

Kleinhüningen, Birsfelden and MuttENZ

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The port of Kleinhüningen, on the right bank of the Rhine in the north of Basel-Stadt, is the largest and the most central of the Swiss Rhine ports. Its first basin opened in the early 1920s and its second basin in the late 1930s, together with the quays along the river and the railway sidings that connect it with the Badischer Bahnhof and the Swiss network.¹ Kleinhüningen handles containers, bulk goods, mineral oil and general cargo. The tri-border point, marked by a monument on the tip of the Westquai peninsula, lies at the edge of the port, so that the cranes of the container terminal stand within sight of both France and Germany.

The port of St. Johann, on the left bank, was the first Swiss Rhine port and for a long time handled bulk goods in the immediate vicinity of the chemical works. As the chemical and pharmaceutical industry turned to research and the Novartis Campus took shape on the neighbouring site, the port lost its function. After its closure in the early 2010s, the land was incorporated into the redevelopment of the area and into the public riverside promenade that now runs along the Rhine towards the French border.²

Upstream of the city, in Basel-Landschaft, lie the ports of Birsfelden and Au in the commune of MuttENZ. The port of Birsfelden, situated above the Birsfelden power station and its lock, specialises in bulk goods, mineral oil and general cargo. The Auhafen in MuttENZ is dominated by tank farms that store a substantial part of the mineral oil products imported into Switzerland by water.³ The proximity of the Auhafen to the Schweizerhalle industrial area, whose history Part G has described, places it in a zone in which the Major Accidents Ordinance and the coordination of spatial planning with hazardous installations play a significant role.⁴

Together, the three remaining port areas cover a significant area of land along the river. Their location in densely populated areas is both their strength and their weakness. The proximity to consumers and to the

industries of the region keeps transport distances short, while the same proximity creates pressure from urban development, from residents who object to noise and traffic and from planners who see the riverside land as an opportunity for housing and public space. This tension runs through the debates on the future of the port, which later sections of this chapter consider.

1 Notes

1. On the construction of basin I of the port of Kleinhüningen (opened in 1922) and basin II (opened in 1939), see HLS, article "Kleinhüningen", and the historical publications of the Swiss Rhine Ports. Dates to be verified. ↩
2. On the closure of the St. Johann port (around 2011) and the integration of its site into the Novartis Campus area and the Rhine riverside path (Rheinuferweg St. Johann), see the publications of the canton of Basel-Stadt and the Swiss Rhine Ports. Date to be verified. ↩
3. On the port facilities at Birsfelden and Auhafen Muttenz, their specialisation and the tank storage facilities there, see the annual reports of the Swiss Rhine Ports. To be verified. ↩
4. See Part G, Chapter I, sections on Schweizerhalle and its regulatory consequences, and the Ordinance of 27 February 1991 on Protection against Major Accidents (StFV, SR 814.012). To be verified. ↩

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