

Finsterwalder drives Europe on a growth course



The 230 modern heavy goods vehicles of the firm Finsterwalder Transport und Logistik GmbH (FTL), which is based in Halle (Saale) are on the road every day - and not only in Germany, but also throughout Europe. Whether it's the north or the south, in Spain or Bulgaria: The company that was founded back in 1937 and which opened branches in Halle and Merseburg in 1990 is chartering a successful course.

"We aren't growing really fast but we're growing steadily and sustainably," explains Sven Köcke, the firm's Marketing/Sales/Property manager. In autumn last year the number of employees at the Halle-based logistics company went over the 800 mark. "Ten years ago we numbered just 300. We are hoping to employ over 1,000 men and women in the foreseeable future," explains Köcke, full of confidence. "We are growing with the region and benefitting from its geographical location," explains the 37 year old, who is both a leading member of the Logistics Board of the State of Saxony-Anhalt and the Chairman of the State Committee for Transport in the Wirtschaftsrat Deutschland (Economic Affairs Council of Germany).

Central Germany - a key centre for logistics.

This is where flows of goods meet, are divided and are distributed all over Europe. There are good reasons why logistics firms like Amazon, Rossmann, Hermes, Kaufland and previously Quelle have set up in this region.

The Schkeuditz motorway junction has been a crossing point for trading routes from northern to southern and Western to Eastern Europe for a very long time - a situation that isn't predicted to change. This advantage is strengthened by the superb local transport infrastructure, a benefit which will be all the stronger when the central German motorway loop road with the A 143 to the west of the city that has been incomplete for many years is completed. This gap in the motorway network is slowing up Finsterwalder just as much as the missing section of the so-called Eastern Tangent in Halle. This means journey times to the motorways are longer, not to mention the damage to the local environment that this causes.

The Deutsche Bahn AG is investing over 400 million Euros in the construction of a new rail junction and the modernisation of the Halle/Salle junction. Köcke is certain that this will further enhance the attractiveness of Saxony-Anhalt for logistics companies.

On the one hand, this means local companies, most of which come from the chemicals industry, the foodstuffs industry (link at www.invest-in-saxony-anhalt.com/Nahrungsmittelindustrie.93.0.html), the mechanical engineering industry (link at www.invest-in-saxony-anhalt.com/High-performance-mechanical-an.105.0.html) and the paper industry (link at www.invest-in-saxony-anhalt.com/Paper-Industry).

A second important group of customers are, as Köcke explains, large trading companies which produce in the Far East and require logistics hubs to be able to distribute their goods around Europe. For these customers, FTL has set up sea port hinterland transport system. "We pick up goods in containers from the sea ports in Hamburg, Rotterdam and Bremerhaven and transport them to Halle. Some of the containers also come along the river Elbe by ship to the port of Aken, before they go on to Halle by road. Here, the containers are opened and decontaminated in accordance with the regulations before the goods are then distributed to recipients throughout Europe. Köcke explains how the logistics sector in central Germany benefits from the fact that so many countries in Eastern Europe are land locked and have no direct access to world seas. This means they rely on the over-land transport of goods.

Each day, 700 vehicle units are scheduled with partners all over Europe.

In Halle, FTL operates one of twelve rail ports in Germany. This means Deutsche Bahn AG closes the gap of the so-called last mile of rail goods traffic for customers who have no rail link of their own. FTL has its own 2.5 kilometre long rail network, which includes platforms and shunting locomotives

Today, Finsterwalder Transport & Logistik GmbH has twelve sites in Saxony-Anhalt. In has recently completed a new building in Schkopau. At eight locations in Halle as well as in Eisleben, Merseburg and Bad Lauchstädt, the family-owned firm has taken over former GDR-era industrial sites and transformed them into brand new logistics and storage operations. Its operational facilities at all locations now stretch over 500,000 square meters. This is equivalent to almost 70 football fields. All in all, over 50 billion Euros have been invested.

The points on the FTL sites are all set for growth.

Heavy goods handling is set for expansion. A suspension crane system that connects directly to the rail terminal is already in place. Customers will primarily come from the mechanical engineering, auto production and plant engineering sectors. The handling of overseas-transportation containers is also going to be extended. In 2011, FTL transported over 6,000 containers. Business in the region is brisk enough for another container handling location for combined road and rail transport, explains Köcke.

In 2011, the German locations were joined by branches in Venlo (Netherlands) and Tartu (Estonia). The same year, Michael Finsterwalder joined the company's management team. This means the third generation of the Finsterwalder family has now joined the management team, following from company founder Eugen and current Managing Partner Klaus Finsterwalder, ensuring its continuation as a family business. And growth is also being ensured by the firm's apprenticeship programme. In this context, in 2011, the company was recognized as being a TOP training company by the IHK (chamber of commerce) of Halle-Dessau.

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