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## Port of Kiel: Moderate Growth and Strong Cruise Business

The PORT OF KIEL looks back on a solid year 2025 in an economically and politically demanding environment. Total throughput rose to 7.965 million tonnes (+4.8%), while passenger numbers increased slightly to 2.7 million (+1.2%). Key growth drivers were Baltic Sea traffic and the Swedish paper business, while Scandinavian ferry connections also stabilised.

In the cruise segment, 187 calls were recorded with 1.11 million passengers. For 2026, the port expects 212 calls and around 1.2 million passengers. New shore power facilities now allow up to three cruise ships to be supplied simultaneously, with a target shore power rate of 75%.

Following investments of over 50 million euros in shore power, the port is planning a further 70 million euros, primarily for the expansion of areas at the Ostuferhafen. Charging infrastructure for electric trucks is also being developed by 2026, and with the integration of DFDS ferries into the shore power supply, all ferries in the port will in future be able to operate with low emissions. RoPax spoke with Dr. Claus, Managing Director of SEEHAFEN KIEL GmbH & Co. KG, about current developments in the ferry and cruise business as well as infrastructure projects at the Port of Kiel.

### RoPax: Dr. Claus, how has 2026 started for the Port of Kiel so far?

Dr. Claus: Overall solidly. Comparing the first three months with the previous year, we have been able to maintain our level. We are not yet seeing growth, but stability is already a good result in the current market environment. Particularly important for us is that traffic with Norway has stabilised. Due to the weak Norwegian krone, we had experienced significant



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volume losses there over the past two years. Now we are seeing a small increase again. Sweden is slightly down, but still within an acceptable range.

### RoPax: How is your cargo business developing overall?

Dr. Claus: Our paper and forest products business continues to perform very well. The so-called Forest Products segment is growing. In this context there is also a change in transport chains: volumes from Iggesund (Holmen Group) remain at the Port of Kiel, but with a change of carrier. In future, WALLENIOUS SOL will take over these transports. The volumes remain the same, but we are gaining an additional strong player in the port.

### RoPax: Could this bring further growth going forward?

Dr. Claus: That is quite possible. When a second carrier is active in the market, new opportunities arise, particularly for return loads in the direction of Scandinavia. This opens up additional possibilities in the market.

### RoPax: Another major topic is the energy and transport transition in road freight. What role does Kiel play here?

Dr. Claus: An important one. At the Ostuferhafen we are currently installing eight charging points for electric trucks. The facilities are being developed in cooperation with ENGIE and are scheduled to go into operation on 1 September 2026. This will create one of the first larger charging infrastructures for heavy commercial vehicles in northern Germany.

### RoPax: Let's turn to cruise. Kiel has recently benefited strongly from changes in the international market.

Dr. Claus: Absolutely. Due to the security situation in the Middle East, AIDA decided to relocate vessels to Kiel. As a result, we received additional calls by the "AIDAprima", a total of 22 additional calls spread across the winter season. Eight of these took place last year, with a further 14 this winter. The voyages were very well booked.

### RoPax: Winter cruises in the Baltic were long considered difficult to market.

Dr. Claus: That is true, but the market has changed. Many guests today no longer necessarily want to fly long distances, but prefer to depart from a nearby port. The Baltic is also a calm sailing area. That makes winter voyages more attractive.

### RoPax: What role does your excellent shore power concept play in this?

Dr. Claus: A very significant one. We have invested massively in shore power in Kiel. Our goal is to supply around 75 percent of cruise ships with shore power during their time in port in 2026. This works well in principle, even if there are sometimes technical challenges in the details, such as one of the connections being on the "wrong" side of a vessel. But we generally always find a solution.

### RoPax: Beyond energy issues, security is also coming into sharper focus. What role does the Port of Kiel play in a military context?

Dr. Claus: Kiel is an important logistical hub for NATO and Bundeswehr transports towards Scandinavia and the Baltic states. With the increasing presence of the German brigade in Lithuania, this area is gaining further importance. For us, this means maintaining appropriate infrastructure and processes.

RoPax: Thank you for the conversation.