

1 THE TIR CUSTOMS TRANSIT SYSTEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 BACKGROUND

A Review Conference convened in November 1975 under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) produced the TIR Convention of 1975 that came into force in 1978. Since that time the TIR Convention has proved that it is one of the most successful international transport conventions and is in fact so far the only universal Customs transit system in existence. The idea behind the TIR Convention and its transit regime has formed the basis for many regional transit systems and has thus, directly and indirectly, contributed to the facilitation of international transport, especially international road transport, not only in Europe and the Middle East, but also in other parts of the world, such as Africa and Latin America.

Anyone who has ever travelled on European roads will recognize the familiar blue and white TIR plate borne by thousands of lorries and semi-trailers using the TIR Customs transit system. For the driver, the transport operator and the shipper, this plate stands for fast and efficient international transportation by road.

Work on the TIR transit system started soon after the Second World War under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The first TIR Agreement was concluded in 1949 between a small number of European countries. The success of this limited scheme led to the negotiation of a TIR Convention which was adopted in 1959 by the UNECE Inland Transport Committee and entered into force in 1960. This first TIR Convention was revised in 1975 to take account of practical experience in operating the system and to give effect to technical advances and changing Customs and transportation requirements.

The experience gained in the first 10 to 15 years of operating the system was thus used to make the TIR system more efficient, less complex and at the same time more Customs secure. Another reason why the original TIR system had to be modified was that in the early 1960's a new transport technique emerged: the maritime container. That was followed a little later by the inland container used by the European railways and by the swap-body introduced for improving the efficiency of road/rail transport.

These new combined or multimodal transport techniques necessitated the acceptance of the container, under certain conditions, as a Customs secure loading unit. It meant also that the TIR regime no longer only covered road transport, but was extended to rail, inland waterways and even maritime transport, although at least one part of the total transport operation still has to be made by road.

Upon its entry into force, the new Convention terminated and replaced the old Convention of 1959. However, the former Convention is still in force for various reasons, one of which is that one of the Contracting Parties to the old Convention (Japan) has not yet acceded to the TIR Convention of 1975.

1.1.2 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

The TIR Convention has proved to be one of the most effective international instruments prepared under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). To date, it has 68 Contracting Parties, including the European Union. It covers the whole of Europe and reaches out to North Africa and the Near and Middle East. Countries in Asia have been informed about the facilities of this global Customs transit system and their interest has shown that they may well join the TIR Convention in the not too distant future. Already today, the United States of America and Canada are Contracting Parties as well as Chile and Uruguay in South America (see Chapter 3 of the TIR Handbook).

The success of the TIR system may also be attested by the number of TIR Carnets distributed and issued every year. Whilst in 1952 only a little over 3,000 TIR Carnets were issued, this number increased steadily reaching 100,000 in 1960, then 800,000 in 1970. During the seventies and eighties the demand for TIR Carnets floated between around 500,000 and 900,000. This can be explained by the enlargement of the European Union which utilizes its own Community Transit System within its territory. Thus, TIR Carnets are not used for Customs transit operations within its member countries.

As a result of the expanding East-West European trade, particularly since 1989, and the corresponding tremendous increase in international road transport, the number of TIR Carnets issued, exceeded one million in 1992 and now exceeds 3 million¹ (2012), which represents the start of nearly 10,000 TIR transports every day in 57 countries and well over 50,000 TIR border crossing procedures daily. The number of transport companies authorized by national Customs authorities to utilize TIR Carnets amounts to more than 3,000 (2012) (for details see Chapter 1.8 of the TIR Handbook).

¹ The number of TIR Carnets issued in 2012 was 3,158,300

It should be noted that the EU enlargement in 2004 with ten countries and in 2007 with two more has not substantially affected the number of TIR transport operations in this part of Europe.

The financial and economic crisis which became apparent in the last quarter of 2008 and which deeply affected the road transport industry, led to a severe decrease in road transport activity. As a result and after decades of growth, the number of TIR Carnets distributed by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) over 2009 dropped by 30 percent. However, modest improvement and signs of recovery were already evident by the end of 2010 with an overall increase of twenty per cent compared to 2009 and further increase in 2011-2012.

The continued success of the TIR Customs transit system can be explained by the special features of the TIR regime which offer transport operators and Customs authorities a simple, flexible, cost-effective and secure Customs regime for the international transport of goods across frontiers.

1.1.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE TIR CONVENTION

Since 1975 the TIR Convention has been amended thirty one times. In 1995 the UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), supported by several ad hoc expert groups, began work on a major overhaul of the TIR system.

Phase I of the TIR revision process was successfully concluded in 1997 and its amendment came into force in all Contracting States to the TIR Convention on 17 February 1999. It included controlled access to the TIR system for transport operators, national TIR Carnet issuing and guaranteeing associations as well as for the international organization responsible for the centralized printing and distribution of TIR Carnets. Phase I also provided for transparency in the functioning of the international guarantee system and established an inter-governmental supervisory organ, the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB).

A second package of amendments to the TIR Convention (Phase II) came into force on 12 May 2002. It clearly and unequivocally stipulates the legal and administrative responsibilities of Customs authorities, transport operators and the international organization which, since that date, has also become responsible for the effective organization and functioning of the international guarantee system.

In the year 2000 work started on Phase III of the TIR revision process with a view to allowing, inter alia, for the use of modern electronic data processing mechanisms in the TIR system without changing its basic philosophy nor its recently modernized legal and administrative structure.

One such amendment, which came into force on 12 August 2006, established an international control system for TIR Carnets to hold data, transmitted by Customs authorities and accessible by the associations and Customs administrations, about the termination of TIR operations at offices of destination. The objective of the international control system is to provide the transport industry and the international guarantee chain with an important tool in the application of risk management in the commercial operation of the TIR system and to facilitate the inquiry procedures by Customs following the termination of national TIR.

With the conclusion of the TIR revision process, the TIR regime will be well positioned to cope with the future requirements of efficient international transport and trade as well as Customs procedures. At the same time, the revised TIR Convention will provide Governmental control, security and, if necessary, intervention in order to ensure an efficient Customs transit procedure indispensable for modern transport and trade.

1.1.4 OBJECTIVE AND ADVANTAGES

Customs transit systems are devised to facilitate to the greatest possible extent the movement of goods under Customs seals in international trade and to provide the required Customs security and guarantees. For such a system to function satisfactorily, it is essential that any formalities involved are neither too burdensome for the Customs officials nor too complex for the transport operators and their agents. Therefore, a balance needs to be struck between the requirements of the Customs authorities on the one hand and those of the transport operators on the other.

Traditionally when goods crossed the territory of one or more States in the course of an international transport of goods by road, the Customs authorities in each State applied national controls and procedures. These varied from State to State, but frequently involved the inspection of the load at each national frontier and the imposition of national security requirements (guarantee, bond, deposit of duty, etc.) to cover the potential duties and taxes at risk while the goods were in transit through each territory. These measures, applied in each country of transit, led to considerable expenses, delays and interferences with international transport.

The TIR system was devised in order to reduce these difficulties experienced by transport operators and, at the same time, to offer Customs administrations an international system of control replacing traditional national procedures, whilst effectively protecting the revenue of each State through which goods were carried.

(a) Advantages for Customs administrations

As regards Customs control measures at frontiers, the TIR system undoubtedly has advantages for Customs administrations, as it reduces the normal requirements of national transit procedures. At the same time the system avoids the need - expensive in manpower and facilities - for physical inspection in countries of transit other than checking seals and the external conditions of the load compartment or container. It also dispenses with the need to operate national guarantees and national systems of documentation.

