

TIR EXECUTIVE BOARD (TIRExB)

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COMMISSION DE CONTROLE TIR (TIRExB)

ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ МДП (ИСМДП)

Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975

TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)

Ninety fifth session

Geneva, 6 February 2023

Report of the ninety fifth session of the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)

I. Attendance

1. The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB, also referred to hereafter as the Board) held its ninety-fifth session on 6 February 2023 in Geneva and requested to extend it for an additional hour on 8 February 2023 (5 p.m. - 6 p.m.), with the possibility to connect virtually.
2. The following members of TIRExB were present: Mr. M. Ayati (Iran, Islamic Republic of), Mr. M. Ciampi (Italy), Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission), Ms. P. Yalcin Bastirmaci (Türkiye) and Ms. C. Zuidgeest (Netherlands).
3. Ms. T. Rey-Bellet attended the session as observer, representing the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2022/95

4. TIRExB adopted the agenda of the session in Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2022/95, with the addition of Informal documents Nos. 4 and 5 (2023), to be discussed under agenda items 7 (b) and 9 (a), respectively.

III. Adoption of the report of the ninety fourth session of TIRExB (agenda item 2)

Documentation: Informal document TIRExB/REP/2022/94 draft

5. TIRExB adopted the report of its ninety-fourth session with a few amendments to Informal document TIRExB/REP/2021/94 draft and requested the secretariat to submit it to the TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2) for endorsement.

IV. Computerization of the TIR procedure (agenda item 3)

A. Interconnection of national customs systems with the eTIR international system

6. The Board took note of the latest developments concerning the interconnection of the eTIR international system with national customs systems. In particular, the Board noticed that the first eTIR transport based on Annex 11 to the TIR Convention took place between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, paving the way to the new electronic era for the TIR system. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Uzbekistan performed already both the interconnection and the conformance tests while Pakistan and Tunisia had finalized the interconnection but not yet the conformance tests. The secretariat shared its experience with those first interconnections that it performed. Based on Annex 11, a contracting party could announce its connection to the system while having finalized both the interconnection and the conformance tests. However, the operational readiness of a contracting party to use the system starts only when the appropriate user interface has been developed and the customs officers are trained and know how to use it.

7. The Board further took note that the fourth session of the Technical Implementation Body (TIB) would take place on 9-10 (a.m.) June 2023, in conjunction with the one-hundred-and-sixty-third session of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), as requested by TIB.

B. International TIR Data Bank

Documentation: Informal document No. 1 (2023)

8. The Board was informed about developments related to the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) and other related information technology projects, managed by the TIR secretariat. The Board took note of the status of data recordings in ITDB and, in particular, of the following figures: 1,160 web application users, 29,663 authorized holders recorded, 271 stamps and seals recorded, 2,856 customs offices recorded and of the web service usage for the past years. The Board also took note of the latest achievements related to ITDB, in particular the deployment in production of the eTIR Portal and the completion of the eTIR Mobile apps development.

9. Furthermore, the Board welcomed and approved, pending a few amendments, the ITDB data governance, contained in Informal document No. 1 (2023), and requested the secretariat to transmit it to AC.2 for endorsement.

10. In this context, the Board also took note of a request by IRU regarding a possible access to the information on stamp and seals, emphasizing that the information on the stamps could be of great use when reviewing used TIR Carnets to detect faked terminations. In a first reaction, the Board stressed that the information on stamps and seals is collected and shared via ITDB to facilitate controls by customs. The Board also stressed that such request would be better addressed directly to AC.2, in the form of a document which would clarify the benefits of such access and propose the relevant changes to the ITDB data governance document.

V. Support in the application and revitalization of the TIR Convention including amendment proposals that would increase the competitiveness of the TIR system (agenda item 4)

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. 23 (2022), 29 (2022) and 2 (2023).

11. The Board recalled that, at its previous session, it considered Informal document No. 23 (2022), containing a revision of examples of national practices regarding the concepts of authorized consignee and consignor, as well as Informal document No. 29 (2022), on the application of the concept of authorized consignee for TIR in the European Union. The Board had requested the secretariat to prepare a document for its next session with the following examples of good practice: the applications of the concept of authorized consignee in the European Union and the applications of the concept of authorized consignor in Türkiye.

12. The Board approved the examples of best practice, as contained in Informal document No. 2 (2023), and requested the secretariat to transmit them to AC.2 for endorsement and, ultimately, inclusion in the next revision of the TIR Handbook.

VI. Support training activities on the application of the TIR Convention (agenda item 5)

Documentation: Informal document No. 24/Rev.1 (2022).

