ECG News

Truck Ship Compound Train Barge

ECG – The Association of European Vehicle Logistics

Issue 15.18, 4th –8th May 2015

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ECG & other industry events

►**ECG Board Meeting and Spring Congress & General Assembly**, **on 28-29th May**, in Cascais, Portugal

► **ECG Quality Working Group Meeting**, **on 9th June 2015**, in Brussels, Belgium

► **ECG UK & Ireland Regional Meeting**, **on 10th June 2015**, in Liverpool, UK

►**Automotive Supply Chain Congress**, **on 10-11th June 2015**, in Liverpool, UK

►**ECG Board Meeting**, **on 9th July**, in Naples, Italy

►**ECG Land Transport Working Group Meeting**, **on 14th July**, in Frankfurt, Germany

►**ECG Eastern Regional Meeting**, **on 17th September**, in Istanbul, Turkey

►**ECG Academy Alumni Meeting**, **on 6th November**, Venue TBC

►**ECG UK & Ireland Regional Meeting**, **on 12th November**, in London, UK

►**Automotive Supply Chain Global Awards**, **on 12th November 2015**, in London, the UK

►**ECG Russia Regional Meeting**, **(TBC)**

NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

Ro-Ro fees hit the roof following privatisation at Port of Derince

(Source: Automotive Logistics News, 6th May 2015) Usage fees for Ro-Ro operators at Turkey's busiest vehicle handling port at Derince increased by 450% last month following the privatisation of the port and the beginning of operations under the winners of the contract, Safi Katı Yakıt Sanayi, Ticaret. Safi won the tender issued last June by the owners of the port, the Turkish State Railways Administration, with a bid of $543m and began operations last month. The company has committed to invest $300m in the construction of new facilities that it said would be operational within five years. However, despite a stipulation by the Turkish government that operating costs should not be increased for three years, Safi is reported to have imposed new 'compulsory' tariffs. According to estimates by the **Association of European Vehicle Logistics** (**ECG**), this is equivalent to an extra $10m per year for the four main short-sea shipping operators calling at the port, which are **Grimaldi Lines**, **UECC**, **Neptune Lines** and **EML**. Derince port rents storage space to Ro-Ro carriers and other service providers, which in turn manage their own terminals inside the port. Shipping group Grimaldi, which calls at the port as part of its short sea Mediterranean rotation, told *Automotive Logistics* that it would not be able to absorb the costs of operating there and would have to pass the cost onto its customers, including carmakers. The company's Director of commercial logistics and operations, **Costantino Baldissara** said the company was looking at an increase in costs of around $1.5m per year. "There is no room for negotiations as the new owner of the port refuses to discuss the matter," he added. Baldissara went on to say that Safi was creating problems for the Turkish export industry and pursuing a short-term strategy that could result in carmakers shifting production to avoid the costs. Those carmakers were reserved in commenting this week, though Toyota, which is one of the main OEMs moving traffic through the port, said it was aware of the situation. Other vehicle makers using the port include Honda, Hyundai and Daimler. Baldissara's points were backed up Peter Menzel, Commercial Director at Neptune Lines, a short-sea operator that also calls at the port. He said that Safi had imposed radical changes to the handling tariffs after unilaterally annulling existing agreements with the several service providers in the port. "It is clear that these new tariffs will have a dramatic effect on the port users," said Menzel, adding that shipping lines would not able to absorb such increases and that discussions were under way with relevant parties. "Neptune Lines has had intense discussions with the new owners and will continue doing so," said Menzel. "Alternative ports are under discussion and negotiation. "This is indeed a very challenging situation for carriers as well as shippers and receivers," he added. There has been some speculation in the industry that Safi might not be interested in continuing Ro-Ro business operations at the port, perhaps in favour of developing more profitable container business. However, Menzel said that there had been no clear statement in that direction so far. Safi has not yet commented or replied to *Automotive Logistics* regarding its reasons for the increases in fees or its future plans for Ro-Ro operations at the port. Should shipping lines or manufacturers choose to divert ports, or should Derince eventually discontinue automotive handling, there are few opportunities to switch to ports with enough capacity. Derince handled more than 500,000 vehicles in 2013, nearly twice the number of vehicles as the next largest ports, Koecaeli, which is operated by Ford Otosan, and Gemport. Carmakers and shipping lines might make some consolation that the nearby Autoport terminal in Yeniköy recently reopened. However, according to Costantino Baldissara, that port has also sharply increased rates for vehicle handling.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Russia to ease rouble risk for foreign automakers, report says

