FIT ALLIANCE

COMPLETE GUIDE TO
ELECTRONIC BILL OF LADING ADOPTION FOR FREIGHT FORWARDING

BIMCO   dcsa   ICC   Swift   FIATA
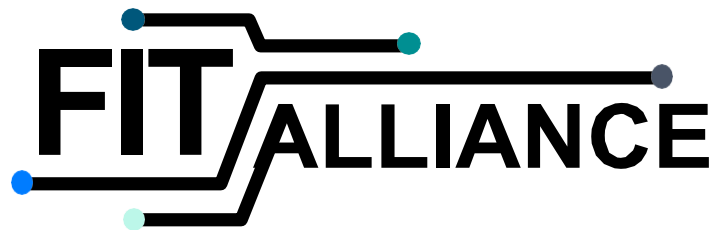
FIT ALLIANCE

The FIT Alliance

This publication has been produced by The Future International Trade (FIT) Alliance. Members of the FIT Alliance are the Digital Container Shipping Association (DCSA), BIMCO, International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and Swift. The Alliance works together to generate awareness about the benefits of going digital and the importance of common and interoperable data standards and common legislative conditions across international jurisdictions and platforms. The aim is to facilitate acceptance and adoption of eBLs by shippers, carriers, regulators, banks and insurers and to unify communication between these organisations and all other stakeholders involved in an international trade transaction. By establishing open-source, interoperable, technology-agnostic standards, the FIT Alliance intends to make the digitalisation of international trade a reality, enabling smooth data exchange and streamlining the end-to-end shipping process for the entire industry.

FIATA – THE GLOBAL VOICE OF FREIGHT LOGISTICS

FIATA was founded in 1926 in Vienna, Austria, and is *'the largest federation and voice of global logistics serving its entire eco-system. It fosters the knowledge of its members to ensure a sustainable and resilient supply chain'.*

FIATA's vision encompasses the expectation of *'Logistics without borders for a digital and sustainable world'*

More than 50 years ago FIATA started to establish standard transport documents to harmonise documents and forms used by freight forwarders. Today, FIATA is leading with the digitalisation of these standard transport documents.

FIATA is working to a more efficient, digital and sustainable future of logistics through:
- the work of its Institutes and Advisory Bodies
- the work with its international partners, such as the UN (UNECE, UNESCAP, UNCITRAL), WCO/PSCG, ICC DSI, IMO, BIAC (OCDE), FIT Alliance (SWIFT, DCSA, ICC, BIMCO), to name just a few.

Negotiable FIATA Multimodal Transport Bill of Lading (FBL)

Non-negotiable FIATA Multimodal Transport Waybill (FWB)

FIATA Forwarders Certificate of Receipt (FCR)

FIATA Warehouse Receipt (FWR)

- FIATA Forwarders Certificate of Transport (FCT)
- FIATA Shippers Declaration for the Transport of Dangerous Goods (SDT)
- FIATA Shippers Intermodal Weight Certificate (SIC)
- FIATA Forwarding Instructions (FFI)

THE CURRENT STATE OF eBL ADOPTION IN FREIGHT FORWARDING

In the global supply chain, freight forwarders play a central role in the movement of freight through various modes of transport. While freight forwarders are multimodal, it appears that exchanging data beyond one mode of transport, such as maritime transport, is challenging due to a lack of interoperability. By using a recognised data standard based on the UNCEFACT data reference model, as other FIT Alliance members too, and through its eFBL solution, FIATA is contributing to the promotion of interoperability and the consistency of data exchange.

The digitalisation of the supply chain is an industrywide challenge, where collaboration between all stakeholders is critical. FIATA is committed to contributing to positive change by representing the interests of freight forwarders and leading projects that will help them embrace the digital world, and aims to ensure that they increase their operational efficiency by becoming digital freight forwarders.

FIATA observes a positive shift towards the adoption of electronic bills of lading, with key stakeholders actively working towards the digitalisation and modernisation of trade processes.

24 of FIATA's Association members have adopted the eFBL (electronic FIATA bill of lading) and have begun to distribute it to their members. Moreover, FIATA has formed partnerships with 23 Transport Management System (TMS) providers, fostering a collaborative effort to adopt the FIATA eBL across the industry. This collective achievement highlights FIATA's commitment to innovation, efficiency, and embracing digital solutions to enhance the freight forwarding sector's capabilities.

FIATA STANDARD ELECTRONIC TRADE DOCUMENTS

Since 1968, FIATA has been working on establishing standard trade documents to harmonise documents and forms used by freight forwarders.

Trusted networks with certified member digital identities help forwarders move forward with electronic trade documents and data exchange with authenticated stakeholders, as well as gain access to a digital global ecosystem.

FIATA HELPING FREIGHT FORWARDERS TO BECOME DIGITAL

The reliance on paper in freight forwarding involves manual and time-consuming processes, leading to operational slowdowns. Managing physical documents increases the risk of errors and loss, compromising transaction reliability. International freight shipments, dependent on paper documents also complicate communication and tracking. Potential delays in handling paper documents can subsequently disrupt logistics chains.

The pandemic accelerated the need for the logistics industry to move away from paper documentation to be able to issue eBLs through their everyday tools.

FIATA plays a pivotal role in facilitating digital transformation for freight forwarders. **By establishing partnerships with technology providers, and uniting with international organisations like those in the FIT Alliance and ICC DSI, FIATA grants access to advanced digital tools, streamlining operations.** Additionally, FIATA serves as a hub for information sharing and networking among forwarders, fostering the exchange of experiences in adopting digital technologies. This collaborative effort helps freight forwarders navigate the challenges and successes of their digital transformation journey.

The adoption of electronic solutions provides a more efficient, secure, and transparent alternative to the challenges associated with paper usage in the freight forwarding industry, which will:

- Allow stakeholders in the document and data exchange process to **save money and time**
- Access a **green solution**
- **Avoid losing** Bills of Lading
- **Improve data accuracy** and **quality**
- **Guarantee interoperability** with FIT Alliance members' solutions

HOW TO BECOME A DIGITAL FREIGHT FORWARDER

In order to help FIATA Members and those interested in distributing electronic trade documents to become digital freight forwarders, FIATA has developed:

1. **A network of trust**: defining a digital identity format and registry, which will allow freight forwarders to exchange authenticated and secured data.
2. **Enforced the usage of a single standard for freight forwarder bill of lading:** making FIATA digital standard templates available through TMS and other relevant logistics platforms in a controlled way; allowing freight forwarders to digitally sign documents so that the issuer of the document can be easily identified by their partners.
3. **Facilitated interoperability:** connecting existing software platforms through the definition of a data exchange model and API specifications.