

TISA: pooling resources

James Burgess says TISA will add market-driven impetus to traffic information technologies

A new company, which aims to synergise and add market-driven impetus to traffic information technologies, held its first general assembly in Berlin at the end of November. The new Traveller Information Services Association (TISA) will take over the activities of the TMC Forum, the TPEG Forum and the German Mobile.Info project.

TISA has been set up as a not-for-profit company and its secretariat will be hosted by ERTICO - ITS Europe. The TISA Coordinator is James Burgess and he says that the new company will ensure an international framework for market-driven, coordinated, proactive implementation of traffic and travel information services and products based on existing standards such as RDS-TMC and TPEG.

So what lies behind this launch? Why have these three organisations decided to pool their resources for the common good?

James says that they have been working together since 2004 when the Road Traffic Information Group was created. The idea was that by building on the synergies of the different members of the group and using the best of both technologies, they could ensure that a single, market-led technology would emerge. Indeed, over the last couple of years the Road Traffic Information Group has developed and improved requirements definition for traffic information developers and implementers.

James explains that the benefits of this cooperation highlighted the potential of a more concrete joint activity. 'What emerged was a conviction that by working together in a single, market-driven organisation, the aims and objectives of the traffic information industry could be achieved more effectively.'

It was this conviction that led to the launch of TISA. It brings together three organisations which, though previously independent, were each set up to foster and develop traffic and travel information services.

The first to be established was the TMC Forum. This was set up in 1997 to represent all sectors in the development and roll out of RDS-TMC services and products using technology initially developed as part of European Commission funded projects. The Forum supports both commercial and public sector organisations and acts as the 'keeper' of TMC standards.

TPEG (Transport Protocol Experts Group) development started in 1998 driven by the European Broadcasting Union and its partners. TPEG technology has been designed to provide a 21st century multimodal Travel and

Traffic Information data protocol for delivering content to the end-user, regardless of location or client type in use. The TPEG Forum started in 2002 and published its first standards through ISO in 2004. Since then the Forum has been working continuously on standards upgrades and the development of new applications, bringing TPEG closer to large-scale implementation.

The final piece of this jigsaw is the German Mobile.Info project led by BMW. Over the last two years Mobile.Info has defined a set of commercial services, based on the best of TMC and TPEG capabilities, which would be suitable for the first major European TPEG services.

TISA comes into being at an exciting time for traffic and travel information services. TMC services are now widespread and motorists in many countries worldwide use their navigation systems to warn them of, and dynamically reroute them around, traffic congestion or other road problems or hazards. One of the key benefits of TMC is that it is lan-

guage-independent and, as far as possible, universal. A driver from one country can take their navigation system to another country and receive local traffic information in their own language. TPEG is also dedicated to facilitating the same language-independent utility.

Maintaining and strengthening this international framework is the challenge facing TISA, says James. 'If the TMC Forum had not existed, if it had not actively provided international support, we would see a patchwork of different standards requiring manufacturers to make dedicated products for each market. This would build in cost and complexity and it would mean that the smaller markets would lose out. TISA is determined to take this international outlook to the next level and is looking for strong involvement not just from within Europe but from the Americas, Asia and Australasia to ensure TISA remains relevant to a wide range of markets.'

The success of the recent EC-funded DYNASTY project in China is an example of what can be achieved. The DYNASTY project was highly successful in raising awareness of European-developed ITS technologies in China and as a result the Chinese National ITS Standardisation Committee has adopted RDS-TMC as a set of Chinese standards for real-time traffic information broadcasting.

TISA aims to build on this success and continue to work for the implementation of successful standards such as TMC and TPEG in new markets such as China which have huge potential and their own unique requirements. 'TISA recognises these different requirements. TISA is not about trying to apply a single, inflexible solution to a variety of situations. Rather, the aim is to capitalise on similarities and support interoperability of services and devices that support the "end customer", the traveller.'

In the ten years since the TMC Forum was launched in 1997, traveller information services have developed rapidly. The formation of TISA, with a dedicated focus on continuing support for TMC and TPEG deployment on the international stage, should mean that this development continues and accelerates.



The next Committee meetings for TISA members will take place at ERTICO in Brussels in late January 2008, and TISA will host sessions at the 7th ITS in Europe Congress and Exhibition (June 4-6, Geneva, Switzerland) and the 15th ITS World Congress and Exhibition (November 17-20, New York).