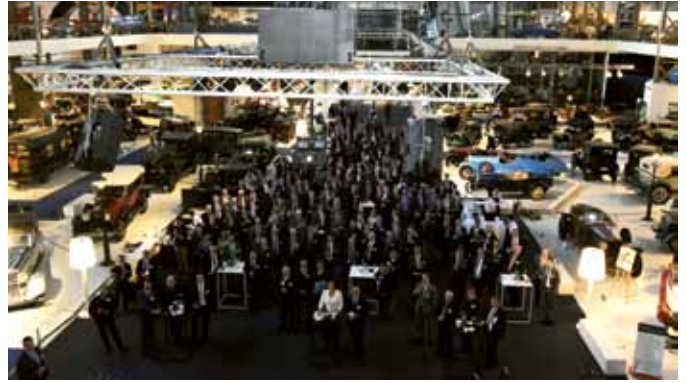


The ECG Spring Congress & General Assembly

by Aleksandra Plis



This year's Spring Congress & General Assembly of the Brussels-based European Finished Vehicle Logistics Association (ECG) was held in Malta on May 18th-19th. Thanks to the summery weather, not least because the Association celebrates its 20th anniversary, participants could proudly summarize their past achievements, along with venturing into what the future may hold for them.

The event officially started with a photo relation bringing back memories from the past two decades, accompanied by Kenny Rogers' song *Twenty Years Ago*. Afterwards, Wolfgang Göbel, the President of ECG, warmly welcomed all participants, and especially new members that decided to join the Association over the past 12 months. His

speech was followed by reports from particular ECG Working Groups about their meetings and activities during 2016 as well as plans for this year.

Day 1's evening dinner was held under the open sky at the famed by a unique waterfall and rock formations view Limestone Heritage Park & Garden, where participants (brought there by vintage busses) had the

opportunity to taste original Maltese food. The ECG Academy Graduation Ceremony was the evening's highlight, topped with awe-inspiring fireworks.

Constraints? How about no!

The event's second day kicked off with LMC Automotive's Justin Cox's summary on the global vehicle market, noting its eight



consecutive year of growth in the post-crisis era. The overall progress, although slower than in 2016 (from +5% to +3%), is nevertheless expected to continue this year. In China, governmental incentives, such as a 5% tax reduction on small engine vehicles, have led to increasing sales starting in late 2015 and continuing throughout last year (+12%); currently, the Chinese market represents about 30% of the global demand. The European light vehicle market is expected to grow this year by 2.2% in sales volume; this figure excludes Russia, which, however, is forecasted to mark its first increase of roughly 6% since the collapse of its market due to political and economic issues. The UK will definitely be affected by Brexit, Justin underlined, but it is still too early to predict the real scale of it, whereas the currently estimated decline of 4.5% was in fact expected to happen even before the leave vote actually took place.

As for other future trends, ECG is trying to adapt new technologies to its members'

needs. Avtologistika's Pavel Haidai presented an app gathering in one place all ECG's manuals as well as ECG News. The digitalization topic was threaded by TransFollow's Hans Lip, who put a spotlight on the rationale behind prompt next-gen tech adaptations, like the use of the e-CMR as well as other e-documents, not only to cut costs and make businesses run smoother, but also to avoid the fate of Nokia or Kodak, two companies which badly suffered from missing the innovation call.

Day 2's second part began with Lucienne Meilak from the Maltese Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure, who focused on the so-called Valletta Declaration, signed in March by EU Member States' Transport Ministers under the patronage of the Malta's Presidency. The adopted document, *Priorities for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2020*, stresses the importance of digitalization and smart innovations uptake, so that sea shipping

can continue to be a catalyst for the maritime economy in particular, and the EU's growth in general. DG CONNECT's Eddy Hartog brought closer the Commission's 5G Action Plan, launched in September 2016, and aimed at boosting the Union's deployment efforts of having in place 5G infrastructures and services across the Digital Single Market by 2020. FEPORT's Lamia Kerdjoudj-Belkaid gave the final speech, talking about the necessity of making a competition-to-cooperation mind shift, encompassing all transport modes, particularly in light of 2018 being named the multimodal year. "If there are too many constraints, business will go somewhere else," she stressed.

The Association's next Spring Congress & General Assembly will take place in Madrid, but before it, ECG is gearing towards its autumn *Digital Revolutions in Political Turmoil* conference, to take place in Brussels from 19th to 20th of October. ■

ECG TURNS 20 YEARS – HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

In March, the Association of European Vehicle Logistics (ECG) celebrated its 20th anniversary, gathering in Brussels' Autoworld Museum its members, past executives, friends and supporters, as well as top EU officials, like the European Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc and ACEA's Secretary General Erik Jonnaert, to cherish with them this very, very special occasion.

Established in March of 1997 as a non-profit organisation, going back then under the name of the European Car-Transport Group of Interest and initially encompassing around 30 members, the Association has been ever since its first day representing the common interests of vehicle logistics companies at a European level both to regulators and lawmakers, as well as to the sector's car and truck manufacturing customers.

Currently at 103 (seven of which joined this year), ECG membership is at its record level, having significantly bounced back after the post-crisis years, which is a very good sign that the sector is in good health. A big shout-out was given in this regard to Grimaldi's Costantino Baldissara, until recently ECG's President, who has successfully guided the Association through these rough waters. Today, ECG members have an aggregate direct turnover of around EUR 27.1 bln. Over 116 thou. Europeans are directly employed by the vehicle logistics industry, while an additional 294 thou. indirectly. The sector owns or operates 25 river barges, 508 car carrying ships, 16 thou. purpose-built rail wagons, and more than 22 thou. specialised road transporters.

Under the presidency of Mosolf Group's Wolfgang Göbel, the Association now looks into the future. It will not only advance its highly acclaimed ECG Academy as well as Working Groups, but will take up the challenges and opportunities tabled down by the ongoing digitisation, e.g. looking into how logistics providers can better use data to predict and control their operations. As such, ECG will invest in a standard forecasting tool to be used for aiding the sector in improving data analysis for well-versed decision-making. The Baltic Transport Journal would like to take this opportunity to wish ECG a happy birthday and best of luck in all of the Association's future endeavours!

