



A round up of news from the European Association of Abnormal Road Transport and Mobile Cranes

ASSOCIATION TRANSPORT OFFICER NEEDED

The Association is looking for a new transport officer as part of its strategy of expanding the activities of its transport section.

The priority of the new paid-for post will be to grow membership and contacts, especially in areas where ESTA is yet to be represented. The successful candidate is likely to be multi-lingual.

To find out more, or to apply, please contact Caroline van Geest at ESTA on: officemanager@esta-eu.org

A PUSH ON EUROPEAN PERMITS

ESTA transport section vice-president, Wim Richie, has made a new call on Europe's road transport authorities to help reduce paperwork and bureaucracy faced by the heavy transport industry and to adopt the Special European Registration for Trucks and Trailers (SERT). After a lengthy campaign by ESTA the SERT was launched ten years ago with European Commission support. Only the Netherlands has fully adopted it.

Many in the industry feel that an opportunity to boost efficiency and eliminate an obstacle to cross-border trade is being lost. SERT forms a key part of the *European Best Practice Guidelines for Abnormal Road Transport*, first published by the European Commission's transport directorate and which received the approval of the EC's road safety authorities back in 2005. It is intended to replace the many different national documents faced by heavy transport firms, reducing paperwork while making sure the authorities have the detailed information they need.

Wim Richie, also a former senior policy officer for the Dutch department of road transport, said, "SERT has great benefits for the industry. It will reduce costs as for every vehicle only one document is needed to give all the necessary information."

Richie added, "What is more, SERT is a very effective way of registering modular trailers – that is, trailers that can be put together in different combinations even when different manufacturers are involved."

In 2012 ESTA completed some new research and concluded that complying with different cross-border permit regulations costs the industry around €500 million (US\$560 million) a year. It believes this figure could be almost halved with a more efficient system.



Wim Richie

European licence plans make steady progress

Ambitious plans from the European Association of Abnormal Road Transport and Mobile Cranes (ESTA) to create a European Crane Operator Licence (ECOL) are gathering momentum. Experts close to the project, however, warn that the complex work might not be completed for another two or three years.

The latest progress was due to be discussed at the ESTA March board meeting, as *IC* went to press. It is expected to be raised again at ESTA's General Assembly in Paris this April, during the Intermat exhibition.

Work on the learning outcomes – that is, what crane operators need to know – has almost been completed.

The focus will now shift to devising training programmes that will have the backing of the European Qualification Framework, the organisation responsible for overseeing the co-ordination of qualifications throughout Europe.

ESTA is also proposing to set up a separate governing body to run the licence scheme and is drawing on the experiences of similar initiatives in the USA and Australia, organised by the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) and the Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA), respectively.

The ECOL project is being overseen by a special ESTA working group, comprising representatives from eight countries.

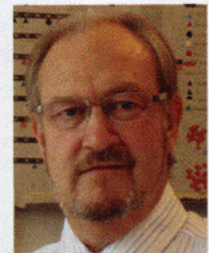
The move has been welcomed by the overwhelming majority among all of ESTA's 18 members.

Supporters believe that the licence will lead to higher standards, improve site safety and boost employment opportunities for qualified operators, making it easier for them to find work outside their home country. They also think it will reduce training and education costs and help make the European crane industry more competitive in global markets.

The licence will supplement, rather than supersede, existing national qualifications and is likely to be set at a higher qualification level than currently exists in most member states – so countering the fear among some in the industry that ECOL could become a "lowest common denominator" qualification.

"We strongly believe that there is a real need to have one standard in Europe, and that ECOL will significantly raise skills levels," said Haydn Steele, safety and training manager at UK ESTA member, the Construction Plant-hire Association, and one of the experts driving the project.

Steele added, "There are many hurdles to overcome yet, and operators with a future European licence will still need to be aware of local rules and regulations, but the advantages of having everybody trained to the same benchmark are great."



Haydn Steele