In addition, advantages arise from the fact that the international transit operation is covered by a single transit document, the TIR Carnet, which reduces the risk of presenting inaccurate information to Customs administrations.

In cases where irregularities are suspected, Customs authorities have the right to inspect the goods under Customs seal at any time and, if necessary, to interrupt the TIR transport and/or to take adequate measures in accordance with national legislation. In view of the strict provisions of the TIR Convention and the interest of all Customs authorities and transport operators to apply these provisions, such interventions should remain exceptional. Customs authorities can therefore reduce routine administrative Customs procedures to a minimum and devote their limited resources to specific control measures based on risk assessment and intelligence.

The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB), as an inter-governmental organ, ensures that each of the actors in the TIR procedure adequately applies the provisions of the Convention. In case of difficulties in the application of the TIR Convention at the international level, Customs authorities may wish to address the TIRExB for guidance and support. The TIRExB is also at the disposal of all Contracting Parties to coordinate and foster the exchange of intelligence and other information.

(b) Advantages for the transport industry

The advantages of the TIR Convention for commerce and for transport interests are also obvious. Goods may travel across national frontiers with minimum interference from Customs administrations. By removing traditional impediments to the international movement of goods, the TIR system encourages the development of international trade. By reducing delays in transit, it enables significant savings to be made in transport costs.

The TIR Convention also provides, through its international guarantee chain, relatively simple access to the required guarantees which are a sine qua non for the transport and trade industry to benefit from the facilities of Customs transit systems.

Finally, reducing the impediments to international traffic by road caused by Customs controls enables exporters and importers to select more easily the mode of transport that is most suitable for their needs.

1.2 PRINCIPLES

A short description of the principles of the TIR Customs transit regime as stipulated in the TIR Convention of 1975 is given below. It demonstrates why the simplicity and effectiveness of the system is attractive to transport operators and Customs authorities.

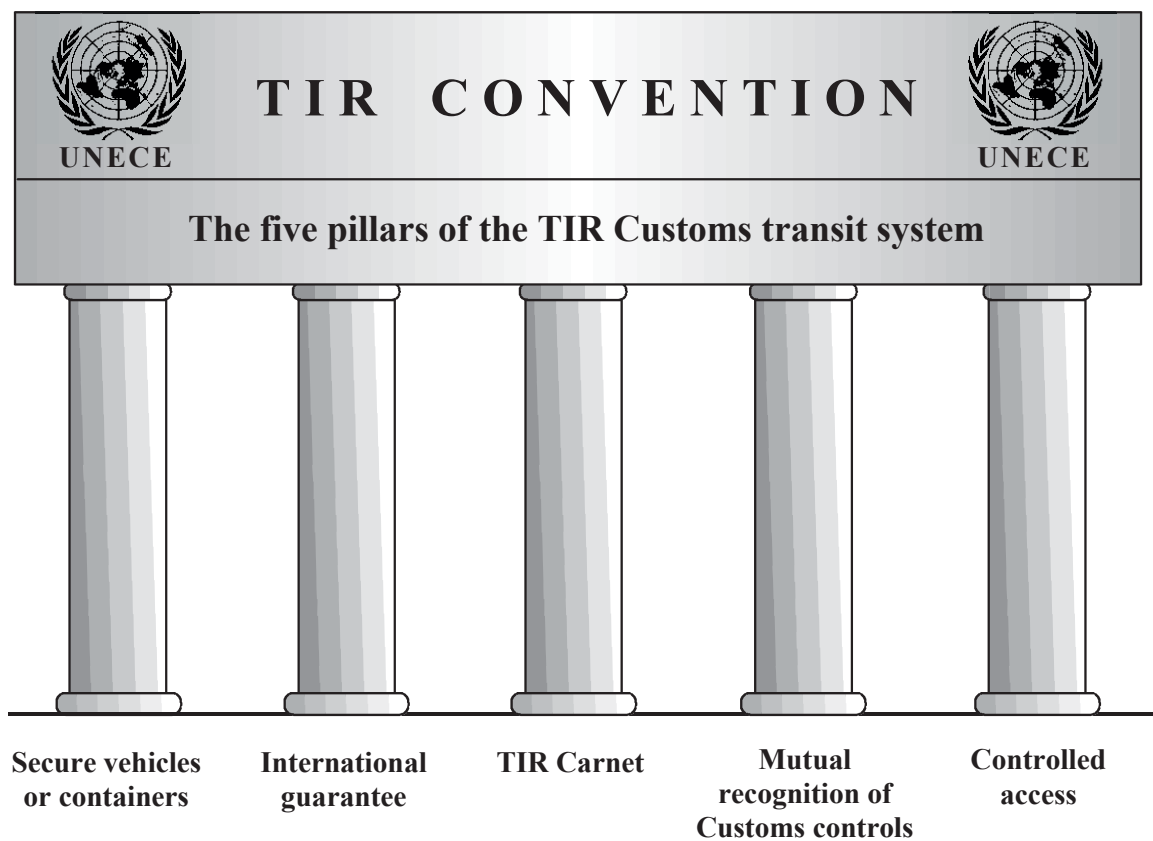
In order to ensure that goods may travel with a minimum interference "en route" and yet offer maximum safeguards to Customs administrations, the TIR regime contains five basic requirements – the five pillars of the TIR Customs transit system (see Figure 1):

- (1) Goods should travel in Customs secure vehicles or containers;
- (2) Throughout the journey, duties and taxes at risk should be covered by an internationally valid guarantee;
- (3) Goods should be accompanied by an internationally accepted Customs document (TIR Carnet), opened in the country of departure and serving as a Customs control document in the countries of departure, transit and destination;
- (4) Customs control measures taken in the country of departure should be accepted by all countries of transit and destination;
- (5) Access to the TIR procedure for
 - national associations to issue TIR Carnets and to act as guarantor;

- natural and legal persons to utilize TIR Carnets; and
- international organizations to take on the responsibility for the effective organization and functioning of an international guarantee system

shall be authorised by competent national authorities or the TIR Administrative Committee.

Figure 1: Principles of the TIR System



1.2.1 APPROVAL OF ROAD VEHICLES AND CONTAINERS

Concerning the requirement of security, the TIR Convention stipulates that goods shall be carried in containers or road vehicles the load compartments of which are so constructed that there shall be no access to the interior when secured by a Customs seal and that any tampering will be clearly visible.

Towards this aim, the Convention sets out standards of construction and approval procedures, and goods may only be carried under cover of a TIR Carnet if the load compartment of the road vehicle or the container is approved in accordance with such requirements. If a container or a load compartment fulfils the requirements of the Convention, relevant national approval or inspection authorities issue so-called approval certificates for road vehicles or containers. In principle, these certificates shall be recognized in all Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention.

If national approval or inspection authorities are in doubt as to whether new constructions proposed by manufacturers are in line with the technical provisions of the TIR Convention, they may address their query through their respective governmental authorities to the TIR Executive Board and the TIR secretariat, to the TIR Administrative Committee or to the UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) for an opinion on this matter. The UNECE Working Party and the TIR Administrative Committee may issue a comment or, if it is a major and generally applicable new construction not yet covered by the TIR Convention, prepare, if necessary, an amendment proposal for modification of the Convention.

1.2.2 INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEE SYSTEM

The second basic element of the TIR transit regime is its international guarantee system. This system was designed to ensure that Customs duties and taxes at risk during transit operations are covered at any moment by a national guaranteeing association, if the TIR transport operator cannot be held responsible.

