

Chartering and maritime transport

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

Maritime transport is the physical link in the trading chain. Geneva, a city with no access to the sea, nevertheless houses one of the world’s principal communities of charterers, shipbrokers and vessel operators. The Fondation Genève Place Financière cites ship chartering among the activities that form, together with finance, a unique cluster.¹ The world’s largest conference on the maritime transport of commodities, Geneva Dry, is held in Geneva.²

The large trading houses have chartering departments that hire vessels for a voyage or for a period, negotiate freight rates and manage port operations. The president of Suissenégoce elected in January 2024, Sébastien Landerretche, heads the global ship chartering of a large agricultural trader, which illustrates the link between trading and transport.³ Shipowners and fleet operators are also established in Geneva, some of them among the largest in the world.⁴

Chartering exposes a trader to particular risks: volatility of freight rates, maritime incidents, piracy, sanctions targeting vessels or shipowners, and the growing environmental requirements imposed on shipping. Geneva’s charterers work with marine insurers, protection and indemnity clubs, specialist lawyers and port authorities throughout the world.

Component	Function	Players cited
Financing	credit secured on the commodities	BNP Paribas, ING, Crédit Agricole, BCGE, UBS, formerly Credit Suisse
Inspection	certification of quantity and quality	Société générale de surveillance
Chartering	maritime transport, broking, fleet management	traders’ departments, brokers, shipowners

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Component	Function	Players cited
Insurance	cover for cargoes, political and credit risks	specialist insurers and brokers
Law	contracts, compliance, arbitration	law firms, Swiss Arbitration Centre
Training and representation	skills, defence of interests	University of Geneva, Suissenégoce

1 Notes

1. Fondation Genève Place Financière, cited above. ↩
2. “Le négoce des matières premières reste globalement stable en Suisse”, swissinfo.ch, 12 August 2025. ↩
3. swissinfo.ch, 12 August 2025, cited above. ↩
4. Wikipedia (en), article “Mediterranean Shipping Company”: company founded in Naples in 1970 by Gianluigi Aponte and Rafaela Aponte-Diamant; “In 1978, the headquarters was established in Geneva, Switzerland”; the world’s largest container shipowner since 6 January 2022, ahead of Maersk; around 900 vessels and 7 million TEU in September 2025, 21.2 per cent of world capacity, 524 offices in 155 countries, more than 200,000 employees; company owned by the Aponte-Diamant family. ↩

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