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Careers in logistics: roles and paths

From operations to sales, from customs to chartering: who does what in a logistics company, and where each role leads.

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Online interactive version: **https://ozgurkonakci.com/en/guide/careers-in-logistics/**

SHORT ANSWER

The main roles in a logistics or freight forwarding company are operations, customer service, pricing, sales, customs, warehousing and distribution, project and special cargo, ship agency and chartering, and management. Starting in operations is an advantage because it teaches how the work actually runs, which pays off later in sales and management. In Türkiye, customs broker and assistant broker authorisations depend on a Ministry of Trade exam; FIATA's freight forwarding diploma is delivered through its member national associations.

Who works in logistics?

Getting cargo from the factory to the buyer is the joint work of many connected roles. This page summarises the main roles in a freight forwarding or logistics company and where they lead. Job titles vary between companies; the substance is the same.

Role map

Role	What it does	What it takes	Where it leads	Related topics
Operations	Bookings, document preparation, coordination with carriers and customs, shipment tracking. Split by sea, air or road, and by export or import.	Attention to detail, document knowledge, time management, problem solving.	Customer service, pricing, sales, team leadership.	The bill of lading → The container shipment timeline → Demurrage, detention and storage →

Role	What it does	What it takes	Where it leads	Related topics
Customer service	The customer's single point of contact: informs, follows up and resolves issues with the relevant team.	Communication, patience, operational knowledge.	Sales, key account management.	The parties in trade and logistics → Cargo damage and the claims process →
Pricing	Obtains rates from carriers, builds the cost and prepares quotations for sales.	Comfort with numbers, market awareness, knowledge of surcharges.	Sales, commercial management, procurement.	FCL, LCL and freight calculation → Freight quotations and surcharges →
Sales	Wins new customers, understands needs, offers solutions and quotations, maintains the relationship.	Communication, commercial sense, knowledge of products and processes.	Key account management, branch or regional management.	Incoterms® 2020 → Payment methods and letters of credit →
Customs	Customs declarations, procedures, tariff classification and keeping up with regulation.	Knowledge of regulation, attention to detail. In Türkiye, customs broker and assistant broker authorisations depend on a Ministry of Trade exam.	Customs brokerage, trade compliance management.	HS codes and customs procedures in Türkiye → Transit shipments and customs transit →
Warehousing and distribution	Receiving, stock, handling, shipment preparation and distribution planning.	Planning, workplace safety, systems use.	Warehouse management, supply chain planning.	Container packing and weight distribution →
Project and special cargo	Planning oversized, heavy, dangerous or temperature-controlled cargo.	Technical knowledge, regulation, risk assessment.	Project management, specialist advisory.	Project cargo and out-of-gauge loads → Dangerous goods transport: IMDG and ADR → Reefer containers and the cold chain →

Role	What it does	What it takes	Where it leads	Related topics
Shipping side: agency and chartering	Ship agency, line representation, chartering.	Maritime knowledge, contract literacy, foreign languages.	Line management, chartering brokerage.	Chartering, laytime and vessel demurrage → How to read a container's position on board: bay, row and tier →
Management and analysis	Branch or regional management; seeing processes, performance and the flow between departments as a whole.	Knowing several functions, working with data, leading teams.	Senior management, commercial and strategic roles.	Your first export or import: a step-by-step roadmap →

Where to start?

Starting in operations is always an advantage. Knowing the kitchen teaches you, through experience, how to present the service to customers and how to control the work once you are a manager. Someone who has learned first-hand how a bill of lading is issued, why a container waits at the port or what holds up customs makes realistic promises in sales and asks the right questions in management.

Later in a career, what makes the difference is often not a single specialism but **knowing several functions.** Seeing the flow between sales, operations, pricing and finance as a whole is the basis for management, analysis and process roles.

AN EXAMPLE PATH

1. **On the carrier side, on the floor:** cargo operations and apron experience at the flag carrier Turkish Airlines: physically loading aircraft and running operational processes. This is where the hands-on side of the work began; seeing customs processes from the inside added extra knowledge and experience.
2. **Sales:** freight forwarding sales at Kuehne + Nagel and DHL Global Forwarding
3. **Branch management:** Ankara branch manager at CEVA Logistics and Kınay
4. **Integrated systems:** an analysis role rather than an IT one; aligning departments' processes with each other and keeping them working well
5. **Brand and marketing:** a role that came after getting to know the company and the industry closely

Each move came from learning something new and developing it. This is the path of the owner of this site; details are on the career page.

Which qualifications and training help?

- **Assistant customs broker and customs broker:** in Türkiye these authorisations depend on an exam run by the Ministry of Trade. It is the most direct route for those specialising in customs; in other roles, being able to read the regulations is a great help.
- **FIATA diplomas:** the FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding is a 15-module programme delivered by FIATA's member national associations. There is also a higher diploma in supply chain management.
- **Postgraduate study:** a master's in logistics and supply chain management broadens your view, especially when moving into analysis, planning and management roles.
- **Foreign languages:** in international transport, daily contact with carriers, agents and overseas offices is mostly in English.

The topics in this guide can also be read as a starter curriculum: the first export and import roadmap, Incoterms, bills of lading and the parties in trade are a good place to begin.

Mandatory licences and voluntary certificates

Some documents in logistics are a **legal requirement** for doing a particular job; others are **voluntary** certificates that build knowledge and careers. Starting in an operations or sales role at a forwarder usually involves no legal licence requirement; requirements arise for specific activities such as customs representation, dangerous goods and driving. Ask your employer whether your role has a specific requirement.

