

**FISITA**

Promoting excellence in mobility engineering

Q1 2024

Dear colleague

**An Open Letter regarding the development of new-era relationships for Society Members of FISITA**

As you are aware, FISITA has provided an international platform for the world's national engineering societies for over 70 years. Throughout this time the automotive engineering community has delivered much benefit to society through technical innovation and advancement, and at the same time the institutions and traditions of our industry sustained, grew and became an embedded part of the landscape.

Over the last 20 years, I think we can agree that our industry has changed significantly, and even more so in recent times, in fact I think it is fair to say that our industry has moved far away from what used to be described as the 'motor industry'. With this rapid evolution and change within our industry comes the need for its institutions and traditions to adapt in order to remain relevant to the industry they support, and lead its community forward, into the new era.

There was a time when access to community and content could most readily be found via membership of an industry organisation, through participating in their time-served traditions, committees, meetings and events. Being in a room to contribute, network and grow one's own profile, meant the membership organisation was essential to personal development. Then, after holding position for decades, the internet age brought challenge to this established necessity, enabling people to access content and build community from behind their computer screen, most of the time absolutely free of charge, and without formality or time/travel commitment.

My point is that for at least 60 of the 73 years that FISITA has existed, much remained the same. Members would look our organisations for the next community gathering, the next committee meeting, the next opportunity to engage with peers. Today, so much has and continues to change this image of value and benefit for all membership organisations, and our lived experienced can confirm this to be the case in what now is surely described as the 'mobility industry'.

In addition to the internet age, I am clear that the impact of the covid pandemic leaves a legacy of changed human and corporate behaviour. For the corporate world, this means less discretionary spend, less travel, less time away from the office – and subsequently for the membership organisation, this means less conference attendance, less sponsorship, less exhibiting and a challenging membership proposition.

It appears to me, therefore, that the combination of the changing technological landscape, the challenged need and requirements of the old industry institutions, coupled with the long-term impact of the internet age and the more recent impact of covid, means an extraordinary need to adapt – especially for the long-standing organisations, steeped in tradition, procedure and processes spanning decades.

As a membership organisation professional and leader of 23 years' experience, I am used to the ebb-and-flow of people and preferences. Today we are collectively faced with more significant changes

which challenge the sustainable existence of the traditional membership organisation. The cold, hard fact is that to survive and thrive, the relationships and relevance of the membership organisation must evolve in order to serve the changing needs of the industry around it. Whether at national, or international level, it is my firm belief that any membership organisation not already modernising will find their future challenging.

At FISITA, we acted swiftly in the early days of covid, changing our vision for member engagement and introducing a 'less is more' approach to in-person conferencing, while increasing the relevant engagement of expert peer groups in the digital space, and linking the digital and in-person within a new two-year cadence. Today I am delighted to report we conclude 2023 with more members than ever, with more of their people engaged with their international peers, holding more dialogue, with greater efficiency and effectiveness than ever before – and our new conferencing concept saw 2,200 guests meet for the inaugural FISITA Technology of Mobility Conference and Exhibition in Barcelona this September. All of which saw us deliver the most successful year in FISITA's long and rich history in 2023.

With this in mind, I invite you to join me in considering the future relationship between FISITA and the national engineering societies, and to determine a new way forward, fit for the new era. To do so, we embark upon an open discussion with each and every Society Member Leader. We will use the relationships and trust built between us over the last nine years of my leadership, and between our organisations over the last seven decades to find a way forward, where national engineering societies can benefit in new and different ways from being a FISITA member.

In the first phase of these discussions, I ask each Society Leader to join me for a meeting, where we can explore the content of this letter, to discuss my working assumptions, to engage with me and FISITA VP Society, Jose Manuel Barrios and build the plans which take our international community forward into the mobility era with a new vision and strategic direction, which supports the national engineering societies, large or small, to survive and thrive - and I hope, create legacy for future generations of engineers to benefit from as time continues its march forward.

I do hope you join us as we move this important discussion forward, and please contact my colleague Kerry McDiarmid to arrange our 1:1 meeting via [k.mcdiarmid@fisita.com](mailto:k.mcdiarmid@fisita.com)

Yours

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Ch' followed by a stylized flourish.

Chris Mason  
Chief Executive Officer  
FISITA