



TIEFGANG#22

SERVICES

Best of both worlds: Travel on route AL4, the direct connection from Wilhelmshaven across the Atlantic to Mexico and the USA. **Page 3**

INLAND

Fast track: Join us inside the port railway's signal box, where staff control 16 tracks for goods trains up to 800m long. **Pages 4-5**

SITE

A matter of conviction: Find out why Bavaria Traffic Network from Nuremburg uses CTW for its export container shipments. **Page 7**

CONNECTED TO EUROPE

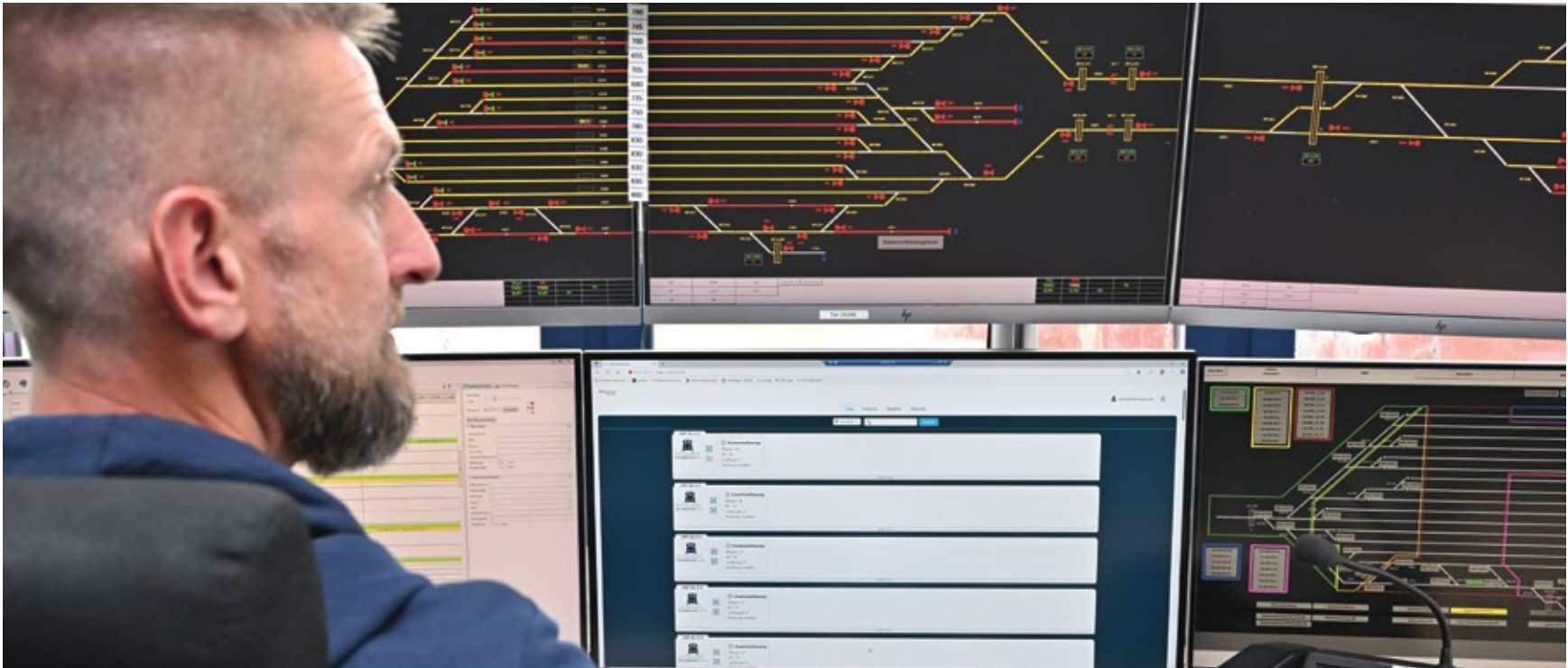


PHOTO: BJÖRN LÜBBE

24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year: there's never a moment's downtime in the control centre for Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven's port railways. That's thanks to Ingo Winsel and his team, who keep us connected to Europe at all times of day and night.

