particularly in safety critical roles;

• The importance of organisational learning

• The contradiction between the role of the trainer as a key player in the development of railway employees’ competences and skills (hence a safe and interoperable railway) and the comparatively low recognition of the job and consequent difficulty in recruiting new, qualified trainers; and

• The need to invest in new training approaches (partly due to decreasing resources)

The success of the congress and the intensive exchanges between participants proved the value of organising opportunities for networking and promoting a regular professional dialogue among the rail training providers.

WORLD BANK TRANSPORT FORUM 2011
On 29th March UIC was given the opportunity to provide its railway input to the Transport Forum organised by the World Bank from 28th to 31st March in Washington D.C. on the theme of 50 years of Innovation in Transport: Achievements and Future Challenges.

“Rail”, said Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director-General of UIC, “is becoming an increasingly global concern. Close to 50 billion euros were spent in 2009-2010 on European railways, with new investments emerging elsewhere in the world. In terms of global infrastructure the rail sector represents an average of one million km and 15,000 km on high speed rail lines.”
Loubinoux went on to speak of the new challenges of mobility. Something must be done to broach this new challenge of mobility in the years to come, particularly with regards to world demographics, as by 2050 the world population will be close to 10 billion and the total freight volumes are set to double.

Mobility will continue to create environmental challenges, he said and added, “Given that transport counts for over 50% of the world’s fuel consumption and that within transport rail accounts for only 2% of CO2 emissions, it is evident that rail, as a lowcarbon mode, has a major role to play in sustainable development… As rail has excellent records in nearly all areas, notably safety, the rail sector does not intend to stop there and has developed strategic ambitions. The target for 2020 is to reduce CO2 emissions by 30% and to use clean electricity as much as possible. By 2050 the aim is to have carbon-free operations.

“UIC’s mission”, he continued, “is to promote the development of the railways at world level to meet the challenges of mobility and sustainable development for the benefit of society at large… UIC’s desire to do better for the rail sector is reflected in the Declaration of Sustainable Mobility and Transport, already signed by more than 45 members around the world, that will be presented at a major event at the United Nations in New York on 11th May”.

Loubinoux concluded by saying that rail, as a low-carbon mode, has an important social and economic role to play. A sustainable transport system, he added, must combine the strengths of all modes into one integrated system and rail is capable of being the backbone of such a sustainable future transport system.

Two UIC Senior Advisors also participated in this World Bank Forum: George Barbu took part in the panel discussion, What must the Bank be doing more of or better, in order to reap the benefits of emerging ITS / ICT opportunities?”, while Teodor Gradinariu gave a presentation on Rail Asset Management.