



**Stepping into
the spotlight:
Meet the new
President
of EUEW**

Henk Oude Brunink

Anyone who has ever met Henk will probably confirm that his style of leadership is quite rare. From a strong commitment, he always strives to achieve the best result together. He does not feel the need to be in the spotlight, but he can be a strong presence in the room to share and substantiate his views about the best practical path to a common goal, always listening to and taking into account the opinion of others.

Henk Oude Brunink has been EUEW Vice President since 2019 and – as can be expected of a Vice President – has supported the organisation and in some areas, such as the revision of the EUEW Bylaws, has already been able to help building the future organisation. We have come to know him as someone who wants to put trust to a team and is happy if he can help making the team successful.

Building on the achievements, brought about by former presidents Ulrich Liedtke and Alexander Dewulf, Henk has a challenging, but inspiring three-year journey ahead, starting this June. Let's all spend a few minutes together to get to know the man, professionally and personally, in his own words.

Mr. Oude Brunink, congratulations on your new role as President of the European Union of Electrical Wholesalers (EUEW). After a lot more than the initially expected three years serving as EUEW Vice President and contributing to what EUEW represents today, mid-June you will be taking over this new position. Let's help the EUEW community know you better, by sharing a bit more information about you, professionally and personally.

Yes, due to COVID, it has been an unforeseen and record-breaking EUEW presidency for Alexander Dewulf and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his flexibility in extending his presidency, as well as his passionate and professional leadership to the

EUEW community, both online and, luckily, also face to face again. And although I am not new to the EUEW scene, it has provided me with the opportunity to get to know the people and their interests from the EUEW Federations, -groups and -members even better.

I have started working in this industry 31 years ago, directly from university, and I still work for the same company, now called *itsme*. Of course, a lot has happened over these years, as we have developed into the leading wholesaler for motion- and control-technology for machine building and industry in the Netherlands, also with activities in Belgium and Spain. As a company, we have a clear strategy of making our customers succeed by providing them with value adding services in technology and supply chain availability. This is driven by my competent colleagues and supported by an omnichannel IT-landscape. Over the years, I have gained hands-on experience in translating a vision into concrete and accepted ways of working, both internally and externally and, doing so, built up a strong background in commerce and operations. I am married for 26 years already and we have one daughter and three sons that are now studying or getting ready to start their studies. As many people that come from the eastern part of the Netherlands, I consider myself to be straightforward and authentic, which by the way also fits to the spirit of Rotterdam, where we lived for 14 years and people are said to be born with their sleeves rolled up.

You have an impressive career; please share with us the highlights of your history with the electrical wholesalers' industry. What made this industry so appealing?

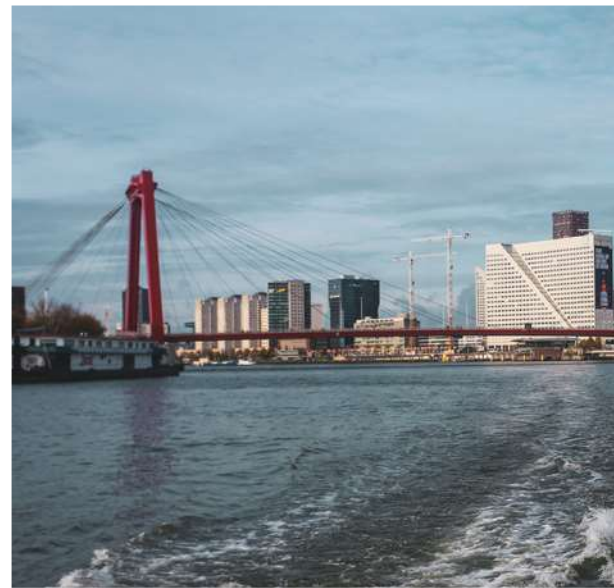
Let me first say that I have never looked at my work as a career, especially not with personal highlights. What I find appealing from the day I started working in this industry is that, although electrical wholesalers are perhaps the best kept secret in the market, we do make a big impact on the success of both customers and suppliers. I always enjoy working with talented and competent people that I can learn from, together accomplishing something that one cannot accomplish alone. I feel that the atmosphere and culture in the electrical wholesalers' industry offer many opportunities to do so, even in this age of digitization, where expectations toward wholesalers are higher and responsibilities we should take have to change accordingly. In other words, I hope we all cherish the human scale of things that still allows people the autonomy to master new skills and gives them a purpose to contribute to a better electrical future.

You also have an important role within the IDEE group. Do you believe that your experience with IDEE had a significance in preparing you for your new role at EUEW?

IDEE is a household name in the electrical wholesale industry as a marketing group of strong independent electrical wholesalers from 17 countries in Europe. Now serving as Chairman of the Board of IDEE for more than 10 years, I always enjoy listening to and learning from the various cultures, backgrounds, strategies and markets within our group, thereby respecting our differences but also identifying and leveraging what we have in common. The family owned companies of IDEE always have a close relationship with their local communities and as a result show a strong felt responsibility about solutions for the current and next generations. From my experience as a Vice President of the EUEW, I am sure I can build on this experience for my role at EUEW.