From the moment goods are landed at Germany's only deepwater port, there's not a moment to lose: everyone wants their consignments delivered as soon as possible. And so as well as an HGV slip-road onto the A29 motorway, an electrified rail spur plugs CTW straight into the rail network, putting Germany and much of the rest of Europe within easy reach. Of course, that

means that connections have to run like clockwork – and reliability is one reason why Bavaria Traffic Network uses CTW for regular shipments of brass for export: "Wilhelmshaven shares our approach: fulfilling customer orders without any fuss or complications," explains owner-manager Maria Pokorny. Find out more about our working relationship on page 7. And

if you want more detail on how the port's railway is operated, read our profile of Ingo Winsel, signalling manager at the marshalling yard for Germany's only deepwater port: TIEFGANG joins him for a day – and a spectacular view – up in the control building.

READ THE FULL REPORT ON PAGES 4 AND 5.



"As an international trade hub, a connector for all approaches to the energy transition, and a place which produces impulses for real innovation, Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven is setting new standards as it sharpens Germany's competitive edge."

Patrick Schnieder, Member of Bundestag and Federal Minister of Transport

THREE QUESTIONS FOR . . .

*Grant Hendrik Tonne,
Minister for Economic
Affairs, Housing, and
Transport in the Federal
State of Lower Saxony and
Chair of the Supervisory
Boards for the Container
Terminal Wilhelmshaven
marketing and operating
companies.*



Mr. Tonne, as Minister for Economic Affairs, Housing, and Transport in the Federal State of Lower Saxony you are, to put it in layman’s terms, our ‘harbourmaster’. What plans do you have for your term of office?

Lower Saxony’s ports are hubs for trade, home to businesses, and absolutely essential for securing Germany’s supplies of energy. They will also play a crucial part in the success of our green transition – and, in view of the threat to peace, stability, and security in Europe represented by Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine in complete and utter breach of international law, our ports are key elements in enhancing Germany’s defence capabilities.

In office, I will pursue a proactive approach to our ports with a focus on long-term planning for everybody involved in them. My focus will be on strengthening the competitiveness of our maritime sectors, enabling innovation, and securing employment. An important part of this will be federal government recognising the importance of our seaports and taking due responsibility for their upkeep and development – including contributing towards infrastructure initiatives to ensure their future operability.

As such, I am joining with my fellow economics ministers across the north German federal states in efforts to obtain an increase in the federal subsidy from its current level of around €40 million annually to between €400-€500 million. It is our expectation that investments in seaport infrastructure are included in the scope of legislation for the planned extra-budgetary fund for spending on infrastructure and net zero initiatives: for Lower Saxony, this will be essential in modernising and expanding not only our seaports, but also our waterways and locks. Nevertheless, securing the necessary funding will be no easy task.

For many years now, there have been calls for closer cooperation between the German North Sea ports, especially in terms of handling containers. What is your stance on this issue?

In view of the international competitive environment, I agree that closer ties are needed. So our state government will continue to work towards improving cooperation between the ports of Hamburg, Bremerhaven, and Wilhelmshaven in order to strengthen their position vis-à-vis the Netherlands and Belgium. The overall goal must be to offer container shipping lines and global trading companies a convincing proposition for using seaports on the North German coast.

With Hapag-Lloyd, the Gemini Cooperation, and new routes to China, Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven is making strides. In your view, what will the role of Germany’s only deepwater port be in cooperation with the country’s other harbours?

