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Activities and administration of the TIR Executive Board –

Activities of the TIR Executive Board:

National and regional TIR workshops and seminars

Proceedings of the TIR Seminar on the construction of Customs secure vehicles for TIR operations (Helsinki, 18-19 June 2013)

Note by the secretariat

1. A technical seminar on capacity-building of competent authorities to facilitate a more effective implementation of the provisions of the TIR Convention related to the construction, approval and control of Customs secure vehicles for TIR operations was organized by Finnish Customs, in cooperation with the TIR Executive board (18–19 June 2013, Helsinki).
2. To maximise the impact of the seminar, to raise awareness on issues related to the construction, approval and control of TIR vehicles as well as to suggest avenues to further improve these aspect of the TIR system, the organizers as well as the speakers agreed to publish the proceedings of the seminar, as reproduced in Annex.
3. The Administrative Committee of the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2) and the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) may wish to take note of the proceeding and, in particular, follow up on the various conclusions and recommendations by the seminar.

Annex

Proceedings of the TIR Seminar on the construction of Customs secure vehicles for TIR operations (Helsinki, 18-19 June 2013)

I. Introduction

1. The seminar, co-organized by Finnish Customs and the TIR Executive board, with financing from the Customs 2013 programme¹ of the European Commission for the European Union member States, was aimed at capacity-building of competent authorities to facilitate a more effective implementation of the provisions of the TIR Convention related to the construction, approval and control of Customs secure vehicles for TIR operations. It was designed for Customs officials from the Contracting Parties of the TIR Convention who are responsible for the approval and control of TIR vehicles and was also open to officials responsible for Customs and transport policies. The first day was open to participants of the private sector interested in the topic whereas the second day was restricted to Customs official. The seminar included presentations by Customs experts from various countries as well as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) TIR secretariat.

2. Presentations are available on the TIR website.² Speakers provided the following summaries of their presentations.³

Legal base and technical regulations (UNECE, Erik Willems)

3. The TIR Convention has proved to be one of the most effective international instruments prepared under the auspices of UNECE. To date, it has 68 Contracting Parties, including the European Union. The success of the TIR system may also be judged by the number of TIR Carnets distributed and issued every year. While in 1952 only a little over 3,000 TIR Carnets were issued, this number increased and reached 3,158,300 carnets in 2012.

4. The TIR customs transit system is based on the following five main principles (the so-called five pillars):

- the use of secure vehicles or containers;
- the international guarantee chain;
- the TIR carnet;
- the mutual recognition of Customs controls;
- controlled access to use the system.

5. Concerning the first pillar, The TIR convention stipulates that the goods shall be carried in containers or road vehicles, which load compartment is constructed so that there

¹ ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/customs/cooperation_programmes/customs2013/index_en.htm

² www.unece.org/transport/areas-of-work/tir/events/helsinki-finland/presentations.html

³ Speaker's contributions are published as received.

shall be no access to the interior when secured by customs seal and that tampering will be clearly visible.

6. The TIR Convention defines the standards of construction in Annexes 2 and 7, Part I as well as the approval procedures in Annexes 3 and 7, Part II. Articles 3, 12, 13 and 14 of the Convention clearly state that TIR transports may only be carried out by means of a vehicle or container, which are approved in accordance with those requirements. Furthermore, vehicles must have obtained a certificate of approval conform to Annex 4, whereas containers must have obtained a certificate of approval conform to Annex 7, Appendixes 2 or 3 and have an approval plate conform to Annex 7, Appendix 1 affixed on them.

7. Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention shall recognize the validity of the approval certificates issued in other Contracting Parties. However, in accordance with Article 14, they have the right to refuse to recognize the validity of the certificate of approval if the road vehicles or containers do not meet the requirement of Annexes 2 or 7.

