

# Interview with Jean-Claude Delen

## CEO Global Forwarding DHL Belgium

### President of the Transport & Logistics

#### "Metropolitan Brussels 2018" pole.



*"I may be captain of the boat but without a crew, I go nowhere"*

Neuve where underground warehouses will be filled by truck or any means of transportation and where the shops could refuel. Doing this might reduce immobility during peak hours. Obliging people to deliver from 7 until 10 in the morning really brings a lot more traffic jams than necessary. And of course these infrastructures may be used on a 24-hours basis...

#### **Where do you step in when it comes to define the strong points of Brussels?**

As our ideas will be presented to the political circles, the good thing about all this – and this is why I stepped in – is that we are not only speaking here of VOKA or BECI. It is really a joined initiative which means that the Regions will be involved and not only Brussels! Brussels is not considered as a political entity but altogether with its hinterland and the economical facts and figures they arise. Now, for the strong points, we believe there is heap of opportunities residing in the canal network as an axe between the port of Brussels and the airport. Other alternatives may be found in the northern suburbs like the new logistic distribution centre nearby Londerzele – maybe the only place where you still have some ground! – where DHL will be managing-partner of the site. We may also go as far south as Huizingen or even Nivelles...

We do not believe in the current Gare TIR which traditionally had been used as the customs entrepôt in Brussels. We think of it being too far inside of Brussels to really play the appropriate role of distribution although it could still be used for fresh food.

#### **And what about the transportation of people going in and out of Brussels?**

We should try to take out of the Brussels Ring as much transit traffic as possible! All those trucks driving from north to south and vice-versa have nothing to do with Brussels. This is one of the biggest problems that we have in mobility. In fact we need another northern axe at least 25 km up north to make sure this transit traffic will not come through the Ring anymore. And we should rethink about linking Antwerp to Leuven into Liège...

#### **And the railroads?**

The railroads are just another big missed opportunity! Just consider the time wasted on the RER project! And what about the tracks having been taken off all over places like those, for example, having connected the Gare TIR? Goods could have been transported there by rail and afterwards distributed within Brussels via smaller, cleaner and less-noisy vans. I mean lots of trucks nowadays are really EURO 5, which



is the highest level of less pollution, and we are already looking for EURO levels climbing up to 6 or 7. These are the trucks that should only be allowed within the city premises and with the privilege of using the bus lines... Specific parking lots within Brussels should then be allocated, even underground, to delivery trucks and to them alone. This way can smaller-scale storage spaces be connected with huge warehouses in the city outskirts like some kind of "Rungis".

#### **According to the BAK Basel Economics report, Brussels is at the very top when considering its productivity rates but disastrous when it comes to unemployment especially in the transport sector.**

It's true that we just can not find the right people. In our kind of industry we have high-level educated people as well as low-level. The unemployment statistics show that plenty of high-level jobs are easily filled in Brussels because of the many people with university and engineering backgrounds. The problem

is with the lower levels of education. In my opinion it all starts from the basics. And basics are parental and school... coaching. In fact, we do not find the attitude to work that we should be looking for.

#### **What do you mean by "attitude"?**

The political world has finally understood that we should not let these guys aside and forget about them. The attitude of the schools has not changed yet and the parental attitude has certainly not changed... And that is the big challenge. I think we need to bring the responsibility of the kids back to their parents.

#### **You mentioned the word "coaching"...**

We need to train these people, we need to bring them the attitude of work and also the motivation and the pleasure to go to work. And if you persist in not giving to these people the opportunity to be trained and working in companies, then they will not have any interest. Therefore, and as part of the IRIS training project I am involved with, we have a building located in Anderlecht – at the heart of this very population we need to attract into our industry – in order

to coach them, train them, learn them how to use a forklift, to be a warehouse man, to pick and pack and to prepare orders. From this place we want the people to get a job immediately in one of the transport and logistic center.

#### **Where does DHL step in?**

We suggest that within a group of let us say twenty trainees DHL would be sponsor of 5. This means we would urge these guys to come to work for us and pay them while they are still under training. But they need to be open for flexibility... For the world of transportation, you can not expect to get a job from 9 to 5... We have to fill the infrastructures by 24 hours. When orders come in for exportation, shippers will expect us to pick them up at the latest minute to ship them out and be available anywhere in Europe the day after the morning at 8 o'clock. But then in incoming shipments the importer will expect us to deliver very early in the morning. It is twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week coverage. Yes people need a lot of flexibility here.