

ECTA UIRR ERFA Best Practice Guideline: Standardized Digital Booking, Gate-In and Gate-Out



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Disclaimer

This document is intended for information only and sets out best practice guidelines for standardized digital data sharing in intermodal freight transport by exchanging transport milestone messages in a intermodal supply chain and this in a harmonized and interoperable way amongst different supply chain actors. The information provided in these guidelines is provided in good faith and, while it is accurate as far as the authors are aware, no representations or warranties are made with regards to its completeness. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide. Each company, based on their individual decision-making process, may apply these guidelines, in full or partly or apply any other adapted measures.

No responsibility will be assumed by the associations ECTA UIRR ERFA to the information contained in these Guidelines.

1. Lexicon and list of abbreviations

A full list of abbreviations can be found in the ECTA-UIRR-ERFA best practice guideline: **“General principles for a standardized digital data sharing in intermodal freight transport”**

Abbreviation	Definition
Actor	A company/stakeholder within the intermodal logistics chain exchanging data of milestone events
API	Application Programming Interface
EDIGES	Electronic Data Interchange for Intermodal Goods Exchange. Standard EDI format used in the intermodal business
ETA	Estimated time of arrival
ETP	Estimated time of pickup
ITU	Intermodal transport unit
Milestone event	A node where logistics activities take place within the logistics chain that might impact the ETA/ETP status or geographic position of a train, wagon set or loading unit in the transport process
NHM code	The Harmonized Commodity Code (*NHM) is based on the international standard Harmonized System (HS) used to describe and code goods in international trade published by the World Customs Organization (WCO). (*From French “Nomenclature harmonisée des marchandises”)
XML-XSD	XSD (XML Schema Definition) is a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) recommendation that specifies how to formally describe the elements in an Extensible Markup Language (XML) document.
DXI	DX Intermodal
TRI	Train Running Information
Planning loading list	Planning of train capacity / departure train with unit that Intermodal Operator plans to load (typically shared with departure terminal)

2. Introduction

Intermodal transport refers to the method of transporting goods using two or more different modes of transportation, such as rail, road, and other modes of transport in a single journey without handling the cargo itself when changing modes. The cargo is packed into an Intermodal Loading Unit (ILU) which might be a maritime (tank) container, continental swap body or (crane-able) semi-trailer. This guideline is a joint initiative of three major associations (ECTA, ERFA and UIRR) active in freight with the objective to promote the modal shift from road to rail using common standardized data models and messages. We refer to the introductory best practice guideline **“General principles for a standardised digital data sharing in intermodal freight transport”** for more detailed information.

By promoting standardized formats for electronic data interchange, the goal is to increase efficiency and sustainability. It is essential for the competitiveness of intermodal transport within the logistics sector and unavoidable for the parties involved. In addition, it will also improve the situation of seamless, real-time logistics planning and execution and have positive effects on the reduction of administrative costs and paperwork.

This guideline zooms in on the data standards themselves and refers more specifically to the booking and Gate-in & -out intermodal processes.

The three parts of this best practice guideline being (1) intermodal order booking process (2) Terminal Gate-In and (3) Terminal Gate -Out) can universally be used for any kind of transport unit and goods, it is not limited to the chemical industry. The booking process takes place between the Intermodal Operator and the logistics service provider but is also the basis for the downstream process at the terminal, such as the Gate-In &-Out. Besides the quality of the given data in the booking, the timing, the processing and the format are relevant factors for the planning of capacity and communication. In the intermodal sector, the EDI standard of Ediges via the Datahub KV4.0 of DXI can be recommended.

3. Scope and objectives

This guideline is focused on the Intermodal Loading Unit (ILU) flows and will zoom in on the order booking, gate-in and gate-out processes. From a transport mode point of view, movements between road, rail and water are included.

The overall objective of the sector initiative “Standardization of Digital Processes in Intermodal” can be summarized as:

- Push for digital intermodal standards – take ECTA digital data standards and guidelines as an example
- Reduction of administrative work, avoid excel sheets, data entry and paper driven processes
- Improve responsiveness to tackle disruptions along the intermodal chain and terminals
- Improve visibility and predictability towards the end customers
- Reduce overhead and administration costs
- Be as efficient and effective to be able to compete with truck lanes

The overall objectives of the present guideline for “booking and Gate-In &-Out” can be summarized as:

- Describe the basis for automated processes in intermodal business in Europe
- Describe the main standard processes about intermodal booking and gate-in/gate-out at the terminal

- Provide digital data standards and definitions
- Provide basic rules as an orientation towards implementation

We consider the following primary supply chain actors involved within this guideline

1. Logistics Service Providers
 - Freight forwarders
 - Transport/trucking companies
 - Truck Drivers
2. Terminal operators
 - Intermodal terminals in Europe
3. Intermodal operators
 - Also called “combined transport” operators in Europe