8. The approval of vehicles and containers is a prerequisite to the principal of the mutual recognition of customs control put forward in Article 5 of the Convention. Customs offices en route can only rely on the checks performed at the customs office of departure if vehicles are secure, thus limiting the controls en route to checking the integrity of the custom seal affixed at departure.

9. In order to assist customs administrations to correctly and uniformly implement the legal provisions related to security of vehicles, the UNECE TIR website also contains standard approval reports and a guide about good practices related to the sealing of vehicles.⁴

II. Expert presentations

A. Construction of vehicles (Danish Customs, Bent Rasmussen)

10. Article 1 of Annex 2 of the TIR Convention states that the “Approval for the international transport of goods under Customs seal may be granted only to vehicles, the load compartments of which are constructed and equipped in such a manner that:

- no goods can be removed from or introduced into, the sealed part of the vehicle without leaving obvious traces of tampering or without breaking the Customs seal;
- customs seals can be simply and effectively affixed to them;
- they contain no concealed spaces where goods may be hidden;
- all spaces capable of holding goods are readily accessible for customs inspection.”

11. The specific requirements for road vehicles are described in detail in Articles 2, 3 and 4 of Annex 2. Fifty pages of the TIR Handbook (including the text of the articles, sketches, explanatory notes and comments) describe precisely: (a) structures (assembly methods – strength, etc.), (b) joining devices (screws – bolts – rivets – nuts, etc.), (c) hinges (doors – sideboards, etc.), (d) closing systems (doors – flanges – covers, etc.), (e) sheets (material – affixing – repair, etc.) and (f) sliding sheet / roof systems (curtain siders).

12. Since those requirements have been introduced in the TIR Convention and in the TIR Handbook, new secure developments by manufacturers of vehicles/trailers have

⁴ www.unece.org/tir/training/english/tir-secure-vehicles-containers.html

appeared, especially new types of hinges and door closing systems. Considering that manufacturers constantly develop new systems and assembly methods, it is important that TIR approval authorities are kept up-to-date on a regular basis and cooperation with the private sector is of great importance.

13. TIR approval authorities should pay particular attention to vehicles with special construction of the floor, in particular those with loose floorboards. Some vehicles seem to have been approved by the German Authorities despite the empty spaces hidden under the floor boards, thus making it impossible to inspect without off-loading goods. Further to a dispute between Estonia and Germany, vehicles with such floor construction can no longer be approved.

14. While recognising the transport industry's need for vehicles with sliding sheets and sliding roofs, it is important to recall that the approval of the vehicles remains a particular challenge. A number of security related issues, such as those mentioned in the CLCCR "checklist" prepared in 2007 should be kept in mind by inspectors. The possible inclusion in Annex 2 of a new Article covering the security of the sliding roof system will hopefully further clarify the construction requirement.

15. Finally, it should be stressed that still numerous vehicles approved for TIR can nevertheless be easily opened without breaking the seal.

B. Authorization of vehicle inspectors and endorsement of TIR certificates in Finland (Finnish Customs, Erik Lindholm)

16. Motor vehicle inspectors in Finland have previously been able to independently issue TIR approval certificates. Under order No. 169/010/12 issued by Finnish Customs, TIR approval certificates will be issued by Customs as of 1 July 2013. Consequently, a new operational model has been put in place for the certification process of TIR quality experts and for authorization procedure of TIR approval certificates.

17. As of the beginning of July, TIR approval certificates will be issued by customs offices that handle TIR Carnets. The authorization of the transport units will be supported by reports prepared by TIR quality experts. The forms used for the reports are those contained in the standard approval report published on the UNECE website. The forms have been translated into Finnish and are available on the website of Finnish Customs. In order for the transport unit to be authorized, the following have to be presented to Customs:

- the report of the TIR quality expert (including the expert's name, signature and ID number);
- empty transport unit;
- pre-completed TIR approval certificate.

