

INTERVIEW: Iffet Türken was elected ESTA's new Transport Vice President at the organisation's general assembly in April. She explains why ESTA is so important to her and the industry.

Iffet Türken is well-known in the heavy transport industry. She is also a busy woman.

A board member for business development for trailer manufacturer Kässbohrer and a member of BSK, the German heavy transport and crane association, she is also vice president of TAID, Turkey's Heavy Commercial Vehicles Association, and is on the Supervisory Board of the Council of the trailer, body and bus section of the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA),

What is more, she attends the Executive Masters Programs at the world-renowned INSEAD business school in France, focusing on change management.

And, in addition, earlier this year, Ms Türken was elected Transport Vice President of ESTA, the European association for abnormal road transport and mobile cranes.

The reasons for accepting the ESTA position and adding to her list of commitments are both professional and personal.

She is passionate about ESTA's role in raising standards, improving the business climate and promoting international cooperation throughout the heavy transport and mobile cranes industry – a strategy that fits with her work and priorities at Kässbohrer.

And she is personally concerned with increasing the visibility and role of women in the transportation industry which, she believes, would bring a more diversified and forward thinking approach into the sector.

But given her already full agenda, why is ESTA so important and what does she hope to bring to the role?

“To be honest, and as all in the industry are well aware, the European Union is not united when it comes to abnormal road transport,” Türken says.

“It is still the case that two of the biggest challenges our industry faces remain the harmonization of equipment transport regulations and the reduction of permit delays across Europe.

“Each country has its own rules and requirements regarding the transport of oversize loads, including the technical capacities of transport equipment, vehicle identification and working conditions.

“In fact, in some countries, the rules and regulations even vary from one region to another.”

She continued: “ESTA’s role is pivotal in this area, acting as an umbrella organization pulling together national associations, operators and manufacturers to try and overcome the inconsistencies within the European heavy transport industry, and increase the efficiency in cross-border heavy transport projects.”

She insists there is no conflict between this work and the work of ESTA’s national association members. They support each other.

“ESTA not only complements the work of national associations, but provides these national associations with a Europe-wide vision for a better and safer business environment.”

What is more this work complements the approach taken by Kässbohrer, who joined ESTA in 2012.

Türken explained: “In Kässbohrer, we pride ourselves on listening closely to our customers to understand their daily operational issues and load-specific challenges. As a result, being active in ESTA is very important for us. It allows us to bring information we gather from our customer base across Europe to contribute to the issues faced by ESTA and its members.”

ESTA currently has members in 18 countries in Europe, but going forward, Türken wants to see ESTA expand its influence and base geographically, and build on its work to date to reduce bureaucracy and boost cross-border harmonization.

“There are many ways in which ESTA can set the agenda across Europe. The current work on developing a European Crane Operator Licence (ECOL) is a case in point.

“Another example was ESTA’s support for the recent successful campaign over engine emissions, led by FEM’s Cranes and Lifting Equipment Product Group, which won the industry extra time to implement the new Stage V regulations.

“And then there was the publication this year of the much-anticipated SPMT best practice guide, which is now being translated into six languages.”

Less successful to date, but no less important, was the promotion of the Special European Registration Trucks and Trailers (SERT), one of the recommendations of the European Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) for Abnormal Road Transports, issued by the EU Commission.

“The aim was to reduce the paperwork faced by heavy hauliers, but adoption has been limited”, Türken said. “Going forward, this remains one of our key objectives.”

She continued: "These initiatives show how ESTA is working to improve the quality of services in the industry. There are many more examples, and will be many more in the future.

Underpinning much of ESTA's work is an emphasis on improving safety at all levels in the industry.

The Best Practice Guide for SPMTs was one example of this, and of an approach that attempts to bring together all relevant parties - from manufacturers, operators and government permit authorities to representatives from clients.

"As ESTA's work shows, it's crucial to involve clients more in safety debates and decisions. In Kässbohrer, we do this as well and I hope that the method of internationally-accepted 'best practice' becomes more widespread in the industry, as it's the easiest way to accumulate expertise."

Türken first entered the industry in 1996 when she joined leading semi-trailer manufacturer, the TIRSAN Group, after graduating in Political Science and International Relations at the Bogazici University in Istanbul.

As befits her degree subject, she remains personally committed to the benefits of international cooperation and collaboration.

"All my involvements are a key part of my job. In Kässbohrer we believe that we can only improve our services and products further through the long-term partnerships and collaborations with industry constituents. It is crucial to be able to manage complexities through various stakeholders."

As for her personal role, she concludes: "The heavy vehicle industry mirrors world trade. With my position as business development manager, I can take the role of ambassador within different cultures and find areas of mutual interest and common ground."

All of which is good news for ESTA.