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Data lags reality as trade tides turn

Anyone looking at economic data today must accept a simple truth: numbers age fast–especially when U.S. policy is as unpredictable as it is now. "With the current flood of news, yesterday already feels like a long time ago," said Christiane von Berg, Chief Economist for the DACH and Benelux regions at Coface, during a conference held by the credit insurer in Mainz on Thursday.

To illustrate her point, von Berg presented a chart tracking cargo landings at the major U.S. West Coast ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. The most recent data–current as of Tuesday–showed a noticeable dip.

The backdrop? Since April 9, a sweeping U.S. import tariff of 145% on Chinese goods had been in place, with few exceptions. But earlier this week, Washington and Beijing jointly announced a temporary thaw: a 90-day suspension of their respective trade barriers. As of May 14, U.S. tariffs on Chinese imports have been lowered to 30%. Unless a broader agreement is reached, those duties will jump to 54% on August 12.

"And now shipping companies are scrambling to react," von Berg remarked. The rush is on to move as much cargo as possible into the U.S. before the window closes. "That chart," she predicted, "is likely to reverse dramatically–the curve could spike upward in no time." And yet, she added with a shrug: "Who knows what's next?"

Sebastian Reimann

IN FOCUS

Northern European ports reach capacity limits

Several key Northern European ports–including Hamburg, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Wilhelmshaven, and London–are currently operating at or beyond capacity. According to a customer advisory from Kühne + Nagel, waiting times for container ships have surged over the past month. Hamburg topped the list with ships waiting an average of 2.6 days last week, while in some ports delays of up to 10 days are reported. Terminal utilisation exceeding 90 percent is impairing productivity across the region.

Persistent disruptions–including severe weather, alliance reshuffles, public holidays, and a recent strike in Belgium–are exacerbating delays. Antwerp was particularly affected, with ships halted for 36 hours and inland vessels facing clearance waits of over 100 hours.

In Hamburg, the relocation of MSC from Eurogate to HHLA's Burchardkai and ongoing automation projects are key contributors to congestion. While HHLA maintains that operations are stable, Hapag-Lloyd reports structural strains in western ports and is evaluating adjustments to its services. Volumes in Northern Europe are rising sharply, with carriers like Hapag-Lloyd and CMA CGM reporting strong import-export growth.

Freight forwarders, including Brelog, cite the reorganisation of shipping alliances as a central cause of bottlenecks, adding logistical burdens and costs. Some shippers are expediting U.S.-bound exports due to a temporary tariff pause.

Meanwhile, capacity between Asia and Europe has soared to a record 515,000 TEU. Analysts suggest liner network restructuring and redirected goods–originally bound for the U.S.–may explain the spike. Speculation is growing that Chinese exporters are increasingly targeting Europe to offset lost American demand, adding further pressure to already strained European ports.

INSIDE FREIGHT MARKETS

14 Schenker employees on the DSV Executive Board and in the divisions and regions

In the case of the DB Schenker takeover, the competences and performance as well as the professional and personal future plans of the candidates were also evaluated - both the previous Schenker managers and the respective DSV managers. The current list of the future DSV management team makes correspondingly exciting reading. Of the 61 names, 14 are from Schenker. It is known that 3 former Schenker managers will be given top jobs on the Executive Committee: Helmut Schweighofer as CEO of the Road division, Vishal Sharma as CCO and Saskia Blochberger as CPO. It has been known for some time that Schenker CEO Jochen Thewes will join the DSV Supervisory Board.

The personnel decisions below Management Board level in the divisions and their regional responsibilities are also exciting. In the Air and Sea division, for example, Daniel Wieland (Projects), a former Schenker man, is the only member of the eleven-strong management team. In Schweighofer's Road division, which is managed by ten people, it is Christoph Matthes (Asia/Pacific region) and Viktor Strömblad (groupage). In the contract logistics business, Rainer Kiefer is the new CCO, Guy Culliford is responsible for global customer management and Catherine Soo for the Asia/Pacific region - so a third of the management team comes from Schenker. Finally, two Schenker employees are responsible for specific sectors: David Resetar for automotive and Shirley Paterson for the technology sector.

Massive pull-forward effects for US imports

In the first quarter of the 2025 fiscal year, goods worth USD 1.89 trillion were imported - more than half of the total import volume in 2024 (USD 3.36 trillion). The figures indicate a significant shift in trade flows. The sharp increase within just a few months can hardly be explained by economic factors alone and is seen as an indication of strategic stockpiling. It appears that many companies have brought forward their imports in order to anticipate impending tariff increases.