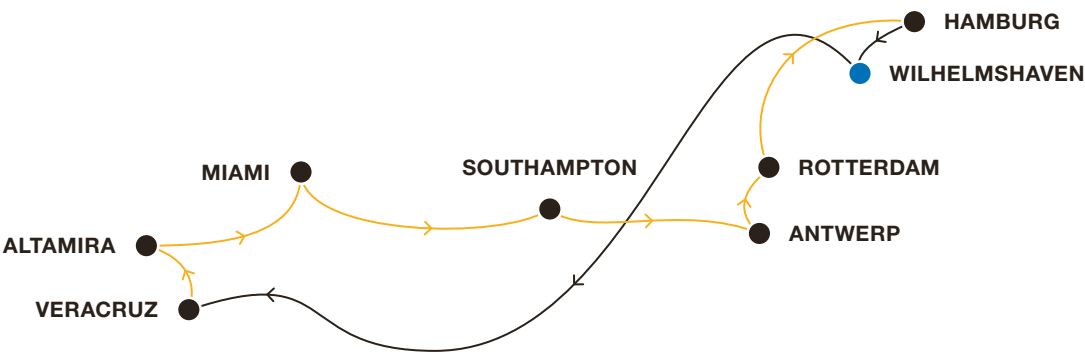
Shipping line Hapag-Lloyd taking stakes in Eurogate Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven (CTW) and Rail Terminal Wilhelmshaven (RTW) represents nothing short of a milestone in the port’s journey. For Hapag-Lloyd, this is a strategic investment based on its conviction that being a shareholder will make it more competitive on routes to the East Asia. That is why Eurogate has recently spent considerable sums on updating existing container gantries and buying new cranes – a step which I wholeheartedly support. I am convinced that, as a deepwater port offering access to today’s ultra-large container vessels independent of tides and excellent inland rail connections, Wilhelmshaven has excellent prospects going forward.



Born in 1976 in Bad Oeynhausen, Grant Hendrik Tonne grew up in Leese (Lower Saxony). On leaving school, Tonne began a law degree at the University of Bremen, qualifying as a full legal practitioner in the state examination at Celle court in 2007. After becoming a member of the Social Democrats (SPD) in 1996, Tonne held several political offices, including that of Minister for Education in Lower Saxony from 2017 to 2022. In November 2022, Tonne was elected head of the parliamentary party in the Landtag (state assembly) and, since May 2025, has been the state’s Minister for Economic Affairs, Housing, and Transport.

PHOTO: MW

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS



Since February 2025, AL4 has been providing a regular connection between Wilhelmshaven and the other side of the Atlantic. Before reaching the USA, the service docks at two harbours in Mexico – and saves customers paperwork...

Atlantic Loop 4, to give the AL4 route its full name, connects Germany with the American East Coast, with Wilhelmshaven as its last port of call in Europe before it heads across the ocean. That puts the Jade Bight within just 14 days' sailing of Veracruz and Altamira in Mexico.

This routing means that, because AL4 only heads on to Miami after these two calls, there is no need to fill out complicated Automated Manifest System (AMS) filings for cargo on board bound for Mexico – and the first US stop in Florida is still only 22 days away from Wilhelmshaven.

Offering the best of both worlds, this service is of particular interest for customers from Chemicals and Automotive, as a large number of carmakers and suppliers have production sites in Florida's neighbouring state, Georgia.

STRONG PORTS, THRIVING ECONOMY

Whether as a hub for international trade and technology-agnostic transformation of the energy system or as a catalyst for innovation, JadeWeserPort in Wilhelmshaven is setting new standards and strengthening Germany's competitiveness. Since starting operations 13 years ago, Germany's only deep-water port has become a high-performing, indispensable location.

To ensure that JadeWeserPort as well as the other German sea and inland ports can fulfil their tasks reliably in the future, too, we are putting in place the right framework. Our roadmap for this is the Federal Government's National Ports Strategy. All stakeholders are continuously working to implement the 139 measures of the Strategy. For instance, we are supporting the digital transformation in the ports and improving their connections where necessary. We are committed to ensuring a level playing field. And we are enabling the ports to help with the major challenges of our times, including the transformation of the energy system and climate change mitigation.