4. Processes and milestone events in intermodal supply chain

4.1 Intermodal process overview

To obtain a full overview of the intermodal door-to-door process flow we refer to chapter 5 of the introductory best practice guideline “**General principles for a standardised digital data sharing in intermodal freight transport**”. The image below illustrates the key stages and communication points within an intermodal transport process, managed by an intermodal operator. It depicts the journey of goods from the consignor to the receiver, highlighting the different actors and operational steps involved, such as first mile, terminal operations, rail or sea transport, and last mile delivery. The lower section of the image emphasizes the main EDIGES messages that facilitate communication and tracking throughout the process, including booking, gate-in, train departure, estimated time of arrival (ETA), estimated time of pickup (ETP), and final pickup.

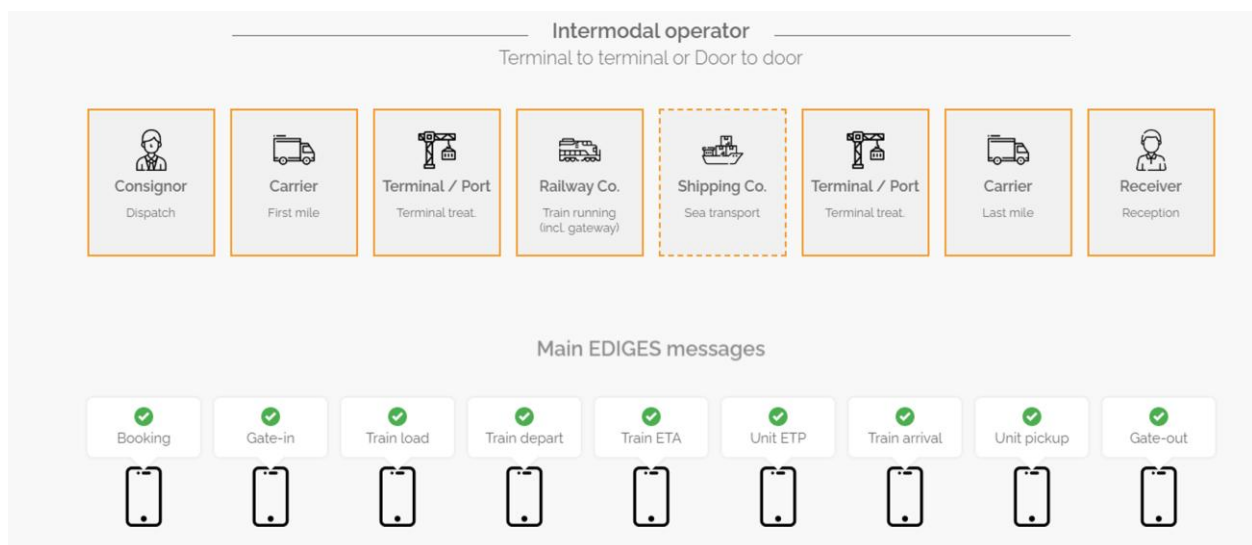


Figure 1 - KV4.0 data hub - main milestones

4.2 DXI Data Hub

The DXI Data Hub (KV4.0) operates as an electronic data hub and is not digital web-based platform: it serves as the central distributor for all messages within the intermodal supply chain. Communication with the hub is facilitated through a standard REST API, utilising URL, user authentication, password and token access. Data exchange follows a PUSH procedure for delivering information to the hub and a PULL procedure for retrieving messages. The system ensures uniformity by adhering to the EDIGES 4.1 XML standards with built-in validation rules to maintain compliance with the latest format. Importantly, only the sender determines the recipients of the data, and no information is stored on the hub itself, ensuring security and data integrity.

We like to refer to chapter 7 within the introductory best practice guideline “**General principles for a standardised digital data sharing in intermodal freight transport**” for more detailed info on the DXI data hub itself.

4.3 Main EDIGES events messages

A general description of the EDIGES data model and data exchange formats can be found in the introductory guideline that also contains an overview of all existing EDIGES event messages in the appendix.

