

The eCMR and related aspects

09.10.2026 | Dr. Guido Belger, Head of Legal

The BGL logo is a large, stylized white 'BGL' inside a green circle with a white border. The logo is positioned on the right side of the slide, partially overlapping a semi-transparent image of a truck. The truck is a white cab with a green trailer, driving on a road. The background of the slide is a blue-tinted image of a road stretching into the distance under a blue sky.

BGL

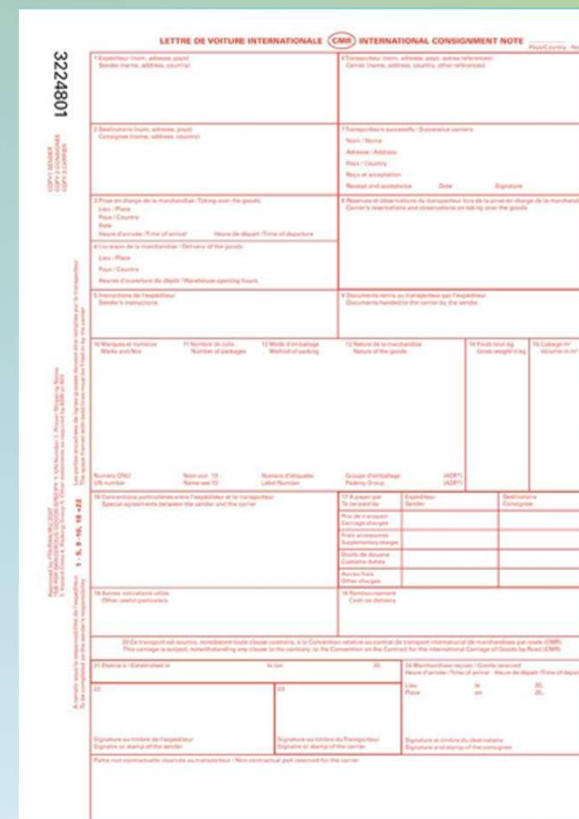


AGENDA

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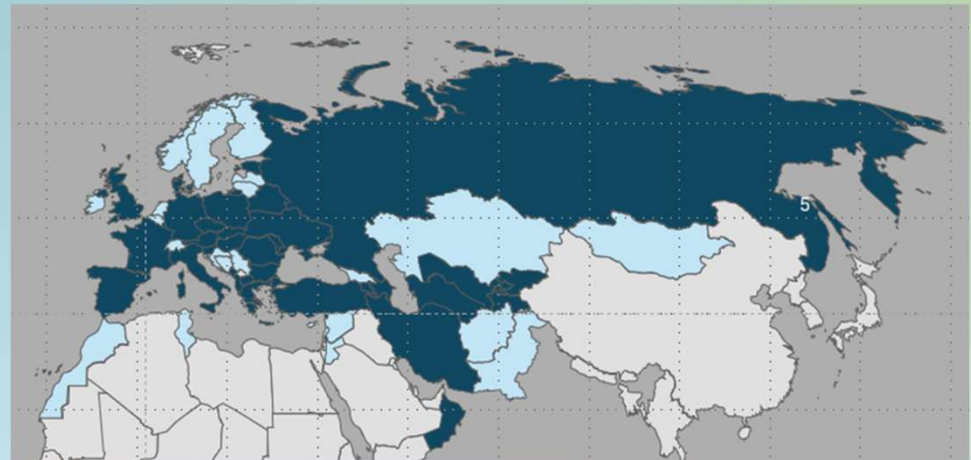
I. Introduction

- For years, the transportation and logistics industry has been discussing the digitization of the CMR consignment note. Discussions have centred on potential efficiency gains, sustainability, and cost reduction.
- Although efforts are being made in many countries to introduce the digital version – the eCMR consignment note –, the paper version of the CMR consignment note is still the norm in cross-border road freight transport.



II. Historical Background

- The CMR was signed in Geneva on 19 May 1956, entered into force in 1961 and currently has 58 contracting parties.
- To facilitate the legal use of electronic consignment notes, the Additional Protocol to the CMR on the electronic consignment note was introduced in 2008 (eCMR), which officially entered into force on 5 June 2011 and currently has 41 contracting parties.



https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XI-B-11&chapter=11&clang=_en
<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/MTDGS/Volume%20I/Chapter%20XI/XI-B-11-b.en.pdf>

III. Key Provisions of the eCMR

- The aim of the eCMR is to enable the CMR consignment note, as defined in Article 4 of the CMR, to be presented in digital form.
- The eCMR sets out the conditions under which communication arising from the conclusion and performance of a contract of carriage under the CMR may take place in electronic form with legal effect.
- Although the title of the Additional Protocol and most of its individual provisions refer only to the electronic consignment note, the eCMR Additional Protocol governs electronic communication in general for contracts of carriage subject to the CMR and applies to all processes described in the CMR.

**ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON
THE CONTRACT FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CARRIAGE OF GOODS BY ROAD
(CMR) CONCERNING THE ELECTRONIC CONSIGNMENT NOTE**

THE PARTIES TO THIS PROTOCOL,
BEING PARTIES to the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR), done at Geneva on 19 May 1956,
DESIROUS OF supplementing the Convention in order to facilitate the optional making out of the consignment note by means of procedures used for the electronic recording and handling of data,
HAVE AGREED as follows:

Article 1
Definitions

For the purposes of this Protocol,

"Convention" means the Convention on the Contract for the International Carriage of Goods by Road (CMR);

"Electronic communication" means information generated, sent, received or stored by electronic, optical, digital or similar means with the result that the information communicated is accessible so as to be usable for subsequent reference;

"Electronic consignment note" means a consignment note issued by electronic communication by the carrier, the sender or any other party interested in the performance of a contract of carriage to which the Convention applies, including particulars logically associated with the electronic communication by attachments or otherwise linked to the electronic communication contemporaneously with or subsequent to its issue, so as to become part of the electronic consignment note;

"Electronic signature" means data in electronic form which are attached to or logically associated with other electronic data and which serve as a method of authentication.

Article 2
Scope and effect of the electronic consignment note

III. Key Provisions of the eCMR

Article 1: Definitions

- Convention, electronic communication, electronic consignment note, electronic signature

Article 2: Scope and Effect of the Electronic Consignment Note

- The electronic consignment note = the consignment note as defined in the convention

Article 3: Authentication of the Electronic Consignment Note

- The electronic signature ensures a connection with the signatory and identifies the signatory
- Data is accessible to entitled parties

Article 4: Conditions for Establishment of the Electronic Consignment Note

- Must contain the same particulars as the consignment note under the convention
- Ensures data integrity
- Possible amendments/supplements in accordance with the convention

Article 5: Implementation of the Electronic Consignment Note

- Interested parties must agree to the implementation of the electronic consignment note

Article 6: Documents Supplementing the Electronic Consignment Note

- Accompanying documents may also be in electronic form

Art. 7-16 – Final Provisions



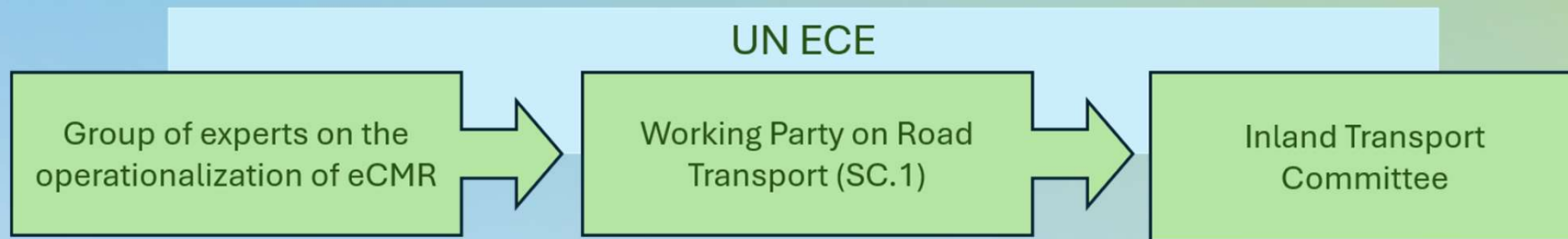
IV. Slow Implementation

- There are practical reasons for the slow adoption of eCMR consignment notes to date.
- According to UNECE, the most important of these is the lack of harmonized conceptual specifications for the actual implementation of the eCMR that would serve as a guide for users.
- Background: Although Article 5 paragraph 1 of the eCMR lists six procedures and the methods for their implementation, which “the parties involved in the performance of the contract of carriage should agree upon in order to comply with the requirements of the eCMR and the CMR,” it does not provide concrete and specific guidance on the actual implementation of these procedures.

V. UN-Guideline

- Since the eCMR came into force, its implementation has attracted the interest of various stakeholders – particularly transport and IT companies – whilst at the same time raising technical and legal questions regarding the implementation of the Additional Protocol.
- The UN has therefore been working for some time to provide users with clarity on the technical and legal aspects in the form of “Guidelines” or “Guidance Notes,” with the aim of paving the way to develop and advance solutions for practical implementation.

