

Top-level consultations in Rotterdam's inland container shipping sector

During the third sector consultations, a number of stakeholders in the inland container shipping chain indicated that there is an urgent need to address the issue of container handling delays. The results of activities to this end were shared with the relevant stakeholders during the sector consultations of 8 February, headed by the Port of Rotterdam Authority. The attendees also agreed on follow-up actions.

Due to a variety of factors, waiting times for container inland vessels at the deep sea terminals remain longer than desired. National and international inland shipping and transport organisations, shippers and industry representatives have voiced their concerns about this matter. The Port Authority takes these concerns very seriously. Swift, reliable and efficient container transport via inland shipping is in everyone's best interest. Of the some 12 million TEU put through Rotterdam every year, approximately 3 million TEU is shipped in or out of the port by inland vessels. A reliable inland container shipping chain is a prerequisite for inland shipping's long-term and lasting growth as an efficient mode of transport.

Working groups get started

The sector consultations on 8 February included representatives of all the sector parties involved: barge operators, container terminals, shipping companies, freight forwarders and shippers. The attendees included Dutch, German and Swiss representatives of the industrial and logistics sectors and shippers (DSVK/BDI, evofenedex, FENEX/TLN, SPEDLOGSWISS), inland shipping organisations and barge operators (LINC, BDB, CBRB, SVS, Koninklijke BLN-Schuttevaer, EBU), terminal operators (VRTO, ECT, APMT, RWG), shipping companies and ship agents (VRC).

The Chairs of the three working groups updated the attendees on:

- The independent study into the inland container shipping chain;
The relevant chain parties have increased their insight into the current process, business and contractual relationships between various players and the balance of influences and interests within the chain. The working group has established the main causes of the delays on the basis of interviews with different parties and data from a number of sources. It has proposed possible optimisation measures, which will be worked out in further detail.
- The short-term improvements in the handling and planning process;
Container terminals and barge operators indicate that there are a limited number of short-term improvement measures in the handling and planning process for inland container shipping in Rotterdam (quick wins). Practical improvements have presently been implemented in the Portbase barge planning module and parties are working to improve utilisation of the existing quay capacity.
- Improvements to the operational procedures and agreements in this context;
Parties have formulated KPIs and definitions that help to increase their joint insight into the performance of the inland container shipping chain.

The working groups regularly come together and are working step by step toward new solutions. During the consultations on 8 February, the Chairs of the working groups updated all stakeholders on progress made in the above areas and made agreements about their follow-up.

Nextlogic update

Together with various sector parties, the Port Authority has taken a number of initiatives that are intended to structurally improve the settlement of container flows to and from the hinterland in the longer term. One such initiative is the development of Nextlogic: a digital solution for the port-wide

coordination and allocation of supply and demand for available quay capacity for inland vessels. Capacity is allocated to inland vessels via an integrated, neutral and dynamic process. This results in better utilisation of the available quay capacity and shorter stays for inland vessels in the port area. The first Nextlogic elements will be going live in the near future. Nextlogic is expected to offer its first services in mid-2018. Following consultation with the private sector, the Port Authority has decided to handle Nextlogic's operation itself via an entity that has been especially set up for this purpose. Nextlogic remains a strong concept that can count on widespread support and close involvement from the various chain parties.

Incentive scheme

Barge Terminal Tilburg, Combined Cargo Terminals, Moerdijk Container Terminals and Danser Group have joined forces, agreeing to combine cargo along the route between Tilburg, Moerdijk and the port of Rotterdam. The collaboration between these private parties and Rotterdam's deep sea terminals within the 'West-Brabant Corridor' is the first concrete initiative supported by the Port of Rotterdam Authority within its incentive scheme for the sector. The Port Authority received six proposals, which were evaluated by a team made up of representatives of shippers, forwarders and knowledge institutes.

The next sector-wide consultations will be held on 13 April 2018.