



Germany still very popular for heavy cargo logistics

Expertise, customer proximity, continuity - the project & plant forwarder Alfons Köster knows what counts in heavy cargo logistics. Alfons Köster CEO, Peter Vasilopoulos discusses the development of this challenging market.

POHM: How do you judge the general development in the market for project and plant cargoes?

Vasilopoulos: In general, the mood in project logistics is improving. The general cargo business is recovering and demand for transporting larger cargoes is

picking up again. Naturally, this varies in the individual sectors. In the oil and gas industries for example, as previously it is not easy for a mid-sized company to position itself. However, for us there are diverse industries, which appreciate being represented by a mid-sized forwarder with a flat hierarchy.

Do you see special challenges or trends in international heavy cargo logistics?

We recognise a certain trend in shifting production sites. While just a few years ago complete plants and production sites were transported, today those inviting tenders try to produce the components required in their home countries and purchase only the high-tech equipment abroad. Then the greater added value stays in the home country.

How is Germany positioned in comparison to the international market?

In our opinion Germany still holds a leading position in the international market. This also means though that international groups keep an eye on brands of interest in our markets, on occasion even making offers for competing brands. If there is a takeover, the production sites and the knowhow are protected for a certain period of time. This also happened to some of our customers in the past, with several takeovers from the People's Republic of China where the desired German sites were secured.

Which modes of transport are most sought after, or most used for heavy-load cargoes?

In this sector waterways are still well used. These are not affected by roadworks on motorways and main roads, making long-term planning possible.

Alfons Köster has eight sites in Germany as well as in the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Shanghai. How different is your business in the various markets?

Basically our aim is to offer our customers in all locations a comprehensive package. Therefore, we do not push differences in focus at our domestic or overseas branches. In Baden-Württemberg we are traditionally the largest overseas forwarder, almost all of our employees there are involved in overseas business. In addition, our branch in Waiblingen successfully carries out project logistics for some of our customers. The Düsseldorf branch is intensively involved in business with Iran. We are well positioned, from consolidated and part loads by road to standard containers through to dismantling, packaging and shipping of used production plants.

Thanks to strong investment from foreign companies in the last ten years, we have been able to install Europe-wide overland transport in Prague. The



**Egal was,
egal wann,
egal wo!**

Schwerer, breiter, länger? Gern. Alles, was über das Übliche hinausgeht, ist unsere Spezialität. Wir können Standard, sind jedoch Profis, wenn es bei Stück- und Schwergut richtig knifflig wird. Dann sind wir Stauer zur Stelle und packen an. Dabei haben wir eines immer im Blick: Ihr Gut.



BUSS

A brewery tank being shipped to Mexico – just one of the heavy-lift shipments effected by Alfons Köster



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country has proved to be more favourable, with high-quality production sites and offers ideal conditions to supply the European market, free from customs duty or tax.

What have been the greatest challenges since the founding in 1929 and how have you prepared for the next ones?

One of the greatest challenges was surely the crisis at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 90s, overcome by our sole owner Fritz Wessel with targeted consolidation measures and by bringing in the juniors, Olaf and Frank Wessel. Alfons Köster then surely profited from the expertise gained by Olaf Wessel during his long stay in the United States. This formed the basis for today's strategy and market positioning of the enterprise as a specialist for heavy-lift and project cargoes. I, myself have been working in the company since 1999, starting as a department head and 10 years later becoming a member of the management board. I am very pleased to

be part of the success. Since 1999 we have tripled our turnover and our workforce.

The aim for the coming years is, as in the past remain close to our customers and together with them to develop and implement logistics concepts taking optimisation and saving potential into consideration. ■

Alfons Köster & Co. GmbH

Alfons Köster is a family owned and run company with almost 200 employees. Established in 1920 the company is lead today by owners Fritz Wessel, Olaf Wessel and Frank Wessel. The headquarters is in Hamburg with branch offices in Stuttgart, Tauberbischofsheim, Munich, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf, Bremen, Hamm, Prague and Shanghai. The project & plant forwarder has been successfully placed in the Top Ten of the German heavy cargo market for several years.