

ECG teaches its members how to handle some 'animals' at the Spring Congress in Malta

The 22nd annual meeting of European logistics operators serving the automotive industry illustrated risks and opportunities of quite an healthy sector with significant growth and great recovery expectations

Valletta (Malta) - "If you expect to face donkeys but come across a lion, it might be too late to adjust your survival strategy to the new threatening interlocutor..." Wolfgang Göbel, ECG Euro Cartrans Group president since last year (the new Board elections will be held in May 2018 during

the next general assembly in Madrid) pointed out. This clever witticism was definitely extempore, but it described the present situation very well.

To those that did not attend the 22nd ECG Spring Congress General Assembly held in Malta, the metaphor used by Costantino

Baldissara's successor might seem strange as it is associated to the location of the gala dinner held the night before the conference, at the end of the first day of the private meeting – that ratified the increase in the number of members of the Board to 15 – at the Limestone Heritage Parks &



Gardens. This is a former limestone quarry turned into an open-air museum hosting a few livestock, including donkeys, whose bray was changed by sound engineers to resemble wild beasts' roars in order to play a joke on the 160 participants.

"What would happen to your companies if, in the market jungle, they had to face an opposite situation, i.e. finding a fierce enemy where they expected to find a harmless partner: would you be able to survive?", Göbel asked ironically to the representatives of ECG's some 100 member firms.

As a matter of fact, compared to a few years ago, the scenario in which the European association of logistics operators serving the automotive industry operates underwent a radically positive change, but the president of the association urged to be always on guard because, although OEM – the world's automotive industry factories – are doing very well (especially in Italy and Spain, as LMC Automotive's Justin Cox observed), and consequently transport services suppliers benefit from it, difficulties can always lie in wait like a lion.

However, things have definitely changed compared to Baldissara's 8 years of office that began in 2008, on the eve of the great crisis; a difficult period during which ECG members had to withstand adversities,

and in the meanwhile they had to devise a relaunch plan for the recovery that we are witnessing today.

"These are good times for the automotive sector, with encouraging data and an overall production recovery; there are many long-term contracts, and we must seize these opportunities", Mosolf group's top manager confirmed while opening the spring conference attended by many distinguished international guest speakers. "Another significant feature is consolidation, with companies joining together (through merger or acquisition) both as regards demand or supply, and this implies also opportunities for collaborations with partners or competitors, from OEM to colleagues and rivals", the German manager pointed out while the news that [Groupe CAT plans to take over STVA](#) was the talk of the day among all the participants gathered in Malta.

The positive mood of the automotive logistics supply chain emerged from the detailed reports and technical speeches delivered.

The aforesaid gala dinner closed with the graduation ceremony of a record number of students who passed their examinations in 2017: 20 new graduates of the ECG Aca-



Wolfgang Göbel

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demy, with 5 Italian “worker-students”, including Mulazzani from Grimaldi, who was awarded “student of the year” by Baldissara. The latter recalled the reasons for the institution of the *Giovanni Paci Award* after the untimely death of the Sicilian reporter in 2010, who already worked in the press office and was executive advisor of the association based in Brussels. ECG Academy is attended by managers who want to have their skills certified after 5 weeks of full immersion, including classroom lessons and training visits on spot to operating companies, final written and oral tests, as well as a dissertation and researches carried out within working groups.

The fact that the sector is going very well is confirmed by the new members that joined ECG, such as Sesè of Spain, a new

group headed by some former staff of the Scandinavian operator Wallenius and based between Zaragoza and Barcelona; as well as by the enthusiasm with which the road haulage company Fahrenheit, of the Fimalco Group – the only ECG’s Maltese member, with expansion plans in Europe (starting from Italy) – hosted this two-day meeting.

This segment is also keeping pace with modern technologies, or even anticipating them, as Mosolf itself tried to use LNG as an alternative fuel to diesel for its car-carrying trailers already since some 10 years ago, and at present another company is successfully using the new fuel for a fleet of 10 car-carrying trailers carrying out long-distance transports. This confirms that natural liquefied gas has a great potential also as regards platooning trucks convoys.



Justin Cox and Wolfgang Göbel



Kerdjoudj-Belkaid, Hartog, Meilak, Sturgeon

For its part, the French transport and logistics multinational company GEFCO, in collaboration with Transcontainer JSC and other industrial partners, announced that it will launch a multimodal service connecting Germany and China through the Riga port, on the Baltic Sea.

However, besides confidence and recovery, another key aspect of this historical phase for the sector is digitalization, as pointed out by Pavel Haidai from Avtologistika, the company that created the new ECG App. Moreover, there is also the disruption from the past because modern economy is inevitably heading to paperless operations, Hans Lip from TransFollow observed, quoting the famous Theory of Disruption establishing the ability to adapt to new digital and telematic technologies.

As this year is the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, which gave rise to the European Economic Community, the current European Union, the two guest EU officers, Maltese Lucienne Meilak and Dutch Eddy Hartog, mentioned the [recent Valletta Declaration](#) to recall the latest guidelines related to European transport systems and the EATA Roadmap. President of FEPORT, gathering European private port terminal operators, Lamia Kerdjoudj-Belkaid - with a 10-year experience in the private and shipping industry working for an international tanker company, before representing the French association of shipowners - pointed out that FEPORT and ECG not only have many members in common, but also several problems, and it is no coincidence that

the two associations are already working together.

“We do not focus only on the maritime and port aspects, but also on the hinterland because FEPORT members – that are making 40 billion euro private investments – are increasingly multimodal operators that can provide integrated logistics solutions to support goods flows”, Kerdjoudj-Belkaid said, noticing that the association does not include only employers since it represents also dockers, who are these days protagonists of the riots happening in Spain. “Although we have long been regarded only as stevedores, we are functionally much more complete, being true intermodal operators. Our member

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Lamia Kerdjoudj-Belkaid

22 associations of the transport cluster with the same priorities and aiming at becoming a global lobby. On June the 27th, during the next TOC in Amsterdam, we will hold another meeting. We have already achieved the objectives set for 2020, and we urge national and international politicians to take balanced decisions without laying an undue burden on us! Finally, on November the 30th we will summon a stakeholders conference to submit our requests”, Kerdjoudj-Belkaid concluded.

Angelo Scorza



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companies are getting ready for the future, and this implies a mediation between innovation, automation and human factor; explaining this to our workers is not easy, as the recent protests in Spain show. We must deal with the loss of jobs due to progress, but also with the new jobs. If 2017 is the Maritime Year – and May 20th was the international Maritime Day – 2018 will be the Multimodal Year, and this means expanding activity to the whole logistics chain”, the French officer explained. “Hanjin’s case of bankruptcy affected also automotive logistics operators: how many spare parts were locked in those Korean containers? [We play a vital role in IAME](#), gathering



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