In this guideline we want to specifically focus on the following EDIGES event messages

Code (main/cancel)	Description	Flow
10/11	Transport Booking from Customer to Operator	Customer Logistics Service Provider à Intermodal Operator à Terminal
20/21	Delivery of unit at departure terminal (Gate-in)	Terminal à Intermodal Operator
50/51	Picking-up of the ITU (Gate-Out)	Terminal à Intermodal Operator

Table 1 – EDIGES event milestone messages covered in this guideline

5. Intermodal Order Booking

5.1 Business Process and rules

5.1.1 New Booking Creation Process (from Logistics Service Provider)

The following steps detail the process for creating and confirming a new booking originating from a Logistics Service Provider to the Intermodal Operator (Intermodal Operator):

1. **Booking Submission:** The Logistics Service Provider (Logistics Service Provider) initiates the process by submitting the new booking request to the Intermodal Operator (Intermodal Operator).
2. **Booking Reception and Integration:** The Intermodal Operator receives the submitted booking and integrates it into their system according to the rules.
3. **Booking Acknowledgment and Initial Validation:** The Intermodal Operator will respond to the Logistics Service Provider with a Booking Acknowledgment. This acknowledgment will indicate the status (OK/KO - Accepted/Rejected) based on:
 - **Compliance Verification:** Ensuring adherence to fundamental requirements (e.g., verification of terminal existence).
 - **Technical Validation:** Confirming the presence and correctness of all mandatory data fields.
4. **Shipment Planning:** The Intermodal Operator will then proceed to plan the shipment according to the booking details and operational capacities.
5. **Booking Planning Confirmation to Logistics Service Provider:** The Intermodal Operator will provide the Logistics Service Provider with a Booking Planning Confirmation. This confirmation will include specific planning information, such as the assigned unit to a particular TRAIN-No and the scheduled departure date.
6. **Booking Planning Confirmation to Terminals:** The Intermodal Operator will also share the Booking Planning Confirmation with the departure and arrival terminals to ensure all parties have the latest planning details.

5.1.2 Timing Aspects and Deadline Definitions

To ensure smooth operations and timely departures, the following timing considerations and deadlines must be observed:

- A. **Booking Closing Time:** This refers to the latest point by which a new booking can be created or submitted by the Logistics Service Provider. The Booking Closing Time is set to **before the Delivery Closing Time**. Add the Booking Closing Time in the timetable.
- B. **Document/Data Delivery Deadline:** This is the latest point for the submission of all required digital documentation (e.g., exact weight, digital CMR, digital waste documentation). All electronic documents must be delivered **before the physical delivery of the unit at the terminal gate**. It is crucial that all data and documents are submitted prior to the unit's physical arrival to facilitate smooth processing. Add the Delivery Deadline in the timetable.
- C. **Delivery Closing Time:** This defines the latest point by which a unit must be physically delivered to the departure terminal (the Logistics Service Provider needs to provide the "forecast delivery date and time" at departure terminal and therefore the target train). Delivery Closing Time should be defined in the timetable for each train / terminal (remark: delivery after this deadline does not mean that the unit is not loaded on the train, but there is a lower chance of being guaranteed). Loading of the unit on the train can only be ensured, if operationally feasible. This

earlier deadline allows for better prioritization of departures, with the objective of optimizing capacity and having full trains; otherwise, units will be processed on a First-In, First-Out (FIFO) basis upon physical delivery and “forecast pickup date and time” at destination. A standardized Delivery Closing Time should be established for all terminals, where feasible.

- D. Unit Delivery at Departure Terminal:** The deadline for unit delivery at the departure terminal is governed by the established **Delivery Closing Time** (see point C above).
- E. Booking Update Deadline:** This is the latest point up to which modifications or updates to an existing booking can be made by the Logistics Service Provider. Updates to bookings are permissible **until the Booking Closing Time**.
- F. Management of Booking Priorities (Non-Manual Process):** The prioritization of bookings for loading will be managed through a systematic, non-manual approach. The following methods and considerations apply:
 - **Primary Prioritization Mechanisms:**
 1. **Loading List from Operator:** The Intermodal Operator may provide a loading list/planning that dictates priority. For each Booking Confirmation the train number and date to be planned is specified.
 2. Gateway connectivity with the next train.
 3. **Date and Time:** Prioritization can be based on a parameter indicating date and time requirements (e.g., ForecastPickupDateTime), valid until the booking is closed.
 4. **First-In, First-Out (FIFO):** In the absence of other overriding priorities, units will be prioritized based on their order of physical delivery.

5.1.3 Booking Main Content Requirements

For a Booking to be complete and processed efficiently, the following information is mandatory to be provided by the Logistics Service Provider:

- A. Unit ILU Code:** This must be provided by the Delivery Closing Time. Updates to the ILU code are permissible until the Booking Closing Time.
- B. Total Weight:** Indicate whether the unit is full or empty and specify its total weight.
- C. Length:** Specify the length of the unit.
- D. Unit Type:** Clearly state the type of unit being booked.
- E. Terminals:** Specify the designated departure and arrival terminals.
- F. Customer and Operator References:** Include relevant customer reference numbers and any operator-specific reference numbers.
- G. Key Date/Time Information:** Provide the ForecastDeliveryDateTime, RequestedDepartureDate, and ForecastPickupDateTime.
- H. Goods Description:** Detail the nature of the goods. This includes providing the NHM code (if applicable), and full details for any dangerous goods or waste. This information must be finalized by the Booking Closing Time.
- I. Customs Information:** Specify if any particular customs information or procedures are required.
- J. Train Number:** The train number is not required as part of the booking content.
- K. Truck License Plate:** The license plate of the truck delivering the unit must be provided before the unit's physical delivery to the terminal. (*optional*)
- L. Additional Details:** Further specific fields and required details for bookings are outlined in the "Booking Fields" section of this document.
- M. Full or empty code.**