(Source: Automotive News Europe, 5th May 2015) Russia's government is planning to introduce measures to reduce the risk of rouble volatility for foreign automakers that have localised production in the country, *Kommersant* newspaper reported on 5th May, citing industry sources. Automakers asked the government to consider such measures late last year when the rouble fell sharply, but officials only started looking at the steps after General Motors scaled back its presence in the market in March. GM said it would shut its Russian factory and wind down its Opel brand in the country. The changes, which are being considered by the Ministry of Economy, may be approved toward the end of the second quarter or early in the third quarter, *Kommersant* said. The Ministry was not immediately available for comment. After several years of growth in excess of 10%, car sales in Russia have plunged on a weaker rouble, dampened by Western sanctions over Ukraine and a slide in oil prices. New-car sales in Russia fell by 42.5% in March, year-on-year. Foreign automakers working in Russia include Ford Motor, Volkswagen, Renault and Nissan.

BMW postpones Russia assembly plant decision

(Source: Automotive News Europe, 6th May 2015) BMW said it had postponed a decision about whether to build an assembly plant in Russia because of the uncertainty caused by the economic crisis. "Russia is a challenge for our company and we have asked ourselves how things will go on there," CEO Norbert Reithofer told reporters on 6th May, adding that a decision about whether to build an assembly plant had been postponed. Currently contract manufacturer Avtotor builds BMW cars from kits in Kaliningrad. The country's premium market is generally doing much better than the overall market, possibly helped by wealthy Russians investing in hard goods in the current financial meltdown, IHS Automotive analyst Tim Urquhart told *Automotive News Europe* last month. BMW rival Daimler has narrowed down potential sites for a Mercedes-Benz car plant in Russia to three locations, according to local media reports. In the first three months BMW's Russia sales fell by 14% in a market down 36%, according to data from the Moscow-based Association of European Business in Russia. Mercedes sales were up 9%.

European carmakers seek delay to tougher emissions testing

(Source: Automotive News Europe, 6th May 2015) European carmakers are lobbying for a three-year delay to new vehicle testing rules that would reduce the fuel-saving claims they can make for their vehicles, according to an industry paper seen by *Reuters*. The European Commission wants to tighten vehicle testing to close loopholes such as driving on an unrealistically smooth surface and taping up car doors and windows. It wants to introduce the tougher standards by September 2017 in the form of the WLTP (Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedures) and phase out the NEDC (New European Driving Cycle) currently in use. However, a position paper from the European car industry group ACEA says it "cannot envisage vehicle testing beginning before 1st January 2020." ACEA's paper says a further year's delay might be needed because of the time required for all manufacturers to have newly-registered vehicles tested under the new rules. A Commission research published in 2013 showed lab techniques explained around a third of a recorded drop in average CO_2 EU emissions from passenger cars, linked to reduced fuel consumption. ACEA said it was "actively contributing" to the development of the more stringent rules and was committed to introducing them as soon as it is feasible. "When considering all the issues that have to be addressed in finalising the work, it becomes clear that unrealistic deadlines for implementing WLTP simply cannot be rushed into," ACEA said in an emailed statement. A meeting of EU Member State representatives and the Commission on 7th May will decide which techniques carmakers will be allowed to

use when testing their vehicles as well as the date of introduction of the new rules. “We all know by now that pumped-up fuel economy figures are the direct result of carmakers gaming the lab tests. EU governments have the opportunity on 7th May to stop this cheating as from 2017,” said Greg Archer, clean vehicles manager of sustainable transport group Transport & Environment. The industry has already won a concession after Germany, home to Europe’s biggest automakers, led a campaign to delay by a year the Commission proposal to introduce an emissions limit of 95 g CO_2/km from 2020. Average CO_2 emissions from new cars sold in the European Union fell 2.6% last year to 123.4 g/km, beating goals of 130g/km set for 2015, the European Environment Agency (EEA) said last month.

