

Chemical Express pivots to intermodal sustainability

The Naples-based logistics operator, which has transported chemicals for 40 years, is expanding

Chemical Express Srl closed its financial year 2018 with a €33.5 million turnover, up 15 per cent compared to 2017.

The Naples-based company handled 500,000 tons of chemicals (30 per cent of which were hazardous) with over 25,000 shipments made across Europe, especially to Germany, France, Benelux, Spain, with the remainder going to Northern and Eastern countries such as the UK, Portugal, Greece, Turkey and Russia.

The increase in the volume handled was supported by an increase in the fleet, which now has 150 tractors, 150 road tanks, 1,700 container tanks and 450 lightweight chassis. "Our customers are the major international chemical producers and traders, as well as several Italian companies specialising in petrochemicals (solvents, lubricants and petroleum products) and highly specialised products for any industrial or domestic use," Account Manager Francesco Mattozzi explained. "Besides chemicals we transport also liquid industrial waste, products of animal origin (category 1) and food products".

In 2018 and in the first months of 2019, the company also increased the number of employees: "Our management is proud to grant many young people the chance to be hired after a stage. We invest in human capital, constantly looking for talents to raise up for



several roles," Mattozzi continued, stressing that Chemical Express is entering into agreements with technical institutes to attract young people into the logistics and transport sector, thus training future generations of logistics operators to work in trade, customer service or technical offices.

In addition to the headquarters near Naples, the company has a site in Trecate (Novara) and Valencia (Spain). The expansion project provides for an expansion in Europe, first through the opening of commercial offices, and then of branches. "We are also making significant investments in social responsibility and sustainable development and applying them to the business through transparent and ethical behaviour, the care for workers' health and compliance with

international regulations. The evaluation carried out by a third party (Ecovadis), to which we submitted by joining the association named Together for Sustainability (T.F.S.), confirms our commitment. The certifications held by Chemical Express, namely ISO: 9001 – 14001 – 45001 – 39001, ensure our great concern for the quality of our services, respect for the environment, protection of workers' health and road safety".

The market poses new challenges and provides new opportunities, as Chemical Express is well aware. "Problems for transport operators remained unsolved: the lack of harmonisation of several EU regulations (the sanctions governing weekly rest for drivers introduced only by some countries); the difference in

salaries for Eastern operators compared to the rest of the EU, granting them advantages compared to other operators; the inadequate conditions of several intermodal infrastructures (ports, railway terminals) for operational needs (insufficient space for temporary storage, impossibility of storing dangerous goods), which create problems and imply additional costs for transport operators” a company spokesperson noted.

Chemical Express was established in 1979 by Salvatore Romano and the top management recently celebrated the 40th anniversary. “Our winning formula – allowing us to become one of the major operators within a complex sector such as transport of chemicals in tanks, both in Italy and in Europe – is based on the combination of customers' requirements, protection of the environment and of safety, as well as advantageous economic conditions” Mattozzi says. “Already in the early Nineties the company started investing in intermodal transport, implying the use of a mixed railway/road or maritime/road systems, creating several advantages: an increase in transportable weight of goods compared to road transport; overall containment of costs compared to road transport; increased safety, reducing the number of heavy vehicles on the roads; significant reductions in carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere”.

“In the transport industry, the chemical sector is the most specialised one”, Mattozzi continued. “Great technical competence is needed, in particular for dangerous goods. Moreover, customers' needs - being increasingly focused on the optimisation of timings, on the containment of costs and especially on compliance with safety requirements - imply a constant technological upgrading



of units, a speeding-up of the digitalisation process and the maintaining of maximum safety standards during all transport stages and for all the operators involved. To that end, we modernize our fleet on a regular basis to provide customers with state-of-the-art units, respecting the environment and being equipped with the most modern safety systems, with regards to both tractors and road tanks and container tanks, with devices aiming at increasing safety conditions”.

In particular, the ‘ground operator’ i.e. a valve in the lower side of the unit – rather than in its upper side – allows the appropriate pressure for the tank container without the need for drivers to get onto the units. This avoids the potential for falls, although Chemical Express trains its personnel on safety risks, working height considerations and individual protection devices.

Several units are equipped with fall-arresters (LIFE-LINE), allowing drivers to anchor the sling to the fall-arrest on the tank container to ensure that operations at heights are carried out with safety.

Often, transporting chemicals requires specific measures, such as controlled temperature. This requires a verification and resetting of the desired temperature by way of heating the product by induction through hot water or vapour put inside channels placed on the units' surface. The company makes use of certified heating and washing stations operating across Europe. Chemical Express joined the

“Responsible Care” programme sponsored by the European Chemical Transport Association ECTA (of which it is a member since several years) which, in agreement with the European Chemical Industry Council CEFIC, launched several initiatives such as the measurement of carbon dioxide emissions related to transport activities and their consequent reduction, the efficient use of resources and fuels, and the collaboration with governmental and international institutions.

“In particular, carbon dioxide emissions can be reduced by using EURO 6 vehicles and by preferring intermodal transport over road transport. This allows for a reduction of up to 80% in carbon dioxide emissions for long distances (average 800 kilometres) compared to road transport. However, in order to achieve this goal, the intermodal logistics infrastructure must be able to compete with the road system by providing competitive services in terms of both timings and costs”.

When in October 2016 the Ro-Ro and container shipping company Grimaldi created the Italian Logistics Association of Sustainable Intermodalism ALIS, Chemical Express identified with its values and supported the newly established association by becoming one of its founding members.

The association currently has 1,400 member companies, representing 152,000 employees, with a fleet of over 106,000 vehicles and €22 billion of aggregated turnover.