Busworld has begun in style

Vice prime minister Vande Lanotte: “Buses are hidden treasures”

New location, new approach, new host. The traditional opening ceremony of the 22nd edition of Busworld in Kortrijk and the 50th Busworld fair worldwide was smoother, quicker and more professional than ever before. Redgy De Schacht, president of BAAV organising the fair, told the large audience in the city theatre of Kortrijk that the number of exhibitors and the number of visitors to Busworld is still growing. Thanks to the biggest fair in the sector, the public transport has become a topical subject in the news and in the press every day - a statement which, moments later, was endorsed by the Belgian vice prime minister Johan Vande Lanotte in his speech.

After the opening speech television host Kurt Van Engenh had a short discussion with Didier Ramoudt, president of Busworld International and Mieke Glorieux, CEO of Busworld International, about the wind of change that is blowing through Busworld International. This change does not only apply to the location, but it also goes for the actual content: Busworld International has taken a new turn with the foundation of the Busworld Academy.

The locations of a number of fairs abroad will be changing as well. Next year, Busworld in Russia will be relocated to Kiev in Ukraine. The same goes for India, where Busworld India will no longer take place in Mumbai but in Bangalore. Furthermore, Busworld will be starting a new fair in Bogota, Colombia. Thanks to the three shaking Columbian beauties that turned up on the stage in the city theatre, we were able to already have a taste of the Latin-American folklore. Despite the negative perception, Mieke Glorieux is confident that this new fair will be successful. After signing the contracts with the Ukrainian and Columbian ambassadors, the secretary-general of the IRU, Umberto de Pretto, and Didier Ramoudt, president of Busworld International, put their signature on a “memory of understanding”. Good choice, because doubling the passenger transport by bus and coach in the whole of Europe is a mission that you can never complete on your own. The vice president of the IRU, Yves Mannaerts, then explained why the IRU gave a prize to Skype for being the best city for group tourism, to the Romanian company for public transport in Alba Iulia for being the best European bus company, and to the Danish coach operator Pipowij for its innovative approach in the coach tourism. After Yves Mannaerts the founder of Busworld, Luc Glorieux, handed out the award for coach tourism. This time, the lucky winner was the tourism sector Ruhr district, which has made some very serious efforts in order to promote, preserve and restore the region’s heritage.

Bottlenecks

Redgy De Schacht, Umberto de Pretto and Jean Wynn, president of the Belgian federation, talked about the bottlenecks in the sector. There is nothing new under the sun, as the bottlenecks have already been identified before. The strict driving times and rest periods still have a negative impact on the good functioning in the tourism sector, politicians still do not think of bus and coach transport as a priority and the problem of unfair competition with the airline sector has not been solved yet either, not even after a quarter of a century. During his short speech vice prime minister Vande Lanotte mentioned that Belgium and, by extension the whole of Europe, is facing a number of enormous challenges with regard to mobility. Figures of the Planning Office show that the mobility increases by 1% each year. Taking the current traffic jam issue in mind, it would not be surprising if we start having gridlocks everywhere soon. “That is why”, Vande Lanotte said, “it is high time that we reduce our ecological footprint. I would like to congratulate Busworld for keeping this topic alive in the media. Buses are hidden treasures”, the vice prime minister concluded.

At the end the Grand Awards were distributed. EvoBus received the Grand Award Coach for its Setra TopClass and Van Hool got the Grand Award Bus for its ExquiCity. MAN was honoured as Busbuilder of the year 2013.

The snorkelman

Right before the opening of Busworld several bus and coach drivers got the shock of their life when suddenly at the wash installation, an unrecognizable man wearing flippers, diving goggles and a snorkel stood up in front of them. Little did they know that Dominique Janssens had dressed like this for fun. Dominique Janssens forms part of the security team (it will be his sixth time now) but he has also been the operator of the wash installation for five editions. Basically, he makes sure that the buses and coaches are spick and span before they drive to the stands. For the 2013 fair he washed more than eighty buses and coaches. To that occasion Mieke Glorieux, manager of Busworld, gave him an appropriate outfit consisting of flippers, diving goggles and a snorkel.

A small miracle ...

Every time it’s a little short of a miracle that the Busworld stands are ready on time. Panic breaks out with all of those who are not familiar with the fair routine when they look at the halls the day before the official opening. Complete and utter chaos. Fork lifts, ladders, garbage containers and packaging material blocking every corridor, trucks and lorries driving back and forth, workmen hammering, sawing, patching, painting and cleaning until every screw and detail of the stand is right. And still, it has never happened that we did not get ready on time. Indeed, a small miracle …
The new concept of ECW catches on

Setra and Van Hool are the big winners

The whole team of Busworld is at your disposal ...