

Paper logistics

The right place at the right time

Roto Alba prints 6,420,580 brochures for the French sports goods dealer GO Sport in the space of five days. The printing plant in the heart of the old town of Alba in Piedmont has no warehousing facilities. The required grade of paper is not made in Italy – it is therefore transported by road from Duisburg and delivered just-in-time by Ralpin's rolling motorway.



Driver Dragan Savic already has a long journey behind him by the time the paper is unloaded in Alba. After the truck and trailer were checked in Duisburg it was first onto the ro-mo in Freiburg.

Dragan Savic picks up the nine paper rolls with a total weight of 24 t from the Norsk Skog Walsun paper mill in Duisburg. He sets off shortly after eight o'clock on Wednesday evening, with the aim of arriving in Freiburg im Breisgau in good time to catch the rolling motorway train (ro-mo) which departs on Thursday at 12.40 p.m. After more than 675 km on the German A3 and A5 motorways the 440 hp

Volvo FH Euro5 unit pulls into the terminal with its lightweight Berger ecotrail semi-trailer from the Tirolean company Berger Logistik. Only a short time is needed to hand over the documents for the customs-free EU-EU transport from Germany to Italy via Switzerland.

The drivers receive snacks of sandwiches, chocolate bars and mineral water. Things then move at the double. Drive

over the weighbridge – the truck's weight of 39.5 t is only just within the road limit of 40 t – pass under the loading gauge and then head directly on to the waiting train. Today Savic is the first to drive onto the special low-loader railway wagons and cover the distance of just under 400 m at walking pace. Retract antennas, bleed air from the suspension, place chocks under the wheels and lock the cabin – and it

Three good reasons for the ro-mo

There is no alternative to road transport for the delivery of the paper rolls to Roto Alba. Transport by rail over the whole route is prohibited by the demands of just-in-time delivery and production, the location of the printing plant in the historical centre of the town, the absence of a private siding and the fact that there is no nearby handling terminal.

Ro-mo makes customers happy

The rolling motorway of the service provider Ralpin through the eco-sensitive alpine region from Freiburg im Breisgau in southwest Germany to Novara in northern Italy nevertheless makes rail transport possible over a distance of 414 km.

In the view of Friedrich Mair, authorised signatory with Berger Logistik in Radfeld near Kufstein, it also makes economic sense because

- drivers can take the prescribed nine hours' rest while travelling and
- punctual delivery in Alba is assured by the dependability of the logistic chain.

There is no need for a 279 km detour via Tirol and the Brenner which would otherwise arise as a result of the ban on night driving in Switzerland.

A dozen train pairs per day

Ralpin runs up to eleven train pairs per day between southern Germany and northern Italy, to which one night train pair from

Basel via the Gotthard to Lugano was added in January. In 2010 it transported more than 900,000 shipments through the Swiss Alps on the Lötschberg–Simplon axis, deploying more than 5,000 trains.

Plans are pending for a remodelling of the terminal in Freiburg im Breisgau. Their implementation will bring simpler loading, greater efficiency (by eliminating the reversal of the train's direction at the German-Swiss border in Weil am Rhein) and a resultant increase in capacity. From 2012 Ralpin will bring 20 new, air-conditioned crew carriages into service to offer the drivers greater comfort on their journey through Switzerland.



Photos: Pirmin Rösli/Raipin

In the second night Savic witnesses a change of locomotives in Domodossola, where SBB Cargo Italia takes over and hauls the train to Novara. The crew wagon is seen between the engine and the first wagon.

is now time to rest in the accompanying crew wagon.

Here, in the common room with cooking facilities, the drivers can heat and eat the meals they bring with them, watch films on their laptops, read or play cards. All is soon quiet in the couchette compartments, for on their arrival in Novara at 23.55 h many drivers want to head directly from the train to their destinations in all parts of Italy.

From job to job

Dragan Savic has different plans for the early hours of Friday morning, however. He will not be able to deliver his load to the Roto Alba printing plant until after 7.30 a.m. He judges that he will need two hours to drive the remaining distance of 129 km on the North Italian A26. So he parks his truck, folds down his bed in the driver's cabin and sleeps until just before five. Unfortunately another trucker who has also stopped in Novara has parked his vehicle in such a way as to block the transport of the paper until he returns from his morning shower.

Savic now heads swiftly southwards. The way through the historic streets and tight roundabouts of Alba to the printing

plant close to the town centre is rather narrow in places. The janitor is awake and the sun is pleasantly warm, but the person responsible for unloading the cargo is in no hurry to arrive. Our driver makes the waiting time pass more quickly by getting the trailer ready with the tarpaulin pulled back, the side boards removed and the tie-down belts released and rolled up. He drinks an Italian coffee from the machine and chats with two fellow drivers who are bringing rolls of paper for the same printing order.

No empty runs

The crane operator finally arrives to take delivery of the paper and starts up his powerful machine. He hoists roll after roll onto the conveyor belt which transports them into the lift and brings them to the rotary presses in the basement. The big print run must be completed on Tuesday, for the products offered in the brochure will be on sale in client's shops in only three weeks. Savic has not yet finished his day's work. On the return trip he loads 25 pallets of aperitif drinks in Canale, 15 km away, before heading home for a well-earned weekend's rest.

Kurt Metz

In brief

Gefco and SRR teaming up. The French service provider Gefco and the Latvian railway SRR want to jointly offer multimodal transport solutions between Europe and Central Asia. To this end the two companies have established a joint venture called Eurasian Multimodal Alliance. The new offer is aimed primarily at industrial companies and mining enterprises. www.gefco.net; www.srr.lv

Coal train services suspended. Transnet, a South African state-owned bulk freight company, is planning to suspend coal train services from the Richards Bay coal terminal for around 20 days. The line in the northeast of the country, as well as the rolling stock that travels on it, will be subject to thorough maintenance measures from 23 May. Transnet has recently suffered several derailments.

www.spoornet.co.za; www.rbct.co.za

More goods carried. Sri Lanka's state-owned railway SLR transported 44% more freight last year in comparison with 2009, which enabled it to reduce its deficit by LKR 34 million to LKR 3.17 billion (approximately EUR 20 million). The country's central bank reported that the railway was able to improve primarily on account of an increase in the volume of oil transported.

www.railway.gov.lk; www.cbsl.gov.lk

CN investing in containers. The Canadian National Railway Company (CN) has acquired more than 1,000 new containers. Approximately 540 containers will be used to renew CN's domestic container fleet. CN's overall container fleet now amounts to almost 6,000 units.

www.cn.ca

Capacity increase. Bigger freight trains have started full operations between Southampton and the West Midlands in the United Kingdom, following the completion of a multi-million pound rail upgrade. It is estimated that the move will remove up to 50,000 container lorries from the roads each year.

www.britrail.com

New railway link. CFL Multimodal is launching a new intermodal service linking the terminal of Bettembourg (Luxembourg) to the Skandinavienquai in the port of Lübeck (Germany). The trains will carry containers, swap bodies and semi-trailers. The service will be phased in with three rotations per week and extended at a later stage to five round trips per week.

www.cfl-mm.lu