

Good morning ladies and gentlemen!

It is a pleasure for me on behalf of NORVEGFINANS – the Association of Norwegian Road Financing Companies – to welcome all of you to the 38<sup>th</sup> ASECAP Study and Information Days here in Oslo.

Especially I would like to welcome the Norwegian Minister of Transport and Communication, Mrs. Magnhild Meltveit Kleppa, who participates at the opening of this conference. A special welcome also to the representatives from the European Institutions:

- Mr. Enrique Grillo Pasquarelli from the European Commission,
- Mrs. Anne Jensen from the European Parliament,
- Mr. Philippe Hamet from the European Commission

and

- Mrs. Grammatiki Tsingou from the European Investment Bank

Furthermore I would like to welcome the President of ASECAP Mr. Jose Luis Feito from Spain. I am also very happy to see among us the President of IBTTA, Mr. Steven Snider and also Patrick Jones from IBTTA, who both has taken the trip across the Atlantic to join us here in Oslo, and of course the ASECAP General Secretary, Mr. Kallistratos Dionelis.

I would also like to mention our main sponsors, Q-Free, GSA and Norbit who you can find together with the other exhibitors in the exhibition area outside of the conference hall. My best welcome to all of you!

Over the years, the annual ASECAP Study and Information Days have developed from an event mainly for the ASECAP members and their representatives, to the number one event for the European Tolling Industry. Here we meet representatives from ministries and other public authorities, suppliers of tolling equipment and solutions, service companies, consultants and of course top managers and key experts from the ASECAP members – the European tolling companies.

This combination of participants with different backgrounds, lots of experience and detailed knowledge about transport policies - and the tolling industry in particular - is a marvelous platform for learning and networking. And we need this platform!

The dialogue between the involved parties is decisive in a time where it is increasingly difficult for the European countries to allocate sufficient funds for the road transport infrastructure. The “User-pays” – principle has been successfully deployed in many European countries for decades already. And we – as the tolling industry – have taken the task of

collecting the funds from the users. The legal and organisational frameworks differ substantially from country to country. The tolling companies range from private concessionaires to state-controlled organisations. Nevertheless, the issues and challenges facing us are very similar all over Europe.

The demand for road transport services is growing, with interruptions caused by the economic climate and crises, but then growing again. And this is not only a volume growth, it is also accompanied by strong requirements to the quality of the road infrastructure. The increased globalization and cross-border traffic goes hand-in-hand with the European integration. Safe, fast and efficient travel is required, locally and for long-distance. The requirements come from the users of passenger and freight transport services, as well as from the European Union.

The investments required for achieving the high standards required and improved safety are immense. In many cases it is a challenge just to manage the maintenance and keep the current status.

The title of this conference – “Roles of states and concessions in building a safe, smart and clean transport policy for Europe” – indicates that the requirements for transport services can only be met together by states and concessionaires. I expect that we will deepen the insight on the different roles during our conference.

In the CESARE project, which ASECAP completed last year together with their partners, the focus was on the role model related to interoperability of the tolling services in Europe. The role model with Toll Chargers, EETS Providers, Users and Interoperability Management was analysed in depth. This was a major achievement which provided valuable input to the participants themselves, as well as to the legislative process in Europe. Some of the project conclusions were adopted in the Commission Decision 2009/750. Based on the Decision the Member States and the tolling industry now have to move from a concept into practical solutions for interoperability. This is a major challenge, but only one of the areas where we have to implement customer-oriented solutions, which meet the requirements of our customers – the paying users of the road infrastructure.

The paying users want value back for their money. In 2009, in a survey among our tolling customers in the Oslo area, 43% answered that they in general are positive to toll collection for financing road infrastructure. The survey also showed that when the customers were asked about specific projects, then 74% had a positive attitude towards tolling.

With tolled roads, bridges and tunnels spread across Norway, tolling has become a part of the daily life for the majority of Norwegian drivers. On national level we have a 70% share of distributed on-board units. We are also proud of having had national interoperability since 2004, extended to Scandinavian interoperability in 2007 - the EasyGo service.

This example illustrates the importance of tolling as a required and generally also accepted tool for financing road infrastructure. We need to keep and increase the user acceptance for

tolling as an inevitable tool. That means, we must fulfill the users' requirements and create user-friendly solutions. In turn that will also help to increase the political acceptance for tolling as the best financing approach for road infrastructures.

I am convinced that the equipment industry can deliver the technical solutions. It is more challenging to provide customer-friendly solutions from an organizational point of view -and to manage the process. Are we able to do that? As states? As concessionaires? As service companies?

I borrow the words from the US President Obama and say: "Yes, we can". It will require that we adapt our organizations, both inside the tolling companies and inside ASECAP. It will also require changes from the public authorities. They must maintain and develop a reasonable legal framework for the industry. There is no reason to believe that the dynamics of the markets and the European integration will be reduced in the coming years, and the need for constant change will remain.

I hope that this conference will provide us with additional insights and new ideas, to help us to manage the transformation process ahead of us. We have many interesting sessions waiting for us during the next two days, and many possibilities to build new liaisons and strengthen existing liaisons. Use the time!

I wish you enjoyable, inspiring and useful days here in Oslo.

Thank you for your kind attention.