EUROPE

BLG reports gains supported by automobile and container divisions

(Source: Automotive Logistics News, 6th May 2015) **BLG Logistics** has reported a moderate 3.3% rise in sales to almost €883m during the 2014 financial year and said that increased earnings in the automobile and container divisions were major factors in the results, which also saw pre-tax earnings rise by €17.4m to €30.1m. The German logistics provider said that in spite of poor economic development in Eastern Europe there was a strong performance in the Automobile division in 2014, during which the company handled 7.4m vehicles. “An increase in technical added value, an effective efficiency enhancement programme at the BLG AutoTerminal Bremerhaven and a considerable car export volume are responsible for this result,” stated the company. The terminal at Bremerhaven handled a record volume of 2.3m vehicles, up almost 5% on the previous year. In anticipation of further growth in German vehicle exports in the near future, BLG is investing in a new parking deck in Bremerhaven with 7,000 spaces. According to the company business activities were also boosted at the inland terminals in Duisburg, Kelheim and Dodendorf. Niedersachsen Ports is also building a new dock for BLG’s vehicle handling in Cuxhaven, with work having started in March this year. “We have identified automobile handling as a growing field for our ports,” said Holger Banik, Managing Director of Niedersachsen Ports. “Through this measure we are strengthening our competitive position. After Bremerhaven and Zeebrugge most of the cars in Europe are handled in the ports of Lower Saxony.” Automotive parts handling was also a strong focus in BLG’s Contract division, with extensions to operating space at BLG’s facilities in Bremen completed. In the rail transport segment BLG said it extended its range of activities to include more value added activities, including the commissioning of a modern rail service and logistics centre in Brandenburg. BLG’s Eurogate container joint venture (with EuroKai) increased handling volume by 4.2% to 14.8m TEUs in 2014. Growth in the Container division is expected to increase by between 2.5% and 3.5%. Further expansion is also planned for the e-commerce and freight forwarding segments.

Strike action to hit DB rail freight for a week

(Source: Automotive Logistics News, 5th May 2015) Germany has once again been hit by strike action taken by the German train drivers union, GDL. The strike, which began on 4th May, has affected services provided by Deutsche Bahn’s subsidiary **DB Schenker** and will continue until 10th May. Passenger services will also be affected. The GDL is taking the action over pay and conditions. It is the eighth strike in the last 10 months and follows action taken just two weeks ago. The union has rejected Deutsche Bahn’s latest offer, which comprised a one-off payment to workers of €1,000 ($1,120) and a staggered 4.7% pay increase. In a statement the rail provider described the action as “absolutely inappropriate” and said it not only harmed business for it and its customers but also for the German

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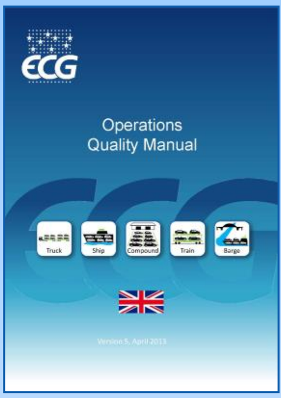

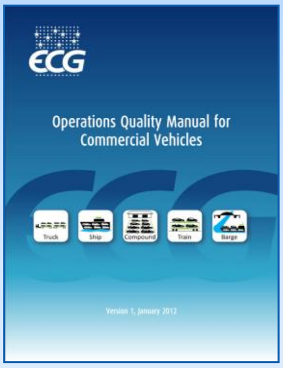

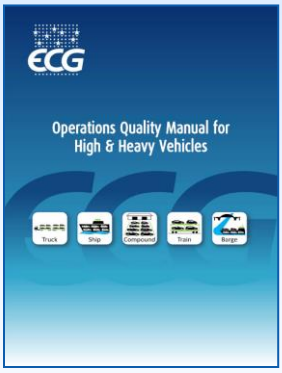

- Written by the Quality Working Group and the H&H Working Group composed of OEMs and LSPs.
- The manuals can be downloaded from: http://www.ecgassociation.eu/PublicationsReports/ECGOperationsQualityManuals.aspx

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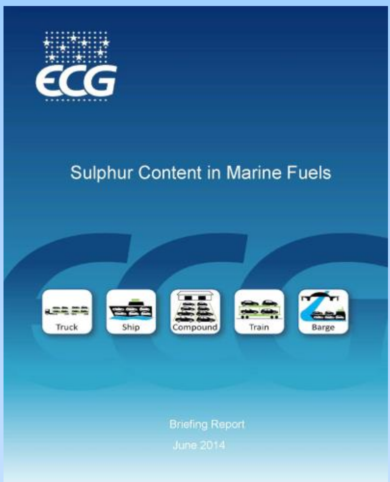
Briefing paper on the sulphur content in marine fuels updated



As the Regulation on sulphur content in marine fuels came into force on 1st January, ECG has updated its Briefing paper to better inform our readers.

The new rules will affect companies that operate routes in the Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECAs), i.e. the North Sea with the English Channel and the Baltic Sea. In these zones the sulphur content of the fuel can't surpass 0.1% which is a great technical and financial challenge for these operators.

The Briefing paper contains IMO and EU regulatory background and analysis of the latest developments, as well as a glossary of terms.

