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Working Party on Customs Questions affecting
Transport
(19-22 June 2001)

Ad hoc Expert Group on the Computerization
of the TIR Procedure
(21 June 2001, agenda item 3)

BACKGROUND AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION BY THE EXPERT GROUP

First results of questionnaire

Note by the secretariat

A.   BACKGROUND

1.   In preparation for the second meeting of the expert group, the secretariat has prepared a
questionnaire, aimed at both Customs and trade, to gather in-depth information on the requirements of
computerization of Customs transit procedures at the national level as well as on technologies used to
capture and disseminate data (TRANS/WP.30/2001/5, paragraph 83).

2.   The questionnaire has been sent to the Customs TIR focal points of all Contracting Parties and
to a small selection of transport operators. A copy of both questionnaires is added to this document as
Annexes 1 and 2. The deadline for returning the questionnaire to the secretariat was 1 June 2001. A
first summary of the results is given below. The main part of the document will be dedicated to the
reaction from the Customs TIR focal points. The reactions from the transport industry will be discussed
separately in paragraph 5. Because of the short time-span, the secretariat has not yet been able to
review and analyze the statistical data. In fact, this document contains only preliminary observations.
The conclusions, on the basis of an integral analysis of all supplied data, will be presented in a later
document.

B.   RESPONSES

3.   Up to date, 33 Contracting Parties have sent the secretariat their response to the questionnaire, including the European Community, which, on behalf of its Member States, has sent a co-ordinated response to question 25. Generally speaking, it should be noted that all responding Contracting Parties have answered the questions as comprehensive and as elaborate as possible. Therefore, the secretariat has obtained a vast amount of information, which will keep their value throughout the whole of Phase III of the revision process.

4.   Before going into the details of the answers, it should be said that, due to the fact that not all respondents have answered all questions and that for some questions more than one answer was possible, the total number of answers does not necessarily add up to 33.

C.   ANSWERS TO THE VARIOUS QUESTIONS

Question 1: Is it possible in your country to lodge a TIR declaration by electronic means (in addition to the paper based TIR Carnet)?

Yes: 13 countries; No: 19 countries, several of which have indicated that this possibility will soon be available in their country.

Preliminary observation: Although the majority of countries still does not offer trade the option to lodge a TIR declaration by electronic means (in addition to the obligatory submission of its paper version), quite a considerable amount of countries does. Looking at the large number of countries that already dispose of various types of computerized Customs procedures (see also question 14), it is foreseeable that the number of countries accepting electronically lodged declarations will increase considerably in the coming years.

Question 2: Do you key-in data from the TIR Carnets you receive in your national computer system?

Yes: 20 countries; No: 11 countries.

Preliminary observation: A majority of countries does already key-in data from the paper TIR Carnet for use in their national computer system. It goes without saying that, in doing so, there is a lot of duplication of information, knowing that there is no exchange of information between the various Customs administrations involved. Additionally, it is clear that every time information is keyed-in, typing errors might be made.

Question 3: What data do you key in?

TIR Carnet number: 15 countries; Name of holder: 8 countries; Goods manifest: 10 countries; Voucher No. 1/2: 10 countries; counterfoil 1/2: 6 countries; among the other data mentioned the most frequent ones are (at random): office of departure, date of departure, office of destination, office and date of discharge, gross weight, number of packages, name of consignor/consignee, means of transport, full/ partial unloading and full/partial discharge.

Preliminary observation: The answers to this question make clear that a considerable amount of countries copy a lot of information from the TIR Carnet for the benefit of their national, computerized system. A large amount of work and resources could be saved, if these data would only have to be keyed-in once, instead of separately in each individual country.

Question 4: On what level is the thus obtained data used?

Locally, at the specific Customs office concerned: 11 countries; centrally, at a regional or national level: 16 countries; at all levels: 1 country.

Preliminary observation: There is no clear tendency with regard to the places where the obtained data are used.

Question 5: What kind of system do you use for the electronic transmission of data?

Restricted internal system: 18 countries; internet: 4 countries; other: 1 country.

Preliminary observation: A majority of countries disposes of a national 'intranet' system to take care of the transmission of captured data.

Question 6: Do you use the electronically captured data from vouchers 1 and 2 to establish discharge?

Yes: 15 countries; No: 6 countries.

Preliminary observation: Already 50% of the countries use electronically captured data as a means to establish national discharge.

Question 7: If yes, do you still use the original copies of vouchers 1 and 2 to establish discharge?

Yes: 12 countries; No 3 countries.

Preliminary observation: Most countries use the electronically captured data in addition to the information from the vouchers 1 and 2 to establish discharge.

Question 8: If yes, is the computerized discharge performed by:

Office of departure/entry: 6 countries; office of destination/exit: 7 countries; centralized office: 7 countries; other: 0.

Preliminary observation: There is no pre-dominant answer to this question.

Question 9: Do you make use of the bar-code in the TIR Carnet?

Yes: 2 countries; No: 21 countries.

Preliminary observation: Almost all countries that have answered this question have indicated that they do not use the bar-code in the TIR Carnet. Thus, however useful it may be to the national associations and the IRU, its use by Customs authorities is extremely limited. In fact, out of the two countries indicating that they use the bar-code, one country indicates that it still keys-in the TIR Carnet number in its national computer system.

Question 10: Do you keep the Customs ledger in which all TIR Carnets are inscribed in an electronic format?