The **Booking Planning Confirmation from the Intermodal Operator** has to include the following mandatory fields:

- A. Train Number
- B. Estimated Departure Date
- C. Estimated Delivery Closing
- D. Estimated Pickup (can be updated with ETP message later)

5.1.4 Update of an Existing Booking

The possibility of updating an existing booking is subject to the following rules:

- A. **Updates after Booking Closing:** It is not possible for the Logistics Service Provider to update a booking after the Booking Closing Time has passed or the unit is not delivered yet.
- B. **Updates after Unit Delivery:** In general, it is not possible for the Logistics Service Provider to update a booking after the unit has been physically delivered to the terminal.
- C. **Updates Initiated by Logistics Service Provider to Intermodal Operator:**
 - **Before Booking Closing:** Generally, all attributes of a booking can be updated by the Logistics Service Provider before the Booking Closing Time, -except the departure / destination terminal.
 - **After Booking Closing or Physical Delivery:** After the Booking Closing Time or once the unit has been physically delivered, it is generally no longer possible to update, cancel, or change the priority of the booking.
- D. **Modification After Unit Delivery:** It is not possible to modify a booking after the unit has been delivered to the terminal.
- E. **Replanning and Train Cancellation:** in the event of operational replanning or train cancellations by the Intermodal Operator, a new Booking Planning Confirmation has to be always generated according to the standard process.

5.1.5 Cancellation of a Booking

The process and conditions for cancelling a booking are as follows:

- A. **Initiation of Cancellation:** Only the Logistics Service Provider can initiate the cancellation of a booking.
- B. **Automatic Cancellation for Non-Delivery:** Consideration should be given to a process for automatic cancellation of bookings for units that are never delivered (e.g., in No-Show scenarios). In this case, the Intermodal Operator has to inform the Logistics Service Provider about the cancellation due to Booking No-Show.
- C. **Cancellation Deadline:** Generally, a booking cannot be cancelled after the physical delivery of the unit. This is closely linked to the No-Show concept (e.g. rolled to next departure).
- D. **Cancellation After Unit Delivery:**
 - It is generally not possible to cancel a booking once the unit is delivered to the terminal.
 - In exceptional emergency situations (e.g., requiring intervention from emergency services), any such cancellation would be a manual process, treated as an absolute exception.
 - If a unit is already inside the terminal, cancellation, if permitted under exceptional circumstances and is only conceivable until the unit is loaded onto a wagon.

- E. Management of Units Not Departing:** If a unit has been delivered but subsequently does not depart as planned (e.g., due to an exceptional cancellation after delivery), it must be picked up by the Logistics Service Provider or rebooked.

5.1.6 Rejection of a Booking

To ensure clarity and consistency, the following applies to booking rejections:

- **Standardized Rejection Reasons:** A standardized list of rejection reason codes must be established and used by the Intermodal Operator when a booking cannot be accepted.

5.1.7 Other Business Rules

Additional business rules governing bookings and operations include:

1. **No-Show Policy:**
 - A "No-Show" occurs if the Logistics Service Provider indicates a specific departure requirement in the booking (e.g., departure date or train number) and the unit is not delivered to the terminal by the agreed deadline (e.g., by the Delivery Closing Time).
 - **Space Reallocation:** In the event of a No-Show, the Intermodal Operator can reuse the allocated space for another party. No-Show units that arrive late may be automatically shifted to the next available train.
2. **Slots Booking (Train Capacity):** The formalization of how slots (capacity on trains) are managed has to follow the booking rules above.
3. **Unique Booking per Unit/Departure:** It is not permissible to have two bookings open simultaneously for the same unit at the same departure terminal.

5.2 XSD specification of the transport milestone messages

Please follow the link below for the latest version and find the details in the zip-file at the bottom of the page in the download area.

<https://edigesconsortium.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/ED/pages/1463353345/4.1-FINAL>

Or click the following link and find the details in the mentioned XSD folder:

https://edigesconsortium.atlassian.net/wiki/download/attachments/1463353345/Ediges_src_4_1_2024_3_c.zip?api=v2

5.3 XML (EDI) example message

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6. Terminal Gate-In Process

6.1 Challenges of intermodal Gate-In

Compared to conventional road transport, the intermodal chain comes with additional complexity due to the involvement of multiple actors, handover points, and interfaces. This is particularly evident in terminal processes.