Financial assistance is provided through the new 'Climate-friendly shipping and ports' item from the Climate and Transformation Fund. The Federal Government has earmarked 400 million euros for this purpose over the next four years. These funds can be used to establish climate-neutral shipping corridors, build shore-side electricity and bunkering facilities in the ports on a co-financed basis, or shift transport operations to the waterways. The funding provided by the Government helps to implement the National Ports Strategy faster. Our objective is clear: ports like JadeWeserPort are to remain innovative, modern, resilient, sustainable, easily accessible and competitive in the future, as well.



PHOTO: TOBIAS KOCH

PATRICK SCHNIEDER

Member of the German Bundestag
Federal Minister of Transport

FAST TRACK

Besides domestic services to all of Germany's key economic hubs, Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven also boasts a wealth of rail connections across Europe. At the port marshalling yard, Ingo Winsel and his team receive, configure, and dispatch freight trains to and from destinations as far afield as Italy, Austria, Hungary, Romania, and the Czech Republic. TIEFGANG visits them inside the signal box.



The man with the plan:
Working with his team, Ingo Winsel makes sure that each container is at the right place at the right time.

There can be no doubt about it: with its commanding view of the Jade Bight, the control building at the north-western edge of Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven is no ordinary office space. Nevertheless, Ingo Winsel and his colleagues don't spend much time looking out of the windows, focussing instead on the bank of computer monitors at their workstation. In charge of signalling across the freight yard at Germany's only deepwater port, the 44-year-old manages a team of seven operatives who, between them, ensure that the marshalling yard runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. On the long, straight tracks also visible from their windows, incoming and outgoing freight trains are assembled and disassembled ready for transshipment a few hundred metres further down the line. "Electrification has fully plugged us in to the European rail network," says Ingo, "and traffic has picked up markedly since."

With a total of 16 tracks able to accommodate freight trains of 700 to 800 metres in length, locomotive sidings, and a dedicated area for hazmat waggons, the yard has several dozen points and signals – a level of complexity which becomes instantly visible on the central monitor display up in the control centre. The electronic signalling system is visualised as a series of red and yellow lines, and each single signal, every set of points, can be operated at the click of a mouse. "That is quite a difference to the way things used to be," explains Winsel, "when signalling was a pretty physical job." In days gone by, signalmen would work up a sweat as they pushed and pulled at big, heavy levers to change points; today, a couple of clicks are all that is needed to get a train into the yard and onto its designated track. "The computer sets the points and signals accordingly" – under the watchful eye of the operatives on duty up in the control building, who follow proceedings on the monitors. "Tracks showing red already have trucks in them," says Ingo, "whereas the yellow ones are still clear."

These days, there isn't always a lot of yellow left: often, the only tracks still empty are the ones needed to keep traffic flowing. "We always have to have some space to shunt trucks and get them ready for dispatch down to the Terminal," says Ingo. Otherwise, due to weight of demand, much of the capacity at the marshalling yard is now in more or less constant use. "Obviously, we run trains to

PHOTOS: BJÖRN LÜBBE

all of Germany’s industrial and business centres,” explains Ingo, commenting on the continuing success of railfreight at Wilhelmshaven, “but we are also connected to the wider European network, too, with services to Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.” In contrast to passenger traffic, goods trains are seen as fast and reliable. As a result, interest in using Wilhelmshaven’s railfreight facilities is strong, with 50 operators having already secured contractual rights to slots at the terminal.

Railfreight companies frequently reserve such options in order to be able to respond to future developments, but many of those who have signed access agreements with the terminal operator are already running regular services between Wilhelmshaven and destinations both in Germany and abroad. Most major domestic routes have a minimum of three, often six weekly services, and even destinations as far away as Verona in Italy, Budapest in Hungary, or Prague in the Czech Republic are served several times a week – some are even scheduled on a daily basis. The schedule, of course, is one of the most important elements in Ingo Winsel’s equation: “We need it to plan capacity as closely as we can.”

