

Executive M.B.L.-HSG Alumni Reunion 2021 in Hamburg:

Precious Hamburg

Date: September 23-26, 2021

Participants: 20

A flagship of Germany's economy, delicious seafood, 300 HP speedboats and one of the most notorious red light districts in Europe: perfect conditions for the 2021 M.B.L.-HSG alumni gathering

Hanseatic Hamburg, with Germany's largest seaport, its 2,500+ bridges, stunning architecture and famous nightlife scene, hosted the Executive M.B.L.-HSG Alumnae and Alumni for an extremely enjoyable and memorable reunion, the second since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to local insights, which are usually reserved only to absolute insiders, a perfect selection of high-end food and the great company of our international colleagues, the Hamburg reunion will remain mostly memorable for many years to come.

By Matthias Löwenbourg-Brzezinski with Nils Günther, Markus Scheurenbrand and Peter Kastlunger

After a warm-up in the Boilerman Bar and the stylish "Coast By East" restaurant directly below the Marco Polo Tower, in the immediate vicinity of the Hamburg Cruise Center, the first full reunion day kicked off on Friday with a deep-dive into the economics of the Hamburg airport, hosted by the airport's CEO and HSG-alumnus, Mr. Michael Eggenschwiler.

Because when HSG alumni ask, "you don't say no" - with these words Mr. Eggenschwiler greeted the M.B.L. alumni in front of a model construction of his approximately 600-hectare airport. Born in Basel, he has been a member of the management team at Hamburg Airport since 2003, and some 40,000 people are employed in and around the aviation business in the Hanseatic city.

COVID-19 had a major impact on airport operations, a consulting project was initiated and the workforce was put on short-time working. Now the situation is recovering somewhat: it also takes time to get used to the "new normal" and to get back to the old pace. Political pressure to "fly green" and energy efficiency in the airport's operations have increased noticeably in recent years: for example, even the baggage car is no longer powered by diesel.

Where is the sector heading by 2040? It will still be "very similar to today", certainly hydrogen will play a major role and automation will become more important, but fundamentally not much will change. Michael Eggenschwiler's presentation was followed by a bus tour of the airport site - with a direct view of the aircraft runways. Intense brain-food during the first conference day was followed local seafood bites in the harbor, followed by Levantine cuisine from the eastern Mediterranean in the evening. Enjoying mezze and sharing dishes, we engaged in lively discussions in an atmosphere of lively streets of Beirut and Tel Aviv.

On Saturday morning, thanks to 300 HP, the boats of the "RIB Piraten" went down the Elbe River from the Landungsbrücken, passing the Airbus factory in Finkenwerder and the beautiful districts of Blankenese and Wedel. In the harbor area the speed limits still had to be observed, but from the harbor border, the three boats and your skippers could show what they are made of. While gently crossing the keel waves of the other boats, dynamics arose, which was especially noticeable in the front part of the boats. And with approx. 80kmh, the wind blows strongly around the ears! After a good hour, we were back with many impressions of the Elbe shore.



In the afternoon, we continued with an exclusive three-hour bus tour through sights around the port of Hamburg. We started our bus tour in the historic “Speicherstadt” with its Wilhelminian brick buildings, an UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2015. We continued through the futuristic Hamburg “HafenCity”, the largest inner-city development project in Europe with the impressive Elbphilharmonie concert hall. Passing the last quay sheds from the imperial era, we travelled by bus over the famous Köhlbrand Bridge. Here we enjoyed the wide view over the vast area of the port of Hamburg, the heart of the city, prior to entering the heart of the tour – the Container-Terminals.



After checking of our IDs and explaining that photographing is not allowed during the predominant part of the tour, in front of us the container port of Hamburg. Visitors don't normally get in here at all - we do! Thanks to special permission from Hamburger Hafen, our bus rolls directly onto the terminals with flashing warning lights. We learned a lot about how container gantry cranes work on the thousands of ships that moor here every year.

The container terminal “Altenwerder” is an impressive example of fully automated logistics. Huge unloading and loading stations ensure smooth processing here. Up close, we see the computer-controlled driverless transport platforms and the latest generation of container gantry cranes. After a coffee – or beer – stop at the topical “Trucker Treff”, we continued our tour through the “O'Swaldkai”, the multipurpose terminal for fruit and car handling and “Hansaport”, Germany's largest seaport terminal for iron ore and coal.

It was a truly impressive tour behind the scenes of the port of Hamburg which gave us a better feeling for the dimensions of the port of Hamburg logistics and the highly sophisticated processes running it. Stunned by these impressions, the Gala dinner was held in the exclusive “Jin-Gui”, with fantastic wines and modern Japanese cuisine. What followed was dancing in St. Pauli, the first dancing night for many of us since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, on Sunday, the group held the yearly General Assembly. Nils Günther and Matthias Löwenbourg-Brzezinski joined the board to contribute to the future success of the E.M.B.L.-HSG Alumni program – and to the 2022 reunion! This one will take place on September 22nd to 25th on the island of many contrasts: Cyprus!