Gate-In Challenges

The following elements must be in place when an ITU is delivered to the terminal:

- Final and complete transport data must be available before arrival — manual data entry or changes at the terminal must be avoided (responsibility is with the Logistics Service Provider)
- Clear driver identification procedures must be in place;
- The unit must undergo a condition check (e.g., labels, damages) to ensure it is safe for rail transport.
- Digitalization to simplify the processes and interaction with different parties involved (e.g. drivers, counter operators, ...).

6.2 Actors involved

Throughout the intermodal booking and terminal processes, the following actors are involved:

- Logistics Service Provider – initiates the booking and provides transport data
- Intermodal Operator – coordinates and validates bookings, provides visibility and status updates
- Terminal Operator – manages terminal operations, gates, and equipment handling
- Truck Driver – executes the physical transport, interacts with terminal entry/exit systems

6.3 Business Process

The Gate-In process begins when the loaded transport unit arrives at the terminal. From this point, the unit is handed over from road transport to the intermodal network (rail or inland waterway). A clear and digital procedure helps to avoid delays, reduce manual work at the terminal, and ensures that all involved parties have access to the correct and complete transport information.

To ensure a smooth gate-in, all necessary booking data has to be available before the truck arrives at the terminal (see booking section). This includes a valid booking reference, transport details, and driver information. The unit itself must also be in a condition that is suitable for intermodal transport.

Step-by-Step Process:

1. **Final Transport Data at Loading Site (preannouncement):**
 - After loading at the shipper's or forwarder's site, the driver receives the final transport information (e.g. CMR, loading list)

- If any data has changed compared to the original booking (e.g. container number, dangerous goods details), the Logistics Service Provider (Logistics Service Provider) must update this according to the rules defined in the Booking guidelines section.
- If digital documentation (e.g. CMR) is not available, the paper version can be scanned or photographed and processed automatically using OCR solutions. The recommended solution is to implement fully digital document process:
 - Normal goods: fully digital solution recommended
 - Dangerous goods: fully digital solution recommended, depending on regulation
 - Waste: fully digital solution recommended, depending on regulation
 - Customs: fully digital solution recommended, depending on regulation
- Uploaded CMR / dangerous goods & customs docs are final.
- Additional data to be provided by Logistics Service Provider/driver:
 - Weight of the unit (net weight)
 - Goods transported
 - Seals

2. Data Validation and Forwarding to Terminal

- The Intermodal Operator checks the data for completeness.
- The data is forwarded to the Terminal Operator (Terminal Operator).
- Responsibility is with the Logistics Service Provider (digital documents and additional data provided in the preannouncement).

3. Arrival at Terminal – Driver Identification

- Upon arrival at the terminal gate, the driver identifies themselves according to the local regulations.
- Digital solutions are recommended. For example, digital badge, QR-code, two-factor identification. For increased security fingerprint/biometric solution can be evaluated.
- The local house rules and safety regulations must be acknowledged.

4. Unit Inspection

- The terminal checks whether the unit meets the basic conditions for intermodal handling, for example: correct labels, no visible damage, proper sealing, and suitability for intermodal transport. The recommendation is to automatically perform these activities by video gate.
- If the unit is rejected due to technical or safety issues:
 - The driver receives the information at the gate.
 - The Terminal Operator informs the Intermodal Operator.
 - Intermodal Operator transfers the info to Logistics Service Provider.
 - Irregularity information has to be provided to the relevant party.

5. Gate-In Confirmation / entering the terminal

- If all checks are passed, the terminal accepts the unit and confirms the Gate-In event digitally to the Intermodal Operator.
- The status update is shared with Intermodal Operator (which shares it with Logistics Service Provider), and the unit is assigned to the planned train.
- Driver-truck combination receives permit to enter.
- Driver receives the information about the location, where to drop the unit / where the unit is craned onto the train or to the storage area.
- Check at the barrier of permission to enter, for license plate / driver.

6.4 XSD specification of the transport milestone messages

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6.5 XML (EDI) example message

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7. Terminal Gate-Out

7.1 Challenges of intermodal Gate-Out

Gate-Out Challenges

Upon pickup from the terminal, the following steps are required:

- The Terminal Operator informs the Intermodal Operator that the unit is ready, who then notifies the Logistics Service Provider
- Driver identification and pickup authorization must be verified.
- A final label and condition check must be performed before exit.

7.2 Business Process

To begin the Gate-Out process properly, it is mandatory to have the correct loading units arriving at the terminal via rail/vessel, including the details and the documents accompanying the train/vessel. After checking the train arriving at the terminal, the units are handed over to the Terminal Operator, the Intermodal Operator and Logistics Service Provider are informed, and the unit is ready for pick-up.