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http://www.ecgassociation.eu/publicationsreports/ecgpositionandbriefingpapers.aspx

economy. The action is estimated to cost the economy around €100m according to German industry federation, BDI. Deutsche Bahn said it would be making every effort to minimise the impact of the strike on its customers but warned there would be strong impairments to train services. The automotive industry in Germany is heavily reliant on rail as a mode for inbound and outbound shipments. A spokesperson for DB Schenker told *Automotive Logistics* that the company was in permanent communication with customers. “We created, in close co-operation with our customers, a replacement schedule to drive supply-relevant trains for important manufacturing sectors, like automotive,” said the spokesperson. As with the most recent strike in April the OEMs are looking at other modes to ensure both inbound and outbound shipments are made, though given the high volumes produced by German carmakers, finding adequate capacity on trucks may not be possible. A spokesperson for VW confirmed that production was still running at production sites in Germany. “We cannot exclude that the nationwide strike might affect our delivery chain,” she added. “However, we aim to keep the production up and running. Therefore, we [will] monitor the further development of the strike very closely.” Private rail companies are unaffected by the action. A spokesperson for **BLG Logistics** said its own BLG AutoRail division continued to operate.

Confidence in the UK logistics sector remains high despite intensifying competition and no let-up in pressure on margins

(Source: Automotive Purchasing, 5th May 2015) The latest UK Logistics Confidence Index reports of intensifying competition in the sector with over half (53%) of businesses reporting that all new business won in the past six months has come from new customers switching from others service providers. The bi-annual Index, commissioned by Barclays and Moore Stephens, also shows that less than one in ten (9%) of operators say their main source of new business has come from customers renewing existing contracts, a drop of 10% since the last survey in H2 2014. More encouragingly, a third of firms say that current expanding customers have been their primary source of new contracts. Many respondents point to over-capacity in the market, combined with price challenges from larger multi-national providers for the increase in competition. Operators also point to a continuing squeeze on prices by customers as well as competitors. The survey results suggest that major retailers and manufacturers are increasingly likely to shop around to meet their price and service expectations, rather than renewing contracts automatically with the result, that for many respondents, customers' pricing expectations are becoming increasingly demanding. However, despite these pressures, confidence in the sector remains steady with 37% saying that business conditions are somewhat more favourable compared to the previous six months; an increase of 25% since the beginning of 2012. The outlook for the next six months is similarly confident with almost eight in ten respondents (79%) expecting the outlook to improve or stay the same and over half (55%) looking to increase headcount. This confidence is translating itself into higher turnover expectations as just over four-fifths (81%) of businesses are expecting an increase over the coming year, with almost 16% looking at a rise of 10% or more. Two-thirds of operators (67%) are expecting an increase in their profitability and three-quarters (75%) believe it likely that their company will make significant capital expenditure over the next six months with just over 40% saying that this is very likely. This survey has recorded an increase in businesses planning to make an acquisition over the coming months, up to 32% from 24% in the previous survey. This movement reflects the trend of recent acquisition in the sector and our survey indicates the main drivers behind this are an intention to enhance or diversify the operators' service offering, or to add further scale and reach to their businesses. However, attracting and retaining highly-skilled employees, particularly drivers, continues to be a major concern for the industry and is increasingly becoming a major hindrance to growth. Virtually half (49%) of businesses see it as their most pressing problem over the next six months. Operators highlight the fact that logistics is often seen as an old fashioned

Events in Brussels

Rail Forum Europe dinner event related to trade and international rail markets, on **14th July**
http://www.rail-forum.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/1505051_RFE_Press_Release.pdf

industry with a perception that it lacks significant career opportunities as well as the unsociable working conditions for drivers in particular. They also underline the lack of funding to qualify and train drivers. Across the industry, the majority of training is currently provided by companies themselves, with the result that this investment is often not realised if staff are lured to competitors by higher salaries.