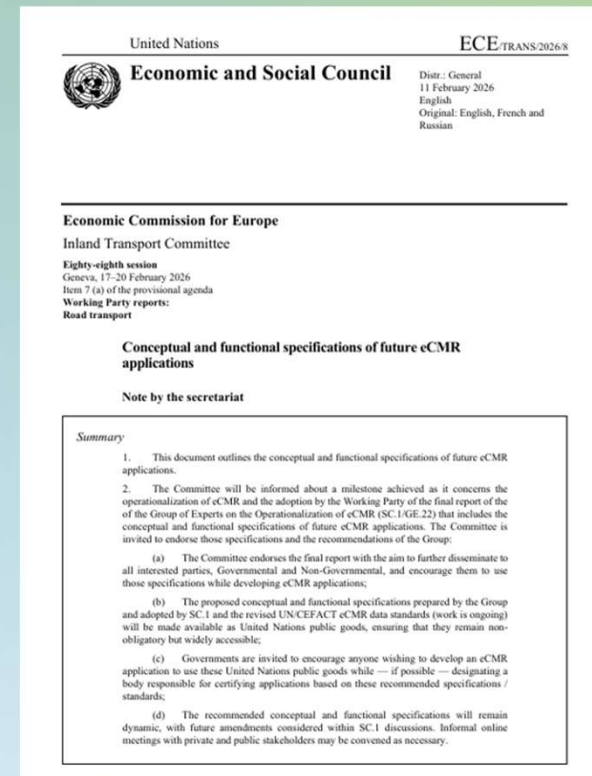
V. UN-Guideline



- A UN/ECE SC1/GE22 expert group was therefore mandated to draw up a report on the operationalisation of the eCMR within four years (2022–2025).
- The report, comprising three parts, was adopted by SC.1 at its 120th session at the end of 2025 as a final report, on the understanding that it would be submitted to the ITC (Inland Transport Committee) for final approval.
- At its 88th session in early 2026, the ITC approved the report, which now runs to 70 pages and consists of 11 chapters and an annex, subject to the following conditions:

V. UN Guideline

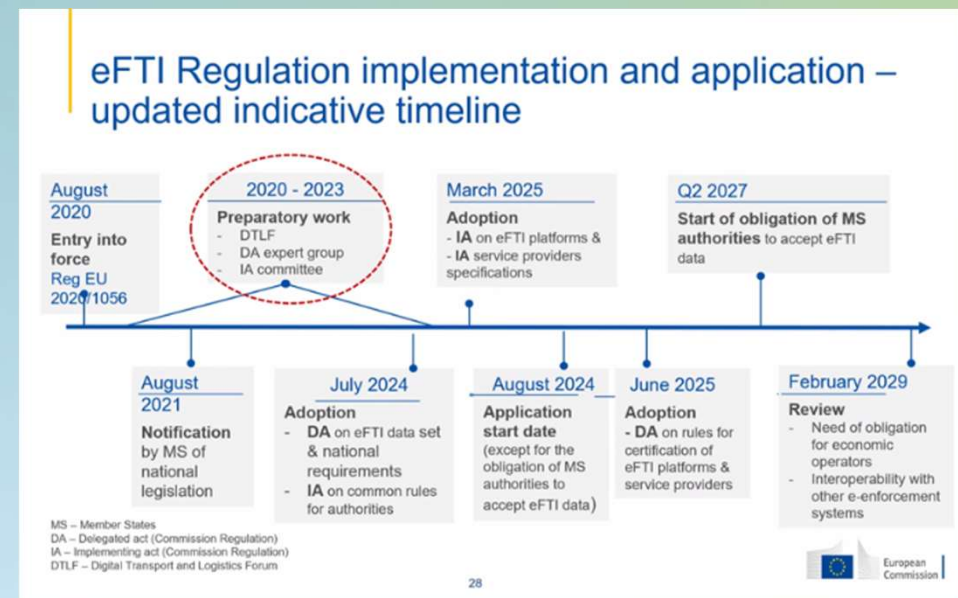
- The Committee endorses the final report with the aim to further disseminate to all interested parties, Governmental and Non-Governmental, and encourage them to use those specifications while developing eCMR applications;
- The proposed conceptual and functional specifications prepared by the Group and adopted by SC.1 and the revised UN/CEFACT eCMR data standards (work is ongoing) will be made available as United Nations public goods, ensuring that they remain non-obligatory but widely accessible;
- Governments are invited to encourage anyone wishing to develop an eCMR application to use these United Nations public goods while — if possible — designating a body responsible for certifying applications based on these recommended specifications / standards;
- The recommended conceptual and functional specifications will remain dynamic, with future amendments considered within SC.1 discussions. Informal online meetings with private and public stakeholders may be convened as necessary.



<https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/ECE-TRANS-2026-8e.pdf>

VI. Related Aspects: eFTI

- eFTI Regulation as a legal framework for the use of eCMR consignment note in B2A information exchange
- The eFTI Regulation (EU Regulation 2020/1056) is part of the European Union's efforts to digitise logistics and transport processes in Europe.
- It is a Regulation that sets out the legal framework for the electronic exchange of information on the transport of goods between businesses and the competent authorities of EU Member States.



VII. Related Aspects: Fake Carrier

- The implementation of the eCMR, and thus the eCMR consignment note, may also offer opportunities to enhance security in transport logistics and reduce the risk posed by fake carriers.



VIII. Conclusion and Outlook

- In the 70th year of the CMR, the next chapter focuses on the digitization of the CMR consignment note and the associated processes.
- There is no doubt that the paperless exchange of information via eCMR systems – particularly in conjunction with eFTI within the EU – will be the key to smart logistics utilising AI.
- However, the step towards actual practical implementation must be taken by the economic operators; the UN-Guidelines have further lowered the barrier to entry.

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