The Gate-Out process begins with the truck arriving at the terminal site / when the truck registers for the pick-up of the unit. A clear and digital procedure helps to avoid delays, reduce manual work at the terminal, and ensures that all involved parties have access to the correct and complete transport information.

To ensure a smooth gate-out, all necessary data should already be available before the truck arrives at the terminal. This includes a valid pick-up PIN code and unit to be picked up. It is important to note that the physical identification of the person (driver) arriving at the terminal and the authorization for the pickup of the unit are two separate important processes.

Step-by-Step Process:

- **Registration for pick-up:**
After having the unit at the terminal and “ready for pick-up”, the registration of the pick-up can be processed.
 - Necessary to give:
 - Driver (identification, permission to transport hazardous goods, if necessary)
 - Truck (license plate)
 - Unit number & pick-up pin code
 - At the terminal: technical inspection (e.g. compliance for loading the unit on the truck and DG documentation)
-
- 1. At the terminal:**
 - House rules and safety regulations must be accepted by the driver.
 - Upon arrival at the terminal gate, the driver identifies themselves.
 - The terminal system checks whether the unit number / pick-up pin code combination is valid.
 - 2. Data Validation and Terminal processing**
 - Driver-truck combination receives permit to enter
 - Essential info of the location, where to pick up the unit/where to receive the unit inside the terminal from Terminal operator to driver
 - Check at the barrier of permission to enter, for license plate / driver
 - 3. Gate-Out Confirmation**
 - By leaving the terminal, the Gate-Out is confirmed
 - Condition checks for dangerous goods can be performed by the terminal.
 - The status update “picked-up” is shared from terminal operator to intermodal operator (which sent it to logistics service provider).

7.3 XSD specification of the transport milestone messages

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8. Recommendation for Gate Processes

Drop-off & pick-up code recommendation

There are different pick-up codes in use. However, as a Best-Practice, we recommend the following characteristics:

- Strongly recommended to be unique
- Minimum length of 10 characters
- Intermodal Operator generates the codes and provide them to authorized partners

Data standards for Gate Process

For definition and Best Practice, please find the ECTA Guideline for “Truck & Driver data standards”.