18. Since early 2013, TIR quality experts need to be authorized and registered. The authorization process is administered by the Customs Authorisation Centre, who will be responsible in the long term for the administration of all authorizations. In 2013, there has been two application periods. So far, 58 persons have been registered as TIR quality experts in Finland.

19. Applicants fill-in a standard application and, in order to be authorized, they require:

- a certified qualification to carry out registration inspections of heavy vehicles;
- not committed any serious or repeated violations of customs or tax legislation;
- passed the examination held by Customs.

C. Certification process in Bulgaria (Bulgarian Customs, Elisaveta Takova)

20. In Bulgaria, customs is the competent authority for the approval of the road vehicle for transport of goods under customs seal.

21. The requirements and procedure for approval of the road vehicle at the national level are explained in the Order of the Director of the National Customs Agency No 70 dated 11 April 2005. The Order approves the Rules of organization and control at the customs offices for the approval of vehicles for transport of goods under customs seal in accordance of the provisions of the TIR Convention.

22. On the territory of Bulgaria, 30 customs offices are competent for approval of the road vehicle designated by Annex 3 of Order No 70 dated 11 April 2005:

1. Burgas, 2. Varna, 3. Vidin, 4. Dobrich, 5. Gabrovo, 6. Gorna Oriahovica, 7. Iambol, 8. Kazanlak, 9. Karlovo, 10. Karjali, 11. Lovech, 12. Pazarjik, 13. Pleven, 14. Plovdiv, 15. Pristanishte Lom, 16. Razgrad, 17. Russe, 18. Svilengrad, 19. Svishtov, 20. Shumen, 21. Silistra, 22. Sliven, 23. Smolyan, 24. Sofia Iztok, 25. Sofia Zapad, 26. Stara Zagora, 27. Stolichna, 28. Targovishte, 29. Haskovo, 30. Ugozapadna

23. In accordance with Art. 2, p. 1 of the tariff of fees collected by National Customs Agency:

- For an initial review and inspection (primary issue of Approval Certificate) is 30 levs (approx. 15 euro).
- For renewal of the Approval Certificate (three times) is 15 levs (approx. 7.50 euro).

1. Procedure

(a) Submission of the application and attached documents

24. The road vehicle must be presented every two years for purposes of inspection and renewal of approval to the competent customs office in the area of the vehicle registration

- At present – on paper
- At the end of the year 2013 – electronic submission of the application
- The application should be accompanied by the following documents – fee payment document; vehicle registration document; document of annual technical inspection; lease contract (if applicable).

(b) Inspection of the road vehicle

25. The competent authority should inspect the road vehicle in accordance with the general rules prescribed in Annex 2.

(c) Issue of a Certificate of Approval

26. The number of the Certificate of Approval issued by the Bulgarian customs authority is formed as follows:

TIR/code of the customs office issuing the certificate/serial number of the Register for the Certificate of approval

Figure 1

Sample heading of a certificate of approval issued in Bulgaria**D. Certification process in Czech Republic (Czech Customs, Richard Vesecky)**

27. In the Czech Republic the following have important roles in the TIR procedure: national guaranteeing association (proposes traders to be authorized to use the TIR system, issues TIR Carnets and TIR plates, cooperates with customs on the basis of a cooperation agreement, organizes training courses, issues courses certificates), forwarding companies, traders (request national guaranteeing association to be authorized in the system, requests customs authorities for the TIR approval of the vehicles, attend training courses, cooperate with customs authorities regarding the inspections of vehicles) and customs authorities (cooperate with national guaranteeing association, inspect and approve vehicles, issues and extends the validity of certificates of approval).

28. Each person wishing to use TIR Carnets, must first be approved by the national guaranteeing association, in cooperation with the customs office responsible for the territorial jurisdiction in which the applicant is resident. It is up to customs to authorize holders to use TIR Carnets and only customs can withdraw the authorization or exclude foreign TIR Carnet holders.

