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Largest waterways junction – one of the century's major constructions completed by Ferrostaal/DSD Stahlbau

After a construction period of just under five years, the Magdeburg waterways junction, the largest intersection in Europe, was opened to inland waterway vessels on 10 October 2003. Construction of the aqueduct over the Elbe, for which 24,000 tons of steel and 68,000 cubic metres of reinforced concrete were needed, was managed by Ferrostaal / DSD Stahlbau, a member of the MAN Group. With this currently unique structure, developers and design engineers from the companies involved have broken entirely new technological ground, the steel bridge with its maximum span of 106 m (distance between two supports) being the largest aqueduct ever built.

The junction provides now a direct waterways connection between Hanover and Berlin. Up until now, vessels coming from the Mittelland Canal have had to master a complicated manoeuvre involving a ship hoist and descending locks in order to cross the River Elbe into the Elbe-Havel Canal. Coupled with two new locks, the new aqueduct creates a direct connection between the two canals without being dependent on prevailing water levels. As early as the 1930s, there were plans to realise a project of this kind, but initial building work was discontinued in 1942 due to the war. In the wake of German unity and the opening up of Eastern European markets, this West-East connection has however taken on a new significance.

The aqueduct across the Elbe is made up of two parts, as designed and constructed by Ferrostaal/DSD, namely the foreshore aqueduct leading from the Mittelland Canal to the Elbe and the actual aqueduct across the River Elbe itself. The entire construction (918 m long) is made of steel. Based on the highest navigable water level, the overhead clearance on the Elbe measures 6.5 m, which allows for three-tier container traffic along the Elbe. The normal water level in the aqueduct "trough" is 4.25 m, the usable width of the trough amounting to 32 m, so that it can now be negotiated by up to 110 m long and more than 11 m wide vessels up to a gross weight of 3,500 t.

Further information: Wasserstraßen-Neubauamt Magdeburg
(www.wna-magdeburg.de/welcome.html)