



# Digitalisation: making it reality

ECG president **Wolfgang Göbel** highlights the importance of connected logistics, encouraging the industry to work together

“ **A**lmost a year ago now we held our annual ECG Conference in the wonderful city of Vienna, and our theme was ‘Back to the Future’. It proved highly popular, and not just because the day of the conference nearly coincided with the day in the ‘future’ that Marty McFly travels to in the ‘Back to the Future’ films.

Rather, I believe that this concept was so popular as it is one that is becoming increasingly relevant to the vehicle logistics industry. Indeed, I was struck by the fact that the many delegates in attendance seemed to be more interested than usual in the content and in what our well-informed speakers had to say.

There can be no doubt that our world is changing fast and that the pace of change is increasing. The world of finished vehicle logistics is changing, too.

This year we will focus more on this subject and the ECG Conference in Hamburg October 20th and 21st will take place under the banner: ‘Digitalisation and Megatrends – the future of automotive logistics’. Again it can be no coincidence that, at the time of writing, registrations are up a staggering 75% year on year.

It was also in Vienna last year that the ECG board members and logistics representatives from OEMs across Europe came together to form the ‘FVL Industry Meeting’, which it was agreed would act as a steering group to foster deeper collaboration and continuous improvement across the outbound distribution chain.

Under this structure we have formed several working groups, each jointly chaired by a representative of an OEM and a logistics service provider, one of which also has the title ‘Digitalisation’.

Another sign of the levels of interest in this topic is the number of people who have volunteered to participate in this group. Following a survey of ECG’s members during the annual General Assembly this past May in Italy, we have now agreed a ‘Top Five’ list of priorities for this working group to focus on.

Each of these priorities will, in turn, need to be driven by their own sub-group, so support from members will be essential. To reiterate a call that I have made before, I would encourage all of our members to send their best people to support this and our other working groups.

These are areas where we can really start to make a difference. Don’t wait to be asked though, if you are reading this and want to be involved in the process, then tell someone. Whether we embrace it or not, change is coming and we need to be ready for it, or at least to be as prepared as we can.

## Teaching the next generation

Another of the most important things that ECG does is to focus on education, a key part of our mission statement. Facilitating the ECG Academy is central to this objective. Astonishingly we are about to start the 11th year of the programme. Every year the course is refined and further improved, and consequently the demand continues.

Aimed at junior and middle management it provides a mix of industry specific training as well as general management training. Who will not benefit from improving their negotiation skills or learning more about how to innovate?

The course is certified and alumni are awarded the Certificate in Automobile Logistics Management. We already have a handful of registrants for the 12th course so I am absolutely confident that the future of this qualification is assured.

Perhaps most important of all is the network of contacts the students develop and carry forward with them during their careers in the industry. We have almost 200 of these alumni out there now and we bring them together once a year for an opportunity to continue networking.

More importantly, we provide a half a day of additional relevant business-related learning. This year we will hold the event in Bremen, Germany on Friday, December 2nd.

Now that the ECG Academy has matured, we continue to hear from the many alumni that they want something more that builds on what they have learned on the original course. The ECG board has spent some time investigating alternatives and we are close to finalising these ideas. I am sure that what we will launch in 2017 will be of much interest – and not just to our existing alumni.

Watch this column, check our website, [www.ecgassociation.eu](http://www.ecgassociation.eu), or contact ECG executive director Mike Sturgeon for more information. ◻

For more on the upcoming ECG Conference in Hamburg on October 20-21st, visit: [www.ecgassociation.eu/ecgconference/2016overview](http://www.ecgassociation.eu/ecgconference/2016overview)