The operation of the TIR guarantee system is straightforward. Every national association representing the interests of the transport sector in a particular country and authorized by the Customs administration of that country, guarantees payment within that country of any duties and taxes which may become due in the event of any irregularity occurring in the course of the TIR transport operation. This national guaranteeing association thus guarantees the payment of duties and taxes of national and foreign carriers under TIR Carnets which have been issued by this national guaranteeing association itself or by an association in some other country.

Every country therefore has the benefit, for all TIR transport operations within its territory, of a guarantee provided in its territory. There is, so to speak, always a national partner from which the Customs authorities can seek payment in cases of irregularity, irrespective of whether this irregularity was caused by a national or foreign transport operator. The TIR transit system may therefore be considered as a succession of national transit movements relying on international rather than national guarantees. However, the arrangements governing the establishment of the guarantee are based on national law and are usually contained in an agreement between the national Customs authorities and the national associations (an example agreement is contained in Chapter 6 of the TIR Handbook).

All national guaranteeing associations constitute a guarantee chain linking all TIR countries. Today the only existing and well-functioning guarantee chain is administered by the International Road Transport Union (IRU) in Geneva (Switzerland), a non-governmental organization representing the interests of road transport operators world-wide. The guarantee chain is supported by several large international insurance companies and is supervised by the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB).

In the event of any irregularity, before approaching the guaranteeing association, the Customs authorities should, where possible, seek payment from the person(s) directly liable. If the guarantee has to be applied (for instance because of the bankruptcy of the person(s) directly liable), it is always the guaranteeing association of the country where the irregularity has been found which is called upon by the Customs authorities of that country, so that the matter can be settled within the country on the basis of national law. This guaranteeing association will however apply, through the international guarantee chain, for reimbursement of their expenses.

The monetary limits to the guarantee are determined for each country separately. The maximum recommended amount to be claimed from each national association is at present limited to \$US 50,000 or Euro 60.000 for each TIR Carnet depending on the country.

1.2.3 THE TIR CARNET

The TIR Carnet is an international Customs document and constitutes the administrative backbone of the TIR system. It also provides proof of the existence of an international guarantee for the goods transported under the TIR system.

Under the supervision of the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB), the IRU is, at present, the only international organization authorized to centrally print and distribute TIR Carnets to its national guaranteeing associations under conditions set out in the Convention. Each national association in turn issues the TIR Carnets to transport operators in its country in accordance with the conditions set out in the declaration of commitment concluded between each transport operator and the association.

The cover page of the TIR Carnet and the series of vouchers and counterfoils, in sets of two inside, represent the essential function of the TIR Carnet as regards the controls to be carried out by Customs authorities and for the operation of the guarantee system. A set of two vouchers and two counterfoils is used in each country where a TIR operation is carried out.

The presentation of a valid TIR Carnet bearing the names, stamps and signatures of the international organization and those of the issuing association and duly filled-in by the transport operator is in itself proof of the existence and validity of the guarantee. The TIR Carnet remains valid until the completion of the TIR transport at the Customs

office of final destination, provided it has been brought into operation at the Customs office of departure within the time limit prescribed by the issuing association.

1.2.4 INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF CUSTOMS CONTROL MEASURES

The fourth constituent element of the TIR transit system is the principle that Customs control measures taken in the country of departure should be accepted by the countries of transit and destination.

Pursuant to this principle, goods carried under the TIR procedure in sealed load compartments of road vehicles or in containers will not, as a general rule, be examined at Customs offices en route, and that is where the main advantages of the TIR system for the transport operator come into play. This does not exclude the right of Customs offices to carry out spot checks in cases where they suspect irregularities, but it is understood and even stipulated in the Convention, that such checks should be exceptional.

This procedure, which is very attractive for the transport operator, essentially means that the checks performed by the Customs office of departure are acceptable to all other Customs offices during the TIR transit operation. As a consequence, and in order to have trust in the effective functioning of the TIR system by all Customs authorities involved, the Customs office of departure plays a crucial role.

It is therefore pivotal that the Customs inspection at the office of departure should be stringent and complete, since the functioning of the whole TIR procedure depends on it. The Customs office of departure must also, before affixing seals, check the condition of the load compartment of the road vehicle or the container and, in the case of sheeted load compartment or containers, the condition of the sheets and sheet fastenings, as this equipment is not included in the certificate of approval.

1.2.5 CONTROLLED ACCESS TO THE TIR SYSTEM

In 1999, Phase I of the on-going TIR revision process, brought a number of modifications to the TIR Convention establishing further requirements and obligations for the transport industry to utilize the TIR system. These measures have been introduced to safeguard the system against fraudulent activities, committed in particular by internationally organized crime.

Annex 9 to the Convention stipulates conditions and requirements for the authorization by national competent authorities (usually Customs authorities) of national associations to issue TIR Carnets and to act as guarantor (details of such authorization can be provided by the conclusion of a written contract or by a State

Decree). In addition to commercial requirements which may be imposed by the international organization (i.e. the IRU), the revised Convention specifies that national associations are only allowed to be authorized if they have been in existence for at least one year, are financially sound and have not committed any serious or repeated offences against Customs or tax legislation. Furthermore, these associations must establish a written agreement with the competent authorities of the country in which they are established and must inter alia provide proof of guarantee coverage for all of their possible liabilities vis-à-vis national Customs authorities (an example authorization and agreement are contained in Chapter 6 of the TIR Handbook).

Annex 9 to the Convention also stipulates conditions and requirements for transport operators to obtain access to the TIR system. These include sound financial standing, absence of serious or repeated offences against Customs or tax legislation and the deposit of a written declaration with the national association issuing TIR Carnets specifying the responsibilities of the transport operator.

In February 2012, the Administrative Committee of the TIR Convention adopted amendments to Article 6 and introduced a new Part III in Annex 9 to the TIR Convention, establishing the conditions and requirements to be complied with by an international organisation which is authorised to take on the responsibility for the effective organisation and functioning of an international guarantee system and to print and distribute TIR Carnets. These amendments establish the definition of the international organisation and clearly outline its authorisation process. These amendments entered into force on 10 October 2013.

Information on all transport operators authorized to use TIR Carnets is centrally stored in the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) by the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) in Geneva using a unique identification (ID) code system. Any withdrawal of authorization by Customs authorities as well as exclusion from the system under Article 38 of the Convention is also recorded.

1.3 ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

The TIR Convention, 1975, is one of the most modern and up-to-date international Customs Conventions. It is working efficiently with only a limited number of incidences of litigation, resulting mainly from unclear and vague provisions and differing interpretations.

The smooth functioning of the Convention can be attributed to several reasons, one of which is the interest of all parties concerned, be it transport operators or Customs authorities, to keep the system in operation as it saves time and money for all concerned.

