

## Determination despite uncertainty

by Przemysław Opłocki

**This year's General Assembly & Spring Congress of ECG (Association of European Vehicle Logistics) took place on 22-23 May on the Atlantic coast in the Portuguese Cascais. One burning question dissected during the event was the future of business relationships with the US, especially in light of the volatile customs policy tossed around by Trump's cabinet.**



Over 300 delegates from member companies and partners discussed how to conduct business effectively in the face of geopolitical changes, political tensions, armed conflicts – and how all of this will affect production and supply chains. Strengthening business relationships and closer cooperation now seem not only important, but essential. Another topic was how to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support people working in the vehicle logistics industry.

Day 1's General Assembly saw report presentations from board members on the ECG work groups, highlights from regional meetings, and heard from Frank Schnelle, the Association's Executive Director. There was also a presentation of a special report on sustainable development and emissions. The meeting introduced the ECG Board candidates and then elected Ceren Eker from ANT Lojistik and Artur Allende from Noatum Automotive as new members. All other board members were re-elected (besides Xavier Vázquez, who did not stand for re-election).

The emblematic ECG Gala Dinner took place at SUD Lisboa, a place with a magnificent view of the 25th of April Bridge, which connects Lisbon with the southern bank of the Tagus River. This year's Gala was also a time for an

official 'farewell' to ECG's outgoing Executive Director, Mike Sturgeon, after 15 years of nothing but rolled-up-sleeves effort. In tune with tradition, the ECG Academy diploma ceremony took place.

Day 2's Spring Congress kicked off with a speech by Wolfgang Göbel, President of ECG, who emphasised that the Association, faced with global changes and challenges, wants to support the development of its members' businesses and improve their ability to work with new technologies. To that end, ECG struck a strategic cooperation agreement with the China Automotive Logistics Association (CALA) in April 2025. CALA's delegation, mainly with OEM representatives, is expected to partake in ECG's autumn conference (16-17 October 2025, Amsterdam). ECG has also refreshed its collaboration with the Automotive Industry Action Group.

Professor Alexander Sandkamp (Kiel Institute for the World Economy) gave the first speech, talking about the planned American tariffs and their impact on European production. In his view, these should not be as significant as feared. Justin Cox (GlobalData) came with his classical automotive outlook, with an overarching conclusion that logistics providers must adapt (capacities, workforce) to the loss of five million cars in production.

Asked what could give the market another domestic or export boom, Cox hinted at electric vehicles (EVs). Both the EU and the UK could help here by lowering VAT and lessening regulations. The Chinese might, in his view, have a clear upper hand here production-wise by setting up plants specifically designed to assemble EVs, rather than struggling to retrofit legacy factories.

AI and digitalisation dominated the next session, especially how they may change the industry by improving processes and procedures. Federico Avellán Borgmeyer (efcom) presented how cubX (customer behaviour explorer) solutions help with detecting phantom invoices. Anike Murrenhoff (Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics) showed how AI solutions can solve specific challenges in the logistics sector. Representatives from the ECG Academy showed various AI applications to enhance productivity and reduce costs in the business of moving vehicles. Next was the Green Cost Calculator, a tool to help finished vehicle logistics navigate the complexities of fluctuating cost factors over the investment period.

Summarising the Congress, Wolfgang Göbel emphasised that "despite ongoing market uncertainties, this year's ECG General



Assembly sent a clear signal of determination; the finished vehicle logistics sector is setting the course for digital transformation, CO<sub>2</sub> transparency, and enhanced global

cooperation." At the press conference, ECG board members underscored the importance of AI and digitalisation for the industry. As such, the Association has set in motion the

digitalisation working group, tasked with supporting its members with input and use cases. At the same time, ECG won't be losing sight of environmental issues. ■