Document	Issued by	For	Mandatory?
Customs broker and assistant customs broker	Turkish Ministry of Trade	Representing the declarant before customs as a broker	Yes, to act as a broker; not for operations and sales roles at a forwarder
Dangerous Goods Safety Adviser (TMGD)	Turkish Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure (UHDGM)	Advising on dangerous goods activities by road (ADR), rail (RID) and sea (IMDG)	A business holding an activity certificate must employ a TMGD or use a TMGD consultancy
SRC 3 / SRC 4	Turkish Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure	Drivers carrying goods internationally (SRC 3) and domestically (SRC 4)	Yes, for those drivers
SRC 5 (ADR)	Turkish Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure	Drivers carrying dangerous goods by road	Yes, for those drivers
Dangerous goods by air training (IATA DGR, CBTA)	IATA or a training organisation authorised by the Turkish DGCA (SHGM)	Staff who accept, prepare or handle dangerous goods by air	Yes, training suited to the person's function
FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding	FIATA's member national associations	Freight forwarding	Voluntary
ICS qualifications	Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers	Shipbroking, chartering, ship agency	Voluntary

Document	Issued by	For	Mandatory?
CILT qualifications	Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport	Logistics and transport	Voluntary
ASCM CSCP and CLTD	ASCM	Supply chain management (CSCP); logistics, transportation and distribution (CLTD)	Voluntary
ICC Global Trade Certificate (GTC)	ICC Academy	Trade finance: letters of credit, documentary collections, guarantees	Voluntary

Notes on each

- **Customs broker and assistant customs broker:** the exams are run by the Ministry of Trade. The customs broker oral exam requires an average of at least 70 out of 100. According to the Ministry's 2025 results, 312 of the 996 candidates who sat the assistant customs broker exam passed. According to secondary sources, pre-registration for the 2026 exam ran in May–June 2026; check the Ministry's announcement for the exact exam date and details.
- **TMGD:** the exam covers ADR, RID and IMDG; there is no TMGD exam for air. A bachelor's degree is required, the pass mark is at least 70 out of 100 and the certificate is valid for 5 years. Amendments to the dangerous goods rules were published in October 2026; check the current provisions on mevzuat.gov.tr.
- **SRC certificates:** SRC 5 is the dangerous goods driver certificate based on ADR, with Basic, Tank, Class 1 and Class 7 types. Drivers who carry dangerous goods and hold SRC 3 or SRC 4 must obtain it.
- **Dangerous goods by air training:** according to IATA, since 1 January 2023 training has been **competency-based (CBTA)**: content is set by the person's function, the employer is responsible for the training's effectiveness and training is renewed every 24 months. In Türkiye, the SHGM's CBTA DGR instruction entered into force on 22 June 2023.
- **FIATA Diploma:** courses are delivered not by FIATA but by national associations it validates. According to an April 2026 letter from UTİKAD, the association runs the FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding in Turkish and online; the latest intake started on 27 April 2026.
- **ICS:** the Professional Qualifying Examinations consist of 7 exams, 4 compulsory and 3 elective. There are Foundation and Advanced Diploma steps for newcomers and those with some experience.
- **CILT:** international qualifications are delivered through accredited training providers; for example, the International Certificate is Level 3, the Diploma Level 5 and the Advanced Diploma Level 6.
- **ASCM:** there are no eligibility requirements for the CSCP. The CLTD, covering inbound logistics, outbound distribution and reverse logistics, is earned with a single exam.
- **ICC GTC:** an online, nine-course entry-level trade finance certificate, valid for 3 years. It strengthens a logistics professional's knowledge of payments and documents.

MYK certificates: Türkiye's Vocational Qualifications Authority (MYK) has national occupational standards and qualifications; for example, there is a national qualification for **Port Forklift Operator (Level 3)**. Check myk.gov.tr

for which logistics qualifications have been published and which require a certificate by law.

Test yourself

1. Which role obtains rates from carriers and prepares quotations? *(Answer: Pricing.)*
2. In Türkiye, which body runs the exam for assistant customs broker authorisation? *(Answer: The Ministry of Trade.)*
3. What advantage does starting in operations give a manager? *(Answer: Knowing how the work runs, and so knowing the right checkpoints and questions.)*

Frequently asked questions

Where should you start in logistics?

Starting in operations is a real advantage. Someone who has learned from the inside how documents, carriers, customs and timing work knows what to offer in sales, and how to control the work as a manager.

How do you become an assistant customs broker in Türkiye?

In Türkiye, customs broker and assistant customs broker authorisations depend on an exam run by the Ministry of Trade. Check the Ministry's announcements for current requirements and exam dates.

What is the FIATA Diploma?

A training programme based on the minimum standards of FIATA, the international federation of freight forwarders. The FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding has 15 modules and is delivered by FIATA's member national associations; there is also a higher diploma in supply chain management.

Is any licence mandatory to work at a forwarder?

Starting in operations or sales usually involves no legal licence requirement. Requirements arise for specific activities: a customs broker licence to represent declarants before customs, a TMGD for businesses with dangerous goods activities, SRC certificates for drivers and function-appropriate DGR training for staff handling dangerous goods by air. FIATA, ICS, CILT, ASCM and ICC certificates are voluntary.

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Example career path: Özgür Konakcı's career page and his own account (8 Nov 2026) — https://ozgurkonakci.com/en/career/

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