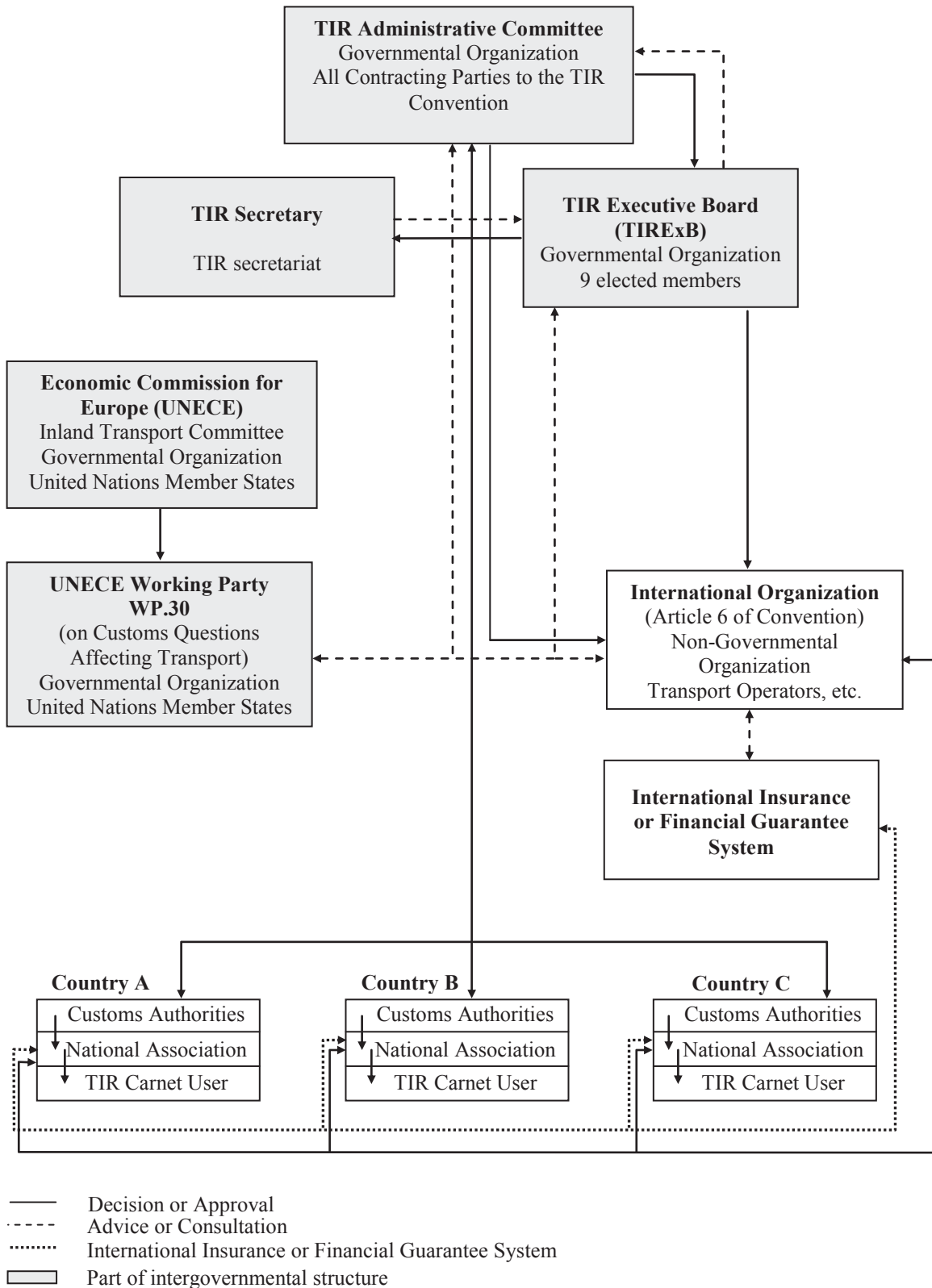
Another reason lies in the fact that the authors of the TIR Convention have already provided some interpretation of the legal text through the introduction of Explanatory Notes into the Convention. These Explanatory Notes, contained in Annex 6 of the Convention, form an integral part of the Convention. They interpret certain provisions of the Convention and its Annexes and describe recommended practices for the everyday functioning of the TIR system. These Explanatory Notes do not modify the provisions of the Convention, but make their contents, meaning and scope more precise.

Technological changes occur very rapidly today, and what was "state of the art" in 1975 when the Convention was created, is not necessarily valid today. This affects not only Customs techniques, but also vehicle and container manufacturing and smuggling techniques. In addition, as smuggled goods - particularly drugs - become more and more expensive, profits for smugglers soar, resulting in the evolution of more elaborate smuggling techniques. In view of these developments, the TIR system and the TIR Convention as its legal base, have to be constantly kept up-to-date. This task has been entrusted to the TIR Administrative Committee, the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) and to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in Geneva.

An overview of the administrative structure of the TIR Convention is provided in [Figure 2](#) below.

An overview of the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved in the TIR system is given in Chapter 1.9 of the Handbook.

Figure 2: Administrative Structure of the TIR System



1.3.1 THE TIR ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE

The Administrative Committee, composed of all Contracting Parties to the Convention, is the highest organ under the Convention. It usually meets twice a year in spring and autumn under the auspices of the UNECE in Geneva to approve amendments to the Convention and to give all countries, competent authorities and concerned international organizations an opportunity to exchange views on the functioning of the system. Until today thirty one amendments to the TIR Convention have been adopted and numerous resolutions, recommendations and comments have been approved by the Committee.

1.3.2 TIR EXECUTIVE BOARD (TIREXB)

The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) was established by the Contracting Parties to the Convention in 1999. Its objective is to enhance international cooperation among Customs authorities in the application of the TIR Convention and to supervise and to provide support in the application of the TIR system and the international guarantee system. The TIRExB is composed of 9 members who are elected in their personal capacity by the Governments which are Contracting Parties to the Convention for two year terms of office.

The TIRExB is inter alia mandated to supervise the centralized printing and distribution of TIR Carnets, to oversee the operation of the international guarantee and insurance system and to coordinate and foster exchange of intelligence among Customs and other Governmental authorities.

The decisions of the TIRExB are executed by the TIR Secretary who is assisted by the TIR secretariat. The TIR Secretary is a member of the UNECE secretariat.

The operation of the TIRExB is financed, for the time being, through an amount on each TIR Carnet issued.

