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# Rotterdam rolls out delay-busting barge planning tool



*About 40 percent of the hinterland container transport in Rotterdam is moved by barge. Photo credit: Danny Cornelissen / Port of Rotterdam.*

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Greg Knowler, Senior Editor Europe | Jan 20, 2023, 10:49 AM EST



Rotterdam's barge-scheduling tool Nextlogic has gone live, offering integrated planning of inland container vessel calls meant to improve handling efficiency in a sector that moves 3.6 million TEU through the port each year.

Lengthy delays in handling barges at Rotterdam have long frustrated shippers importing cargo through Europe's largest container port. Even though much of the port congestion experienced through last year has eased, multimodal operator Contargo is still reporting delays in handling barges of about 48 hours.

Allard Castelein, CEO of the Port of Rotterdam Authority, said the digital cooperation enabled by Nextlogic made the port smarter and more sustainable.

"This cooperation enables us to create a better balance between coast and hinterland and establish a more balanced logistics system," Castelein said in a statement this week.

The digital tool enables barge operators to forward port call, rotations, and cargo information to Nextlogic in advance for each inland vessel, and terminals do the same for their available quay capacity. Nextlogic compares the information and creates the optimal schedule for all parties, with the planning optimized automatically 24/7.

Four deep-sea terminals and 15 barge operators in Rotterdam are now connecting via Nextlogic, with a fifth deep-sea terminal, other barge operators, and the first of the depots handling empty containers also preparing to connect.

Barge and terminal operators connecting with Nextlogic via application programming interface (API) will pay €0.52 (\$0.56) per move, while empty depots will be charged €0.17 (\$0.19) per move.

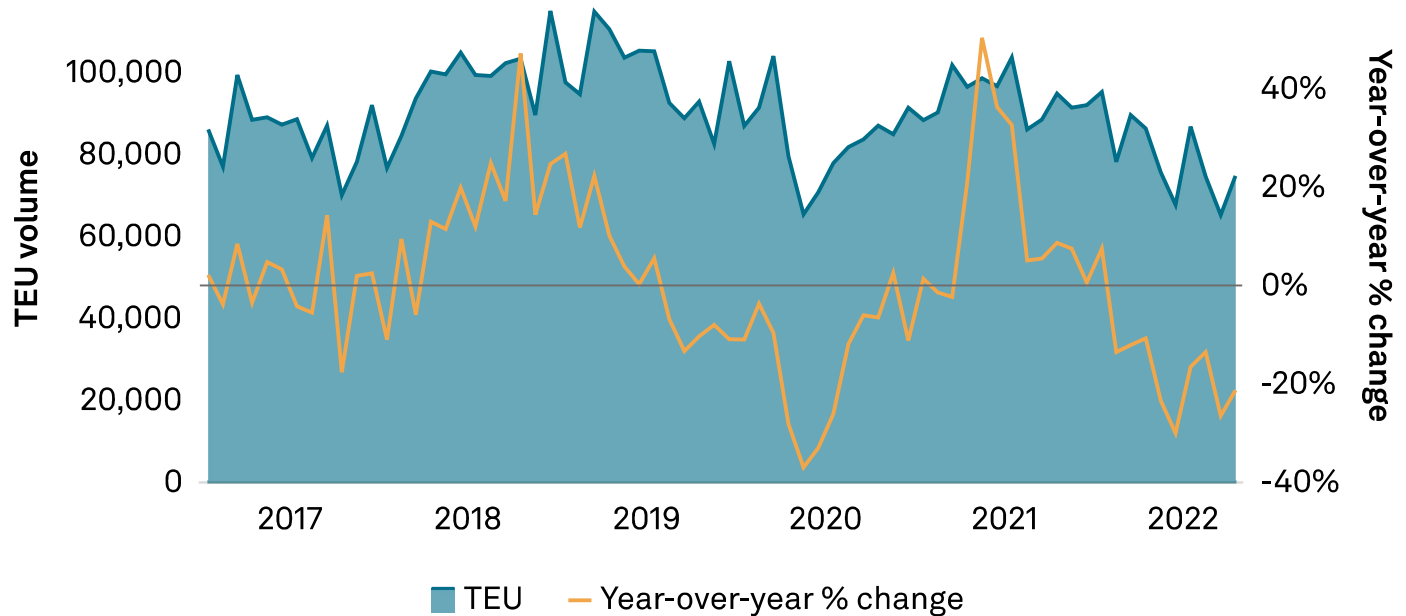
### **Complex inland moves**

The complexity involved in planning inland shipping calls is immense, demonstrated by the fact the pilot phase of Nextlogic lasted from October 2021 to December 2022. A total of 70,000 barges are handled in Rotterdam each year, 18,000 of those carrying containers. Matching supply with demand requires early information sharing between barge operators and terminals to avoid congestion during calls by deep-sea vessels. For each port call by a mega ship of 21,000 TEU, 28 barges are required to handle inland containers, a port spokesperson told the *Journal of Commerce*.

"Around 40 percent of the hinterland transport of Rotterdam's container terminals takes place via inland shipping," Rob Bagchus, chairman of VRTO, the Association of Rotterdam Terminal Operators, said in the Rotterdam port statement. "Integral planning helps both inland shipping and the terminals make optimal use of the available capacity for efficient handling of this inland shipping."

## North Asia to Europe container volume (CTS)

Monthly containerized imports to Europe from North Asia, with year-over-year change



Source: Container Trades Statistics

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The importance of inland shipping to North European hubs was highlighted by Haropa Port, the group created by the merger of Le Havre, Rouen, and Paris terminals, during its annual results announcement this week.

Cédric Virciglio, strategic planning director of Haropa Port, said there was high demand from shippers for the Seine River route last year. At Paris Terminal deep inland on the Seine River, waterway activity increased 25 percent to 207,645 TEU, boosted by the launch of new river-based services.

Still, while river trade remains robust, Asia-Europe volume weakened through the fourth quarter. Data from Container Trades Statistics (CTS) shows volume between Asia and Europe fell 18.4 percent in November year over year, following a 25.9 percent drop in October.

The waning demand can be seen in total containerized volume at Haropa Port — led by the French hub of Le Havre — that remained flat through 2022 at 3.1 million TEU. Rotterdam has not yet released its 2022 operational figures, but in the first nine

The full-year volume at Rotterdam will likely continue that negative run if [the 5.2 percent drop in volume at nearby Antwerp-Bruges](#), Europe's second-largest container port, is a gauge.

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