

## UN Ro-Ro launches Trieste-Mersin service

UN RO-RO, the innovative trailer ship company serving truckers operating between Turkey and Western Europe, has launched a new service between Trieste and Mersin aimed at tapping into the small but growing markets of Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Enrico Samer, the company's Trieste-based agent, said the new service had been under consideration for several years. With volumes falling on UN Ro-Ro's traditional routings, however, this was a way of utilizing a newly delivered vessel that would otherwise have been idle.

The company has suffered along with the rest of the Mediterranean ferry business as the economic crisis has bitten, with volumes slipping 6% last year but 24% in January and February compared with the first two months of 2007.

Describing the new launch as "a reaction to the crisis", Mr Samer said the company would offer a weekly service to southern Turkey, using the new build *Cuneyt Solakoglu*, which has the capacity for 280 trucks.

"Mersin is the natural port for serving Iraq, Iran and Syria," he said, adding that the new call would save Mersin-based truckers a 900 km drive to Istanbul to pick up an alternative service.

"We discussed it with local truckers in the Mersin area, who will also be able to choose which port to come back to on the return voyage," he said, adding that Italian and German trucking companies were also particularly eager to tap into the service.

Mr Samer added that he hoped to add a second vessel of the same capacity – which is also idle at the moment - to the service in several months as demand rises.

UN Ro-Ro, which carries trucks by sea while their drivers travel by air to meet them, has proved a vital link for truck traffic moving between Turkey and Western Europe. Mr Samer said it moved around 240,000 trucks last year and around 4m tones of cargo.