1.3.3 THE UNECE WORKING PARTY ON CUSTOMS QUESTIONS AFFECTING TRANSPORT (WP.30)

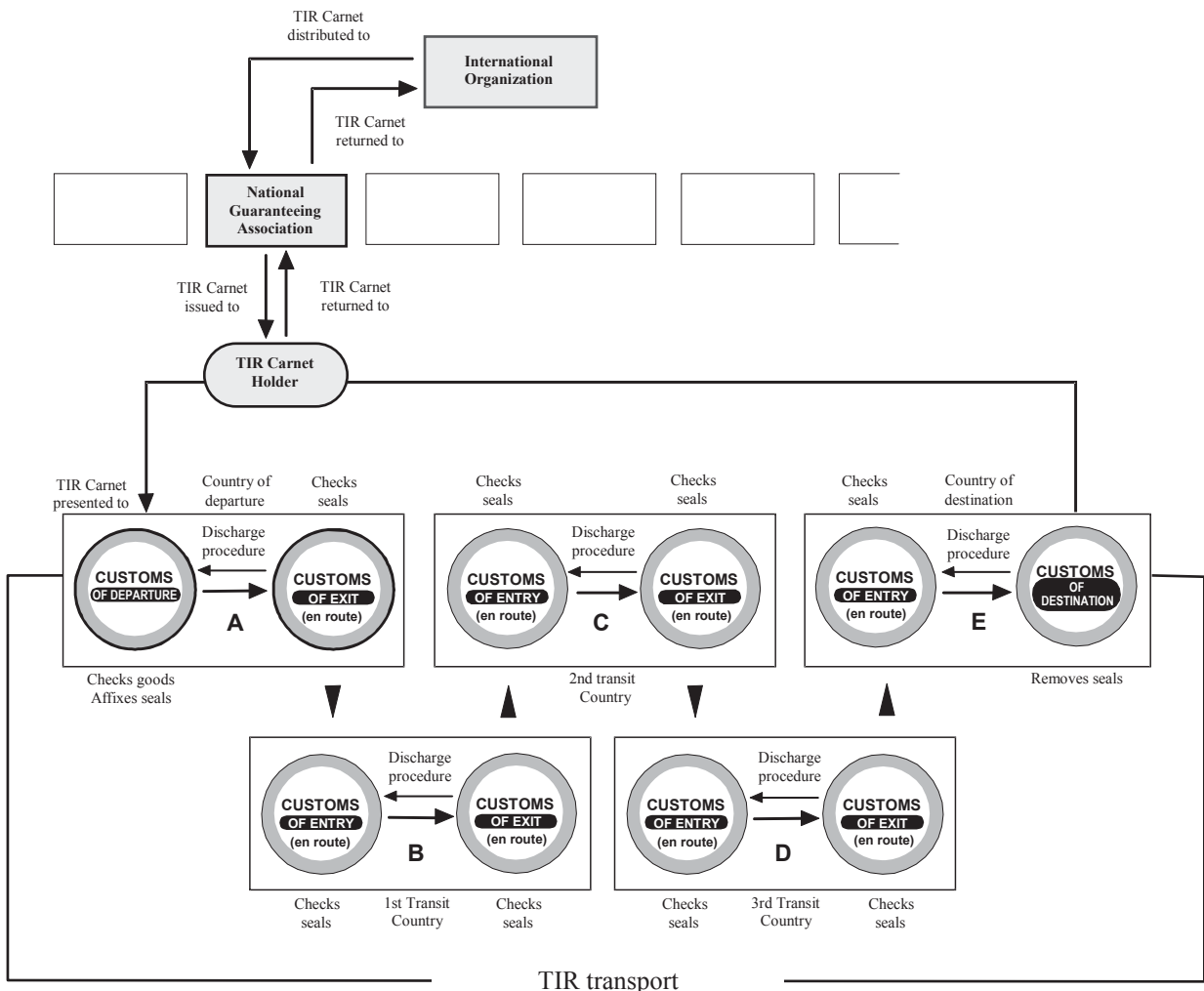
The work of the TIR Administrative Committee is supported by the UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) which holds between two and three sessions a year in Geneva, usually in conjunction with the sessions of the TIR Administrative Committee. Participation in the Working Party is open to all member States of the United Nations and to interested international organizations.

The Working Party also regularly adopts comments on certain provisions of the Convention. These comments are not legally binding for the Contracting Parties to the Convention, such as are the Articles and the Explanatory Notes of the Convention. However, they are important for the interpretation, harmonization and application of the TIR Convention because they reflect a consensus opinion of the Working Party in which the majority of the Contracting Parties and the major users of the TIR system are represented (comments adopted by the Working Party are usually transmitted to the TIR Administrative Committee for consideration and endorsement).

1.4 THE TIR SYSTEM IN OPERATION

The procedures described below show in a schematic way the operation of the TIR system in practice, with particular reference to the Customs control procedures (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: The TIR System in Operation



At the Customs office of departure, which usually is the one where export formalities are performed, the Customs authorities check the load on the basis of information contained in the TIR Carnet (goods manifest) completed by the transport operator. Customs authorities seal the load compartment, report it in the TIR Carnet, keep one sheet (white voucher) and fill-in the corresponding counterfoil. The TIR Carnet is handed back to the transport operator, who starts the transport operation. When crossing the outgoing border of that country, Customs authorities check the seals, detach a second sheet (green voucher) from the TIR Carnet and fill-in the corresponding counterfoil. The vehicle may leave the country. The filled-in counterfoils by Customs provide evidence to the transport operator that the TIR operation in that country has been terminated.

Customs authorities will then proceed with the discharge of the TIR operation; i.e. the recognition by Customs that the TIR operation has been terminated correctly according to the required procedure as described below (although other procedures, including the use of electronic means or central offices, may also be applied): the outgoing Customs office (i.e. that at the border) sends the detached sheet (green voucher) to the office of departure. The latter compares the received sheet with the one it initially retained. If there are no objections and no reservations by the outgoing office, the TIR operation can be discharged by the Customs authorities.

If the sheet, detached by the outgoing office, contains reservations, if it does not reach the Customs office of departure or if Customs authorities have any other reason to question the proper application of the TIR operation, an internal inquiry will be launched. Also the transport operator and the national guaranteeing association concerned will be informed that the termination of the TIR operation has been certified with reservations, or has not taken place at all or that other reasons have led to doubts about the proper application of the TIR operation and that they are requested to provide explanations. If these explanations do not satisfy the Customs authorities, they apply the provisions of the TIR Convention and national legislation to determine the taxes and duties due to Customs. If it appears impossible to collect these from the person(s) directly liable, Customs authorities advise the guaranteeing association that it will have to pay the claimed amount in accordance with the deadlines stipulated in the Convention.

In every traversed country, the system is similar to the one implemented in the country of departure. The incoming Customs office of transit checks the seals and withdraws one sheet from the TIR Carnet, and the outgoing office proceeds likewise. Both sheets are compared for a final control and the TIR operation can be discharged or, in the case of irregularities, submitted to the procedure outlined above. In the country of destination, if the incoming border office also is the office of destination, it fills-in the TIR Carnet, retains two sheets and becomes responsible for the goods to be transferred to another Customs procedure (warehousing, import clearance, etc.). If the load has to be carried to another Customs office in the same country, the incoming office acts like

an incoming border office, and the next office inside the country becomes that of final destination.

The system normally is implemented as explained above, but the national administrative procedures and control prerogatives of every Customs office involved remain unaffected. If an office suspects fraud, finds seals faulty or has reason to believe the TIR Carnet has been tampered with, it will check the goods and it may, if appropriate, interrupt the TIR operation.

To provide more efficient controls, Customs may prescribe a transport route along which vehicles are easily spotted with the TIR plate they must bear. The journey should also be performed within a reasonable time limit. Transport operators who cannot abide by travel times or routes for any reason (flood, snow, breakdown of the vehicle, etc.) should be able to justify such derogations or delays. In more serious cases (broken seals, need for the transshipment of goods onto another vehicle, total or partial destruction of the load, etc.) the transport operator should obtain an official statement from any available local authority utilising the Certified Report contained in the TIR Carnet. On the basis of such a report, Customs authorities may start any inquiry needed.

Examples of best practices for the termination, discharge and inquiry procedure are contained in Chapter 5 of the TIR Handbook.

1.5 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TIR SYSTEM

1.5.1 WORLD-WIDE APPLICATION OF THE TIR SYSTEM

The TIR system is promoted under the auspices of the United Nations to make it as widely available as possible for all countries wishing to make use of it. In 1984, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) adopted a Resolution (1984/79) which recommends that countries world-wide examine the possibility of acceding to the Convention and introducing the TIR system. Furthermore, it recommends that international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and in particular the Regional Commissions of the United Nations, promote the introduction of the TIR system as a universal Customs transit system.

In accordance with this ECOSOC Resolution, activities have been undertaken to promote the application of the TIR Convention beyond the present 68 Contracting Parties. Several regional and sub-regional seminars and workshops are regularly organized in Europe, Asia and the Middle East to familiarize Governments, trade and the transport industry with the facilities of the Convention.

