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DVZ INTERNATIONAL

China and Russia advance strategic ambitions in the Arctic

A milestone in commercial shipping was reached this week in Hamburg, where the *Istanbul Bridge* became the first container vessel on a regular liner service to arrive via the Northern Sea Route. Operated by Chinese container shipping line Sea Legend, the 300-metre ship departed Ningbo and completed the voyage in 20 days–less than half the time typically required between East Asia and Europe. But while the reduced transit time is significant, it is not the core story. The voyage reflects a deeper strategic shift. Russia has long expressed ambitions to assert influence over the passage, using its fleet of icebreakers to project control. For China, the rationale is just as strategic. As tensions rise in the Taiwan Strait, Beijing is keen to secure alternatives to the vulnerable southern corridor via the Strait of Malacca. Establishing a northern link to Europe provides not just a logistical advantage, but also a hedge against geopolitical disruption. Sea Legend has already positioned the route accordingly. In a customer update from early August, the company promoted the new corridor as part of a "Polar Silk Road", emphasising its "freedom from political uncertainty" and offering "safe and smooth transport". The United States has also taken note of the Arctic's growing strategic relevance. In a joint move last week, US President Donald Trump and his Finnish counterpart Alexander Stubb announced the commissioning of 11 Arctic-capable icebreakers. Their official designation–Arctic Security Cutters–leaves little doubt about the intent behind their deployment.

Sebastian Reimann

Sebastian Reimann,
Editor-in-Chief, DVZ

IN FOCUS

US turns up heat on IMO climate plan

As the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the International Maritime Organization concludes its London meeting today, the United States has stepped up opposition to the proposed Net-Zero Framework for shipping. The package would set binding emission limits and a global carbon price through new fuel standards, aiming to reach climate neutrality by 2050. In an unprecedented warning, the Trump administration has threatened tariffs, visa restrictions for seafarers, higher port charges and entry bans on vessels from supporting flag states. It also announced investigations into “unfair trade practices”, curbs on US government contracts and sanctions on officials accused of promoting “activist climate policies”. Washington argues the plan would disadvantage US firms and benefit China. EU member states have voted jointly in favour, calling the framework a milestone for global climate protection and fair competition. The European Commission said it would review EU maritime rules once adopted. Leading shipowner groups, including the International Chamber of Shipping and the World Shipping Council, have urged delegates to endorse the “carefully balanced” plan, warning that fragmented regional regimes would raise costs without speeding up decarbonisation. Several tanker owners and classification societies still push for revisions they describe as more pragmatic.

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INSIDE FREIGHT MARKETS

Carmakers warn of supply chain disruption as Nexperia dispute widens

European manufacturers are bracing for fresh supply chain turbulence after Dutch chipmaker Nexperia warned it may not be able to maintain deliveries to automotive customers. The company, owned by China’s Wingtech Group, is caught in a political dispute that has led the Dutch government to remove its Chinese chief executive, Zhang Xuezheng, raising concerns over continuity of semiconductor supply. Nexperia, based in the Netherlands with a major plant in Hamburg, produces chips critical to vehicle control and power systems. The European Automobile Manufacturers’ Association (ACEA) said shortages could halt production lines as switching to alternative suppliers would take months, while stockpiles typically last only a few weeks. “We suddenly find ourselves in an alarming situation,” ACEA director-general Sigrid de Vries said. The court-ordered dismissal of Zhang and tighter restrictions on Nexperia’s management have deepened uncertainty for logistics planners and procurement teams. A new CEO, German executive Stefan Tilger, has been appointed, while Beijing has retaliated by blocking exports of China-made Nexperia chips – a move that threatens to ripple through Europe’s just-in-time supply networks.

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Muted recovery forecast for Germany’s logistics sector

Germany’s logistics industry is expected to return to modest growth in 2026 after two consecutive weak years, according to the Council of Logistics Experts led by Christian Kille. The group projects nominal growth of 2.6 per cent and a real increase of only 0.5 per cent in its baseline scenario. Even under favourable conditions, the real rate would reach just 1.1 per cent, while a downside case could still leave the sector in slight contraction. The outlook reflects continued caution across the economy. Policy measures have yet to gain traction, investment remains subdued amid global uncertainty, and corporate budgets remain tied up in cybersecurity. Core industries such as automotive, machinery and chemicals are stagnating, while the post-pandemic e-commerce boom has faded. Ongoing consolidation among transport operators adds further pressure. In 2024 the sector grew 2.6 per cent nominally to 335 billion euros, but contracted 2 per cent in real terms as volumes and employment fell. Analysts describe 2026 as a year of stabilisation rather than recovery, with growth too modest to offset recent declines.

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Rising threat from fraudulent haulage firms

Germany is facing a surge in cargo thefts by fraudulent haulage firms posing as legitimate transport companies, according to the German Insurance Association (GDV). The group recorded 88 such cases in the first seven months of the year – already matching the total for all of 2024. Average losses per incident now approach 200,000 euros. Criminals exploit digital vulnerabilities such as forged email addresses and hacked freight exchange accounts to obtain transport contracts under false identities. High-value goods such as electronics are most often targeted, but everyday items are also affected. Insurers are urging stricter verification of subcontractors to curb scams by front companies and identity fraudsters. The GDV warned that without tighter security checks and clearer accountability in logistics chains, digital fraud in freight transport will continue to rise.

