

# UNITED WE STAND

*ECTA'S ROLE IN PROMOTING THE CHEMICAL TRANSPORT SECTOR AND ITS SAFETY MEANS IT HAS TO WORK CLOSELY WITH OTHER ASSOCIATIONS, INCLUDING EPCA*



While it may not have been “on the 2007 scale” in terms of product transported, 2014 “was rather a good year” according to Marc Twisk, appointed this year as managing director of the European Chemical Transport Association (ECTA). Indeed, last year the Association’s Responsible Care members together transported some 89.2m tonnes of chemicals over a total distance of 2.23bn km, up from 82.8m tonnes over 2.16bn km in 2013. What’s more, intermodal transport accounts for 42 per cent of the total tonne-km traffic, much

higher than the 30 per cent target set by the EU for all freight by 2030 and not that far off the 50 per cent figure envisioned for 2050.

“Middle Eastern production is increasing so we see that a lot more deliveries in smaller quantities are being shipped and that’s something that’s good for our members,” reports Twisk. Indeed, whereas such imports used to be restricted to crude oil, naphthas and “more general products”, they now increasingly consist of chemical intermediates in 25-tonne tank containers –

a clear sign that Middle Eastern petrochemical producers are looking to add value through the production of more downstream products.

At the same time, notes Twisk, “a lot of [ECTA] members are also going to the Middle East and other regions of the world” to capitalise on the growth offered by these rapidly developing markets. Nevertheless, while he is reluctant to describe the situation in Europe as rosy, he notes that “some big European chemical clusters are doing quite well” and that the regional chemical industry as a whole

is continuing to see investment. As such, ECTA members are benefitting from "stability in the chemical industry", albeit tempered by a number of general economic difficulties.

#### OUR SURVEY SAYS

The health of the European economy, though, is not the only matter facing the chemical logistics fraternity. For instance, in June this year ECTA conducted a survey of its members to identify what they saw as major bugbears in need of attention. Topping the list was the flouting of industry guidelines, such as the regular instances where a driver is expected to take a sample of the product delivered.

"That is not a job that a driver has to do but we still see it a lot at unloading sites, that a driver has to climb on his truck and take a sample," explains Twisk. Not only is it clearly stated in the applicable guideline that this "is not the driver's work to do", but it is also dangerous and requires "a good fall

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arrest prevention system" that is not available at all unloading facilities. Sadly, this is not the only such example.

"Although there are a lot of guidelines, they are not always known or not always followed, so this is something that we have to work on," says Twisk. "At the smaller chemical and non-chemical sites we see that a lot of these issues are still not dealt with in a proper way, so we have to enforce them and we are now discussing [with industry] how we can do that."

A second major cause for concern among ECTA members is not so much a shortage of drivers but a shortage of well-trained drivers. After all, as Twisk puts it, "if you have a driver driving around with a chemical who doesn't know what that chemical is and how to deal with it, then we have a problem". Thus, there



is a clear need to ensure that all ADR drivers have the same level of training, regardless of where they are based in Europe. At the same time, there is also a need to benchmark driver training to ascertain that "they have a certain ability".

Although perhaps not strictly a transport or logistics issue per se, a third major annoyance the survey uncovered was IT-related. "Before, it was okay if we knew the week something was going to be delivered. Then, on which day it was delivered. Now, it's down to the second," says Twisk.

Consequently, logistics service providers (LSPs) are constantly "dealing with information, getting information, giving information and so on".

While he accepts that this is the nature of the modern world, the problem arises from the sheer number of different electronic data interchanges (EDIs), software applications and formats that ECTA members find themselves having to deal with on a daily basis. This, he says, is proving to be "a very huge administrative burden", particularly among smaller members that lack their own IT departments. »

### ALL PULL TOGETHER

To help overcome such obstacles while simultaneously raising the bar in terms of safety, health, the environment and quality (SHEQ), ECTA has long maintained close working links with such fellow industry associations as the European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic), the European Association of Chemical Distributors, the European Federation of Tank Cleaning Organisations (EFTCO) and the European Petrochemical Association (EPCA), with which it shares a building in Brussels. One clear and highly successful upshot of this close collaboration is the industry-wide Safety & Quality Assessment System (SQAS) that provides for an independent and uniform assessment of LSPs and chemical distributors.

With ECTA a key member of the SQAS Technical and Accreditation Committee, the system, explains Twisk, has now been expanded to include companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices. "I think it's going in the right direction," he says, reasoning that the inclusion of a CSR element does away

with the need for supplementary audits and questionnaires as such matters become perceived as ever more important.

"We are really in favour of SQAS," he continues, noting that all ECTA members are duly SQAS-assessed. After all, he explains, if a Cefic member wants to know something about an LSP in Europe, SQAS provides them with a detailed and impartial assessment of that company's SHEQ and now CSR capabilities. What's more, continues Twisk, if an LSP attains a low score on a matter, the system enables a shipper to follow up and ask them why – something that Twisk is keen to see chemical companies do. "There is a lot of information [in the assessment], so if you have it, use it and ask our members what the pros and cons of their company are," he says.

### DRIVE BETTER, DRIVE SAFER

However, SQAS is certainly not the only example of successful industry-wide

collaboration, with ECTA having also participated in numerous other transport and logistics working groups to date. These have covered a range of issues, from the safe discharge of silo trucks to behaviour-based safety among drivers. What's more, this autumn will also see ECTA participating in a new EFTCO-led working group on the cleaning of bulk tanks and a further Cefic-led working group on the management of change within the chemical supply chain.

This, explains Twisk, follows on from a previous working group concerning the investigation of logistics incidents. "To investigate a logistics incident, we have to have a mutual understanding of what we have to do, how to report it and so on, but the next step now is the management of the change that follows," he says. "When we change something to prevent incidents, we must also find a mutual approach to do so." HCB  
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