Work is continuously under way to extend the scope of the TIR system to more countries in Asia, North Africa or the Middle East. This work is undertaken in particular by the secretariats of the UNECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commissions for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and Western Asia (ESCWA) which promote the TIR system as one of the cornerstones for efficient international land transport in Asia and the Middle East. These efforts are supported by various international bodies and financial institutions, such as the European Commission, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank or the Economic Cooperation Organization which see the TIR system as an important element in facilitating road transport in their areas of interest.

1.5.2 THE TIR SYSTEM AND ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING

World-wide, the replacement of paper documents by electronic data processing is an on-going process of great importance both for Customs administrations and transport operators. This trend towards computerization is increasingly affecting Customs procedures and the documents used by Customs authorities.

Customs administrations are confronted with an enormous dilemma. On the one hand they are governed by laws which oblige them to collect and account for revenues in an effective and efficient manner and to prevent fraud and smuggling of contraband. On the other hand they are increasingly criticized by trading parties (importers, exporters, transport operators, freight forwarders) for not facilitating the speedy throughput of cargo.

Taking into account the limitations of Customs manpower and the increasingly sophisticated methods of Customs fraud and smuggling, there seems to be no other way than to increase productivity and Customs control by adapting national and international administrative procedures, making use of the latest technologies and electronic data processing.

The Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention have included the computerization of the TIR procedure into Phase III of the TIR revision process. They recognize that computerization of the TIR procedure is inevitable in the light of:

- today's extremely rapid technological developments, based on Internet and Smart Card technologies, particularly affecting international transport and trade;
- the ever increasing need for improved efficiency of Customs procedures and trade practices; and
- the fight against fraudulent activities which must be conducted with the most appropriate and effective means.

Given the large number and the diversified administrative structure of the 68 Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention, any computerized system must be able to function in a very decentralized and flexible manner on the basis of only a few internationally accepted standard features, such as the establishment of an international centralized database under Customs control and the management by Customs of data on guarantees. This is a difficult, but challenging task which will have to be realized with an appropriate level of connectivity with the existing TIR related IT systems. But undoubtedly the TIR system must be kept in line with the latest developments in electronic data processing techniques which have already and increasingly will change all related Customs, transport and trade activities. If not, the TIR system, particularly the paper-based TIR Carnet, will become an obstacle to efficient international transport and trade and will jeopardize effective national Customs procedures and controls.

Under the supervision of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), Contracting Parties launched in 2003 the "eTIR Project". The aim of the eTIR Project, and in particular the eTIR international system, is to ensure the secure exchange of data between national Customs systems for the international transit of goods, vehicles or containers according to the provisions of the TIR Convention and to allow Customs to manage the data on guarantees, issued by guarantee chains to authorized users of the TIR system. The eTIR system will offer benefits to all actors involved in the TIR system. First, it will bring additional security and risk management opportunities, thus reducing the risk of fraud. Second, advanced international cooperation will allow all actors to significantly reduce their administrative burden and to maximize the benefits of integrated supply chain management. Finally, the provision

of advance cargo information and the exchange of information in real time will speed up the TIR procedure.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The TIR system, created 60 years ago and the TIR Convention, have proved to be a very effective international Customs transit system and have played an important role in facilitating international trade and transport, primarily within Europe, but more recently also between Europe and neighbouring areas.

With the rapid increase of East-West European traffic, the TIR system is today faced with new and, to this extent, unprecedented challenges. At the same time Customs authorities are faced with cases of Customs fraud and smuggling as a result of changing political, economic and social situations in many countries in the region and due to often heavily increasing Customs duties and taxes. Furthermore, the management and the control of the TIR system pose problems for national Customs authorities which, sometimes still have to acquire the necessary experience and often do not have sufficient and adequately trained personnel.

To counter some of these unwanted developments, Governments and other actors in the TIR system sometimes impose unilateral measures, such as the requirement of additional guarantees for TIR transit operations or the exclusion of certain categories of goods which are not in line with the provisions and the spirit of the TIR Convention.

While such measures may provide some temporary relief, they will induce in the long run not only other countries to introduce similar measures, but they will also make international trade and transport more expensive and, eventually, may lead to a total collapse of the TIR transit system - with no viable alternative in sight.

The TIR Convention itself provides already a number of measures to safeguard the legitimate interests of Customs authorities, such as the requirement for escort services, prescription of transit routes and reduced transit times. Other measures may be prepared at the request of Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention.

Stable and long-term solutions can only be found in the TIR Administrative Committee by all concerned Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention. The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) as well as the UNECE and its Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) provide a forum for such cooperation and coordination. Experience has shown that solutions to many recently emerged problems in the application of the TIR Convention have been found within the organs and bodies established in the framework of the TIR Convention and the UNECE.

It is the aim of the UNECE and the TIR secretariat to continue to work in this direction and to provide a well-functioning international machinery to further improve cooperation and coordination among Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention and the transport industry. It is essential to continuously improve the legal framework within which the TIR transit system operates and to streamline its operation so that the TIR transit system is always in line with the requirements of the transport industry and of the Customs authorities.

The United Nations, as a universal organization, is the depositary of the TIR Convention and provides the framework and the services to administer and, where necessary, adapt the TIR Convention to changing requirements. Past experience has shown that the TIR Convention, as part of the transport facilitation work undertaken within the UNECE, has served the interests of all concerned, Customs authorities and transport operators alike, and there is every reason to believe that it will continue to do so in the future.

1.7 INFORMATION ABOUT THE TIR SYSTEM

Apart from the present TIR Handbook which exists in hard copy and electronic version in numerous languages, several other sources of information about the TIR Convention and its application in its Contracting Parties exist.

The most complete and permanently updated source of information is the UNECE TIR web site, jointly administered by the UNECE and TIR secretariat (<http://tir.unece.org>). This web site provides, in addition to the numerous language versions of the TIR Handbook, up-to-date information on the administration and application of the TIR Convention in all Contracting Parties. It contains the latest information on legal interpretations of the TIR Convention, on depositary notifications and on national and international control measures introduced by Customs authorities and the TIR Administrative Committee. The TIR web site also contains all documents and reports issued in connection with the sessions of the TIR Administrative Committee, the TIRExB and the UNECE Working Party (WP.30) and its ad hoc expert groups (in English, French and Russian).

Furthermore, the UNECE secretariat maintains an international directory of national TIR Focal Points in all countries applying the TIR system. These experts from national Customs authorities and national associations may be contacted on the application of the Convention at the national level. Information on TIR Focal Points is also available on UNECE's Border Crossing Facilitation web site (<http://www.unece.org/trans/bcf/welcome.html>). The UNECE and TIR secretariat also maintains an international register of Customs sealing devices and Customs stamps used under the TIR Convention which is available on-line for restricted use by concerned Customs authorities.

The UNECE secretariat, the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) and the TIR secretariat can be reached as follows:

TIR secretariat, Office 401-3,
Palais des Nations
CH-1210 Geneva, Switzerland
Fax: + 41-22-917-0039 or +41-22-917-0614,
E-mail: tirexb@unece.org.