LOGISTICS

ID Logistics aims to double turnover

Contract logistics specialist ID Logistics plans to double its global turnover once more - continuing a pattern the company has maintained roughly every five years. In 2023 alone, ID Logistics grew its revenue by nearly 20 percent. Germany plays a key role in this expansion strategy. “We want to break into the top five contract logistics providers in the German market,” said Robin Otto, head of the company’s German operations. To achieve that goal, ID Logistics aims to increase its German turnover from around 300 million euros today to between 500 and 750 million euros.

SEA

Charm offensive on the Suez Canal

From 15 May, the waterway operator will grant a 15 percent discount on transit fees for container ships with a net tonnage of 130,000 tonnes or more for a period of 90 days. Ships in this category belong to the class of large vessels with a slot capacity of around 18,000 TEU or more, which are usually used in traffic between China and Europe. With this step, the authority is apparently reacting to the recent drop in utilisation of the canal as a result of the crisis in the Red Sea - and is targeting the large container shipping companies.

RAIL

Helrom sets ambitious growth targets

"By 2030, we will have 100 train sets," announced Helrom CEO Roman Noack in an interview with DVZ International. One train set roughly corresponds to one connection. The Frankfurt/Main-based company currently offers six international connections with different frequencies. The first Helrom train with its own wagons ran in autumn 2020. The wagons can be folded open at the side, the trailer is pushed onto the wagon, which then closes. The freight railway has financed its growth through various investors. According to Noack, the start-up has been generating a positive result since last autumn. One driver of growth is increasing environmental awareness. "This is a megatrend," said Noack. CT will become even more important when CO2 pricing in transport comes into force from 2027, according to the CEO.

ON THE MOVE

New executive role for Amanda Rasmussen at DHL

Amanda Rasmussen will take over responsibility for global sales and marketing of DHL Global Forwarding’s international ocean and air freight business with effect from 15 May. In her new role, she will report directly to Tim Scharwath, CEO DHL Global Forwarding, Freight. Rasmussen succeeds Thomas George, who had held the position for three years before moving to a new role at Group level in November. A long-time expert in international freight forwarding, Rasmussen has previously worked for DHL Global Forwarding in Vietnam between 2010 and 2017 as part of the International Supply Chain division. She later held positions at Indo Trans Logistics and Expeditors International.She returned to DHL in 2024 as Senior Vice President Order Management Solutions, before being appointed to her new role.

BEHIND THE SCENES IN BRUSSELS

Transport chambers of commerce criticise border controls

They harmed the competitiveness of the European economy and led to increased costs and unpredictable delivery times for many companies. In a resolution adopted in the run-up to the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Schengen Agreement on 14 June, the UECC therefore calls for "the immediate lifting of all permanent or regularly extended internal border controls within the Schengen area, unless there is an acute and specific threat". The cost of controls is disproportionate to the benefits. Instead of increasing security, the controls weakened the mutual trust that had been built up between the regions over decades. A Europe with barriers at every border is a step backwards," explained UECC President Davor Sertic. "We must preserve the trust and freedom of movement that underpin our economy and our cohesion."

ROAD

Insurance overtakes logistics at Waberer's

Waberer's increased its profitability significantly in Q1 2025, despite a slight drop in revenue. Group turnover fell by 1.2 percent to 194.4 million Euro, but EBIT rose by 29.3 percent to 11 million Euro, and net profit surged by nearly 585 percent to 7.5 million Euro. The logistics segment saw a 10.3 percent revenue drop to 155.9 million Euro, burdened by fleet reductions, shifting customer portfolios, and weak European demand. Segment EBIT fell nearly 46 percent to 1.4 million Euro. In contrast, the insurance division, bolstered by the acquisition of the Posta insurers, posted a sales jump of 87.1 percent to 38.6 million Euro and EBIT growth of 62 percent to 9.6 million Euro—making it the group's most profitable area. CEO Zsolt Barna considers a stock market spin-off of the insurance arm. Waberer's aims for EBIT over 50 million Euro in 2025 and 100 million Euro by 2031.

COMPANY NEWS

Remote barge navigation under way in Germany

This involves test runs in the German canal network between Scharnebeck and Salzgitter with various dry cargoes. The shipping company is due to receive the relevant permit today (Thursday 15 May 2025) in Berlin. The company and the responsible Directorate-General for Waterways and Shipping (GDWS) have recently been pushing the issue in order to counter the shortage of skilled labour by creating more attractive job opportunities for skippers. At the end of the process, the remote control of ships in the German waterway network, which is already practised in other countries, is to be introduced. Such tests have already been carried out on the Rhine.

ON THE RECORD

We want to be among the global top ten

Ramachandran Dinesh,
head of Indian logistics provider TVS SCS

IMPRINT

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