



Working to benefit the whole industry

ECG president Wolfgang Göbel outlines the ECG's activity in 2017 and looks ahead to the challenges of the year to come

“ I am writing this as one year closes and yet another year begins, so let me start by wishing all of you in our industry a great start to 2018. I wish you a busy and productive year, which is exactly what we are planning at ECG.

The dawn of the new year also heralds something of a new era at ECG; our tasks and strategies have been changing rapidly over the last months and we expect to build on this during 2018. This is, therefore, a good opportunity to remind our members, and to clarify for others in the sector, what our current goals are and how we are aiming to deliver on them.

Following our recent Industry Meeting with many of the OEMs across Europe – which increasingly acts as a steering group for our association – we have reviewed a number of ECG's working groups (WGs).

The previous Land Transport WG has been disbanded for now as the core topics are covered elsewhere. Meanwhile, some of our other meetings continue to go from strength to strength and are attracting record numbers of participants. These include our Maritime and Ports WG and the two regional groups, which cover eastern Europe and the UK and Ireland. These meetings are hosted at different locations across Europe and are very strongly supported.

There are four key areas that fall specifically under the Industry Meeting as cross-industry activities. Firstly, our long-standing Quality Working Group, which for many years has brought together LSPs, OEMs and other interested parties, principally to develop the Operations Quality Manuals (OQMs). We envisage this being split into three sub-groups in 2018. One will cover the OQMs and the others will

look at quality systems and health and safety. These new sub-groups will be established as soon as possible and we will need not just participants but also people prepared to co-chair these.

Secondly, our lobbying task force will continue to target specific EU member states at national level while the ECG secretariat rekindles our activities in Brussels geared towards achieving a harmonised loaded length for car transporters across Europe.

It is essential to get support from some key countries such as France before going back to the European Commission to propose a possible solution. This will require support from LSPs and OEMs, if we are to succeed.

Thirdly, the Capacity WG is focused for now on what we are calling 'Project Caesar'. This is approaching the end of the first phase, which is being supported by several external consultants that know the industry well. We will review the results and present them at the next Industry Meeting in April.

The goal here is to establish good practice in forecasting and from there establish an ECG standard, which we will promote. If we can improve forecasting standards even in a small way across the industry, we believe that the efficiency gains could be significant.

Digitalising the new year

Finally, our fourth area is the Digitalisation WG, and this is rapidly becoming one of our busiest areas of activity, as you would expect in this rapidly developing field.

Here, we have three sub-groups at the moment, of which the one on vehicle telematics is especially active. In this we are also working with the VDA and Odette to try to maximise the benefits of the 'connected car' within the overall

vehicle supply chain.

As always, standardisation is high on the list of objectives. Other sub-groups are looking at paperless delivery, especially getting e-CMR fully accepted in Europe and the possibility of standardising some sort of 'e-gate' booking system to reduce truck waiting times at ports and compounds, which are increasingly becoming an issue.

Our regular activities continue as well and the 13th ECG Academy course is now open for registration. It will begin in October and we expect another 'sell-out' this year. The first two of our new Negotiation Management training course in Potsdam, Germany, still have one or two places available and are excellent value for money. We will also shortly announce a one-day course on legal affairs focusing mainly on competition law compliance, which I am sure will be of interest to many. Appropriately, this will be run in Brussels.

Watch our online calendar for information on our three big annual events. This year our Dinner Debate in the European Parliament will focus on the new 'mobility package'; our Spring Congress & General Assembly will go to Madrid, Spain, in May; and our largest event of all, the ECG Conference, will visit Mainz, Germany, for the first time.

In closing, I would like to remind you that all of this cannot be achieved by a few people sitting in Brussels. We have some ambitious targets and we need the participation of industry experts. As many of you will have already heard me say many times before, please stay with us and send us your best people. From there, we will do our utmost to deliver on your behalf in 2018.

Happy New Year. ◊

Wolfgang Göbel ”