



# French-speaking Working Group of Road Tunnel Operators



French Mirror  
Committee of



september 2018

Centre d'Études des Tunnels (Centre for Tunnel Studies)

[www.cetu.developpement-durable.gouv.fr](http://www.cetu.developpement-durable.gouv.fr)





The Centre for Tunnel Studies (CETU) founded the French-speaking Working Group of Road Tunnel Operators (GTFE) in 1973 to foster closer cooperation between all stakeholders involved in managing and operating tunnels that are either planned, under-construction or in service.

Most organisations working in France's road tunnel operation sector are already members of the GTFE. In recent years, the working group has acted as the French mirror committee of the World Road Association's (PIARC) Technical Committee on Road Tunnel Operations, expanding its membership to the entire profession (including engineering firms and suppliers) and drawing together all French stakeholders involved in road tunnel operation. As part of the PIARC French National Committee (CF-AIPCR), the GTFE has extended its reach even further to encompass consulting firms and other road operation fields.

## Why was the GTFE set up?

The working group is primarily a forum for sharing experiences and information:

- between operators,
- between CETU and the wider profession, on issues related to regulatory amendments and technological advances,
- between operators and stakeholders who produce professional guidelines or work on projects related to the day-to-day operation of tunnels,
- and more generally, between all stakeholders of the profession.

Tunnel equipment and operations form the core of the GTFE's work, although the monitoring and management of civil engineering aspects are sometimes dealt with.

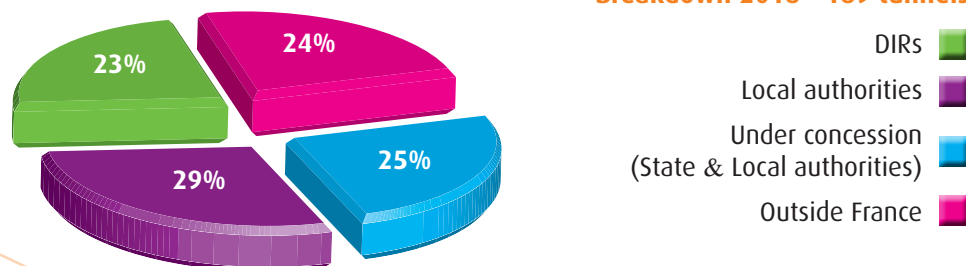
## Who are the GTFE's members?

Most GTFE members are French road tunnel operators from varied backgrounds, such as departments of the French Ministry for an Ecological and Solidary Transition, local authorities and motorway companies.

Over the years, the working group's membership has expanded to include French-speaking operators of road tunnels in other countries (such as Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy and Switzerland), as well as tunnel safety officers.

As of 2018, there are **180 individual members** of the GTFE, representing more than **70 road tunnel operating bodies** – themselves representing around **190 tunnels** measuring more than **300 metres** in length. Interestingly, around 40% of these operating bodies manage cross-border tunnels or tunnels outside France.

**Tunnels operated by GTFE members - length > 300 m**  
**Breakdown 2018 - 189 tunnels**





## The GTFE: The PIARC French National Committee's Mirror Committee on Tunnel Operations



The GTFE meets every six months. The meetings are attended by road tunnel operators and tunnel safety officers. Other attendees may be invited depending on the subjects covered – notably at larger French National Committee gatherings. For instance, fire and emergency service representatives were invited to the meetings at ENSOSP in Aix-en-Provence in October 2015, and, in October 2018, the GTFE will take part in PIARC's International Conference on Road Tunnel Operations and Safety.

**The following guests** may be invited to working group meetings:

- representatives from academia and research, engineering firms, equipment suppliers, manufacturers, construction firms, integrators, or others who could make a valuable contribution to the debate or present innovative products,
- representatives from government, and from the ministry of transport's scientific and technical agencies,
- the future operators of tunnels that are planned or under-construction, who are welcome to attend to obtain information and prepare for their new responsibilities.

## What does the GTFE do?

The GTFE is a forum for discussion where each operator is encouraged to:

- share information about the operation of its respective tunnels
  - report on problems and difficulties encountered,
  - compare management practices with other, similar tunnels,
  - learn from other operators' experiences and identify solutions,
  - improve its own practices.

Discussions focus on aspects such as traffic statistics, incidents and accidents, electricity consumption, equipment and civil engineering maintenance, and operating costs at each tunnel.

- report on major or unusual events that have occurred in a tunnel. For instance, operators may discuss how well the equipment worked, whether the structures were resistant, and how users and personnel involved in these events behaved.
- discuss tunnel safety issues with the other attendees. The GTFE shares information about tunnel regulations and how they can be applied. Operators also present the lessons learned from annual safety exercises in their tunnels to the entire group.



## What happens at GTFE meetings?

The GTFE meets twice a year at the invitation of one of its members. In most cases, the venue coincides with the commissioning of a new tunnel, refurbishment work, the opportunity to present recent work or to illustrate a specific problem.

**Each half-yearly meeting** features presentations by GTFE members, external partners and/or CETU officials, followed by ample discussion time.

The presentations cover all aspects of tunnel operations, including legal and regulatory matters, technical issues on tunnel equipment and its practical usage, new tunnel technologies, etc.

**The meetings are divided into three parts:**

- **A technical tour:** Each meeting features a half-day technical tour of tunnels and their related equipment, to give attendees insights into new underground construction contexts and to enable them to learn from the operator's experience and practices.
- **A thematic workshop:** These workshops, lasting up to half a day, were introduced in 2012. Based on a given theme, current professional guidelines and standards are shared, with feedback from France and elsewhere. The presentations are followed by a Q&A session and a round-table debate.
- **Floor time for operators:**
  - **The spring meeting** focuses on activity reports for the previous year. The GTFE secretariat presents reports on tunnels in operation, based on information shared by individual operators.
  - **The autumn meeting** focuses on operational highlights from that year. Attendees hold in-depth, informal discussions about events such as major incidents, large-scale exercises or tunnel refurbishment operations, in an effort to seek common solutions.

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## Links with the UK Road Tunnel Operators Forum

The GTFE maintains close ties with the UK Road Tunnel Operators Forum, its British counterpart, in order to share and compare practices within a broader international framework. One representative from each working group summarises the highlights of its quarterly meeting and forwards this report to the other group.



The GTFE also shares information about other related activities, such as the training of tunnel control room operators, events organised within the tunnelling community, technical documents published by CETU, reports from the PIARC's Technical Committee on Road Tunnel Operations, and more.

**All members can download the presentations and minutes of the meetings** from the GTFE's dedicated website, providing members with useful documentary resources on operation-related issues.

CETU organises the meetings and acts as the secretariat, as well as handling ad-hoc information requests between meetings.

