“For us, Rotterdam is one of the most important seaports,” says Volker Schmitz, Managing Director of Duisport Agency, the cross-company marketing organisation of the port of Duisburg, situated at the heart of Germany’s Ruhr area. The same applies the other way around as well. Martien Windhorst, Head of the Logistics Department of the Port of Rotterdam Authority: “Duisburg is of strategic importance to Rotterdam, both as a destination in its own right and as a major inland hub for moving rail cargo deep into Europe. With the continuous increase in container flows in the future, its role will only become more important.” Both Rotterdam and Duisburg are aware of their interdependence and are keen to further strengthen the cooperation. Schmitz: “To be and remain competitive from a European perspective, we need to think and work much more in terms of networks and the realisation of efficient corridors.” The dedicated Betuweroute cargo railway line offers ample opportunity for that. Sjoerd Sjoerdsma, Managing Director of rail infrastructure manager Keyrail: “Our main goal is to facilitate efficient rail transport from Rotterdam to the rest of Europe via the Betuweroute. In that, Duisburg is the first major hub on the German side of the border.”

**IMPROVING THE RAIL PRODUCT TOGETHER**

More than enough reason for Duisport Agency, Keyrail and the Port of Rotterdam Authority to jointly see how the rail product Rotterdam - Duisburg can be further improved. Data exchange and coordination are crucial for this. Windhorst: “In Rotterdam, we are greatly benefitting from the Chain Management approach of Keyrail and the services of Portbase, the Port Community System of our port which guarantees an optimum exchange of data.” Through the Chain Management approach, Keyrail has improved the cooperation between the many parties which make up Rotterdam’s rail chain. Sjoerdsma: “In the past, everyone would just optimise their own section; as a result, the total product however was sub-optimal. Using an integrated planning, supported by a train information system, we have now changed all that. More important are the concrete agreements that are at the basis of this: who informs whom. If a delay occurs: notify the next link in the chain beforehand. They can put this information to good use. The information must travel ahead of the train. One preliminary result of the Chain Management approach in Rotterdam is a twenty percent increase in punctuality, which could result in twenty percent increase in efficiency.”

**TRANSLATION TO DUISBURG**

“Such a method of working can also facilitate the handling of trains in Duisburg,” says Schmitz with conviction. “One of our subsidiaries - Duisport Rail - takes care of the shunting of all the trains in our port. For this, sound agreements are essential. If there are any delays in the train schedules, then things can become quite disordered.” Duisport Agency therefore wants to instigate a pilot with a similar Chain Management approach together with all the large and smaller parties in its port. “For this, we will gladly make use of the knowledge and knowhow of Keyrail. If of course also helps that we can show that this chain management actually works in Rotterdam. We are now at the starting point, but hope to have achieved the first results at the end of 2010.”

Even before that, Duisport Agency aims to enthuse the port community in Duisburg for Portbase. The Port Community System of Rotterdam can further simplify the exchange of data with the seaport, for example if companies in Duisburg make use of services such as Barge planning, Rail planning and Cargo information. Schmitz: “We want to implement Portbase ourselves in the near future and then actively promote it amongst individual companies.”

**WE NEED TO THINK AND WORK MUCH MORE IN TERMS OF NETWORKS AND CORRIDORS**

After the chain management has been improved at both ends, the ultimate goal of the three initiating parties is to further extend this to an improved coordination on the entire corridor Rotterdam - Duisburg, with joint planning, coordination of terminal slots etc. Sjoerdsma: “We are of course also discussing this matter with DB Netz, Germany’s rail infrastructure manager.” In combination with the exchange of data through Portbase, rail traffic between the two hubs can thus really be boosted. Windhorst: “Together, we are creating a better and more reliable rail product for our customers, in which more trains will be able to run on the same infrastructure. As far as we are concerned, Rotterdam - Duisburg is only the beginning. Once everything is up and running, we will also gladly implement the concept at other destinations.”