MSC consolidates pole position with largest Asia-Europe share

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MSC accounted for half of the capacity growth in the Asia-Europe lanes that resulted from the diversion to the Cape of Good Hope due to the Red Sea crisis.

According to Alphaliner's latest report, MSC added 279,000 TEUs to services operated as part of its 2M alliance with Maersk Line, and 208,500 TEUs for its standalone services, such as the "Dragon" Far East-Mediterranean loop and the "Swan" Far East-North Europe-Baltic loop.

The capacity additions of 488,500 TEUs amounted to a 54% increase in slot supply from MSC, giving the Swiss-Italian market leader a 22% market share on the Asia-Europe lane, compared with about 16% for its nearest rival, Maersk.

Asia-Europe capacity now stands at 6.3 million TEUs, up 19% year-on-year, as liner operators add more ships to alleviate the effects of the longer sailing time.

Despite the imminent breakup of the 2M alliance in early 2025, MSC's fleet growth has allowed the 2M to become the largest mega-alliance on the trade with a market share of 33.4%, based on the tonnage provided (up from 32.4% a year ago).

By contrast, the market share of the Ocean Alliance is down to 33% (from 37.5% in February 2023) as CMA CGM, COSCO Shipping Lines, OOCL and Evergreen did not take delivery of many newbuildings and are still struggling to fully staff all their Asia-Europe loops.

THE Alliance's market share also fell to 23.3%, from 25.7% last year, after it suspended its FE5 Southeast Asia-North Europe in November 2023.

While many of the opportunistic newcomers which entered the market during the Covid-19-fuelled boom have exited, except Tailwind Shipping, this gap has been filled by Russia-focused new players, such as OVP Shipping, New New Shipping and Safetrans.

Alphaliner noted that while these operators use small ships, the capacity deployed by such non-alliance carriers has doubled from 154,600 to 308,300 TEUs in the past year, giving them a total market share of 5%.

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