

Over the last period of time, there has been an increase in the inconveniences caused by shifting Cargo Opening Times (COT) and Cargo Closing Times (CCT) , the time at which containers can be delivered for export at the seaport terminals in the port of Rotterdam. The effect not only disrupts schedules, but also causes frustration between hinterland carriers and their customers. While the reaction of clients towards hinterland carriers seems logical at first, the actual cause and therefore the influence on the effect lies with another link in the logistics chain. The increasingly erratic pattern in the arrivals of deep sea vessels (currently less than half of the world's container liner shipping is on schedule) combined with the trend towards a narrowing of the COT and CCT (due to lack of space at the seaport terminals) are major contributors to the current problems.

The origins of the COT and CCT lie in the increase in scale and, consequently, in the larger call sizes of deep sea vessels. The CCT is mainly intended to ensure that at any moment prior to the arrival of the vessel, all booked containers (which are both physically and administratively in order) are in the seaport terminal, and thus to be able to prepare the loading operation in an as undisturbed and optimal way as possible. European regulations, among others, also require assurance that the export cargo is present at the seaport terminal at a certain time prior to the arrival of the deep sea vessel. The COT is intended to prevent large quantities of export cargo from being delivered to the seaport terminal prematurely, with the risk of overloaded stacks and the terminal becoming overfull, among other things. Containers are not accepted by the seaport terminal before the start of the COT. This also applies to containers which are already en route from the hinterland and which, on arrival at the seaport, are confronted with an adjusted COT and CCT.

The leading factor for these two timestamps is the estimated time of arrival (ETA) of the ship. The COT and the CCT for the export bookings made on the deep sea vessel are determined based on this time. These times are then communicated to the booking party by the shipping company. However, as soon as the ETA of the deep sea vessel changes, in many cases this also affects the COT and CCT determined earlier and communicated in the chain. Particularly due to the continuing increase in scale in combination with the erratic pattern in the Actual Times of Arrival of deep sea vessels, the effect of a delayed and/or a changed rotation of the deep sea vessel on the underlying process has become increasingly clear. This underlines the importance of correct and up to date information between and acceptance of responsibilities by the right parties in the logistics chain.

An important role in the information flow around the ETA, the COT and the CCT is played by the party that has placed the export booking with the shipping company, usually shippers or forwarders. In the [inland shipping container guidelines](#) published in autumn of 2019, attention has already been paid to the specific role of these parties and on informing hinterland carriers about changes which occur in the planning of their containers. The hinterland transport is in fact a derivative of the export booking and the parameters linked to it; the hinterland carrier has no direct influence on these preconditions.

When the ETA of the deep sea vessel is changed, it is important that the shipper or forwarder is primarily informed of the change and its consequences by the shipping company. Subsequently, the shipper or the forwarder must ensure that the hinterland carrier is provided with updated information, so that they too can anticipate the changing circumstances in good time. In case of hinterland transport, the up-to-date COT and CCT for an export booking subsequently determine whether the container can leave for the seaport or not.

