



Stronger than ever...

ECG president Wolfgang Göbel sees plenty of things to celebrate this year – even if political turmoil and gridlock are getting in the way

“**L**ast issue, I wrote that 2017 was on track to be ECG’s busiest year yet. I am happy to say that continues to be the case in almost every respect. We are setting new records at nearly every turn, which says a lot, not just about the health of the sector but also the increasingly relevant and important part our association is playing as the platform for the European vehicle logistics sector. We continue to build on the hard work and commitment of our previous president, Costantino Baldissara, and the vibrant membership he passed on.

Specifically, we have a membership today that is at its highest level ever, even as we talk to a number of potential new members as well. Our partners who support us, including trailer manufacturers, IT specialists, inspection companies and others, are also at record levels. Perhaps not surprisingly, this engagement is translating into our highest-ever attendances at ECG events, whether it is our regional meetings or the annual Spring Congress & General Assembly, which we recently held in Malta (see p8). I have no doubt that we will also see more of you participating in the ECG Conference this year in Brussels, where we are planning for a record 300 delegates.

Our working groups are also attracting more interest from the sector and beyond. The activities of our Digitalisation Working Group, in particular, are engaging members along with most OEMs and many other interested groups – such as IT companies (see p12). In this area, especially, I sense a real determination to collaborate across the industry to deliver results. We have created three sub-groups in digitalisation to focus on specific objectives; if you are interested in getting involved, contact the ECG secretariat to find out more.

This past May, under a starlit Maltese sky at the General Assembly, we graduated 20 students from the 11th course of the ECG Academy. We are now recruiting for the next course and astonishingly, after 12 years and now with more than 200 graduates, registrations are so high that I fully expect the course will sell out for the first time.

As always, we are seeing a good mix of students coming from both logistics providers and carmakers, and we will have a very full plan with 24 days over five modules from October to May. If you are planning to attend or to register someone from your organisation, please contact the secretariat as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. Every

year, we add new subjects, improve and fine-tune the content to ensure that every course is the best and most relevant it can be, so this is sure to be the best course yet.

Digital revolutions, political turmoil

They say that a week is a long time in politics, and recent weeks have certainly been proving the rule with unexpected results. France and the UK have both finished their latest elections, paving the way for Brexit negotiations that finally began in late June.

However, we have more European elections to come this year – including in Germany – and these political machinations are putting some of our own activities on hold. For example, our lobbying ‘task force’ had been unable to continue discussions on the loaded length of car carriers with the French transport ministry. In Germany, while we think that legislators are finally beginning to understand the need to support our calls for the adoption of the e-CMR protocol, it has been made quite clear that nothing will be done until after the election process is complete. One positive note on this subject is that Germany has already decided to allow ‘on screen’ CMRs to be used for transit traffic, which is at least a step in the right direction.

Meanwhile, the European Commission has published its long-awaited and very lengthy ‘Mobility Package’, with further ideas for the future. On the other hand, we continue to see laws enacted at the national level that lead to disparities between EU member states and make the ‘single market’ less and less of a reality.

With these issues as the background, the 2017 ECG Conference has been titled ‘Digital revolutions in political turmoil’, a title which becomes more appropriate by the day.

As always, we are putting together a great speaker line-up and a full day preceded by a gala dinner on the Thursday evening. The event this year is at the Tangla Hotel in Brussels on October 19th-20th. Registrations are open now and you can find all the information at www.ecgconference.org.

As always we will have a social programme that allows you to continue networking over Friday evening and into Saturday and since we are in Brussels the theme will naturally include chocolate and beer! I look forward to seeing you and your colleagues there, and continuing the great work that we are achieving together this year. ◻”