

e-CMR

Digitalising trade facilitation systems to create more transparent, accurate and efficient logistics

A new wave of technology and opportunity has developed in logistics operations that is reshaping the industry. With the development of digital consignment notes, or e-CMR, supply chains will become paperless in the near future, rendering transport systems more transparent, accurate and efficient.

With e-CMR, transport operators will be able to input electronically, store logistics information and exchange data, in real time via a mobile phone or tablet. The timely recording of data means that agencies instantly receive information on the goods being transported. Hence, any required subsequent actions, happen faster and at less cost.

The move also reduces the environmental impact of global trade, using less paper and minimising archival requirements. It limits the potential for human error and can adopt multi-language platforms for seamless international application.

Endorsing the digitalisation of road transport services, including e-CMR, will enable more efficient transport and trade through the adoption of standardised processes.

About IRU

IRU is the world road transport organisation, promoting economic growth, prosperity and safety through the sustainable mobility of people and goods. Founded in 1948, IRU is active in more than 100 countries.

Learn more about e-CMR on the IRU website
iru.org/innovation/e-cmr

What does this mean for senders, transporters and consignees?

Benefits for senders

- One standard, one way of working
- Management and control of your logistical chain
- Paper-free and practical
- You can organise your chain more efficiently
- Insight into pick-up and delivery times
- Tighter planning, faster invoicing
- Direct, client-focused action in the event of an emergency

Benefits for transporters

- One standard, one way of working
- Better service – higher customer satisfaction
- No more time-consuming handwritten and printed paper consignment notes
- Fewer telephone enquiries
- Safe and correct method for signing

Benefits for consignees

- One standard, one way of working
- Fewer telephone enquiries about consignments
- Legal certainty is provided by electronic proof of delivery (POD)
- Damage, defects and delays are reported quickly
- No longer necessary to scan and manually archive consignment notes
- Better planning thanks to insight into delivery times

Benefits for authorities

- Support a more intelligent and efficient enforcement

e-CMR platforms

What is an e-CMR application or platform?

There are several examples of available platforms for digital consignment notes. These platforms give senders, transporters and consignees more control of the logistical process. Each party can join a chosen platform and can often use their own company software to exchange data, place digital signatures for receipt or delivery and follow the status of dispatches.

How do they work?

e-CMR platforms enable senders, transporters and consignees to work with a single, uniform, secure and standardised interface. Submitting, exchanging, following and signing is all completely paper-free. Everyone involved benefits from better communication, fewer administrative steps and swifter service for lower costs.

“Digital consignment notes are the cornerstones for game-changing innovations – such as autonomous vehicles – which will really transform our industry”.

Zeljko Jeftic, IRU Head of Global Innovation

Specific examples

- BLG Automotive Logistics (a large German logistics company) uses two million sheets of paper for the one million vehicles it transports each year. Applied to the whole of Europe, this means 16.5 million cars transported and 33 million sheets of paper used, representing 135 tonnes of wood each year. This resource would be saved if electronic consignment notes were used.
- Within individual companies, a document’s original paper version must often be transferred from one division of the company to another, which is another cost element that could be eliminated with the use of electronic documents.
- In the Netherlands, independent studies show approximately EUR 4.50 savings in administrative costs with each CMR consignment note, with the switch to a digital CMR1.
- According to Transport en Logistiek Nederland (TLN), 40 million paper CMR consignment notes are used each year in the Netherlands for cross-border road transport. Hence, saving on the administrative costs alone could reach up to EUR 180 million annually with e-CMR.

Background

Since its UN ratification in 1956, the paper based CMR consignment note has been an official document on shipments between senders and transporters. It provides a paper trail of the logistics transfer and is the sole document held by the driver of the truck in relation to the load carried.

In February 2008, a protocol was added to the CMR Convention concerning the use of the digital consignment note. With 11 countries now acceding to the e-CMR protocol, cross-border deployments have already begun. Seven additional European countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway and Sweden) have also recently confirmed their forthcoming commitment to e-CMR through a common action plan, together with France and Denmark.