REST OF THE WORLD

Renault Russia to start duty free supplies of Duster SUV to Vietnam

(Source: Automotive Logistics News, 6th May 2015) Renault-Nissan has said it will launch the duty-free export of the Duster SUV to Vietnam from its Avtoframos facility, near the Russian capital Moscow, within the next two years. Preliminary estimates suggest the carmaker will export between 15,000-20,000 vehicles there a year. The company has also said it will launch complete knockdown (CKD) exports of the Duster next year for reassembly at the Nissan joint venture facility in Vietnam in 2016. The head of Renault Russia, Andrei Pankov, said the export of European brand vehicles to emerging markets from Russia would set “a unique precedent”. The preliminary agreement has been set up with the support of the Russian government, which is currently looking to help foreign carmakers with assembly plants in Russia given that most of them are suffering losses because of the devaluation of the Russian rouble. Approval on the export of the Duster was given by the Russian Minister of Industry and Trade, Denis Manturov, who specified that supplies should be launched in the second half of 2015. “As the Renault Duster has certain exclusivity in terms of the production site, we gave Avtoframos the right to supply these vehicles within two years, duty free, to the Vietnamese market, with subsequent localisation at Nissan’s local plant,” stated Denis Manturov. Dusters made from Russian-sent CKDs at the Vietnamese facility will also be exported to other Asian countries. The joint venture plant with Malaysian Tan Chong Motor Holdings, is supplying Malaysia, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. The latest agreement will boost production at the Avtoframos plant as Renault Russia is currently facing serious problems thanks to a dramatic drop in sales on the Russian market. According to official statistics, for the first two months of 2015 Renault sold fewer than 5,700 units of the model, while during the same period last year that figures was above 13,000, meaning the company has sustained a drop in sales of more than 56% year-on-year. Renault Russia has confirmed that the current situation in Russia is forcing it to consider export supplies to other markets to make up for the loss in sales. Renault Russia is already supplying vehicles to Belarus and Kazakhstan, which are part of the customs union with Russia.

Freightliner launches first autonomous trucks licensed for road use

(Source: Automotive Logistics News, 6th May 2015) Daimler’s Freightliner subsidiary has launched the first autonomous trucks to be granted a license for road use. The Freightliner Inspiration Truck is equipped with a Highway Pilot system, which includes a complex stereo camera and radar systems with lane-keeping and collision-prevention functions. It regulates the speed of the truck, applies the brakes and steers. Two trucks will be able to operate on regular routes in the state of Nevada and both will have to have drivers in the cab at all times. “The driver is an important part of the system and must remain in control of the truck in certain traffic situations on the highway and on country roads, in city traffic and when hooking up a trailer or making deliveries,” said Daimler in statement. As soon as the truck is safely on the highway, the driver can activate the Highway Pilot system following a visual prompt in the instrument cluster. The vehicle switches to autonomous mode and adapts to the speed of traffic. Daimler Trucks North America transferred technology first demonstrated last summer on a

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Mercedes-Benz Future Truck in Magdeburg, Germany and adapted it for use on the US highway. The Freightliner Inspiration Truck is based on the series-produced US Freightliner Cascadia model but with the addition of a front radar and a stereo camera plus assistance systems such as the Adaptive Cruise Control.

PRESS RELEASES

Launch of a new Motorway of the Sea between Venice and Patras

*(Source: **Grimaldi Group**, 6th May 2015)* During a press conference held today at the Münich Transport Logistics Fair, Paolo Costa, President of the Venice Port Authority, together with Guido Grimaldi, Corporate Short Sea Shipping Commercial Director of the Grimaldi Group, have announced the launch of a new Motorway of the Sea between the Ports of Venice and Patras.

Dedicated to the transport of rolling freight, the new direct line will start as from next June. Departures will be performed three times a week both ways thanks to the deployment of two modern Ro-Ro vessels, able to transport 3,500 linear meters of rolling cargo each. The service will be offered to the transport of trailers (including refrigerated units), unaccompanied trucks, vans, cars and other rolling equipment moving between Northern Italy, Central/Northern Europe and Greece as well as other Balkan countries.

“It’s a pleasure for us that Grimaldi chose the Port of Venice to activate the new direct line connecting European markets to Greece,” said Mr. Paolo Costa, President Venice Port Authority. In the last years the Port of Venice made important investments on rail and road connections to enhance its main feature of being the European door to and from the Mediterranean and Far East markets. The new Fusina terminal (Marghera) has been recognized by numbers of international operators as the best Italian port dedicated to Ro-Ro traffics, thanks to 4 wharfs dedicated to Motroways of the Sea, 4 railways for daily trains up to 650m and motorways and railways connections that can guarantee a full intermodality system”.

“Through this move, the Port of Venice enters the Grimaldi Motorways of the Sea network”, said Guido Grimaldi. “Venice has been chosen for the strategic role it plays as a logistics platform with direct links to the rail and road network, enabling us to offer multimodal transport services, guaranteeing an efficient rotation of trailers, high punctuality and fast connections,” concluded Grimaldi.

Thanks to this latest enhancement, the Grimaldi Group, through the Grimaldi Lines and Minoan Lines brands, will offer a wide selection of freight and passenger maritime services between both shores of the Adriatic Sea, thus connecting the Italian ports of Trieste, Venice, Ravenna, Ancona and Brindisi to the Greek ports of Igoumenitsa and Patras.

ETF meets Commissioner Thyssen to address social issues in transport

(Source: European Transport Workers’ Federation - ETF, 6th May 2015) On 4th May European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, welcomed an ETF delegation to listen to the sector’s concerns with regard to social dumping and European social dialogue. Accompanied by her experts on legal affairs and social dialogue, the Commissioner was very receptive for the issues raised by ETF and reached out for a close co-operation in dossiers that concern the European transport sector.

