The 23rd edition of Busworld Kortrijk was the biggest and best ever. There were 411 exhibitors from 36 countries occupying more floor space than ever before. The number of visitors was 34,932, from 118 countries, a 9% increase on 2013 which was in itself a record. Put into perspective, the number of visitors was equivalent to around half the population of the city of Kortrijk!

Even before the final count, it was clear that Busworld this year was busier than ever before. Registrations of new buses and coaches in the core Western European markets in the first eight months of this year were around 15% higher than the equivalent period last year. That confidence has spread throughout the industry. Many exhibitors said that they were doing business and had made valuable new international contacts.

Mieke Glorieux, Director of Busworld Kortrijk, said: “I am delighted that this edition of Busworld Kortrijk was so successful. I tried to visit as many exhibitors as possible and it was great to see that so many of the booths were busy with customers.

“I would like to thank the Busworld team for all the hard work and preparation. The layout of the exhibition this year worked better than before, with additional connections between the temporary pavilions 8 and 9 and the permanent halls. There was an all-day flow of visitors through all the halls, and that was very encouraging. Many exhibitors have already told us that they will be back again in 2017.

“As you all know, even though the floor space was a record this year, there is still further demand. We are discussing about providing even more space, and we hope to be able to tell you more about a new hall 10 in the coming months.

“It was an excellent exhibition for the economy of Kortrijk and the surrounding region. Hotels, restaurants, caterers, taxi companies and so many more did a roaring trade during Busworld. I also have to thank Kortrijk Xpo and people behind the scenes who did such hard work, especially stand fitters. Walking around at the beginning of the week, I had the usual fears about the exhibition not being ready for opening. It is a great tribute to so many people who worked into the small hours that everything was in place and ready for the official opening.”

Exhibitors want to use Busworld to promote new concepts, often alongside established products. Where better than Busworld Kortrijk, with so many international visitors from so many countries? This year, the main theme among manufacturers was alternative drive systems. The previous edition of Busworld Kortrijk, in October 2013, surprised many visitors with the numbers of all-electric vehicles.

This year, while conventional diesel-powered vehicles were still in the majority, especially with minibus and minicoach builders, the number of hybrid buses had declined. Compressed natural gas was present, with Mercedes-Benz predicting a Western European market of around 1,000 gas fuelled city buses per annum. All-electric buses were everywhere.

One of the fascinating aspects of the all-electric bus business is that some have been developed by established bus manufacturers as options to their diesel products. The more surprising aspect is that a number of companies started life by developing and refining batteries and then built buses that could use them.
Battery technology is moving at a rapid rate as those of you who regularly read the excellent ‘Industry News’ section on the Busworld website will know. As volumes and competition increase, battery prices are likely to come down. Recharging times are also falling and the range per charge is generally extending.

Among the manufacturers, there are different schools of thought. Some, like China’s BYD, believe in supplying sufficient batteries for a full day’s operation without any intermittent recharging. While that potentially has weight problems, limiting the number of passengers that can be carried, if a bus is held up in traffic, it does not lose time recharging at each terminal.

On the other hand, buses with much smaller batteries can take a major charge overnight and a fast recharge at each end of a route, typically for five or six minutes. They have a lower unladen weight and therefore can legally carry more passengers. They also tend to be less expensive.

There has to be standardisation of charging systems. Some manufacturers prefer overhead conductive charging, where a supply gantry has to be located in a layby at each end of a route. Paris has spoken against this option.

Others prefer underfloor inductive and contactless charging using plates buried beneath the road surface at appropriate points on a route. The latter system has the advantage that, as the electric revolution gains pace, it can also be used by other all-electric vehicles, such as taxis, municipal trucks and local delivery vehicles.

Everyone loves looking at the latest luxury coaches. After all, they are the glamorous end of the business. What other product in the industry combines high capital costs with fashion – that first visual impact when your coach draws up to collect its passengers?

The new Irizar i8 coaches certainly caught the eye. Less than ten years ago, the Spanish company was Europe’s largest builder of coachwork on chassis. Irizar took the bold long-term decision to start developing its own integral range. At Busworld, all the vehicles on the stand, and two outside, were fully integral, including the new i8, the slightly lower but well-equipped i6, the i4 multi-purpose coach, the i3 low entry interurban model and i2e all-electric city bus.