What were the main reasons the main reasons that convinced you to take on this new role?

I guess it did not take a lot of convincing. When the request came in, I looked at the role as an opportunity for giving back. To me, it will be an honour to represent the people, organizations and companies



that always take on the responsibility of the “middle man” in translating traditional and new challenges into concrete solutions for the electrical future. I am looking forward to serving our industry from this different perspective and contribute to that future.

During recent years, EUEW has been striving to get a more important role in its ecosystem due to the efforts of the EUEW leadership. For your mandate, what would be the main goals, the main achievements you would like to walk away with?

The EUEW agenda is filled with topics that cannot possible be solved within three years. So, we should regard any presidency period as a phase in a long term strategy. Like in the African proverb about the value of community: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. We will therefore continue in the direction that was set out by the previous EUEW Presidents.

First of all, the EUEW will concretely strengthen and amplify the local policies of member Federations on selected themes through information and – possibly – participation from and in Brussels.

Secondly, we will be looking for opportunities within these selected themes to leverage shared interests and commitments of member companies and business groups that are active the Advisory Council. We will do so by establishing and further developing relevant strategic connections with governmental organizations, as well as other cross-industrial organizations and federations within our value chain.



18  BOAT STATION



” *I consider myself to be straightforward and authentic, which by the way also fits to the spirit of Rotterdam, where we lived for 14 years and people are said to be born with their sleeves rolled up.*



The EUEW Business Convention is one of the key industry events for networking and discussing the latest trends. In recent years, the event completely transformed, and it brings together more electrical wholesalers and suppliers with each passing edition. Why is it important for electrical wholesalers to join this major EUEW event?

Although web meetings have proven to be practical and useful in lowering the threshold for contact and cooperation, they also inevitably cause all of us to retreat to our own world. Over the last years, EUEW has invested in the development of a year-round program, consisting of online information sessions around key fields of interest in the Circular Economy, Green Deal and Digital. But within this program, our Business Convention continues to be a highlight as the periodic power supply for people in our industry where representatives of federations, wholesalers and leading manufacturers can meet, share and learn.

“Energize transition: a key role for the electrical wholesalers” is the theme of this year’s EUEW Business Convention. Why is this topic so relevant now? And what is the key role of electrical wholesalers that the convention topic is meant to bring forward?

Change has always been and will always remain a constant. But to ensure a sustainable, and possibly even circular future, we have to align more than ever and reach beyond our traditional perception of change. I do not have to explain why this is important and why every step in the right direction, however small, is the right step. As electrical wholesalers, it is crucial to play our key role in the necessary reinvention of our value chain: take responsibility, show exemplary behavior, energize transition and make change happen, as we will see during the Convention. Seeing is believing and I am sure believing is contagious.



Apart from the energy transition, what would you consider to be the hottest topics for the electrical wholesalers and why?

Another hot topic is of course ensuring sufficient knowledge and education for the challenges that lay ahead, starting with an inspiring and challenging working environment for our employees. Luckily, many Federations already have programs in place that aim to create awareness for the electrical wholesale industry as an interesting place to work. Digital is also a hot topic, but can never be a solution in itself. Digital as a smart means to optimize processes is, and can only succeed when solutions throughout the supply chain are co-created and technical possibilities and barriers are well understood. Both these topics are of course closely related to the overarching topic of energy transition, which also applies to another hot topic, namely cross-industrial cooperation. That is why EUEW has established connections to organisations like EuropeOn, ETIM International, Cecapi, Europacable and LightingEurope.

The current market for wholesalers is very dynamic and quite a bit unpredictable. What are the main opportunities for your mandate as EUEW president? What about the main challenges you would expect to face?

Being in the business for as long as I have, I have always heard that the current market is dynamic and unpredictable. So, nothing new there. And yet, all of us still try to predict the market every year...

Challenges and opportunities depend on a potential problem or advantage. EUEW will constantly be reaching out and listening very carefully to what associated Federations and Advisory Council members see as potential problems or advantages. Of course, the latest big challenges were the financial crisis and COVID and in both cases we have seen that electrical wholesalers are very able to adapt and bounce back successfully. A big challenge for the industry is to evolve the current business model toward a more sustainable and – in the longer run – circular model. This requires a new value paradigm for our whole industry, starting with an intrinsic conviction, but also translated into the concrete introduction of new services.

This year's edition of the EUEW Business Convention is an unprecedented success for EUEW. The first 100 delegates registered just one week after the registrations were open and the event counts on no less than 12 sponsors. What is the message you would like to share with the participants in this year's Convention?

We are all very happy and excited to welcome so many delegates. I wish all of us an open mind for new opportunities and a win-win mindset in our participation to the Convention! ■