

## ECG gets 'one third' old of the European Union's age

The European association of logistic operators serving the automotive industry celebrated its first 20 years of activity at the Autoworld museum in Brussels before the EU Transport Commissioner

### From our correspondent

**Brussels** – To celebrate the first 20 years of ECG European Cartrans Group of Interest (the original name when the association was founded in March 1997) there could not be a more suitable location than the European 'automobile hall of fame'. The

over 200 delegates gathered at Autoworld museum, in the capital of Belgium and of the European Union, to celebrate the European association of logistic operators serving the automotive industry, had the chance to listen to EU Transport Commissioner, Violeta Bulc, describing her future plans in this field.

The ECG Association of European Vehicle Logistics turned 20 in the same days in which the former EEC celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, as the Treaty of Rome dates back to late March 1957.

The commemorative evening, besides recalling all past and present protagonists, such as all the 20 founding members,



Bertani, Hoedlmayer, Maertens, Zwirner and Göbel



Wolfgang Göbel

allowed to take stock of the current automotive logistics situation.

The latest member of the Association of European Vehicle Logistics, MOSTVA, a Polish transport company, is already the fourth new member to join ECG in 2017; this steady climb in membership numbers and indeed strong support from the membership in general allows the finished vehicle logistics sector to effectively speak with one voice. ECG today includes exactly 100 companies (with latest new entries) from 30 countries, being at record levels after significant recovery since dropping to 80s following 2008 financial crisis. It was conceived as a non-profit making organisation in 1996 in Cologne, when 30 delegates representing 20 companies met to lay the foundations of the association, then created slightly later on in March 1997. "Those days there were shipowners and railways associations, but none represented car-carrier trailer operators –President Wolfgang Göbel recalled – therefore we decided to create a multimodal group with a common

purpose". Time showed how strong and deeply-rooted this choice was: "ECG's resiliency is such that all original founders are still here" Mosolf's manager went on, inviting them on the stage: Frits Maertens from Belgium, Konrad Zwirner and Johannes Hoedlmayer both from Austria and Sergio Bertani from Italy.

ECG is now the established platform for the automotive logistics sector bringing together logistics service providers, manufacturer logistics managers and suppliers to the sector.

Today ECG members have an aggregate direct turnover of around 27.1 billion euros. More than 116,000 Europeans are employed directly by the vehicle logistics industry and an additional 294.239 are indirectly employed in the sector. They own or operate 508 car-carrying ships, 16,000 purpose-built railway wagons, 25 river barges and 22,134 specialist road transporters.

Today, with the European automotive

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Violeta Bulc

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industry at healthy levels, Göbel pointed to an association and an industry developing positively. He noted that collaboration and dialogue with executives from carmakers was again strong, including for working groups focused on areas such as quality, and using in-vehicle telematics for tracking and tracing vehicles. "Our communication with the OEMs has risen and fallen at times over the past 20 years, but today it is highly active".

ECG is a longstanding supporter of digital documents and most recently published a joint statement with IRU on e-CMR (electronic consignment note) especially targeted at gaining acceptance for it in Germany. Göbel confirmed ECG is focused on the impact of digitalisation in the sector, including ways in which logistics providers could better use data to predict and control their operations. For the first time, the association's board has agreed to invest in a standard forecasting tool. "This

will be done with ECG's own funds, and will help create a standard that can be used across the sector to improve data analysis and forecasting".

Erik Jonnaert's - secretary-general of the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) - revealed some encouraging figures about factories, followed by all Past Presidents, from the first one, Richard Lawson, to the most long-lived (8 years in office), Costantino Baldisara.

The Grimaldi Group's manager recalled how he succeeded to Kay Ewaldsen in 2008, at the beginning of the worldwide recession.

Expectations were for the Commissioner Bulc, who began with an anecdote: "When I arrived in Brussels in 1992, as a computer engineer, I was stunned to see that the supposed cradle of IT was still working with paper documents. It was a great disappointment for me", the EU official

recalled.

"IT technology must be the driving force of our economy. It is good to see that ECG's customers are here to observe the conceptual evolution from the supply chain to the network of operators. Only by so doing can we look to the future with confidence; advanced digitalization is one of my core priorities because information pursues efficiency. I am also happy that your association is multimodality-oriented; besides the need of a large and reliable database, we must aim at decarbonisation, and we must do it smartly" she went on.