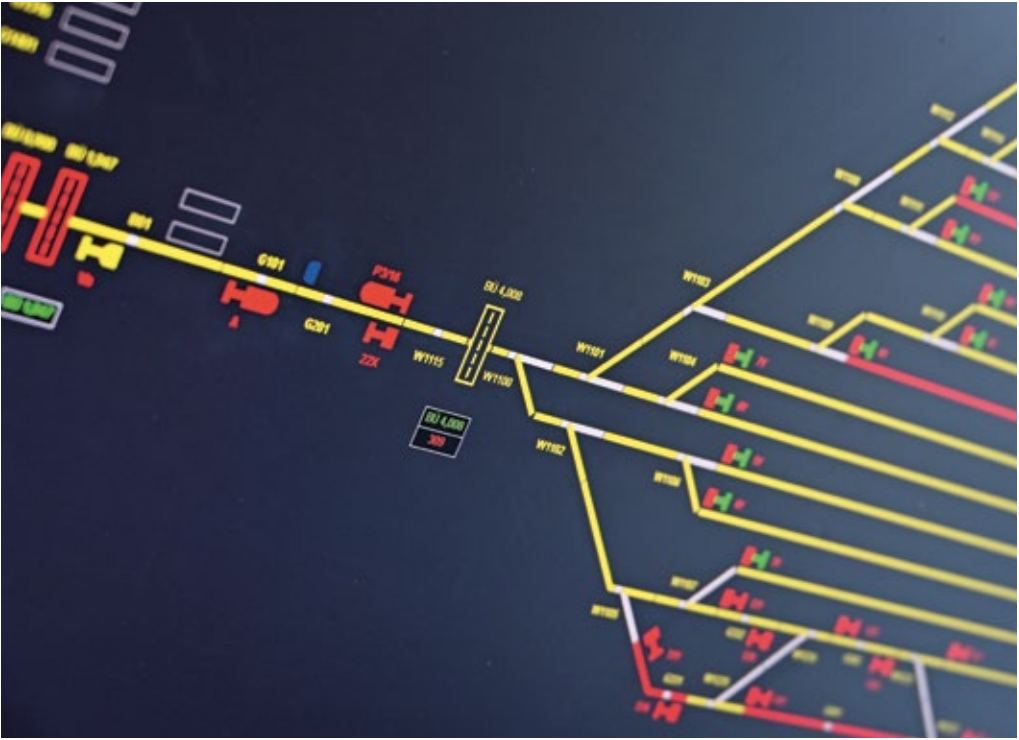
Running the Wilhelmshaven freight yard requires coordination with a range of other partners, too. Transshipment is carried out at the Eurogate intermodal terminal, for instance, or at the Nordfrost site, which has a heavy-goods facility. Meanwhile, private contractors are responsible for shunting the trucks into place to be loaded and unloaded, using diesel traction to get them to and from the transshipment terminals as, due to the overhead cranes and van carrier vehicles in operation, these lines and sidings cannot be electrified.

The shunting locomotives are real behemoths. And to move full goods trains, they have to be: “We are talking about rakes of up to 800 metres in length with anything from 20 to 35 trucks sometimes carrying as many as 56 20-foot containers,” explains Ingo. And at the transshipment terminals, speed is of the essence, with slots at one of the half-dozen tracks set at six hours. Then again, as containers usually arrive at the terminal with time in hand and are stacked in blocks ready for loading onto ships, the potential for delays is actually very low. Nevertheless, the terminal crews are now in the same situation as their counterparts in the signal box: they don’t have time to enjoy the view of the Jade Bight! “Then again, what we’re focussed on are business prospects. And they’ve never been better for CTW customers,” says Ingo with a smile.



