The Intermodal Links Planner combines time schedules of rail, barge and short sea operators in Europe and selects the best intermodal connections. Due to the lack of Transport Service Descriptions (TSD's) provided by service providers, the Intermodal Links Planner collects time table information from various transport modes across Europe in various ways (automatic, manual) and combines this into an intermodal route planner. The Intermodal Links Planner can be used at tactical and strategic level. For use at operational level the information is not (yet) accurate and up-to-date enough.

Intermodal Links supports freight transport and logistics operations. Intermodal links is specifically relevant for planning purposes in the logistics supply domain, subdomain ‘logistics services management’, for the moment mainly at strategic and tactical planning.

- Time savings in finding intermodal connections.
- Capability to offer full intermodal logistics services Europe-wide, without the need to have to keep an up-to-date database of intermodal services.
- Reduced emissions and congestion.
- Optimized logistical processes, leading to reduced costs.
- The Intermodal Links planner can also be installed as a plug-in to websites of e.g. ports or intermodal terminals. This offers these intermodal hubs the possibility to show their intermodal connections to the rest of Europe.
- The Intermodal Links planner allows for benchmarking exercises of intermodal hubs or logistics regions.

The key success factor of Intermodal Links is that Intermodal Links combines the time schedules of more than 90 intermodal rail, barge and feeder operators offering their services between 685 container terminals in more than 40 countries in and around Europe. The tool is very simple to use, just by clicking or typing origin and destination. In less than ten seconds, the search engine offers a complete and up-to-date overview of transport duration, frequency, departure dates and contact information of all available suppliers of container transport services.

The main problem, idea or motivation that led to the development and introduction of the new practice:
The logistics service provider had to collect its own intermodal schedules, which was costly and thus only a limited set of schedules was collected on a regular basis.

Common practice before the implementation:
There was no free route planner where multiple modes could be chosen and used to look for opportunities to make transport intermodal. Some initiatives have/had been undertaken, but these mostly were initiated around one port (e.g. Antwerp) or based on one mode (e.g. rail).
This resulted in a very fragmented and non-complete overview of intermodal options.

The purpose and the sustainability objective of the case:
To increase visibility of intermodal options, which in the end should lead to more intermodal transport and reduced congestion and emissions from road freight transport.

Solution:
Intermodal Links shows in a few clicks intermodal transport solutions for transport companies, forwarders and shippers.

Intermodal Links is a web-based tool. Users can enter an origin and destination, the maximum duration and the number of transhipments allowed, and then the tool produces a series of intermodal options between origin and destination, including travel time, number of transhipments, frequency, operators, terminals and contact details of operators and terminals.

Time schedules are collected through a manual search of the internet, as well as that (changes in) time schedules are increasingly provided by the operators in excel format.

The use of the Intermodal Links planner is free of charge. Ports or intermodal hubs that want to integrate Intermodal Links into their website have to pay a subscription fee per year to keep the planner up to date. The costs are client specific, depending on number of connections that they are interested in, whether they make use of the plug-in functionality, etc.

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More Best Practice cases and information about BESTFACT can be found at:
http://www.bestfact.net