Chip supply remains fragile despite easing bottlenecks

Germany's semiconductor supply chains have stabilised since the pandemic, yet most firms still face difficulties. A Bitkom survey found that 60 per cent of companies purchasing chips this year reported procurement issues, down from nearly 90 per cent a year earlier. Average delivery delays remain around four months, still well above pre-pandemic levels. While shortages have eased, 96 per cent of affected firms still face delays and 91 per cent price increases. Many have adapted: over half are stockpiling chips or have long-term supply deals, while 44 per cent rely on multiple vendors to reduce single-source risk and safeguard production continuity. Confidence in US suppliers has dropped sharply. Only 37 per cent of German firms still see the United States as reliable, even though 72 per cent import from US-based suppliers. Rising tension around Taiwan adds pressure, with 92 per cent viewing China's threats as a serious supply risk. Bitkom president Ralf Wintergerst said semiconductors remain "at the centre of global economic conflicts" and urged Europe to develop a stronger chip ecosystem to cut dependency and improve resilience.

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BEHIND THE SCENES IN BRUSSELS

EU lawmakers back softer version of supply chain law

The European Parliament's legal affairs committee has approved a watered-down version of the bloc's Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), narrowing its reach after months of lobbying from industry groups. The vote passed by 17 to six, with two abstentions. The revised rules would apply only to companies with more than 5,000 employees and annual revenue above 1.5 billion euros, compared with 1,000 staff and 450 million euros in the original draft. A final compromise with member states is still pending, with talks due to start late next week. EU governments had already signalled support for similar relaxations in June. The directive, adopted in principle last year, aims to strengthen global human rights by holding major companies accountable for abuses such as child or forced labour. Aid group Misereor accused lawmakers of dismantling the directive and "depriving the weakest of protection", saying only about 120 German firms would remain covered instead of 2,700. Conservative rapporteur Jörgen Warborn faced criticism for allegedly seeking tougher revisions through far-right alliances but defended his stance, arguing Europe faces a fragile investment climate.

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COMPANY NEWS

Kuehne + Nagel expands in India as logistics demand rises

Swiss logistics group Kuehne + Nagel is adding five fulfilment centres in India as the country becomes a key growth market for global logistics. The new sites in Gurgaon, Kolkata, Nagpur, Mumbai and Rajpura add 100,000 square metres, taking the group's total to nearly 500,000 and creating about 1,500 jobs. The expansion targets rising demand from consumer goods, healthcare and manufacturing clients as India's economy accelerates toward becoming the world's third-largest by 2030. The facilities include automated handling systems to raise efficiency. The move underscores Kuehne+Nagel's bid to strengthen its position in Asia's expanding contract logistics market, where competition from DHL and DB Schenker is increasing.

US port fee hike prompts Wallenius Wilhelmsen to drop outlook

The Norwegian car carrier Wallenius Wilhelmsen has withdrawn its 2025 earnings guidance after Washington sharply increased port fees on foreign-built vessels. The change stems from an October 10 rule by the US Trade Representative lifting the charge for roll-on/roll-off ships from 14 to 46 US dollars per net ton. The new rate, in force since October 14, applies to all Ro-Ro vessels built outside the United States. The measure is part of wider trade actions against China's shipbuilding industry, which Washington claims benefits from "unfair practices". The levy will be applied up to five times per vessel each year. Wallenius Wilhelmsen said the scale of the rise was far greater than anticipated and is reviewing its route network and customer contracts to contain additional costs. Third-quarter results remain unaffected, but the company warned that higher port charges could weigh on fourth-quarter earnings and force adjustments to its US operations.

Waberer's expands warehouse network in Hungary

The Hungarian logistics group Waberer's plans to build 100,000 square metres of new warehouse space in Hungary by 2030, including temperature-controlled facilities and a site at Budapest Airport, according to an investor presentation. Another 90,000 square metres of rented space will be replaced with company-owned assets. The move is part of a push to cut costs and improve margins by shifting from leased to owned logistics properties. The group currently runs 225,000 square metres of its own warehousing and manages a similar amount for clients. Waberer's will invest about 46 million euros in the programme, one-third covered by state funding. The company expects the new assets to pay off within seven to ten years.

Dettmer and BLG logistics venture DCP files for insolvency

DCP Dettmer Container Packing, a Bremen-based joint venture between Dettmer Group and BLG Logistics, has filed for insolvency after several failed restructuring attempts, the companies said on Monday. The application was lodged with the Bremen district court on 13 October following what shareholders described as "persistent deterioration" in market conditions and earnings. DCP provides container packing, export packaging and handling services at sites in Bremen, Hamburg and Duisburg, employing 239 staff. A related subsidiary, PCB Packing Betriebsgesellschaft, is also expected to file for insolvency. The company had struggled for years with falling volumes in conventional export packing and rising cost pressure from port logistics. Operations will continue under insolvency supervision while options for continuation or sale are reviewed. Dettmer Group and BLG Logistics said the filing has no effect on their other businesses.

