

**Markets and Quality: Government & Industry Initiatives to Guarantee Quality of
Taxi Services
Concluding Remarks**

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Guests, Dear Colleagues,

Allow me to begin by thanking our partners, the German Taxi Association, BZP, the local Taxi Association Nordrhein, which also organises the Europäische Taximesse here in Köln, as well as the speakers and the moderator for their efforts in making this Second International Taxi Forum in Köln a success.

Special thanks also to the representatives from authorities and taxi businesses from countries outside Europe for their presence here today and for their active contribution to the debates. We do hope they will be able to involve themselves on a more regular basis in our discussions and, eventually, join the work of the IRU Taxi Group.

By way of today’s event, we intend to launch a permanent platform which would allow taxi businesses, authorities and everyone interested in these issues to exchange ideas and best practices on the regulation/deregulation of taxi markets in various parts of the world and the impact they have on the quality of taxi services.

We also want to complement this multi-partner dialogue on government actions by adding an industry dimension to it in the form of industry-own initiatives to guarantee the quality of taxi services.

Allow me to dwell for a moment on these two issues.

Today’s debate has clearly shown that there is no simple answer to the question “How much regulation/deregulation is best for the market to deliver quality?”. However, one thing is sure: neither over-regulated nor completely deregulated markets necessarily lead to high quality service and hence are not in the interest of taxi operators, their customers and the regulators.

Examples from countries as different as the USA, New Zealand, Ireland, Turkey and Russia were presented to us today, each one with its specificities, problems and solutions, giving us food for thought in the months and years to come.

In this respect, from the point of view of the organised taxi industry, I would like to stress one specific issue and demand that the industry has had for many years now: we believe that any market liberalisation must be accompanied by appropriate rules for access to the profession, including training.

To back this point of view, within the IRU Taxi Group we have elaborated detailed proposals for driver and manager training. We are now in the process of collecting training curricula and materials from existing taxi training centres, in order to develop future training curricula for managers and drivers, as well as standards for taxi training institutes.

In recent years, we have also developed some support material for taxi managers and drivers, the latest is our multilingual brochure containing voluntary guidelines for taxi managers and drivers to improve the quality of services offered to customers with disabilities.

This leads me to the second issue I wanted to stress in my concluding remarks, namely, the taxi industry's own initiatives to guarantee quality of services. Three examples were presented to you today from Finland, my own country, the Netherlands, and Sweden.

Whatever the difficulties such industry schemes may be facing, in particular in their initial stages of implementation, it is my belief that this is a very productive path to follow especially if such industry initiatives are supported by Governments, including via regulatory incentives. As a matter of fact, including an industry quality certification scheme as one of the criteria for public tenders involving the purchase of taxi services by local and central governments will constitute an excellent tool, not only to support such schemes, but also to deliver quality to the travelling public.

Having said that, I am also aware that in the majority of cases such industry initiatives are relatively new and not well known by the travelling public. This is why I am particularly satisfied that we took the initiative to present and debate such schemes here at this Forum so that our industry can seriously and pro-actively consider this major tool for improving its image, profitability and market share.

To conclude, allow me to once again thank our partners, speakers and, indeed, all participants and invite you now to the cocktail which will take place in the lobby in front of the conference room.

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