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IRU leads discussions on the future of automated road freight transport

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Automation technologies and their potential to transform the road freight transport business were explored in a session jointly organised by IRU and Volvo at the European Conference on Connected and Automated Driving (EUCAD 2019), the flagship event on automation in the EU.

The session brought together port authorities, truck manufacturers, government representatives and research institutes to address issues such as data ownership, regulation, and the potential resulting impact on the environment and labour force.

IRU welcomed the focus on the future of the truck driver profession as a central talking point for discussion at the event. As shown in a recently published report by IRU, the sector is facing one of the most acute professional driver shortages in decades. Automation will not solve the issue, but it does have the potential to fundamentally change the nature of the driving profession, making it more attractive for younger drivers in particular by opening up opportunities which require new skill sets.

In the last strategic session of the conference, IRU highlighted the road transport sector's willingness to embrace innovation, as long as it provides for the safe, secure and sustainable operation of autonomous vehicles. Moreover, IRU advocated for a clear framework regarding liability and urged policymakers to take action on data ownership.

Through its involvement in different initiatives on automation, such as the EU-funded ARCADE project, IRU is striving to ensure that the sector grasps the opportunities that automation holds in terms of safety, efficiency and environmental impact. ARCADE was the main sponsor of EUCAD 2019.

Discussions on safety and technological innovation as a business opportunity for the commercial transport sector will continue at the IRU Logistics and Innovation Forum on 3 October in London.