



Industry collaboration and standardisation through digitalisation

ECTA introduces new guidelines for transport visibility in chemical bulk logistics

Transport visibility along supply chains has become a key priority over the last few years to further optimise transport flows from a safety, sustainability and efficiency point of view, according to the European Chemical Transport Association (ECTA).

Driven by digitalisation and rising expectations towards 24/7 shipment tracking, many supply chain users are looking for enhanced transparency through sharing frequent and accurate transport updates to help anticipate interruptions that could result in late deliveries of road or multimodal shipments at their destinations. However, until now, no aligned approach within the industry has been able to answer how this transport visibility will be considered across all companies in bulk chemical logistics.

Among others, three major challenges must be overcome. First, unharmonised definitions

and status updates lead to different interpretations and discrepancies in the information flow. Second, missing industry-wide standards with regards to data exchange formats and update triggers hamper the inter-operability and scalability of digital solutions. Finally, most supply chain actors still consider data sharing and digital collaboration risky, while not fully foreseeing the overall potential of streamlined and thoughtful data exchange with business partners.

These present shortcomings were picked up by a couple of the leading freight forwarding companies in chemical bulk logistics – Bertschi, Den Hartogh, GCA, HOYER, Rinnen and Talke. As members of ECTA, they have teamed up to define a best practice guideline on transport visibility, focusing on an overview of transport milestone events and estimated time of updates. Additionally, contents

of the various messages, update trigger rules, and communication and data exchange formats have been defined in a collaborative framework addressing all chemical supply chain actors.

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Hence, milestone events and updates on estimated times of arrival (ETAs) at loading and unloading were defined to enhance visibility for shippers and their production and yard planning activities at production sites. Equally important is the exchange of information between freight forwarders and transport suppliers, such as rail, vessel and truck companies that normally have the best overview on

disruptions while cargo is moved on one of their assets. Thereby, the introduced guideline is supposed to complement and incorporate other existing frameworks, for example, the New Data Exchange Format in Combined Transport (EDIGES) standards for rail transportation, or the Digital Container Shipping Association's (DCSA) Interface Standard for Track and Trace.

Moreover, suppliers of fixed infrastructure along the chemical supply chain such as container depots, cleaning and heating stations, as well as port and rail terminals, also have a responsibility to contribute valuable information towards more transport visibility. In these cases, milestone events and updates on ETAs at the various points of interests, estimated times of pick-up and closing at terminals are of importance to improve asset utilisation and facilitate pro-active transport planning, as well as deviation management.

All of these expected benefits can create win-win situations for all stakeholders and thus are good reasons for greater communication and openness for digital collaboration.

Nevertheless, this is easier said than done, even though demand for data sharing and digital collaboration has been increasing for some time. As an answer to the existing scepticism on extended data sharing, the initiators of the ECTA guideline suggest creating initial trust by focusing on the exchange of enriched data sets that have been validated by the data owners, instead of continuously sharing raw data such as GPS positions of assets.

Thies Grage, head of digital integration at HOYER Group, said: "We have experienced that GPS data sets



by themselves can only support the calculation of ETA dates, but still lack necessary additional information, such as driver resting hours, depot stops and ad-hoc planning changes.

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Joep Aerts, business unit director, Den Hartogh

"Additionally, for the time-being, by focusing on transport event and ETA updates, we achieve fast first results without touching the issues of data ownership and data privacy compliance.

Looking into the future, ECTA and its members are convinced that this initial guideline can only be a first trigger to drive digitalisation and collaboration between the various supply chain actors in chemical logistics. As a next step, the introduced guideline is required to reach a critical level of industry acceptance; it also needs to be translated into standardised order status reports for measuring door-to-door delivery performance. This is crucial to harvest the benefits of enhanced transport visibility and work on the weaker performance links of a supply chain.

Secondly, ECTA intends to propose additional solutions to support digitalisation in chemical logistics for more efficiency and sustainability, for example, in the areas of digitising transport documents used in chemical supply chains or tackling previous product load restrictions. In that respect, ECTA is also a co-founder of ECLIC, a chemical logistics data sharing platform, where new digital solutions like the electronic European Federation of Tank Cleaning Organisation's cleaning document are being designed, prototyped and implemented. ■



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