Since the CTW port spur was electrified, there has been a strong increase in rail traffic to domestic and European destinations.

Today's railway is increasingly digital, with each signal and every point controlled at the click of a mouse.





*Following a stroke of luck, global market leader in specialist machinery
Brückner has now integrated CTW into its logistics systems.*

STRETCHING THE LIMITS



For each Brückner Maschinenbau shipment, around 350 crates have to be packed ready for sea transport. Here, head of Project Logistics at Nordfrost, Steffen Kallien, stands in front of some.

PHOTO: NORDFROST

Sometimes, everything just comes together at the right moment. Back during the coronavirus pandemic, with the North European range ports all at full capacity, Brückner Maschinenbau from Siegsdorf in idyllic Upper Bavaria found itself at the limit, too: its order books were full, but there was almost no space left anywhere at Germany’s ports for it to ship its machines to customers abroad. For this worldwide market leader in film-stretching technology, this was a new – and unwelcome – take on its corporate motto “Stretching the Limits”.

“It wasn’t only that there were no slots left on sailings,” recalls Andreas Wenzl, Team Leader for Transport Logistics at Brückner, “it was that we couldn’t even find providers of 100+ containers of storage space at a port. There was literally nowhere able to hold and then ship our cargo to the right terminals. With roughly 350 sea-freight ready boxes for each project, our shipments are sizeable.”

In the end, Brückner found the answer to its quandary the good old-fashioned way: through word-of-mouth at a trade fair. It was at the Breakbulk Europe expo in Rotterdam that Wenzl met Steffen Kallien, Head of Project Logistics at Nordfrost, a logistics services provider with a diverse range of activities – and that he suggested their Wilhelmshaven site as a potential solution for the logjam. Kallien made the case convincingly with a range of plus-points: proximity to the port’s container terminal, storage space immediately available, and strong competences in sea-going cargo. And, of course, just like Brückner, Nordfrost is a family firm.

So it wasn’t long before Brückner’s deliveries team were back to doing what they usually do: delivering boxes to docks, with two shipments transported to Nordfrost’s port terminal at CTW. And quayside, Wenzl’s team came across a familiar name: Hapag Lloyd, writ large on the side of megacarrier container vessels. “We have a decades-long partnership with the Hapag Lloyd shipping line,” says Wenzl, “and they had just introduced new services to Asian ports from Wilhelmshaven, so of course it was a perfect match.” Accordingly, Brückner’s first two major shipments through CTW were delivered to Shantou and Shanghai.

“Another partner – and just as important for us,” stresses Wenzl, “is Eurogate Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven. Not only do they have real expertise in sea-going freight, but they also have specialist competence with heavy goods, breakbulk, and out-of-gauge (OOG) cargo: i.e. the types of shipments that don’t fit into containers.”

A few years on, and Wilhelmshaven is now a cornerstone in Brückner’s logistics operations. With its combination of container storage at the Nordfrost site, the close ties with Hapag-Lloyd, and easy access to the versatile Eurogate Terminal, CTW has ticked every box for Andreas Wenzl. “We will certainly keep sending builds through Wilhelmshaven – especially as the network of routes is developing so fast at the moment.”

So Brückner’s motto of “Stretching the Limits” is, in terms of logistics, once again sounding a positive note: taking new routes with the right partners.

THE **TIP-OFF** THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

After some initial hesitation, Bavaria Traffic Network from Nürnberg now regularly routes export containers through CTW – and has even become something of an evangelist...



“We can deliver straight off the back of an HGV – with no access restrictions at the terminal. And on exports, we’ve never had problems with the customs force.”

MARIA POKORNY

Managing Director, Bavaria Traffic Network

“Thus far, I haven’t a bad word to say about Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven,” laughs Maria Pokorny, owner-manager of Bavaria Traffic Network, a haulier from Nuremberg still comparatively new on the market. “So whenever we’re at industry events and in meetings, I share our positive experiences with customers and partners!”

