



A call to action

Only a united and inclusive association, with a multitude of active participants, can resolve the concerns of its members, writes ECG president **Costantino Baldissara** (pictured with vice-president Wolfgang Göbel, far left)

“ **E**very industry association is fuelled, not only by the energy of its secretariat, but by the will and dynamism of its members. ECG is no different and its effectiveness and purpose as a platform for the sector derives from the unity and engagement of its membership. I am pleased to report that we enter 2016 with a strong and stable membership.

That stability is supported in part by the positive mood derived from a significant period of growth and consistent signs that the industry is also in a period of stability, at least in Europe. All major markets in the EU grew in 2015, contributing to the overall upturn in the region over the year. Welcome though this growth is, many of you have been dealing with transport capacity shortages in recent months. However, another good indicator of the health of the sector are the lead times for sourcing new car transporters, and the waiting lists are longer now than at any time since the crisis. We can see, at last, on the back of recovering volumes, some reinvestment being made in the vehicle logistics industry.

A frequent complaint heard from our sector is that it does not always receive the respect it deserves and that its strategic role should be more highly valued by clients and regulators alike. However, there is a tendency in our industry for companies to stand alone and to underestimate the real potential that lies in working together and exploring synergies and collaborations. On industry and regulatory matters, one company can achieve little, while the shared voice of several companies together is much louder.

As a sector we must pull together, identifying our common interests and working side by side to achieve our goals. ECG is the ideal platform to represent the needs of the European vehicle logistics industry, but its strength depends on your active participation. We need your voice, your energy and your engagement to allow ECG to become a real force to be reckoned with in the industry.

For example, the success of our many Working Groups depends not just on the enthusiasm and efforts of the secretariat in Brussels, but on the involvement of our members. Although groups in areas such as Land Transport, Maritime & Ports and Quality have seen growing attendance in recent months, there is always room for improvement. Attendance is not enough; only active participation and engagement brings real added value. Please look within your

own company to see how you and your colleagues can better support ECG initiatives and working groups, and contact the secretariat if you would like further information on ECG membership or any point of interest. The Quality Working Group in particular is open to all interested parties and not just to ECG members – it draws people from across the board.

A task force for change

A further and more significant example of improved collaboration and dialogue with OEMs can be seen in the creation of a common platform for discussion, which came about after a pivotal industry meeting in Vienna last October (see p14). We are currently working to establish this group; the first meeting, to discuss specific strategies and issues, will take place soon.

Out of this forum has already sprung a joint industry Working Group to further ECG's previous lobbying activities to establish a harmonised minimum loaded length for car transporters in Europe. The formation of this 'task force' has been largely at the initiative of Renault Nissan's Alliance Logistics Europe, whose managers convinced many other OEMs to join forces and campaign together as an industry on this topic. Specifically, we have about four years in the run up to the agreed review of the latest legislation (Directive 2015/719) in which to get the individual EU member states to agree to support us. The additional political weight of the OEMs at the national level backing this campaign should give it the necessary momentum for success – I hope this will prove to be a real example of what can be achieved together.

As you may know, ECG's annual General Assembly is held every May and sees the election of a new board for the coming year. Every two years the president and vice-president are also elected. Getting involved is a real opportunity for your company to take a lead on issues of concern and to help shape the activities and progress of our association. We need and want new candidates to put themselves forward and to channel their energy and vision, not only for the benefit of the association but also for the sector as a whole.

On a personal note, I shall be standing down this year after more than six years as president of ECG and naturally I am keen to see it left in the best possible hands with maximum support for my successor, but I will save the retirement speech for next time! ◊ ”