



Going intermodal into tomorrow's world

The Italian transport company Codognotto relies on **combined transport** and brings primarily fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), furniture and steel to many European countries by road, rail and water.

"We are always looking for options that our drivers can be at home as often as possible"
Matteo Codognotto

On its website, the Italian transport company Codognotto welcomes visitors with the skyline of the Star Wars planet Coruscant and with the self-confident claim 'We are what other logistics companies will be' and the greeting 'See you in the future!'. The freight forwarder has claimed the world of tomorrow for itself – not entirely without good reason, because in terms of climate-friendly transport, it is way out in front thanks to its strong focus on combined transport – both on the road and on water and rail.

FMCG and furniture require combined transport

Codognotto mainly transports FMCG and furniture. 'You need intermodal support for this nowadays', explains Matteo Codognotto, Marketing

& Innovation Group Director of the company, which is headquartered in Salgareda in north-eastern Italy. 'We started transporting by rail in the 1990s and are still one of the few companies today offering combined transport between Italy and Poland.' Other combined transport connections are operated between Italy and Germany, Spain, Great Britain and the Benelux countries, among others. 'This enables us to cover all possible routes in Europe with intermodal transport.'

The company was founded in 1946 by his grandfather, who bought trucks from the army shortly after the Second World War. In the 1970s, his sons took over and continued to concentrate on transport operations within Italy. In 2001, the family bought a company that specialised in international transport and thus expanded its scope of business. From 2004 onwards, own subsidiaries were founded in other countries: first in France, then

in Spain and Great Britain and, finally, in Slovakia and Poland. 'Today, we are represented in almost every country in Europe. We transport by truck, road, rail and air and offer logistics and international distribution solutions – the complete portfolio of logistics services.'

Roadmap for the future in place

And Codognotto is on course for growth: After achieving EUR 350 million in turnover in 2021, the forecasts for this and the coming years continue to show an upward trend. 'We are seeing that the market remains expandable. Costs are rising, there are many challenges here, but we have a roadmap for the future that will allow us to grow and continue to offer our clients the best services and alternative solutions', says Matteo Codognotto. →



Sustainability is a core issue that is firmly integrated into the corporate strategy. According to Matteo Codognotto, his team and he place great emphasis on three pillars. First, social responsibility: 'We know that we need to ensure that our drivers work in an environment that allows them to be safe, happy and motivated. That is why we are always looking for ways for them to be able to spend time at home as often as possible. In the same way, we pay close attention to the well-being of the employees in our offices.' A second pillar is economic sustainability: 'We seek out opportunities in what is an aggressive and competitive market for transport services to remain viable, but of course, we also make sure to always be financially stable.'

Investment in LNG trucks

And thirdly, the digitalisation of all internal and external processes – such as the electronic consignment note – as well as the use of alternative drives, underpin the company's desire to operate in an ecologically sustainable manner. Since 2013, Codognotto has invested in LNG trucks and runs them on bio-LNG produced from waste. 'We are looking in equal measure into the possibility of using electric trucks and hope that, by the end of the year, we will be able to introduce the first vehicles of this kind for heavy-duty transport.' In intermodal transport, the long haul section is completed by train or ship, while the rest is done by road. 'This saves on driver hours, there is less traffic on the roads, and thus the risk of accidents decreases', explains Codognotto as he lists the other advantages. 'And, last but not least, we have also opted for combined transport from an economic point of view because it is a sustainable solution in the long term. We can guarantee our customers that we can offer major capacity on an ongoing basis.'

For road transport, Codognotto relies on Krone: For the next five years, the company has ordered 600 mega-trailers in Werlte, which can hold loads up to three metres high. They are piggyback trailers that can be loaded onto a ship as so-called roll-on/roll-off traffic or Ro/Ro for short. 'This allows us to cover all our customers' needs from a wide range of sectors, whether we are transporting cars, furniture, electronics, steel or white goods', says Codognotto. He has decided in favour of using telematics – all trailers ordered from Krone will be equipped with it. 'We developed our previous systems ourselves, but now we are buying trailers pre-equipped with telematics from the manufacturer for the first time. I look forward to pursuing this close collaboration, and I am sure it will be a success.'



Company wants to be an innovation driver

The Star Wars city-covered planet of Coruscant is the central planet of the universe and has been the seat of the Galactic Republic government for millennia. It is not a green planet but a very modern one, which was also considered the centre of the galaxy in the saga because of its civilised infrastructure. For Matteo Codognotto, one thing is clear: 'Either we are drivers of innovation or we lose our competitiveness.' That is why the company also runs its own research and development department, where it is working on a truck with an alternative drive system, among other things. 'And so we are developing solutions that may seem impossible today. But we are in no doubt that they can be implemented.' The pandemic and Brexit have shown the degree of flexibility with which transport service providers have to react. 'It is, therefore, important for us to think about what the market might look like in two or ten years' time – and we want to be prepared for that.' In an in-house academy, junior staff are trained and supported in their efforts – and so the invitation 'See you in the future!' also applies to them, in particular. ↪

With modern space for storage and offices, Matteo Codognotto (above) wants to offer his teams a good workplace.

+ PROFILE

The Codognotto Group implements integrated logistics management and transport by road, sea or air for leading companies worldwide. The fleet comprises almost 2,000 vehicles.

PHOTOS: IGOR BORTOLUZZI

Interview

How companies benefit from rail transport

Carsten Hemme, Managing Director of **Paneuropa Transport GmbH**, on the advantages and challenges of rail transport

What does combined transport offer freight forwarders?

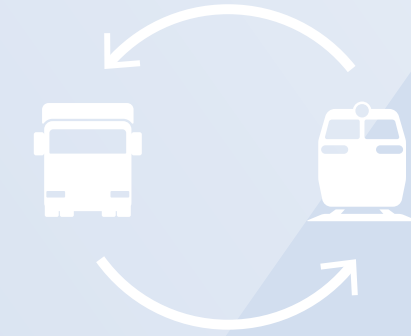
More climate-friendly transport and the possibility to react faster to volatile transport volumes. Rail transport allows you to handle different amounts of cargo with far fewer drivers and tractor units while accommodating mixed and unstable loads. This facilitates planning and helps you avoid having 50 tractor units standing around during the holiday season. The fact that you are allowed to take 4 tonnes more onto the tracks is another plus. And the rail option can partially attenuate the problem of the many freight forwarders that are currently going out of business.

What does rail transport demand from transport service providers?

The scheduling department has to rethink and become familiar with details such as timetables and acceptance times. Delays often have far-reaching effects: whereas a lorry stuck in a traffic jam may be delayed for a few hours, this can stop a train for a whole day. Your customers have to follow suit and come to terms with longer lead times, among other things. This often requires more communication on the forwarding side.

What do you personally see as the greatest benefit for your own company?

We are more independent and can reliably handle our customers' orders. We



have been focusing on combined transport since 2002 and have only ordered trailers that are suitable for railway use since then – whether they are used on the road or not. And we were already expecting an increasing shortage of drivers back then in view of the

demographic development. Most of our transport operations go to Italy, where professional drivers are separated from their families for several weeks. However, if they only bring the goods to the railway and pick them up from there, they can already be back home in the evening.

What has to change?

We need longer trains and, like pilots, train drivers should have an official international language so that the same driver can continue when the train crosses borders. A second rail track would also be helpful. More goods can only be transported by rail if investments are made in a rational and targeted manner. ↪



PHOTO: KRONE