9. Contact Lists and WG participants



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Annex – BPM Processes

Business process 1: New booking

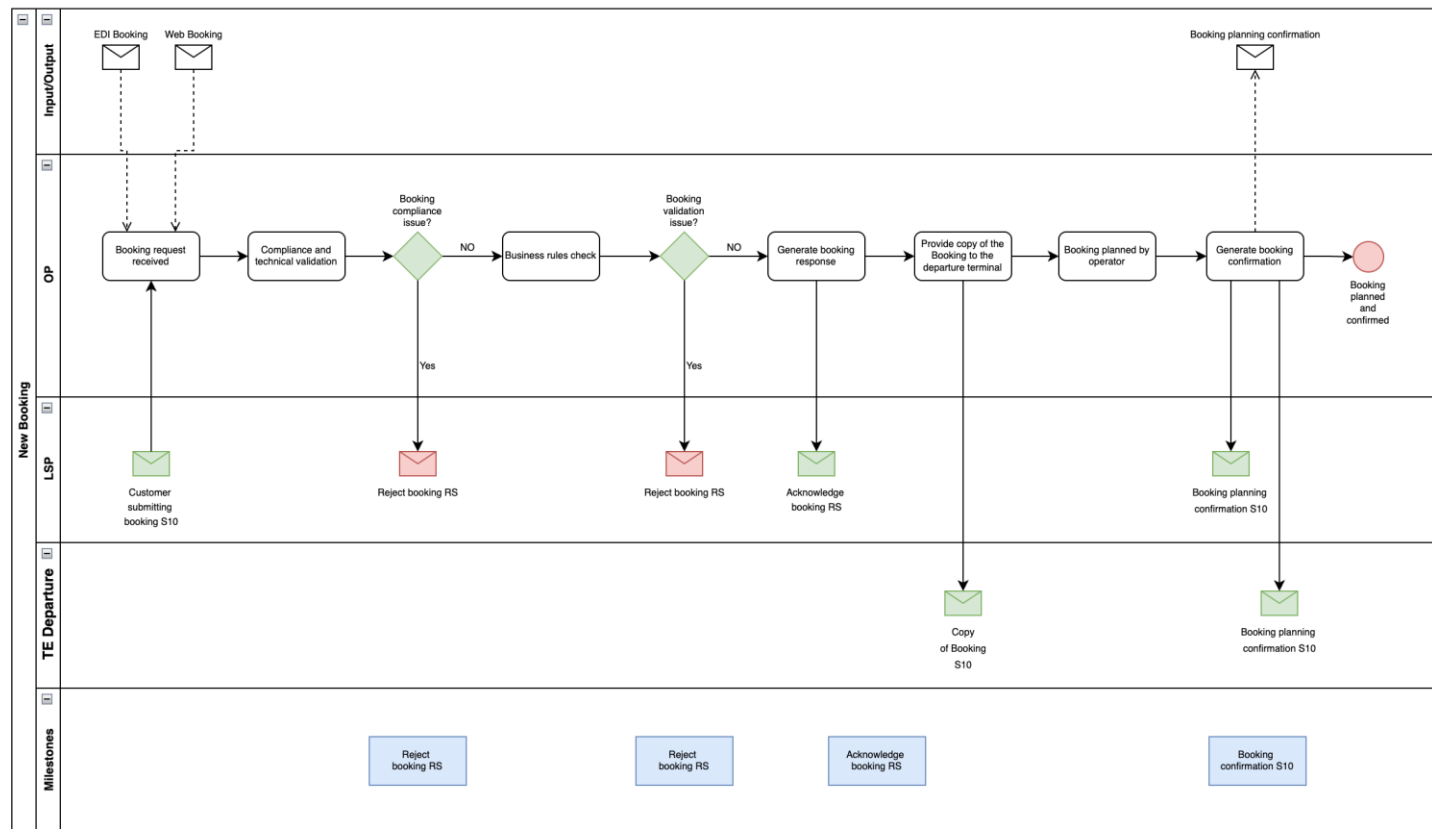


Figure 1 - BPM Process – New Booking

