

TEN-T DAYS 2018 – Thursday 26th April 2018

Session on “Transport digitalization”

9.30-11.15 – Ljubljana, Slovenia

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

<Introduction>

First of all, I would like to thank the European Commission for organising these TEN-T-Days, and for allowing someone from private business to speak, in addition to the representatives of public institutions.

And that brings us directly to the heart of digitalisation, at least in the construction industry.

Digitalisation will only be a success, if all stakeholders, whether public or private, work together, with mutual trust and the commitment to common aims.

But let me briefly present who we are and what we do:

The European Construction Industry Federation, represents, via its 31 national Member Federations in 27 countries, construction companies of all sizes – small, medium and large – which carry out all forms of building and civil engineering activities.

The European construction industry represents 8.6% of EU GDP.

There are more than 3 million construction companies of all sizes – and mostly SMEs! – which employ directly more than 14 million people altogether.

<Setting the scene>

When we talk about “transport digitalisation”, we tend to think first of new services to the users and “apps”.

But “transport digitalisation” also implies hard transport infrastructure which is adapted to the digital era.

Digitalisation has become a major issue for the construction industry and consequently for the EU's hard infrastructure.

At present, keywords in our industry are “robots”, “3D printing”, “prefabrication”, “drones” and “Building Information Modelling”.

These technologies imply two different things:

- a **completely new way of working**, and
- **completely new types of end-products**.

First, the development of new technologies is supported by **new construction methodologies**. I would like to concentrate here on the “BIM” revolution in our industry. With the Building Information Modelling (or BIM), you can design a three-dimensional digital map of the infrastructure, to which all players involved can have access and contribute.

It reduces structural clashes, enables better collaborative-working, can be updated in real-time.

It allows more creativity, streamlines design processes, improves delivery times.

Of course it implies a major industrial transformation in our sector.

In particular, we have this major challenge, in that skills requirements are already significantly changing.

But I see it as a fantastic opportunity.

It won't be a surprise to you that our industry faces difficulties in attracting youngsters..., generating a real shortage of skilled workers in most EU countries.

This digital revolution in construction is a very good way of attracting a generation of young people who know nothing else, but dependency on IT-tools. They are the "digital generation".

Second, as regards the outcomes of these new construction processes, we have to and we are already developing buildings and infrastructure which are smart, digitalised and connected. These developments are vital for improving the EU's transport networks.

And at the cross-road of these two aspects, there is a new business model.

There is the need for all existing players in the value chain to develop a collaborative and inclusive strategy in order to achieve the common goals: public and private clients, the transport industry, the construction industry, new market entrants, like Siemens or Google, IT services providers, researchers, investors...

Without forgetting national and European decision-makers who play a key role in accelerating or slowing down these developments.

My own view is that they should be promoting them.

Fragmentation needs to be replaced by teamwork along this value chain.

Dialogue, collaboration, transparency, shared goals...

This is the new reality in construction and beyond!

<The example of connected roads>

In terms of achievements, I would like to talk about the example of connected roads.

Everyone has the "Google car" in mind.

But again, self-driving vehicles will be useless without the right infrastructure.

A connected road is much more than a mere surface for transportation.

It is a control panel for so many things and provides a wealth of data that can improve our lives as well as our infrastructure.

Imagine roads that can detect sudden changes in temperature on the surface.

In order to avoid traffic problems, congestion, accidents, an alert is sent to the relevant authorities which can take appropriate action and warn people on the overhead signs.

Or better still: roads that can adjust the surface temperature automatically.

This would avoid any disruption or any necessary action.

Imagine roads that can transmit warnings directly to the drivers – or the self-driving vehicles with an alternative route already calculated and programmed into the GPS in case of a major accident ahead.

Zero disruption, minimal delays, driver behaviour adjusted automatically and appropriately.

Imagine automatic monitoring of priority lanes, heavy goods vehicles, toll stations and toll roads.

Imagine roads connected with other infrastructure.

Relevant data shared from roads to railways, to airports, to ports.

Imagine roads that generate energy, with built-in solar panels or other renewables or with the heat created by the tyres of the vehicles using the roads.

This is what connected roads look like. Some of these examples are already in place, some others are still under development.

None of this is science fiction. This is what the near future looks like for SMART transport infrastructure.

<Conclusion>

So, you understand, I believe that smart transport infrastructure goes hand in hand with transport digitalisation.

I would also like to point out something important: “digital-proof” transport infrastructure requires high quality.

As in any high quality infrastructure or innovative infrastructure, this has a cost.

It might sound obvious, but clients – and in particular public clients – tend to go for the lowest price... which leads to cheap solutions.

Also, we are observing it all over the EU: there is a clear investment gap considering the existing and future needs for such smart transport infrastructure!

This is why FIEC joined the coalition which is presenting today the “Ljubljana Declaration” for a strong EU budget for transport in the next multi-annual financial framework.

Indeed, the modernisation and digitalisation of transport as a whole would be nothing without an ambitious EU budget dedicated to it.

And we, members of the coalition, are convinced that a strong Connecting Europe Facility is the right tool to meet the needs!

Moreover, new smart infrastructure is nothing without an underlying “traditional” transport network in good shape!

The maintenance and upgrading of our transport infrastructure has become a key issue all over Europe.

Here also digitalisation can help: with better monitoring, earlier warnings, more detailed assessment of the problems.

This will mean lower maintenance and upgrading costs at the end of the day!

Let's not wait until bridges collapse – as has already happened!

In the end, our ultimate goal is a stronger economy supported by a more efficient built environment.

And for this, digital construction is a fantastic chance!