Together with ETF political secretaries responsible for the different sectors the ETF represents, ETF General Secretary Eduardo Chagas welcomed the Commission's numerous public addresses about social dumping and making its eradication as one of its main priorities and about the importance it gives to European social dialogue. However, he questioned the veracity of the Commission's words given the recent reduction in human and financial resources dedicated to support European social dialogue, the delay that social partners' agreements have been encountering in the Commission services and the lack of a resolute approach so far to tackle social dumping practices in the European economy. The ETF Political Secretaries complemented the General Secretary's intervention by giving sector specific examples of social dumping practices and unresolved issues and concerns with regard to working conditions and social rights.

Commissioner Thyssen first of all congratulated the ETF with the good results it achieved via European social dialogue in terms of social partners' agreements and acknowledged that ETF takes a lot of responsibility on its shoulders. She further confirmed the recent cuts in resources but emphasised that the current European Commission has a different and more positive attitude towards social partners and their dialogue compared to the previous team: "We are aware of the importance of showing respect to the social partners' agreements and the work done by the social partners and I will do whatever I can to facilitate this," Commissioner Thyssen commented.

She further announced that a social legislation package is being developed and due to be ready by the end of this year: "It will focus on jobs, growth and fairness, the key priorities of this Commission, and include more inspections, better enforcement and fairer rules." Commissioner Thyssen concluded with asking the ETF to send in any information, proposals and remarks it may have regarding social dumping practices and social legislation and promised to follow up on the issues raised by the ETF delegation during the meeting.

ECG Note*: Social dumping in the road sector was one of the main issues raised at the ECG Annual Dinner Debate earlier this year. For extensive coverage of the event and its press release, please check out the ECG website. ECG has also created a webpage dedicated to the German minimum wage, a measure to raise the social standards of work on the territory of Germany and thus impacting the costs of foreign labour as well. As this is an issue of great importance for the road haulage industry, the webpage is being continuously updated with the latest developments.*

Determination and resolve needed to reach meaningful ports reform package

(Source: ECSA, 6th May 2015) European shipowners have sent input to the European Parliament, ahead of a discussion in the Transport (TRAN) Committee on the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation on Market access to port services and financial transparency of ports. In it, they call for a more comprehensive and inclusive reforms package.

The European Commission, in an effort to avoid repeating the mistakes of previous failed attempts in 2003 and 2006, when its proposals were ultimately rejected, adopted a more cautious approach on its third charge. This led to a piecemeal approach that was supposed to fare better than the two previous ones, but still encountered strong reactions from MEPs and ultimately led to the suspension of the legislative procedure in March last year.

"We understand the Commission's wariness and caution but remain convinced that an EU ports reform package should be more ambitious than the current proposal, which only addresses some of the real problems faced by ports users in EU ports," commented ECSA Secretary-General Patrick Verhoeven.

More specifically, EU shipowners ask MEPs to push for a balanced market access chapter in the Regulation, as restrictive practices and legal obstacles continue to hamper access to services in several EU ports. Shipowners, far from advocating an unbridled liberalisation of the port services market, are in favour of a reasonable, more measured approach, based on the principle of openness. This liberalisation would not eliminate restriction on the grounds of safety and other considerations. It would merely ensure that they are applied in a justifiable, proportional and transparent manner.

Shipowners also ask MEPs not to exclude any port services from the text under consideration. Cargo-handling and passenger services, absent from the initial proposal, are the most significant part of port call costs. Hence, they should be included in and covered by an EU ports Regulation. Moreover services, already included in the proposed text such as pilotage, towage and mooring, should remain firmly within the scope of the Regulation, and should not be dismissed for safety or public service reasons, as the proposal already foresees the necessary provisions to take these aspects into account in an appropriate manner.

Financial transparency for port funding is another major issue in this proposal and shipowners see no reason why the rules thereon should only apply to major European ports. “Port size should not be a consideration when applying financial transparency rules,” said Mr Verhoeven, adding that they should be considered as the first step towards unambiguous state aid rules for seaports which will provide much-needed clarity to port users, port authorities and port service providers.

Shipowners, as any customer, also want to have the right to express their views on developments that are extremely important to them, such as the co-ordination of port services, hinterland connections and administrative simplification. The EU shipping industry therefore not only supports the design of a mechanism that ensures that users are heard by the managing body of the port and port service providers, but also highlights the need for independent supervision of port managing bodies as a counterweight to their natural monopoly.

