

## Fairplay Solutions

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# Built for the road

In sustaining a remarkable pace of fleet development for some years now, the Naples-based **Grimaldi** Group has advanced the concept of the multi-purpose ro-ro vessel while contributing to effecting a 'modal shift'. The Italian company is a leading proponent of the Motorways of the Sea idea and has fostered a growing service network based on newbuild ro-ro tonnage.

A new chapter in the expansion of the company's ro-ro freight-carrying capacity has opened with the delivery of the 32,647gt *Eurocargo Genova*, the first of 10 sisters ordered from Hyundai Mipo Dockyard. The vessel type applies best practice as regards layout and cargo handling in ro-ros intended for longer, intra-regional freight routes, with the emphasis on freight-carrying versatility. The design's economies of scale and technical specifications reflect the goal of competitive unit costs/trailer unit over the long term. The decision to use a single two-stroke propulsion engine giving direct drive to a single propeller underlines the bid for the lowest fuel consumption.

Affording a freight cargo intake corresponding to 3,810 lane-metres, *Eurocargo Genova* has been assigned to the service linking Genoa, Catania (Sicily) and Valletta (Malta). It has strengthened the Motorways of the Sea network to and from Sicily, increased loading capacity on the route by 70% through provision for up to 280 semi-trailers. While the move consolidates **Grimaldi's** position in the Sicilian freight market, the use of the island's eastern port of Catania has wider strategic significance as a hub for the group's services to Malta, Libya and Greece.

The vessel has four freight decks plus two hoistable car decks, with cargo loading and unloading concentrated through a large stern opening. Designed by Cargotec's MacGregor stable, the stern ramp/door is 18.1m in width

and 17m in length overall, including flaps, and enables pieceweights of up to 120 tonnes to be rolled aboard. The installation of moveable car decks affords flexibility in serving the broad traffic base built up by **Grimaldi**, including its role in carrying factory-new vehicles from southern and eastern European plants, while facilitating fuller usage of the ship's capacity. The car decks are located in the forward half of the main deck, and the headroom of 6.8m abaft these movable decks allows for 'high-and-heavy' items or double-stacked containers. A system of three fixed and one hoistable internal ramp promotes efficient cargo distribution to the freight spaces.

*Eurocargo Genova* is also fitted with six cabins for drivers with a dedicated lounge and mess area. The crew accommodation has been sized to take more than the ship's regular complement, ensuring provision for supernumeraries or cadets. **Grimaldi's** new generation has been specified with MAN two-stroke MC-series main machinery. *Eurocargo Genova's* installation is a nine-cylinder example of the L60MC-C7 design, yielding 20,070kW at 123rpm and driving a controllable pitch propeller. The engine confers a maximum speed of just over 22kt. A high degree of manoeuvrability is exhibited by the vessel, which is fitted with a twisted-flow, flap rudder, two 1,100kW bow thrusters and 880kW stern thruster.

Second-of-class *Eurocargo Malta* has recently been phased into the Genoa-Catania-Malta operation. It is understood that a further pair of the 10 newbuildings are to be used on another of the group's existing freight routes, which connects Salerno (Italy), Cagliari (Sardinia) and Valencia (Spain). **Grimaldi** has indicated that subsequent vessels in the series may start new services between eastern and western Mediterranean ports.

In the meantime, the third and fourth vessels in the series from Hyundai Mipo have been chartered to Pacific Basin Shipping and are to be deployed by new operator Nafta Gulf Bridge in the Gulf of Mexico. They are reportedly named *Strait of Dover* and *Strait of Gibraltar*. ■

**Eurocargo Genova will link Genoa, Catania and Valletta**

# Slow boats from China

Baltic shortsea specialist Finnlines has renegotiated the delivery dates for six high-capacity ro-ro freight vessel newbuildings ordered from China's Jinling Shipyard.

At the time of the contract award in the latter stages of 2007 (at a cost in excess of €240M), the first pair of vessels were intended to enter service at the end of 2010, with the rest following during 2011. Under the revised arrangements, the two lead ships are scheduled to join the fleet at the end of the first quarter of 2011, with the second pair arriving in the fourth quarter. The fifth and sixth vessels will now not be handed over until the final quarter of 2012.

Finnlines said: "The move will allow for a near-perfect synchronisation of fleet re-organisation plans, with new owned ships arriving to replace more expensive chartered tonnage leaving the fleet." In fact, the six newbuildings will supersede seven chartered vessels and

take fleet strength to 25 owned ships, including 10 ro-ros. This will represent a significant change in the composition of the fleet, contrasting with the situation in 2009 when expensive chartered capacity added substantially to the company's cost base at a time when demand had plunged in concert with the economic crisis.

Since then, cost saving and optimisation initiatives, fleet and route network restructuring and synergies with the parent **Grimaldi** Group, coupled with continued growth in the passenger business, have seen a turnaround in Finnlines' financial results. The Jinling series promises new efficiencies, marrying a load intake of 3,245 lane-metres with what is claimed to be state-of-the-art ro-ro design. To ensure Finnish international trade exchange through the rigours of the Baltic winter, the vessels are being constructed to 1A ice class and have been designed and powered to sustain speeds up to 20kt. ■



GRIMALDI GROUP