13. The Board considered and approved the revised examples of national practices about the procedure of authorization of holders and the approval of vehicles, as contained in the annexes of Informal document No. 24/Rev.1 (2022) and requested the secretariat to transmit them to AC.2 for endorsement and, ultimately, inclusion in the next revision of the TIR Handbook.

VII. Adaptation of the TIR procedure to modern business, logistics and transport requirements (agenda item 6)

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. 16 (2022) and 25 (2022).

14. The Board welcomed the draft guidelines for the usage of the TIR and eTIR procedures for intermodal transport, as contained in Informal document No. 25 (2022). The Board further agreed that, due to the late availability of the document, it would revert to it at one of its next sessions after it had sufficient time to thoroughly review its content and update / validate the case studies / scenarios provided.

VIII. Settlement of disputes between contracting parties, associations, insurance companies and international (agenda item 7)

A. Regular checks on TIR transports at certain border crossing points

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. 18 (2022) and 22 (2022)

15. At its previous session, the Board recalled that, while bilateral meetings have been organized (including with the private sector), the situation had only slightly improved at some border crossings but remained unchanged at others. IRU informed the Board that, since advance data is mandatory in Türkiye and Iran (Islamic Republic of), TIR-EPD had been used in all reported cases to send advance data.

16. IRU informed the Board that, together with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), it had visited the Kapikule border crossing point, in order to possibly identify the reasons leading to regular controls, and that another visit was already planned at the Gurbulak - Bazargan border point in March 2023, together with TIR associations of both Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Türkiye. IRU will share the outcome of these investigations with the Board at one of its next sessions.

B. Issues transmitted by the State Custom Service of Ukraine

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. 3 (2023) and 4 (2023)

17. The Board considered a letter it received from the State Custom Service of Ukraine, as contained in Informal document No. 3 (2023), highlighting complications related to the communications between the State Custom Service Ukraine and custom administration, national associations and carriers registered in Belarus and the Russian Federation, TIR operations in the territory of Ukraine that could not be terminated as well as technical questions related to the functioning of the SafeTIR system.

18. The Board took note that IRU was facilitating communication between stakeholders on this file, the Board thanked IRU for their technical assistance and agreed with the technical answers provided in Informal document No. 4 (2023) on the alternative proofs of termination and on the functioning of the SafeTIR system. The Board stressed that it only deals with technical issues.

19. In conclusion, the Board mandated the secretariat to prepare a response letter, which would include the technical explanations related to the alternative proofs of termination and the functioning of the SafeTIR system and circulate it to the members for final approval before being sent.

IX. Self-evaluation (agenda 8)

Documentation: Informal document No. 27/Rev.1 (2022)

20. The Board considered and approved Informal document No. 27/Rev.1 (2022), containing a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the achievements of the Board in relation to its program of work (up to the ninety-fourth session) as well as the consolidated replies and proposals from the self-evaluation form, distributed to Board members. The Board requested the secretariat to include the relevant decisions made during the current session in a second revised version of Informal document No. 27 (2022), and to submit it as an informal document to the forthcoming session of AC.2.

X. Miscellaneous (agenda item 9)

A. Activities of the secretariat

Documentation: Informal document No. 5 (2023)

21. The Board considered Informal document No. 5 (2023), which presents the consultancy needs of the TIR secretariat for 2023, including detailed descriptions of four projects which require the assistance of consultants and a request for possible redeployment of funds to the “Consultancy” budget line.

22. In this context, the Board asked the secretariat if the Board is entitled to modify the cost plan adopted by AC.2 in October 2022. The secretariat recalled the decision taken by AC.2 at its twenty-eighth session¹, which authorized TIRExB to decide, upon proposal by the TIR Secretary, on modifications to the detailed budget line allocations within the approved budget for the efficient operation of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat (see TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/57, para. 18). In addition, the secretariat further recalled that this

¹ *The Administrative Committee [...] authorized the TIRExB to decide, upon proposal of the TIR Secretary, on modifications to the detailed budget line allocations within the approved budget of the TIRExB and the TIR secretariat should this become necessary for the efficient operation of the TIRExB and the TIR secretariat. Such modifications would need to be endorsed by the Administrative Committee during approval of the final accounts*

procedure had already been used, inter alia, at the fifty-sixth session of the Board (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2014/7, para. 47²).