“The current proposal, whatever its final form, only addresses a selection of port-related topics. Other issues, such as the simplification of administrative procedures, the completion of the internal market for shipping and the use of pilotage exemption certificates are part and parcel of a comprehensive EU port policy. Given the essential role ports play as gateways for global and intra-EU trade, we firmly believe that the EU should pursue with unwavering determination its efforts aimed at a more efficient EU ports system,” concluded Mr Verhoeven.

CLECAT welcomes pragmatic discussions on Ports Regulation

(Source: CLECAT, 5th May 2015) On 5th May, the European Parliament Transport Committee held an exchange of views on the proposed Ports Regulation, having suspended work on the proposal due to the elections of May 2014.

The Rapporteur, Knut Fleckenstein MEP, put forward a pragmatic position on the regulation, including a commitment to financial transparency in the setting of port charges and the assurance of independent supervision and support for port users’ rights, as well as ensuring clarity over state aid for port infrastructure.

It was encouraging to see many MEPs supporting measures on financial transparency, independent supervision and protection of port users’ rights. CLECAT also welcomes the desire among many MEPs to ensure legal clarity in order to avoid lengthy court disputes over the meaning of the regulation.

However, CLECAT is concerned at the potential for the draft regulation’s market access chapter to be removed or weakened to a point where it is no longer relevant. A comprehensive, balanced market access chapter, covering the broad range of port services, is essential to a meaningful ports regulation, as restrictive practices and legal obstacles continue to hamper access to services in several EU ports.

We urge MEPs to maintain the market access chapter, with comprehensive market opening including cargo-handling, noting that the proposal put forward by the Commission foresees the possibility to restrict opening of the market for reasons such as safety.

Freight forwarders, like any customer, also wish to be able to express their views on port developments of vital importance to them, such as hinterland connections and administrative simplification. CLECAT therefore supports the design of a mechanism that ensures that users are heard, but also highlights the need for independent supervision of port managing bodies as a counterweight to their natural monopoly.

CLECAT looks forward to continuing discussions with MEPs on the proposed regulation, and trusts that the pragmatic approach will prevail in the Transport Committee’s work and subsequent negotiations with the Council.

ESPO, the European Sea Ports Organisation has also reacted to the vote in the TRAN Committee. Their press release can be read here. The European Transport Workers’ Federation, ETF’s reaction can be read on their website.

ASEM Transport Ministers adopt Riga Declaration to foster closer co-operation in the field of transport and logistics

(Source: Latvian Presidency of the Council, 30th April 2015) On 29-30th April, the 3rd ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) Transport Ministers' Meeting took place in Riga and resulted in the adoption of the Riga Declaration. ASEM member countries committed themselves to fostering closer co-operation in the field of transport, establishing an integrated, sustainable and efficient land transportation system, including intermodal solutions, between Asia and Europe.

"European transport policy must not be restricted to the development of Europe's internal transport system and its linkages with its immediate neighbourhood. Instead it must be updated to fully reflect the globalised nature of cross-border supply chain management, especially between the world's two largest trading partners – Europe and Asia," stressed Latvian Minister for Transport Anrijs Matīss.

Violeta Bulc, the European Commissioner for Mobility and Transport stated: "We all face common challenges and opportunities when speaking about 'connectivity'. Therefore I invite all ASEM members to join our efforts towards a sustainable and integrated transport system which will bring advantages for all our citizens. In this sense, it is vital that proposals to improve transport connectivity between Europe and Asia incorporate all modes of transport. It is also vital to develop decarbonised and innovative transport solutions, and to find synergies between the different national and regional plans, respecting the environment and market rules."

The Ministers discussed the importance of a common vision for the development of transport networks between Asia and Europe and emphasised the significance of connectivity between the two regions for achieving economic prosperity and sustainable development.

During the meeting, emphasis was put on the urgent need to expand transport networks in order to accommodate the growing trade flows between Asia and Europe, especially in relation to Trans-Eurasian overland transport corridors as alternatives or supplements to the traditional ocean routes.

The importance of transcontinental railway transport links was highlighted at the meeting. Railway transport is regarded as an environment-friendly mode of transport between Asia and Europe and is rapidly gaining in popularity. The ASEM meeting therefore stressed that the emergence of Trans-Eurasian rail-based supply chains has been the impetus for a new wave of innovation in multimodal and intermodal logistics.

The President of Latvia, Andris Bērziņš, made the opening speech at the meeting, which brought together ASEM Transport Ministers, the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat, international institutions (the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF), the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Road Transport Union (IRU), and the European Investment Bank), the non-governmental sector, academia and the business community. The latter encompassed global lead logistics providers and global/regional transport and logistics companies (national rail operators, road hauliers, logistics centre operators, sea and dry ports), big brand manufacturers and cargo owners (in the electronics, automotive, textile and other sectors).