Yes: 17 countries; No: 14 countries.

Preliminary observation: A growing number of countries assemble the data on all registered TIR Carnets in an electronic format.

Question 11: Do you dispose of a central database in which all data concerning TIR transports is stored?

Yes: 18 countries; No: 13 countries.

Preliminary observation: A growing number of countries dispose of central databases where all data concerning TIR transports is stored.

Question 12: Are the TIR approved Customs offices in your country equipped to handle computerized Customs procedures?

All: 19 countries; Majority: 10 countries; Some: 2 countries; None: 0.

Preliminary observation: In all countries TIR approved offices exist that already, in one way or another, deal with computerized Customs procedures. This large number is a clear indication that in most countries the infrastructure to computerize the TIR procedure is already available.

Question 13: If yes, what is the level of computerization?

Stand alone computers: 2 countries: Local network: 7 countries; National network: 28 countries.

Preliminary observation: The answer to this question confirms the preliminary observation to question 12. In fact, most countries have developed some type of an own national network. Only three countries report that their national network is designed on the basis ASYCUDA++.

Question 14: Which Customs procedures have been computerized in your country?

Import: 29 countries; Export: 25 countries; Transit: 27 countries (two of which in experimental phase); other: mainly concerning Customs regimes with in economic impact such as warehousing and in- and outward processing.

Preliminary observation: The answers to this question clearly indicate that in most countries the import/export and transit procedures have already been computerized. In addition, five countries mention the computerization of the Customs regimes with an economic impact. From this information one could deduce that a next logical step towards the full computerization should be the computerization of the TIR procedure.

Question 15: Do the TIR approved Customs offices in your country have access to the internet?

All: 11 countries; Majority: 7 countries; Few: 8 countries; none: 6 countries.

Preliminary observation: Although not all countries have yet given all their Customs offices access to the internet, it can reasonably be expected that the number of internet-linked Customs offices will increase considerably in the next few years.

Question 16: What kind of system do you use to transmit data from one Customs office to another?

Diskette: 3 countries; CD-rom: 1 country; Smart-card: 0; EDI: 17 countries; other: 15 countries, mostly mentioning intranet, e-mail or WAN (Wide Area Network).

Preliminary observation: Most countries do either use EDI, their intranet or e-mail to transmit data.

Question 17: If you use EDI, what is the frequency of transmission?

On-line: 13 countries; Off-line: 6 countries, one of which transmits data daily, one between 1-3 days, one at a weekly rate.

Preliminary observation: Already half of the countries have established on-line transmission of data.

Question 18: Do you use electronically captured data as a basis for risk assessment?

Yes: 22 countries; No: 9 countries.

Preliminary observation: A majority of countries is interested in the capture of data concerning TIR operations, as they will use it for their risk assessment.

Question 19: Does your national legislation accept electronically lodged declarations?

Yes: 26 countries; No: 5 countries.

Preliminary observation: Although not yet all countries accept electronically lodged TIR declarations (in addition to the paper declaration), the vast majority of countries already accepts other types of electronic declarations.

Question 20: Does your national legislation accept electronic signatures?

Yes: 13 countries; No: 18 countries, four of which report that legislation on the subject is in preparation.

Preliminary observation: Although so far a minority of countries accepts electronic signatures (and therefore disposes of the necessary legislation enabling its use) its number is growing.

Question 21: Is there any legal impediment in your country preventing the transmission of data between trader and Customs authorities?

Yes: 7 countries; No: 22 countries.

Preliminary observation: A large majority of countries does not have any legal impediment concerning the transmission of data between trader and Customs authorities. Thus, the introduction of electronic data exchange for TIR should not cause too many legal problems.

Question 22: If yes, please state the nature of the impediment or the state of the current or pending legislation.

Preliminary observation: The most frequent answer given is the fact that legislation governing the protection of personal data impedes the transmission. Some countries report that their current legislation is under review in order to solve this problem.

D.   RESPONSES FROM TRADE

5.   The secretariat has sent a questionnaire, dedicated to trade, to a selected number of transport companies active in the field of TIR transport. So far, a limited number of companies have returned the duly filled in questionnaire in time. This limited number is too small to draw any significant conclusions. However, already from the first reactions that have been received, some interesting information can be retrieved.

6.   All responding companies report that they fill in the TIR Carnet by typewriter. One company mentions that it has developed its own IT-system. No indication is given how the information in the IT system is transferred to the paper TIR Carnet. None of the companies uses the bar code for its own administration.

7.   Several companies report that they would like to be able to lodge TIR Carnets electronically, because they feel this lead to considerable time-gain all through the TIR procedure. In exchange, companies would like to receive from Customs information on the status of the operation at the various borders, en route and at destination, including information regarding the discharge of the TIR procedure.

E.   PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

8.   On the basis of the considerable number of reactions to the questionnaire from Customs' side and the first reactions from transport companies it has become clear that, at a national level, the computerization of Customs procedures in general is well under way, as well at the level of Customs authorities as at the transport level.

9.   Regarding TIR, the situation is more complicated, because the Convention as yet requires the use of the paper TIR Carnet. However, the large number of countries that already nowadays key-in many data elements from the TIR Carnet in their national system clearly show that there is at least a need for a more common approach to establish a correct and non-recurrent system of data capture, as a first step to computerization of the TIR procedure.

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