

Coastal shipping provides transportation without any congestion or tolls – and relieves the environment. The Rhenus subsidiary RMS has specialized in this type of traffic, which makes sense both ecologically and economically.

A calculation example provided by the Bonn ShortSeaShipping Promotion Center (SPC) demonstrates how coastal shipping can play its part in reducing CO₂ emissions: The door-to-door shipment of a complete truck load from Dortmund to Lisbon on a coaster generates 1.5 tons of carbon dioxide – and this includes the truck journey to Rotterdam and the ongoing trip from Lisbon Harbor. If a truck transports the consignment all the way, 5.4 tons of CO₂ are given off into the atmosphere – more than three times as much.

Rhenus Fleet Operates Across Europe

The Rhenus Group has its own efficient specialist for the Short Sea Shipping sector: the Duisburg-based Rhein-, Maas- und See-Schiffahrtskontor GmbH (RMS). RMS transports approx. seven million tons of goods per annum on its fleet of 13 vessels and 58 chartered coasters. The company mainly operates on routes to England, Scandinavia, the Iberian Peninsula and Russia, but is increasingly working in the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

“The vessels reach the British port of Goole or harbors in Denmark within two days from Duisburg and Northern Spanish destinations like Bilbao or Santander can be reached in three and a half days,” Helmut Botermann, Managing Director of RMS, explains. Short Sea Shipping is primarily suitable for goods, which are transported in medium-sized or large quantities and where demand can be predicted relatively easily. They include chipboard or paper rolls or even steel coils for the automobile industry. Part loads are also transported on regular services. There are many regular departures from Duisburg, the central traffic hub in the Rhine/Ruhr area. RMS also operates regular services from the seaports of Hamburg and Bremen to Great Britain.

Short Sea Shipping turns any port, which can accommodate a coaster, into a seaport. This applies to the major centers along the River Rhine as far as Basel and the Danube ports as far as Vienna. But the same is true of Brussels on the Albert Canal or Paris on the River Seine and many

destinations inside Russia. Direct transportation minimizes handling operations and prevents transport damage as a result, particularly in the case of sensitive loads. Last but not least, eco-friendly coaster shipments provide a high degree of reliability for delivery dates – they can also be included in just-in-time delivery chains in their capacity as floating stores.

Rising Demand

“The market volume in the Short Sea sector has grown sharply in the past few years,” reports RMS Manager Botermann. As a result, ship capacity is tight. So RMS is examining whether it should expand its own fleet and ensure additional capacity using “Time Charter.” This enables a company to hire a ship for a particular period including its crew.

Short Sea Shipping also has influential backers in Brussels on account of its many ecological and economical advantages. The EU Commission has been examining whether to promote Short Sea traffic at sea since the 1990s. Under the heading “Motorways of the Sea,” subsidies are now available for expanding infrastructure in various regions on the continent. At the same time any administrative restrictions, which are holding back traffic on the maritime highways, are due to disappear. The EU Directorate General for Energy and Transport launched its initiative for a “border-free European maritime transport area” at the end of 2007.