The two-day event included a closed ministerial round-table meeting and several high-profile panel discussions. The ministers and stakeholders analysed the development of land-based transport connectivity between Asia and Europe with a particular emphasis on the possibilities for, and development of, multimodal transport in the transport corridors connecting these two continents. The 3rd ASEM Transport Ministers' Meeting was organised by the Ministry of Transport of Latvia under the auspices of the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Towards the digital era: a co-ordinated approach for the benefit of all rail users

(Source: Rail Forum Europe, 5th May 2015) Digital technology is a very important tool for every user of the rail system as well as a competitiveness asset for the sector as a whole. In order to fully unleash its potential, a long-term vision and co-ordinated approach among all rail stakeholders needs to be developed, especially in the framework of the EU Digital Single Market Strategy. This was the main message put forward by SNCF and Thales at a Rail Forum Europe dinner held in Brussels on 5th May.

Yves Tyrode, SNCF Chief Digital Officer, gave a broad overview of SNCF's digital plan aiming at transforming SNCF within 18 months and leveraging digital technology for each user (employees, customers, IT developers and partners). He explained that SNCF data opening will be accelerated in order to develop innovative services for customers. He concluded by saying: “We need the right standards with the right technology and we need to accelerate by enabling companies and developers to innovate quickly.”

Yves Pérréal, Thales Director for Advanced Studies, highlighted the main challenges of digital technology related to volume, variety and velocity of big data. In this respect, digital technologies are changing current business models and the approach to intellectual property. He explained that Shift^{2}Rail is the instrument already in place in order to address these challenges. “Shift^{2}Rail is the place where the future of digitalisation can be handled with a holistic approach. A long term vision on digital railways can be applied on the 5 innovation programmes on rolling stock, traffic management, infrastructure, IT solutions and freight. The supply industry, infrastructure managers and operators will work together with the support of academia and research centres on this goal,” he said.

Olivier Onidi, DG MOVE Director on European Mobility Network, made it clear that the completion of a digital single market is one of the 10 priorities of the Juncker Commission. “There is a need to have a fresh look at EU digital railway applications in light of technological evolutions in order to enhance safety and security, optimise capacity and ensure a high quality of services,” he said. He highlighted four main challenges for rail to get in the digital era: innovation, intermodal door-to-door approach, access to data and further deployment of ERTMS. “The Commission is working to bring all pieces together through Shift^{2}Rail and giving a leading role to ERA in designing the architecture of digital railways” he concluded.

Pauline Bastidon (CER) emphasised the openness of the railways, which are working closely with industry partners and with other modes on developments in the field of digitalisation. “Individual company developments, together with industry projects such as the Full Service Model initiative and the e-rail freight project, are proof of this openness and willingness to work with all relevant partners to embrace the digital agenda in rail” she declared.

RFE President and Chairman of the European Parliament’s TRAN Committee Michael Cramer thanked the participants and welcomed the sector’s intentions to join up efforts towards digitalisation. “We will use what we have learned tonight for our work in the Parliament on the Fourth Railway Package, the review of the Transport White Paper and integrated ticketing,” he concluded.

Rail Forum Europe will hold its next dinner event on 14th July 2015 in Brussels. On this occasion, the MEPs will address issues related to trade and international rail markets.

Infrastructure: Helping to reduce CO_2 from road transport

(Source: ACEA, 5th May 2015) Intelligently designed, well-built and well maintained roads are key to further reducing road transport CO_2 emissions in Europe.

The European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association (ACEA) last week hosted the third in a series of workshops on the potential for CO_2 reductions from cars and vans.

This workshop – the third of eight – brought together key stakeholders from the world of road building and infrastructure design and development, as well as representatives of road users.

The discussions explored how cleverly designed roads can shorten distances and smooth traffic flow. Stakeholders also showed how different road pavement surfaces can impact CO_2 emissions and vehicle comfort and performance.

Demonstrating that infrastructure development and construction is still an evolving and adaptable field, stakeholders also highlighted new technologies that can be applied to roads to retrieve energy from vehicles using the roads, as well as alternative means of powering the traffic circulating on them.

Welcoming guests at the event, ACEA Secretary General Erik Jonnaert said, “This workshop is an exceptional opportunity to have an open and frank discussion about the contribution that roads can make to reducing CO_2 emissions from road transport. Today we have seen that a range of solutions are available, but also that there is a need for adequate investment in maintenance in order to ensure that the infrastructure we already have is fit for purpose.”