Business process 2: Cancel booking

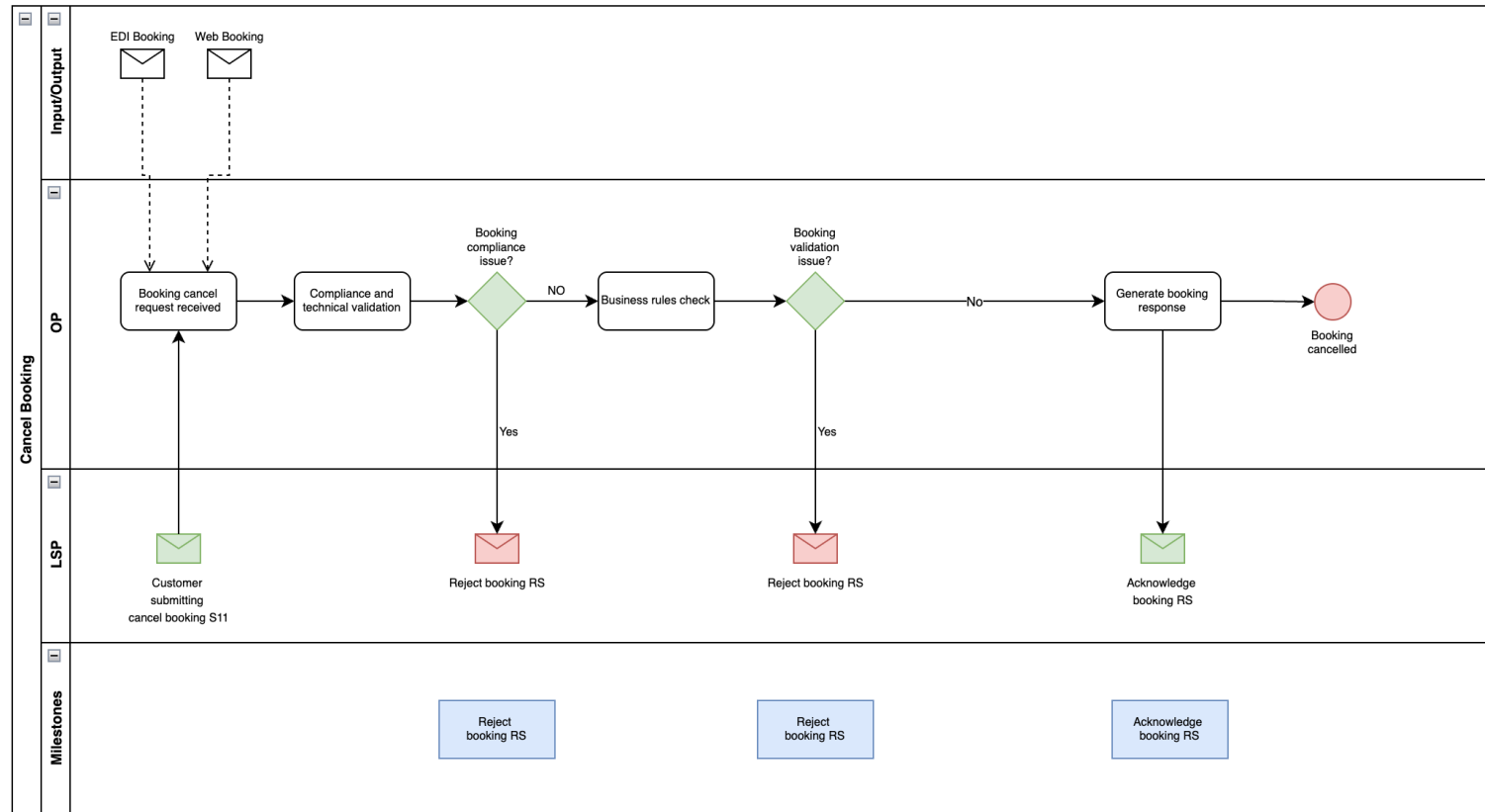


Figure 2 - BPM Process – Cancel Booking

Business process 3: Update booking

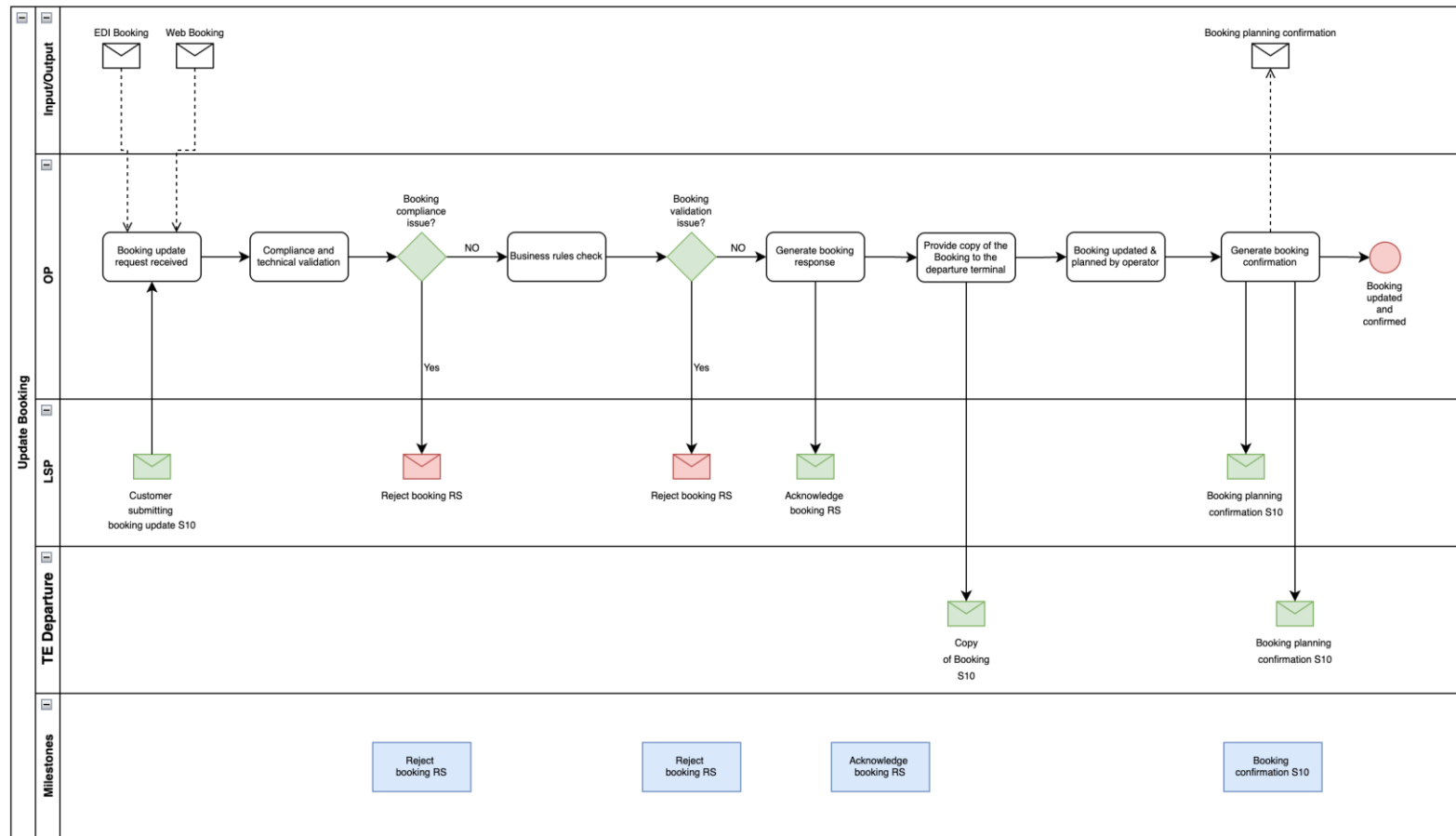


Figure 3 - BPM Process – Update Booking