



# European Tugowners Association

Brussels, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018

## **The European Tugowners Association celebrates its 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Antwerp**

The European Tugowners' Association (ETA) came back to Antwerp to celebrate its 55<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. This year's event was kindly hosted by ETA local members Port of Antwerp, Kotug Smit Towage and Antwerp Towage (joint venture between Fairplay Towage and Multraship). More than 150 participants among ETA full and associate member delegates and guests attended the Annual General Meeting making this edition a success and one of the largest in the Association's history.

This year's Annual Meeting Conference focused on the digitalization of the towage sector and the challenges and opportunities it poses. The speakers, ranging from representatives of the Port of Antwerp to the World Economic Forum or IT solutions specialists provided different perspectives on how the towage sector might benefit from the early adoption of IT based technologies. In this regard, speakers highlighted the need to invest time and resources on the acquisition of digital skills, so the EU sector may keep its competitiveness and technology lead.

*“The European towage sector has made important efforts to adapt to this new digital reality. ETA members are at the vanguard of this IT revolution, acquiring the “smartest” tugs, developing new autonomous ships and installing new software that make our companies more efficient. IT can be also a great tool to increase the safety of towage operations and make the shipping industry greener. We, business leaders do not have other option than preparing ourselves and our sector to an unstoppable change from which we should reap the benefits”* says Leendert Muller, ETA Chairman.

ETA Secretariat wants to warmly thank the host companies for their tireless support without which, this 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting would not be possible to take place.

ETA, is the only association that represents the Tug sector at a European level, and is composed of 87 full members in 25 countries, who own or operate a combined fleet of over 850 tugs in European ports. Its membership ranges from major towage companies operating more than 100 tugs worldwide to family businesses and port authorities with very small-to-medium-size tug fleets.

ETA's work during the next year will focus on the implementation of its strategic vision including creating further awareness of the towage sector at a European and International level; and of enhancing the service it gives to its members.

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