SEA

Charter market stays firm as freight rates slide

Container shipping is showing an unusual split between falling freight rates and still-elevated charter prices, according to a new analysis by Drewry. Spot rates have dropped sharply in recent months, yet charter levels remain about 200 per cent above 2019 averages. The consultancy does not expect both markets to realign before 2026, as carriers keep tonnage locked in long-term fixtures and hire rates resist downward pressure. The strength of the charter market reflects a continuing shortage of available ships. MSC, CMA CGM and other major carriers have absorbed much of the second-hand fleet, cutting the pool of independent owners. Longer voyage times caused by rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope and tighter environmental rules have further limited effective supply, especially for newer, fuel-efficient vessels.

Drewry expects charter rates to stay firm across vessel classes through next year, while global freight rates may decline by roughly 16 per cent. A correction is unlikely until fresh capacity enters service and geopolitical tensions ease, keeping the markets out of balance well into 2026.

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Alternative-fuel ship orders lose momentum

Momentum behind cleaner propulsion in container shipping is fading as operators revert to conventional engines, Alphaliner data show. In the first ten months of 2025, 72 per cent of new vessel orders were built for alternative fuels, down from 81 per cent in 2024 and 83 per cent the year before – the sharpest decline since the green-fuel trend began. LNG remains the preferred option but its share is slipping, while methanol's collapse has been more pronounced: dual-fuel methanol ships now represent just 12 per cent of orders, compared with 18 per cent a year earlier. Diesel-fuelled vessels, once viewed as a transitional niche, have climbed to 28 per cent of total capacity, up from 19 per cent in 2024, driven largely by smaller and regional carriers. Analysts cited the limited availability of green methanol and uncertainty over regulation as reasons for the reversal. Alphaliner said many shipowners were delaying alternative-fuel investments until supply chains stabilise, leaving LNG as the dominant – but temporary – bridge technology.

ROAD

Driver shortage forces logistics firms to cut orders

A lack of qualified truck drivers is forcing logistics companies to scale back operations, according to a new survey by Cologne-based consultancy SCI Verkehr. Roughly three-quarters of respondents said they had to decline or postpone transport contracts, directly reducing turnover and profitability. Many firms report that limited workforce availability has become a structural obstacle to growth. Around half are optimising route planning and scheduling to use existing capacity more efficiently, while switching to rail or inland shipping offers little relief – only 2 per cent reported any measurable improvement. To mitigate the shortage, companies are turning to pay rises and new technology. Seventy-two per cent said they had increased wages to retain or attract drivers, and 65 per cent are using telematics and driver-assistance systems to enhance safety and working comfort. Every second operator now takes personal preferences into account when planning assignments, reflecting the growing competition for labour. SCI Verkehr said these measures raise operating costs and further squeeze margins. Around one-third of firms reported no urgent staff initiatives were needed, largely due to favourable regional labour conditions or a focus on short-haul and local distribution.

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RAIL

Union calls for removal of DB Cargo chief Nikutta

DB Cargo head Sigrid Nikutta is facing calls for her removal after Germany's rail union EVG accused her of mismanagement and mounting losses. In a letter to Deutsche Bahn chief executive Evelyn Palla and supervisory board chair Werner Gatzer, EVG deputy chair Cosima Ingenschay urged that Nikutta be dismissed, saying the freight division had "lost all trust" under her leadership. Ingenschay, who also serves as deputy head of DB Cargo's board, cited cumulative losses of more than 3.1 billion euros since Nikutta took office six years ago and condemned her restructuring plans as a "dismantling rather than a transformation" of the business. The union said DB Cargo was selling key assets, cutting essential staff and outsourcing core activities, resulting in weaker punctuality and service quality. DB Cargo declined to comment on the criticism. A company spokesperson said Deutsche Bahn would review the findings of an independent report on the division's performance due on Wednesday before taking a position.

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ON THE MOVE

Luginbühl takes interim lead at Swiss Post Cargo

Stefan Luginbühl has assumed interim leadership of Swiss Post Cargo following the departure of Roland Heizmann, who stepped down last week, *DVZ International* learnt. Luginbühl, previously responsible for the mail and parcel sorting network, will oversee the logistics unit until a permanent successor is appointed. Heizmann, who had headed the division since April 2022 and led its rebranding under the Swiss Post Cargo name earlier this year, is moving to special projects within the Swiss Post group. The company said he decided to hand over the position "after a sustained phase of growth and transformation". Luginbühl has temporarily stepped back from his postal duties to stabilise operations at the cargo division. Swiss Post said the search for a new head has begun, though no timeline for the appointment has been set.

ON THE RECORD

It's very clear that AI is going to change literally every job,

Doug McMillon, chief executive of Walmart

IMPRINT

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