

A new man at the helm of the ERTICO ship

Hermann Meyer is the new Chief Executive Officer of ERTICO - ITS Europe. He talks to **Carol Debell** about his excitement, his optimism and his confidence for the future of ITS – and the huge challenges that remain in terms of effective deployment.

On December 5th 2007, Hermann Meyer was unanimously elected as the new Chief Executive Officer of ERTICO - ITS Europe. He takes over at a critical time for Intelligent Transport Systems and Services (ITS). The technologies are proven, the value of the systems widely recognised. But still there remain huge challenges in terms of effective deployment. What is needed is someone who understands his way around not just the technological issues but also the political challenges that lie ahead. Enter Hermann Meyer who is keen to talk about opportunities rather than problems.

Hermann joins ERTICO from the External Relations Office of the Volkswagen Group. As head of this department and based in Brussels, Hermann has spent the last few years as a professional 'lobbyist'. It is not a term he likes – he says it sounds reactive as if he spent his time waiting around for the opportunity to talk to people. But he is quite frank about what he was trying to achieve.

'I saw my role as providing politicians with the information they needed in decision making – this was the right way to do these things and to influence outcomes.'

He had an agenda. An environmental economist by profession, he began his career as a lecturer at Edinburgh University but says he quickly came to the conclusion that he would move things along a lot more effectively from within industry.

Throughout his professional life Hermann has been involved in the CO₂ debate. It was this commitment that led him initially to the environmental department of Volkswagen, and then into external affairs. It also took him, in the early years of this century on secondment to ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, as Director of Environmental Policy. You need to know your way around the political corridors to influence policy at this level and Hermann hopes to be able to use this know-how to the advantage of the ITS community. 'One of my key aims is to strengthen the political impact of ERTICO.'

And after years of being a prominent figure in the 'emissions' arena, he says he's learnt some important lessons. 'It became clear to me that an integrated approach to emissions reductions was essential. Car manufacturers

can do a great deal on their own but cost effective solutions will only really emerge when all the stakeholders that interact with the car contribute together – that is when you will see real progress.'

Nowhere is this integrated approach more essential than in ITS which spans not only professional disciplines but a wide range of disparate stakeholders. Hermann has spent his first few weeks with ERTICO meeting with key players in the industry and he says that although they may have very different agendas and priorities, they seem to share one thing. Excitement. 'It is amazing to find so many exciting projects in the pipeline – ideas for which there is a good business case. I think ERTICO needs to be more business

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oriented so that it can provide a platform for its Partners to help them develop these ideas. There are often issues which need to be solved, not in the seven-year timeframe of the research and development environment, but now, urgently in half a year.

He says he sees a vital role for the Network of ITS National Associations here. 'We have to strengthen our partnership further so that we can together provide the platform which will enable these solutions to be found. Within the membership of the Network there is extreme competence and we need to work together to exploit that competence and involve members of the Network in a very intensive and cooperative way. I am looking forward to developing this partnership.'

There are of course challenges when it comes to deployment. Hermann identifies four key phases – the R&D phase, demonstration, implementation and standardisation. 'These four activities need to move forward in a synchronised way. Sometimes there is a disconnect between politics and industry and I think it is here that ERTICO can be really



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Hermann Meyer, the new Chief Executive Officer of ERTICO - ITS Europe

helpful.' He points to the different time frames that you find in the ITS world where different industry sectors have different timetables. 'The IT industry is often working only six months ahead while the car industry will be thinking in ten year cycles and the infrastructure providers are looking 20 to 30 years ahead. Harmonising these different time lines is not easy – it is a challenge and the key is to set clear priorities, establish timelines and agree who does what. That requires a real focus on the core issues.'

There is plenty of effort going into establishing what those core issues are. The European Commission has published an ITS Action Plan which has set 10 priority targets and one of Hermann's first tasks was to attend a Commission workshop on the Action Plan in February. Hermann says that the priority targets which have been established are covering the most important issues. 'I see a very important role for ERTICO in supporting the Commission and helping to narrow the focus further to be able to act effectively. One of the ERTICO proposals to the meeting was that a high level meeting should be set up with Commissioners, Ministers from Member States and CEOs from industry to discuss the most important next steps and to decide goals, timetables and deliverables for concrete actions.'

ERTICO will contribute to this debate through its Partner Topic Groups. The aim of these new groups is to accelerate the imple-

mentation of ITS deployment. Hermann sees these groups as the engines of ERTICO's future activities. 'They are our think tanks and they will come up with the ideas. They could be future development projects, demonstration projects or proposals to relevant institutions. We had a meeting of ERTICO Partners on February 8th and it was very lively.'

There are four Topic Groups and they focus on: the safety and efficiency for mobility of people; safety and efficiency for goods

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transport; security; and the environment. Hermann says that it is important for the Network to be involved in the work of these groups. 'ERTICO will involve the ITS National Associations in the work of these groups.'

While he recognises the challenges in deployment, he says he is supremely confident about the future of ITS. He says that wherever he goes, he finds that ITS is now

viewed as a central part of the solution. 'ERTICO has just given evidence to a public hearing on Urban Mobility at the European Parliament. We took part because one of our key goals is to raise awareness of the potential of ITS and identify further needs for industrial and political activity. ITS was one of the main issues to be mentioned at this hearing and it was clear that it was viewed as the main tool for improving mobility. I do not see an issue getting ITS into the market – there are so many developments ongoing which speak for more ITS. The challenge is to get it on the market fast by creating the right ITS architecture within the EU'

Doing it is one thing, doing it right is another. It is vital, says Hermann that the developments that are undertaken now lead to the right solutions. 'If we end up with a fragmented market then we will have to live with it for a very long time. If we make the wrong decisions then Member States, companies, operators, will be locked in for a very long time.'

It comes back to that integrated approach that Hermann identified earlier. 'We will only get it right if all the stakeholders from industry, from politics, from infrastructure and from user groups, co-operate and work together. That is why ERTICO's role in the coming years is so important because ERTICO sits at the middle of this nexus and will be key to ensuring that this integration and co-operation takes place.'