1.8 TIR CARNETS DISTRIBUTED BY THE IRU TO NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Countries	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Albania	400	800	800	800	950	950	500	500	600
Armenia	200	300	550	300	500	350	800	2000	3,800
Austria	19,850	21,700	14,150	9,850	11,150	8,550	7,500	8,400	6,650
Azerbaijan	3,950	5,000	5,500	9,000	9,500	7,600	7,800	9,100	11,400
Belarus	187,000	182,200	197,500	194,300	213,600	161,400	158,100	173,200	215,000
Belgium	1,200	800	500	300	500	500	550	350	250
Bosnia and Herzegovina (1)	0	0	0	0	0	0	600	900	900
Bulgaria	313,000	349,000	394,500	140,000	148,200	124,200	137,600	150,000	131,000
Croatia	9,700	9,500	9,300	6,300	5,300	2,900	4,250	6,250	6,8000
Cyprus	1,000	450	750	400	-	-	-	-	0
Czech Republic	39,700	37,850	42,500	17,800	22,200	14,250	15,000	23,250	23,850
Denmark	2,600	300	1,000	1,000	800	300	600	600	850
Estonia	56,000	43,000	47,000	51,000	39,000	24,500	40,000	38,500	52,200
Finland	16,300	17,200	13,300	20,100	17,600	10,700	11,600	14,350	11,400
France	12,300	10,000	8,200	5'000	4,700	2,700	3,650	3,700	2,300
Georgia	1,050	3,600	4,300	4,100	4,000	4,000	4,200	7,000	8,200
Germany	42,050	35,200	32,300	40,450	31,400	7,650	18,950	24,900	16,450
Greece	40,500	33,200	30,700	19,800	21,900	9,550	16,000	16,600	5,000
Hungary	44,900	34,300	35,800	16,000	26,100	14,500	17,800	19,400	28,500
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	33,000	33,000	48,000	52,000	48,000	58,000	54,000	78,000	85,000
Israel	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Italy	37,000	25,000	19,500	0	3,550	4,050	4,000	2,550	2000
Jordan	0	100	50	0	50	50	500	300	50
Kazakhstan	17,000	19,600	32,650	39,050	32,150	31,000	30,050	24,500	19,000
Kuwait	50	300	0	50	0	0	0	0	0
Kyrgyzstan	4,900	6,250	11,450	18,100	17,050	15,050	14,050	20,700	17,100
Latvia	91,000	90,000	105,500	90,600	108,900	57,000	86,200	100,100	97,800
Lebanon	0	0	50	100	0	50	0	50	50
Lithuania	148,700	151,600	165,000	174,500	218,500	111,500	157,500	185,200	191,600
Mongolia	150	0	0	50	0	0	0	50	100
Montenegro (1)	-	-	-	0	150	150	50	100	300
Morocco	100	0	100	0	100	100	150	200	100
Netherlands	22,200	15,600	21,000	7,250	8,200	8,700	9,600	5,900	9,650
Norway	0	100	100	50	200	500	150	0	50

Countries	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Poland	273,500	188,000	291,500	185,100	286,050	205,100	283,100	310,050	296,000
Portugal	700	3,000	1,300	150	0	50	0	0	0
Republic of Moldova	46,900	58,500	61,050	77,100	77,850	65,950	68,000	79,100	81,550
Romania	486,300	514,700	397,200	17,800	27,300	25,900	43,500	62,000	53,300
Russian Federation	375,650	424,000	499,900	660,900	696,600	404,800	521,500	568,200	598,000
Serbia (1)	-	-	8,800	12,100	15,300	12,400	20,000	21,100	27,900
Serbia and Montenegro	5,350	5,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	18,450	20,900	23,050	22,550	21,850	12,550	17,400	19,900	20,100
Slovenia	22,000	6,550	16,400	12,000	14,350	5,750	10,100	10,400	12,650
Spain	3,000	2,000	3,000	3,100	3,000	3,500	2,500	2,700	4,300
Sweden	1,500	1,550	1,200	850	900	300	800	400	650
Switzerland	1,600	1,450	1,600	550	550	800	600	600	400
Syrian Arab Republic	900	1,500	800	2,150	2,400	2,400	5,050	4,650	1,150
Tajikistan	0	50	300	500	400	900	700	1500	2,950
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	27,400	27,700	31,550	20,300	23,900	18,200	23,500	21,800	25,400
Tunisia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkey	544,000	589,000	689,000	788,500	765,000	490,000	701,500	672,000	685,000
Turkmenistan	200	400	1,000	1,000	1,000	2,000	3,200	4,700	6,000
Ukraine	251,000	266,000	324,000	345,000	317,000	292,000	309,500	363,600	376,800
United Kingdom	4,400	2,600	1,650	1,350	1,100	550	500	1,050	700
Uzbekistan	2,400	1,800	4,500	7,000	5,000	6,500	9,000	14,100	17,500
Yugoslavia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3,211,050	3,240,650	3,599,850	3,076,250	3,253,800	2,230,400	2,822,200	3,074,500	3,158,300

Note (1) Serbia and Montenegro was one country until 2006. As from 2006 figures for Montenegro and Serbia are separated The IRU started issuing TIR Carnets to Serbia in 2006 and to Montenegro in 2008. Issuance of TIR Carnets to Bosnia and Herzegovina started in 2010.

1.9 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT PARTIES INVOLVED IN THE TIR SYSTEM

The TIR system is a well-balanced mechanism based on cooperation among the Contracting Parties and the transport industry. With a view to ensuring its smooth functioning, it is essential that all parties involved - Governments, the TIR Executive Board, national guaranteeing associations, transport operators, international organizations – meet their obligations in accordance with the provisions of the TIR Convention. An overview of the roles and responsibilities of the main players in the TIR system is given below.

1.9.1 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- Acceptance of the TIR Convention in accordance with national law (i.e. publication in the national public law journal);
- Deposit of an instrument of accession at the Legal Office of the United Nations in New York (depository) (Article 52);
- Authorization of (a) national guaranteeing organization(s) (Article 6 and Annex 9, Part I);
- Authorization of persons to utilize TIR Carnets (Article 6, Annex 9, Part II);
- Publication of a list of Customs offices approved for accomplishing TIR operations (Article 45);
- Training of Customs officials in the operation of TIR Customs procedures;
- Establishment or designation of an authority responsible for the approval of road vehicles and containers (Article 12);
- Transmission to an international organization or to the national guaranteeing associations of information about the termination of TIR operations at Customs offices of destination in their country (Article 42 ter and Annex 10, para. 1)
- Deposit of the following documentation and information with the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB):

International guarantee system

- A certified copy of the written agreement or any other legal document between the competent authorities (Customs) and the national guaranteeing

association as well as any modifications thereto (Annex 9, Part I, para. 1 (d));

- A certified copy of the insurance or financial guarantee contract as well as any modifications thereto (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (v));
- A copy of the (to be renewed annually) insurance certificate (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (v)).

Controlled access to the TIR procedure

- The particulars of each person authorized by the competent authorities to use TIR Carnets or whose authorization has been withdrawn (Annex 9, Part II, para. 4);
- Yearly a complete and updated list of all persons authorized by the competent authorities to use TIR Carnets or whose authorization has been withdrawn (Annex 9, Part II, para. 5);
- The particulars of each person excluded from the operation of the Convention in accordance with Article 38.

National control measures

- The details of any national control measures that competent national authorities intend to introduce in accordance with Article 42 bis.

Customs sealing devices and Customs stamps

- The particulars of Customs sealing devices and stamps approved and used in the TIR Customs transit procedure (TRANS/WP.30/157, para. 93).

