

Press Release



9 September 2024

World record for solar panels on cargo vessel: “Helios” outshines its rivals with an entry in the Guinness Book of Records

Rotterdam. The Solar Hatches on board the dry goods vessel, “Helios”, which operates on behalf of HGK Shipping, has held a new record since 6 September - and this has now been recognised by the Guinness World Records label: the 312 solar panels, which the clean-tech start-up, Wattlab, has installed, are unique for inland waterway vessels when viewed from a global perspective. The world-famous company gave its stamp of approval to the sustainable design of the “Helios” during the World Port Days at an event held in the centre of Rotterdam, which was attended by the key project partners, HGK Shipping, Blommaert and Wattlab, as well as city dignitaries. The solar module structure supports the resource-saving on-board operations by saving as much as 90 tonnes of CO₂ per annum.

The sun god is called Helios in Greek mythology. The colour yellow, which is associated with this central star in our planetary system, also features prominently in the design of the dry cargo vessel at several points. Because the “Helios” is 135 metres long and 11.45 metres wide, the vessel provides hold space measuring 5,570 cubic metres enabling it to ship, for example, rapeseed, which HGK Shipping transports for the world's leading food and agricultural group, ADM.

27 so-called hatch covers equipped with solar panels and made by the Blommaert company span the cargo hold. They generate as much as 90 megawatt hours of electricity per year and this power is made available for the on-board operations on the “Helios”. The dry cargo vessel can therefore save up to 90 tonnes of carbon dioxide every year. Carl Saville, the official representative of Guinness World Records Limited, which awards the coveted certificates, confirmed the new solar panel world record during the World Port Days in the Dutch

port city. Chantal Zeegers, for her part an alderperson in the local community, attended the award ceremony on behalf of the city of Rotterdam.

The world record is not an end in itself

Steffen Bauer, the CEO of HGK Shipping, made one thing clear during the presentation of the title for the “Helios”. “The world record is something special, but of course it’s not an end in itself. We need to look at how we can promote climate protection and the use of renewable sources of energy, not just as a logistics industry, but in society as a whole. The power of the sun offers an ideal starting point for this and we’ve consistently pursued this idea in the design of this vessel. Saving resources is therefore the guiding principle behind our ship designs.”

The cooperation between the key partners, Wattlab, HGK Shipping and Blommaert, illustrates how innovation and sustainability can go hand in hand to provide technically modern and sophisticated inland waterway shipping services. “The development and installation of the solar panels on the ‘Helios’ are an example of how technology can help make inland waterway shipping, which is already environmentally sound, even more resource-friendly. Thanks to this project, we’ve managed to take an important step towards providing more eco-friendly inland waterway transport services,” says Bo Salet, the Co-Founder and CEO of Wattlab.

Tom Blommaert, CEO of Blommaert Aluminium, shared his pride in the achievement: “We are incredibly proud of this Guinness World Record, which showcases our commitment to innovation and sustainability in inland shipping. Solar Hatches represent a transformative solution for reducing fuel consumption and emissions, and this success reinforces our belief in their potential for the future of inland vessels.”

Notes on the attached photos:

1. Group photo as part of the award ceremony (left to right): Carl Saville (Guinness Official), Tom Blommaert (CEO Blommaert), Anja Grimske-Fuchs (Manager Operation, Execution & Logistics Oilseeds ADM), Steffen Bauer (CEO HGK Shipping), Chantal Zeegers (Alderman Municipality of Rotterdam), David Kester (Electrical Engineer Wattlab), Bo Salet (CEO Wattlab). © Rhalda Jansen Fotografie" of #rhaldejansnenfotografie on Instagram
2. The “Helios” during the World Port Days. © Maritime Filming Group
3. Aerial shot of the “Helios” with the solar module structure awarded by Guinness World Records Limited. © Maritime Filming Group

Contact details:

Christian Lorenz, HGK Spokesperson

Tel. +49 221 390 11 90 | Mob. +49 178 839 03 20 | christian.lorenz@hgkgroup.de

About the HGK Group:

Häfen und Güterverkehr Köln AG (HGK) is the logistics company within the City of Cologne’s public utilities group. Formerly just a port operator, HGK has developed into a group that provides integrated transport and logistics services with operations across Europe. Structured in five divisions, Logistics & Intermodal, Shipping, Rail Operations, Infrastructure & Maintenance and Real Estate, the HGK Group operates the largest inland waterway port network in Germany, one of the largest private railway com-

panies for transporting cargo, specialist logistics firms and terminals as well as its own railway network and workshops for railway goods traffic through its subsidiaries and holding companies. HGK Shipping GmbH is the largest inland waterway shipping company in Europe.

About the HGK Shipping division:

HGK Shipping is part of Häfen und Güterverkehr Köln AG. Its fleet comprises about 350 vessels, including owner-operated ships. The spectrum of goods transported ranges from liquid chemical products and liquefied gases to dry goods and even break-bulk cargo.

About Wattlab:

Wattlab is a clean-tech startup based in Rotterdam, founded in 2017 by a team with roots in Delft University of Technology. Specializing in innovative solar solutions for the maritime industry, Wattlab has quickly become a world leader in this niche, offering cutting-edge technologies that optimize energy use on vessels. Their expertise and commitment to clean energy make it a key player in the global effort to reduce the maritime sector's reliance on fossil fuels and move towards a more sustainable future.

Contact details Wattlab:

Bo Salet, CEO Wattlab

Tel. +316 19 88 17 85 | bo@wattlab.nl

About Blommaert:

Blommaert is a leading Belgian company specializing in the design, production and installation of aluminium constructions for the maritime and industrial sectors. With decades of experience, Blommaert is renowned for its high-quality products, including custom-made hatch covers, gangways, and other innovative solutions that enhance safety and efficiency on vessels. The company's commitment to innovation and sustainability is reflected in its collaborative projects, such as integrating solar solutions on ships, positioning Blommaert as a forward-thinking leader in the industry.