The i8 sits above the i6, literally in height, but also in specification. Irizar will differentiate between the two models by ensuring that some of the very high luxury features in the i8 cannot be specified on the i6. The latter has become well established on the roads of Eu-
Temsa launched the new Maraton coach, the highest model that it has ever built and thus extending its range. At the other end, there was the new MD7 midicoach, offering up to 33 seats. Chinese manufacturers also offered new coaches, and mention must also be made of the Iveco Magelys that won the coveted “International Coach of the Year 2016” trophy. Many were amused by the fact that the coach on the Iveco stand was in the livery of the New Zealand All-Blacks rugby team which has been sponsored by Iveco for a number of years. The fact that the All-Blacks hammered France on the Saturday night of Busworld was not lost on a number of visitors!

There is an important market in quite a number of European countries for interurban or multi-purpose coaches that are suitable for a number of applications, such as interurban services, shorter distance private hire and school transport. They have high earning capacity and a potentially long service life, giving excellent Total Cost of Ownership.

MAN had already announced its Lion’s Inter-city earlier in the year, but it made its world première at Busworld. This is likely to develop into a whole range of vehicles.

Scania kept the covers on a new model, until revealing the Interlink. This will be available on two axles up to 13.2 metres and on three axles up to 15 metres. While the chassis is built in Sweden, the body will be built in the Scania factory in Finland.

Various exhibitors concentrated on reduction in fuel consumption. Cummins, the largest independent manufacturer of diesel engines, with numerous clients in the global bus and coach industry, launched stop and start. While this has become widely acceptable in cars, Cummins said that considerable engineering was necessary to make the system suitable for city buses which stop and start many more times during the average day. A number of modifications had to be made to their standard engines, but the savings in consumption could be as high as 5%.

There were also many developments from the component and accessories suppliers, but they will have to wait until the next edition of the Busworld Times.
Immediately before Busworld opened, a team of judges tested an unusual variety of buses and coaches for styling, comfort, safety and ecology.

The Grand Award Coach was given to the Setra TopClass S 516 HDH. It also won the Styling & Design Label and an Ecology Label. The judges described it as a magnificent coach and were impressed by safety features like the front under-run protection.

They also awarded an Ecology Label to the brand new Van Hool EX 17 H coach. Van Hool is building the CX range for North America and the EX range for Europe in a new factory, with a new workforce in Macedonia. The EX coach series is directly positioned under the famous TX series from Van Hool.

The MAN Lion’s Coach Efficient Line won the Comfort & Ergonomics Label. The judges were also impressed with the focus on safety and sustainability, including a lane guard system, the newest brake assistant and adaptive cruise control.

The Safety Label was awarded to the Volvo 9900 with the new Volvo Dynamic Steering. Those who drove the VDS said that it greatly improved steering characteristics, particularly at low speeds and when negotiating roundabouts. It also improved comfort for the driver on uneven road surfaces.

The judges also looked at the new Yutong HTC12 coach, but unfortunately could not test it because it had no authorisation to do road tests in Belgium. They thought that it looked very good, both inside and outside.

There was not a Grand Award Bus, but the Anadolu Isuzu Cityport bus won the Comfort & Ergonomics Label. A lot of thought had gone into the interior design and facilities for passengers.

The two all-electric buses, the Ebusco LFP and the BYD Ebus each won an Ecology Label. The latter was one of thirty five vehicles operating at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam. The judges welcomed the fact that BYD had listened to criticisms of earlier models and made a number of improvements. Furthermore, the reduction from three to two batteries resulted in a significant space and weight advantage.

Two years ago, Busworld introduced Innovation Labels for other products in the exhibition.

This proved very popular and was therefore repeated this year. Five Innovation Labels were awarded. One was given to the Volvo Dynamic Steering and another to Magna for its electric steering pump. Konvekta won a label with its UL700 air conditioning system using CO2 and heat pump. Labels were also given to IntegraBus, a Hungarian company, for its unique infotainment solutions for coach travel and to DTS, a young Belgian company, for its Ario Drowsiness Detection system.
Busworld Turkey
next spring

The sixth edition of Busworld Turkey is being organised by Busworld and its partner, HKF Trade Fairs. The exhibition will be held from 14 to 17 April in halls 9, 10 and 11 of the Istanbul Expo Center, close to the main Atatürk International Airport.