It was over two years ago that Pokorny took over her customer base from predecessor Bavaria Perfect Shipping. So although the company is new, “we are well-known in the industry and I myself have been in logistics for over 25 years now.” Since November 2024, Pokorny and her team have been routing all consignments from North-Rhine Westphalia through Wilhelmshaven, Germany’s only deepwater port “and one which shares our approach: fulfilling customer orders without any fuss or complications.”

An example of the kind of shipment Bavaria Traffic Network sends through Wilhelmshaven is the range of brass produced for export by Siegfried Jacob Metallwerke GmbH & Co. KG from Ennepetal in the Ruhr, Germany’s metalworking heartland. Its customers in Asia use the company’s materials to produce plumbing products and housebuilding components.

What is it about working with Germany’s only deepwater port that helps keep operations simple? “We can deliver straight off the back of an HGV – with no access restrictions at the terminal. And on exports, we’ve never had problems with the customs force,” explains Pokorny. “Although I have to be honest and say that it’s been a case of second time lucky.” What went wrong first time, then?

“Back in 2023, when we first sent outbound goods to CTW through a major shipping line, the railfreight operators were nowhere near as well connected to Wilhelmshaven as they were to terminals at Bremen and Hamburg. The services weren’t frequent enough. But that has got so much better since then!”

“And to be honest, at first, the idea of routing exports through CTW didn’t occur to us.” It was a partner haulage company in Bad Oeynhausen, North-Rhine Westphalia, that suggested Pokorny try the Jade port. “Looking back, that was a real tip-off!” She now expects Germany’s only deepwater port to benefit tangibly from the new Gemini Cooperation initiated by the Hapag-Lloyd and Maersk shipping lines in February this year. Hapag-Lloyd has held a 30-percent stake in CTW since 2022, and has also taken a 50 percent interest in the port’s rail terminal, cementing Wilhelmshaven’s place in Hapag-Lloyd’s network. “Now I’d like to see other major shipping lines committing themselves to this fantastic port,” says Pokorny.





From left to right: the OOCL Piraeus, the Wilhelmshaven Express, the Clemens Schulte, and the Maersk Londrina. PHOTO: DIANA JAZIK

BECOMING ROUTINE AT WILHELMSHAVEN

*July saw two of the world’s largest megacarriers join
two feeder ships at Container Terminal Wilhelmshaven.
Increasingly, things are getting busy quayside.*

Isn’t she beautiful, the Wilhelmshaven Express? Second from left in the aerial photo, this brand new Hapag-Lloyd box carrier is pictured here on the first day she sailed into the port for which she is named. Bringing space for almost 24,000 TEU and 1,500 berths for refrigerated units, the ultra-large container vessel Wilhelmshaven Express offers impressive capacity – and features such as a wind and wave deflector at the bow to reduce air resistance, improving fuel efficiency and saving emissions.

To the left of the Wilhelmshaven Express is the OOCL Piraeus, a 24,188-TEU container ship crossing the seven seas under the Hong Kong flag after her maiden voyage in 2024. She is one of a class of 18 vessels built between 2017 and 2024. The two feeders are the Clemens Schulte, second from right, with a

capacity of 5,400 TEU, and the Maersk Londrina, which can hold up to 8,700 standard container units.

HIGHER CONTAINER VOLUMES EXPECTED IN 2025

Following the launch of the Gemini Cooperation between Hapag-Lloyd and Maersk in February this year, the new Zhejiang Seaport (Germany) Supply Chain Management GmbH site in the Wilhelmshaven Freight Village, and the start of the regular China-Europe-Express (CEX) between Ningbo and the Jade Bight, CTW can now expect strong growth in container volumes for 2025 and into the coming years. Beyond its aesthetic value, this photo is proof (were any needed) that Wilhelmshaven is already an international freight hub occupying a key position in global supply chains – and will need to get used to being busy.

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