Bulc stressed that digitalisation would be vital to the success and survival of transport and logistics companies, even if many of their processes today were still manual. "Digitalisation is not just changing the economy, it is also changing transport. You cannot ignore the potential that new technology and 'industry 4.0' represents for the sector: blockchain databases, truck platooning and autonomous driving are expected to take ground in the short-term, to pave the way for the future, and I hope that they will be all accomplished within the end of my office, due in 2019".

She also highlighted that the European Commission's Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE), which is responsible for improving trans-European logistics networks, interoperability and cross-border connections, put digital communication and technology at the heart of its objectives including far-reaching ambitions to create an open data exchange across Europe's multimodal transport networks to turn them into 'ecosystems', with access to data that can help improve safety as well as reducing emissions and traffic. The commission is accounting for autonomous driving and connected-vehicle technology in legislation on logistics corridors.

She reiterated importance of more EU Member States adopting the e-CMR (electronic consignment note) protocol, which allows for electronic filing of legal trans-

port documents and billing. In late 2016 France and Estonia joined 9 EU members along with Switzerland, in adopting the protocol; however still standing out is Germany, a key transit country and the largest EU vehicle market.

Increasing multimodal logistics is a priority for DG MOVE; the finished vehicle logistics sector, with its relatively high use of rail and short-sea shipping, is an example for much of Europe, she noted, but there were still many missing links, both in infrastructure as well as digital communication and documentation between modes. "We are going to make 2018 the

year of multimodality in the EU, in which we will focus on finding and addressing missing links".

Bulc stressed that implementing digital technology into both regulations and operations required co-operation and communication across industry and policymakers and urged executives to engage with the Commission and national governments about what they needed to improve their business.

The Commissioner confirmed that she is open to suggestions: "Let's work together, just tell us what you really need. You must lobby and commit yourselves to making

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paperless documentation real, pursuing a single-window approach. Don't forget that 2018 will be the year of multimodality in the EU, and we will have to contribute to the creation of a proper transportation system" she added.

Notably a few days after the Autoworld gathering the Commissioner for Transport discussed with public and private institutions how to boost investment in the transport sector at a conference in Sofia focused on investment opportunities in the Cohesion Member States and addressing

the co-operation with the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partners.

High-level representatives involved in planning and financing of European transport infrastructure projects, financial institutions and public and private project promoters, discussed how to make the best use of opportunities under the Commission's Investment Plan for Europe, including the Cleaner Transport Facility, and exchange experience and lessons learned in successful transport projects.

"Public grants will not be enough to deliver

on our vision for seamless, intelligent and sustainable mobility. With the Commission's Investment Plan for Europe, we want to offer innovative solutions such as blending funds to mobilise additional private financing. This is particularly important in the cohesion countries where we still need more work to bridge the infrastructure investment gap with other parts of Europe. Boosting investment is also vital to strengthen the region's competitiveness and stimulate" she concluded.

The conference follows the recent launch

by the Commission of a call for proposals combining €1bn of grants (CEF Connecting Europe Facility - Transport) with financing from the European Fund for Strategic Investments whenever possible, public financial institutions or the private sector; this is a new and innovative way to finance transport infrastructure projects in Europe as part of the Investment Plan for Europe, a top priority for Juncker Commission, and will complement the €19.4bn

in EU grants already announced under the CEFs and the 36 transport-related projects under the European Fund for Strategic Investments that will trigger a total €15.2bn of investments.

**Angelo Scorza**



## Successful Quality meeting held in Brussels

ECG held another successful Quality meeting on 15th March in Brussels when gathering its member companies, OEM representatives and inspection companies around the table to discuss various issues related to the quality of operations. The Association presented the latest version of the Operations Quality Manual to the participants; Version 7 was published incorporating all changes and additions that the Working Group approved during the three meetings held in 2016. However, the usual 'constant improvement' means some amendments are already proposed to this new version! Loose items, yard audit standardisation and OEM parking requirements were also on the agenda. A number of topics discussed

related not just to Quality but also to the sphere of digitalisation: intriguing presentations were heard from Avtologistika on an interactive OQM application and a loose items management tool that has already been in place for several years in their own operations.

A guest speaker from STAR Cooperation presented on the company's IT system, called STAR ITQS, which ensures effectiveness in recording, handling and documentation of damages in an app and also on a web surface. The software can also manage audits and track & trace data for LSPs. This working group meets three times per year and Thursday 13th July was agreed as the date of the next meeting, as usual to be held in Brussels.

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