23. The Board started by pointing out that this procedure was introduced more than twenty years ago. For the sake of transparency, it would be better to create a formal legal basis within the TIR Convention or within the Rules of Procedure of TIRExB. Therefore, the Board suggested that the next composition of the Board should work towards including this procedure in Annex 8 of the TIR Convention, possibly as an Explanatory Note, or in the Rules of Procedure.

24. The Board further noted that, due to the reclassification of a post at the TIR secretariat, a post has remained vacant for more than one year. Furthermore, it noted that the ongoing hiring process of the newly reclassified Information System Officer post is not expected to be finalized before the middle of 2023. Consequently, on the one side, the secretariat has been, and will remain for a few more months, short of resources as well as specific skills and, on the other hand, a significant share of the funds allocated for that post in 2023 will remain unused.

25. Keeping in mind all of the above, the Board considered the four projects in the light of the information presented in Informal document No. 5 (2023) as well as a detailed presentation of each project from the secretariat.

26. With regard to the project to develop an eTIR national application, the Board noted that interconnection projects took nine to twelve months and, in most cases, required to hire additional national consultants. It further noted that, in the view of the secretariat, this could lead to delays for the interconnection of all TIR contracting parties bound by Annex 11 and might require to raise additional funds to cover for the required consultants. With this in mind, the secretariat suggested developing a generic eTIR national application which could be provided to those customs administrations interested in a rapid interconnection with the eTIR international system. The Board stressed that it lacked the technical expertise to evaluate such project but welcomed the secretariat's initiative to speed up the activation of the eTIR procedure in as many countries as possible. The Board further noted that such solution does not seem to be in contradiction with Article 3 of Annex 11, as long as customs administrations consider the eTIR national application as part of their customs system and remain the sole administrators of the tool (user rights, maintenance costs and all other expenses).

27. The Board also noted the request of the secretariat to finetune the implementation of the current agreement between ECE and IRU and to explore options to co-finance the TIR secretariat from funds other than those collected by means of an amount the per TIR Carnet. For this project, the Board recognized the need for legal expertise, which is currently lacking within the TIR secretariat.

28. The Board further acknowledge the need to involve a professional designer to finalize the brochure entitled "Guidelines for the usage of the TIR and eTIR procedures for intermodal transport", once the draft prepared by the secretariat (Informal document No. 25 (2022)) has been reviewed and finalized by the members of the Board.

² *The Board approved a redeployment of funds between various budget lines. At the request of the secretariat, TIREXB added US\$ 10,000 to the budget line "Expert travel" to cover the organization of an extra-ordinary session of TIRExB in August 2013 and US\$ 20,000 to the budget line "Administrative Support Personnel", mainly to cover a decrease in the rate of the US dollar versus the Swiss Franc. These increases were offset against budget lines "Project management expert" (US\$ 20,000) and "Sub-contracts" (US\$ 10,000). TIRExB requested the secretariat to submit these changes to AC.2 for endorsement during approval of the final accounts, pursuant to the procedure adopted by AC.2 at its twenty-eighth session (TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/57/para. 18).*

29. Finally, the Board noted that specific expertise in the GEFEG.FX software was required to amend the eTIR data model and to generate all the tables contained in version 4.3 of the functional and technical eTIR specifications, in English, French and Russian.

30. In line with the AC.2 decision referred to above, acknowledging the vacancy of one Information System Officer's post within the secretariat and the resources required to ensure the timely completion of the four projects, TIRExB agreed, upon proposal of the TIR secretary, that within the "Staff and personnel costs" it would redeploy US\$ 50,000 from the budget line "Professional grade staff" to the budget line "Consultant fees and travel", in addition to the US\$ 30,000 already available. The secretariat indicated that those funds will only be used if funding from alternative sources would not be found.

31. Furthermore, the secretariat informed the Board that, in early March 2023 a workshop is scheduled to be organized with the assistance of the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Center for trade and development in Djibouti for the eight member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The workshop will be on the implementation of the TIR system in African countries and the benefits it can bring to international and intra-African trade.

32. Finally, the secretariat informed the Board about the organization of a meeting between the heads of customs of Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Pakistan Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting aims at promoting the activation of the eTIR procedure along the so-called "middle corridor". The Board recalled that while Pakistan and Uzbekistan have already interconnected their national customs systems with the eTIR international system, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have not yet done so.

B. Other matters

33. No issues were raised under this agenda item.

C. Restriction in the distribution of documents

34. TIRExB decided to keep documents issued in relation to the current session restricted.

D. Date and place of next session

35. The Board took note that the next composition of the Board will hold a short informal session after the elections on 9 February 2023 and that the ninety-sixth session of the Board is scheduled to take place on 12 April 2023.
