

A look at GF's networks

# On course

The Gross+Fuchs Group of Companies is driving the growth of its four networks globally and in a differentiated way, COO Viktor Fuchs told the ITJ's Christian Doeppen in an interview.

**The number of members in GF's four networks has expanded in recent years to more than 700 companies. Has the target size of the individual networks been reached in terms of coverage?**

Because we've limited the growth of our Air&Ocean Partners network we're only looking for new members there for one or the other niche market. Our project cargo alliance Project Partners is enjoying a lot of attention. Its activities are expanding strongly towards Asia and South America. The situation in Connecting5 Continents (C5C) is balanced. We've clearly experienced most growth there over the last few months. Developments are extremely homogeneous, that is to say, equal in the various markets.

**How have the profiles of GF's networks developed over the last few years?**

Thanks to the fact that we have years' of forwarding experience we're naturally close to the needs as well as the problems of SMEs competing with large corporations. Our tools have supported our members well through the economic downturns of the recent years. We've got through this period with the loss of almost no members; rather, we've experienced steady growth in numbers.

**IT tools are still a key factor for success. How integrated is the connection between your members today?**

In terms of software each company works according to the individual requirements posed by its regional environment, above all in terms of IT connections to customs authorities as well as to shipping lines and airlines.

Rather than agreeing on a common denominator to meet the IT requirements in the 98 countries where our members operate, our IT contribution provides a global dunning system. We can follow all of our network members' open invoices and, where necessary, issue reminders. This gives us a perfect overview of our members' activities at a level which most likely can't be matched by any network today.

**What special points affecting all of your members will feature at the top of the agenda of your four networks' general assemblies, which are scheduled for October?**

We'd like to present our members with details of some new features in our software tools. In addition, we have news about business development and promotional activities prepared for 2015 for our members which we're planning to present at the conferences.

**The mood in the breakbulk industry has been substantially more optimistic since the middle of last year. What is your impression, taking into account the Breakbulk Europe trade fair, which took place in Antwerp in May, amongst others?**

I can only agree with you. The overall mood was generally extremely positive in Antwerp, everyone was excited about developments in the coming months – even though actual growth in terms of volume was still lacking in concrete terms at that time. We have to accept the fact that lead times in the project cargo business are much longer than in the conventional sector, but all of our members can hold their breath for long enough! That was my positive impression.

**In what other areas are you particularly aiming to grow, now that Eastern Europe has cooled down?**

The developments in Eastern Europe are indeed a bit disturbing – although we've also been getting a certain amount of generally positive feedback from our members operating there. It is questionable to what extent the sanctions which have now been imposed will actually have any

effect, particularly as regards the daily business of small and medium-sized enterprises. Crises such as the one in Ukraine today may present SMEs with great opportunities – in certain circumstances.

Africa and South America, on the other hand, are definitely our most important markets for further growth. We're planning to make several trips to promote our networks there soon. Both regions have significant growth potential, and business up and down the west coast of Africa is of particular interest to us.



Photo: Air&Ocean Partners

GF COO  
**Viktor André Fuchs.**

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Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Alava  
C/ Dato, 38 • 01005 Vitoria-Gasteiz (Álava) –SPAIN–  
Tel: + 34 945 14 18 00 • vial@camaradealava.com