1.9.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NATIONAL GUARANTEEING ASSOCIATION (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- Undertake to pay up to the maximum of the guaranteed amount of the import and export duties and taxes, together with any default interest, due under the Customs laws and regulations of the Contracting Party in which an irregularity leading up to a claim against the guaranteeing association has been established in connection with a TIR operation. The association is liable, jointly and severally with the persons from whom the sums mentioned above are due, for payment of such sums (Article 8, para. 1);
- Conclude a written agreement on the functioning of the international guarantee system with an international organization (at present the International Road Transport Union (IRU) is managing the only existing international guarantee system) (Explanatory Note 0.6.2 bis);
- Act as guarantor (Article 6, paragraph 1). This guarantee should also cover the liabilities incurred in connection with operations under cover of TIR Carnets issued by foreign associations affiliated to the same international organization as that to which it is itself affiliated (Article 6, para. 2);
- Issue TIR Carnets only to persons who fulfil the minimum conditions and requirements (Article 6, paragraph 4 and Annex 9, part II) and whose access to the TIR Procedure has not been refused by the competent authorities of Contracting Parties in which the person is resident or established (Article 6, para. 3);
- Cover its liabilities to the satisfaction of the competent authorities of the Contracting Parties in which it is established with an insurance company, pool of insurers or financial institution. The insurance or financial guarantee contract(s) shall cover the totality of its liabilities in connection with operations under cover of TIR Carnets issued by itself and by foreign associations affiliated to the same international organization as that to which it is itself affiliated. (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (v));
- Conclude a declaration of commitment with the transport operator requesting TIR Carnets (Annex 9, Part II, para. 1(e));
- Issue TIR Carnets on the basis of a risk management approach (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (iii));
- Take, in close cooperation with the competent authorities, all necessary measures to ensure the proper use of TIR Carnets (Article 42 bis);

- Train its staff and TIR carnet holders for the proper implementation of TIR transports;
- Provide the TIR Executive Board, annually, before 1 March, with the price of each of TIR carnets it issues (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (vi)).
- Transmit to the competent national authority the following documentation and information:

International guarantee system

- A certified copy of the insurance or financial guarantee contract as well as any modifications thereto (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (v));
- A copy of the (annually to be renewed) insurance certificate (Annex 9, Part I, para. 3 (v)).

Controlled access to the TIR procedure

- Yearly, a complete and updated list of all persons authorized by the competent authorities to use TIR Carnets or whose authorization has been withdrawn (Annex 9, Part II, para. 5).

1.9.3 RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRANSPORT OPERATOR (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- Conclusion of a declaration of commitment with the national guaranteeing association stipulating the conditions for use of TIR Carnets (Annex 9, Part II, para. 1 (e));
- Presentation of the road vehicle, the combination of vehicles or the container together with the load and the TIR Carnet relating thereto at the Customs office of departure, the Customs office en route and the Customs office of destination. He shall also be responsible for due observance of the other relevant provisions of the Convention (Article 1 (o));
- Payment of the sums due, mentioned in Article 8, paragraphs 1 and 2 of the Convention, if requested to do so by the competent authorities in line with Article 11, para. 2 (Annex 9, Part II, para. 1 (e) (ii));
- Placement of the TIR plate on road vehicles (Article 16);
- Training of its staff, in particular drivers, for the proper implementation of TIR transports.

1.9.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION (AT PRESENT: IRU) (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- Obtain the authorization to take on responsibility for the effective organization and functioning of an international guarantee system, granted by the TIR Administrative Committee (Article 6, paragraph 2bis and Annex 9, Part III, para.2);
- Conclude written agreements on the functioning of the international guarantee system with national guaranteeing associations (Explanatory Note 0.6.2 bis-1);
- Possibly obtain the authorization to print and distribute TIR Carnets, granted by the TIR Administrative Committee (Annex 8, Article 10 (b));
- Conclude a written Agreement with UNECE, reflecting the authorizations granted in accordance with Article 6.2 bis and/or Annex 8, Article 10 (b) and stipulating that the international organization shall fulfil the relevant provisions of the Convention, shall respect the competences of the Contracting Parties to the Convention and shall comply with the decisions of the Administrative Committee and the requests of the TIRExB. By signing the Agreement, the international organization confirms that it accepts the responsibilities imposed by the authorization (Explanatory Notes 0.6.2 bis-2 and 8.10 (b)).

- Pursuant to the authorization in accordance with Annex 9, Part III, para. 2, the international organization shall:
 - provide the Contracting Parties of the TIR Convention via the national associations affiliated to the international organization with certified copies of the global guarantee contract and proof of guarantee coverage;
 - provide the competent bodies of the TIR Convention with information on the rules and procedures set out for the issue of TIR Carnets by national associations;
 - provide the competent bodies of the TIR Convention, on a yearly basis, with data on claims lodged, pending, paid or settled without payment;
 - provide the competent bodies of the TIR Convention with full and complete information on the functioning of the TIR system, in particular, but not limited to, timely and well founded information on trends in the number of non-terminated TIR operations, claims lodged, pending, paid or settled without payment that might give rise to concerns with regard to the proper functioning of the TIR system or that could lead to difficulties for the continued operation of its international guarantee system;
 - provide the competent bodies of the TIR Convention with statistical data on the number of TIR Carnets distributed to each Contracting Party, broken down by type;
 - provide the TIR Executive Board with details of the distribution price by the international organization of each type of TIR Carnet;
 - take all possible steps to reduce the risk of counterfeiting TIR Carnets;
 - take the appropriate corrective action in cases where faults or deficiencies with the TIR Carnet have been detected and report these to the TIR Executive Board;
 - fully participate in cases where the TIR Executive Board is called upon to facilitate the settlement of disputes;
 - ensure that any problem involving fraudulent activities or other difficulties with regard to the application of the TIR Convention is immediately brought to the attention of the TIR Executive Board;

- manage the control system for TIR Carnets, provided for in Annex 10 of the Convention, together with national guaranteeing associations affiliated to the international organization and the Customs authorities and inform the Contracting Parties and the competent bodies of the Convention of problems encountered in the system;
- provide the competent bodies of the TIR Convention with statistics and data on the performance of Contracting Parties with regard to the control system provided for in Annex 10;
- conclude, not less than two months before the provisional date of entry into force or renewal of the authorization granted in accordance with Article 6.2bis of the Convention, a written agreement with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe secretariat, mandated by and acting on behalf of the Administrative Committee, which shall include the acceptance by the international organization of its duties set out in Annex 9, Part III, para.2;
- Attend as observer the sessions of the TIR Administrative Committee (Annex 8, Article 1 (ii)), TIRExB (Annex 8, Article 11, para. 5), UNECE Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30).

1.9.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TIR EXECUTIVE BOARD AND TIR SECRETARY (NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST)

- supervise the application of the Convention, including the operation of the guarantee system, and fulfil the functions entrusted to it by the Administrative Committee; (Annex 8, Article 10 (a));
- supervise the centralized printing and distribution to the associations of TIR Carnets which may be performed by an agreed international organization as referred to in Article 6; (Annex 8, Article 10 (b));
- coordinate and foster the exchange of intelligence and other information among competent authorities of Contracting Parties; (Annex 8, Article 10 (c));
- coordinate and foster the exchange of information between competent authorities of Contracting Parties, associations and international organizations; (Article 10 (d) Annex 8);
- facilitate the settlement of disputes between Contracting Parties, associations, insurance companies and international organizations without prejudice to Article 57 on the settlement of disputes; (Annex 8, Article 10 (e));
- support the training of personnel of Customs authorities and other interested parties concerned with the TIR procedure; (Annex Article 10 (f));
- maintain a central record for the dissemination to Contracting Parties of information to be provided by the international organizations as referred to in Article 6, on all rules and procedures prescribed for the issue of TIR Carnets by associations, as far as they relate to the minimum conditions and requirements laid down in Annex 9; (annex 8, Article 10 (g));
- monitor the price of TIR Carnets. (Annex 8, Article 10 (h)).