



## Logistics moves mountains...

There's nothing essentially new about the title of this article, since it's an undisputed fact that logistics moves mountains of goods, pallets and the like. However, it can be interpreted in various ways.

Especially in recent weeks, the Austrian media and a variety of web forums have nearly tripped over themselves in finding superlatives to describe the mountains of material that rock bands, such as the Irish band U2, have moved or will move during their tours. Even these mountains can also be understood in various ways.

Logistics activities are rarely placed in the public spotlight or drawn so forcibly to the attention of people who otherwise have little or nothing to do with the subject as when they involve concerts by famous pop music groups or rock bands. With the AC/DC concert in Wels, media attention focused mainly on the audience of 100,000 or so and their travel to and from the event, while U2 managed to move many different sorts of mountains in Vienna's Ernst Happel Stadium.

Naturally, the biggest mountain in this case was formed by the approximately 75,000 concert visitors who streamed into the stadium and then back out. Organising travel on this scale, whether by rail, underground, bus or car, requires precise planning and control of the streams of visitors and their impact on traffic control and travel schedules in order to ensure a fast, trouble-free journey home.

However, what truly attracted the attention of the media was the mountain of enormous, innovative 360° stage structures moved by U2, whose transport (including lighting and sound systems) alone required around 105 lorries. But that wasn't all; there was also a virtual mountain of tradespeople and technicians, along with their fleets of cranes and forklift trucks, needed for assembly and teardown. These activities are conducted in such a well coordinated manner that every transport box has its own assigned place in the loading plan of a particular lorry, which in turn has its defined place in the sequence of unloading and loading activities.

There are three stages due to the required erection time, but only one set of equipment, which makes route planning a part of concert tour planning when it's necessary keep the lorry convoy on schedule while guiding it all over the world, including by ship. This makes transport time an essential factor in the planning of concert dates, and firm arrival and departure times for the individual lorries in part unavoidable. Due to facts of this sort, there are also mountains of readers and other interested parties who are impressed and moved by the numbers and the determined logistics effort.

It is therefore obvious how much detailed planning work is necessary here – especially considering that most concert tours of this sort extend over more than a year. This once again draws the capabilities and significance of logistics out of their usual place in the shadows of economic activity and puts them in the spotlight. Of course, everyone who was in Ernst Happel Stadium in late August 2010 was primarily there for the U2 concert, but at the same time they were somehow immersed in logistics!