This is a very important time for the Turkish manufacturing industry. The country will adopt Euro VI emission limits for all new vehicles registered from 1 January 2016. Many of the manufacturers are already able to supply Euro VI models to customers in the European Union.

On the other hand, Turkey supplies many other markets in North Africa, the Middle East, Russia and Central Asia. Many of them are working to earlier emission limits, in some cases because they do not have the necessary quality of fuel. That is quite a challenge for suppliers and the manufacturing industry.

Following a period of political instability, Turkey now has a majority Government. That should give a welcome boost to the economy and lead to further investment in new vehicles. The country is heavily dependent on buses for urban transport and coaches for intercity travel. Although diesel is the dominant fuel, there is considerable interest in natural gas which is readily available in Turkey.

The large and progressive manufacturing industry is supported by a wide variety of component and accessory suppliers. Many of them work to high standards of quality at competitive prices. Busworld Turkey is an excellent showroom for their products and services.

We will be carrying more information about Busworld Turkey in future editions of the Busworld Times.

Investing in bus infrastructure

Greener Journeys, a London-based lobby group, recently issued research, carried out by independent analysts at KPMG, that found bus priority measures, such as bus lanes, busway schemes, and better interchange systems to speed up journeys, when implemented in the correct places and properly enforced, could deliver significant local benefits such as cutting pollution and journey times. They reckoned that every £1.00 spent on local bus infrastructure could generate up to £7.00 of benefits.

Another research project for Greener Journeys, carried out at the University of Westminster, found that effective bus priority measures could deliver up to 75 per cent fewer emissions per passenger per km. Bus journeys were made shorter and more reliable, encouraging more people to leave their cars at home.
Busworld goes to Russia

Busworld International and ITEMF Expo signed a partnership agreement during Busworld Kortrijk to co-operate on the organisation of the Busworld Russia exhibition in Moscow to take place on 25-27 October next year. It will be held in the modern and well-equipped Crocus Expo venue on the ring road round Moscow, quite close to the major Sheremetyevo International Airport.

The partners plan that the exhibition will be held every two years, alternating with the Comtrans exhibition which covers a whole range of commercial vehicles, including vans, trucks, trailers and buses. In the long experience of Busworld, dedicated shows for the bus and coach industry have proved very popular with exhibitors and customers.

The decision to take Busworld to Russia is part of the strategy of Busworld International to become established in all the large regional markets around the world. Annual registrations and production of new buses and coaches in Russia are in the region of 40-50,000.

Russia is a fascinating market. There are relatively few coaches, because there is little intercity traffic, but a growing segment for commuter coaches serving Moscow. Most of the demand for luxury coaches comes from inbound tourists. Some are imported from China and South Korea, but the highest level specifications, including those for sports clubs, are usually brought in from Western Europe.

Russian politicians are keen to modernise city, suburban and rural bus fleets. Traffic congestion is a problem in the main cities, although bus priority measures are helping to improve journey times. In Moscow, many routes connect with the excellent metro system.

The dominant domestic manufacturer is the GAZ Group, including their subsidiaries, LiAZ, PAZ and KaVZ.

LiAZ has developed a range of solo and articulated low floor city buses, many of them using Western components, such as MAN, Cummins or Scania engines, with ZF gearboxes and axles, and other parts like Hübnerturntables on articulated buses.

PAZ is a major builder of medium size buses, seating around 25-30 passengers and widely used on all sorts of services, such as schools, factory, rural and city transport. Surprisingly, a little more than half the 10,000 or so buses that they build each year are still powered by petrol engines.

KaVZ, the Kurgan factory in Siberia, can offer a wide range of vehicles, including those suitable for the very harsh conditions in the North of Russia. Other manufacturers build highly specialised vehicles to carry workers to and from oil and mining industry sites.

Scania has been the most successful importer in recent years, supplying large numbers of chassis that were bodied in the Goltysyno factory and used initially in the Winter Olympics in Sochi. They are now work mainly on regional services in the Moscow area.

Busworld Russia will be a great opportunity to meet Russian contacts and understand this important market. Moscow is one of the world’s great capital cities and well worth a visit. We will tell you more about Busworld Russia in future editions of “Busworld Times”.

A typical bus for oilfield and mining transport.

Volgabus is an independent bus builder.

Scania has been successful in Russia in recent years.

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