



Evolution, not revolution

Newly elected ECG president Wolfgang Göbel believes the industry's mood of optimism in Europe is the perfect backdrop against which to make progress during his tenure

“ In this, my first article since being elected president of ECG at the 2016 General Assembly in May, I would like to take the opportunity to describe what I see as the current situation and priorities for the industry in general, as well as for ECG in particular.

But first, I want to thank my predecessor, Costantino Baldissara of Grimaldi Group, for the sterling job he has done during his tenure as president of ECG for more than seven years. I have had the pleasure of serving as vice-president with him during that period and so have witnessed his commitment first-hand.

As a direct result of Costantino's leadership, I am taking over an association which is stronger than ever before and is truly the voice of the vehicle logistics sector in Europe. We have a stable membership that is wholly representative of the sector and more engaged than ever, and from this membership a board who all have their own tasks and objectives.

I am also grateful that one of our long-term board members, Mats Eriksson, has taken on the role of vice-president alongside me. We also have a stable and now very experienced team in the ECG secretariat in Brussels. I am certain that the association is well placed to fulfil its role as a platform for the industry in this, our 20th year, and our voice will be heard more often and more clearly in the future.

A time to get invested

All of this comes at a time when, as we heard during the General Assembly (see p8), the sector is enjoying its most buoyant period since the financial crisis, with volumes growing almost everywhere. The mood is positive and the problems we face are mostly the sort that we like to have.

So how do I see the next few years for ECG? My key message is clear: 'evolution, not revolution'. Our mission statement, our goals and our objectives do not change. Most importantly, though, these positive times are exactly the time to invest in the future of our industry. By that, I do not just mean financial investment, though that is certainly required and you only have to speak to one of our friends at the transporter manufacturers to hear how lead times for their products have risen significantly – a sure sign that the sector is indeed investing. Instead, I want to focus on the more valuable investments of time and effort that are required to deliver change and improvements in quality and efficiency.

In October last year we met, as ECG, with many of the OEMs ahead of our annual conference in Vienna and agreed to form a steering group, a forum we have called the 'FVL Industry Meeting'. This year we held a 'kick-off' ahead of the first full meeting, which was hosted by Renault Nissan's Alliance Logistics Europe at its Technocentre headquarters in Guyancourt, outside Paris. Together we are now developing a number of working groups on issues including 'capacity' and 'digitalisation' as well as expanding our existing quality working group. These will each be co-chaired by an OEM representative and an ECG board member and already have good, cross-industry support. No doubt other working groups will follow and I urge anyone with a genuine interest in taking the industry forward on any level to get involved.

At the same time that we formed the industry meeting we also agreed, with the support of a majority of OEMs, to develop a lobbying task force. The objective of this group is to take forward the work done previously by ECG on trying to achieve a harmonisation of allowable loaded length in Europe for car transporters. Considerable preparatory work has already been done by the secretariat and this first phase is almost complete. Soon the group will be formally convened to start the work, and its first step will be to decide exactly how to phrase our proposal to ensure it gives the result that we are looking for. Then we will need to start a dialogue at the transport ministry level in as many EU member states as possible. This is where the political weight of the OEMs will hopefully count. We already know that achieving consensus between 28 different countries is going to be a challenge, but time is on our side as the review clause we won previously in our campaign promises to reconsider the existing directive on weights and measures around 2020.

In closing, I would like to remind everyone that we have recently celebrated the graduation of the tenth course of the ECG Academy. The longevity of this course is down in part to the constant improvement and development of the programme, as well as the stream of up-and-coming talent that the industry employs. Course 11 will start in October, so now is the time to register and secure a place – the first step towards achieving the Certificate in Automobile Logistics Management. If you need more information you should check the ECG website or contact Mike Sturgeon at the secretariat, who will be happy to discuss it in detail. ◦ ”