

Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation

UNECE Activity Report

Fourth Regional SEE Conference on Trade Facilitation, the Single Window and Data Harmonization (initiated by UNECE upon request from the SEE countries)



The transition economies of South-East Europe (SEE) still face serious problems in international trade, which stem from inefficient border procedures, but also from the outdated methods of gathering the information required from traders and distributing it among control agencies. The problem has been very much exacerbated by the wars in the former Yugoslavia. The Government of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia – the primary *demandeur* of the SEE initiative on Trade Facilitation and the Single Window (SW) – stated in their initial

request in 2006 that before 1991 it took a day for a consignment to move between Skopje and Ljubljana, while in 2006 it could take five days or more, and the impediments were primarily procedural. It was with this problem in mind that they requested assistance from UNECE with its expertise in trade facilitation. In addition, the technical systems used by Customs services and other agencies in the region have proliferated lately. Albania, Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, three small countries with economies in transition, also have three different Customs systems. A simple means of exchange of information among them would save significant resources that these countries could use for other useful purposes. With this problem in mind, participants in our regional initiative started to actively work on Customs-to-Customs data exchange.

To address these issues, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) together with the Ministry of the Economy, Trade, and Energy of Albania (METE), and in cooperation with UNCTAD, the European Commission and the World Customs Organization (WCO) co-organized the Fourth Regional SEE Conference on Trade Facilitation, the Single Window and Data Harmonization, in Durrës, Albania, 27-28 September 2010, which was attended by more than 65 representatives of Customs, Ministries of Trade, other related agencies and the business community from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and UNMIK/Kosovo.

The event was organized in a new SEE country, which strengthened the regional momentum of the initiative, using the opportunities offered by the recent installation of ASYCUDA World in Albania. It provided first-hand information on progress made in the Single Window project in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (the second country-wide SW project in Europe to take place after the one in Sweden) as well as new instruments supporting the SW offered by the UNECE and WCO and the progress made in EC DG TAXUD on advancing the concept of the Single Window. Interest in Albania in implementing a Single Window project grew significantly among decision-makers in Customs, METE, the national Information Society agency and others. UNECE and WCO carried out a practical exercise on data simplification and standardization in Customs declarations and sea and road transport documents. The results and the harmonization tool were offered to the participating countries (see the link below). The day after the conference, bilateral agreements on the bilateral exchange of data were signed between the Customs services of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania and Montenegro. It was agreed with the participants to hold a special teleconference/capacity building event on the eTIR data set to be used by these countries.

To view the Conclusions and Recommendations of the conference please go to:

http://www.unece.org/trade/workshop/2010_Dures-Albania/Conclusions.doc

Thematic focus	Venue	Date	Total participants
Trade facilitation and Single Window	Durrës, Albania	27-28 Sept. 2010	61