29. In the Czech Republic, the approval of vehicles for the transport of goods under customs seals also falls under the responsibility of customs authorities. There are fifteen customs offices authorized to issue certificates of approval and each of them is responsible for a county (with the exception of the Customs office Ruzyně - international airport). Only nationally authorized TIR Carnet holders can apply for a certificate of approval and they must be the ones owning or operating the vehicle. The vehicle must be registered in the Czech Republic.

30. The owner or operator of the vehicle (or his representative) applying for approval needs to present an original approval certificate, photographs of the vehicle and the vehicle itself. The main principles that are checked by customs authorities during the approval process are those presented in chapter B.1. Customs officers undertake the inspections in line with the procedures described in a handbook. The handbook is composed of two parts, one theoretical (description of the main principles and procedures for approving of persons and vehicles to the system) and one more practical (Annexes, forms and check lists used for the approval procedure). Each of the following vehicle type has its own control protocol (check lists): (a) vehicles with solid sides and refrigerated vehicles, (b) sheeted vehicles (incl. vehicles with sliding sheets), (c) vehicles for transport of liquids and (d) vehicles with hydraulic ramp. Each check list is composed of a number of boxes specific to the structural

elements of each type of vehicle and contains links to the relevant articles and explanatory notes of the TIR Convention. The approval certificate is then stamped and signed by the responsible custom officer, who also assigns the certificate's unique number.

31. Future plans include the development of a central application to record the results of the approval processes (a computerized system with central database containing check lists, photographs and certificates of approval) as well as the creation of a regular training program for customs officers.

E. Certification process in Poland (Polish Customs, Marcin Żuk)

32. In Poland, the certification procedure is free of charge. The applicant (owner, operator or agent) must first submit a written request for both the issuance and the renewal of the approval certificate. Furthermore, the applicant must present the following documents:

- current business records: REGON (acronym for National Economy Register), NIP (Tax Identification Number), duplicate from KRS (National Court Register), excerpt from the business register or other document;
- photocopy of registration certificate (original for inspection only);
- certificate of approval form;
- photos taken diagonally, trailer (unloaded) ready for inspection (see Fig. 2).

Figure 2

Sample photo of a truck taken diagonally



33. The issuance and the renewal of approval certificates are registered in SPD-EKS (data processing system – electronic book service) in accordance with the principles laid down in the office instructions. Rejected applications are only recorded on paper.

34. The certificate of approval as well as the accompanying photographs or drawings of the road vehicle are stamped with a number given in accordance with the filing instructions.

35. Customs branch directors supervise the activities related to the procedure for approval of vehicles by performing ad hoc checks of vehicle inspection stations.

F. Certification process in Estonia (Estonian Customs, Aivar Kullarand)

1. Issuance of Certificates of Approval in Estonia

36. In Estonia Certificates of Approval of the vehicles are issued by officials of the Estonian Tax and Customs Board. Certificates of Approval are issued in three different towns. Twelve officials deal with the technical inspection of road vehicles and issue of Certificates of Approval. The number of valid Certificates of Approval issued in Estonia exceeds 2,600. On issuing a Certificate of Approval an official shall input the data of a road vehicle, the TIR technical inspection report, the road vehicle registration certificate and a photo of the road vehicle into the system. All the officials of the Estonian Tax and Customs Board can consult the system of the Certificates of Approval of the vehicles and competent officials can add and change the data in the system. When opening a TIR Carnet, the system shall check the validity of the Certificate of Approval issued in Estonia.

37. Training is provided once a year to the officials issuing Certificates of Approval. If a change in the structure of road vehicles occurs or a new design type is made, or some problems arise, all the officials who issue Certificates of Approval are immediately notified by e-mail.

2. Structures and fastenings of curtain side road vehicles

38. Nuts and bolts fastened onto the external part of the frame of the curtain side road vehicle and fixed so that the handles of the tensioner of the side sheet, cover flaps or tensioning devices of the vertical rod could not be removed from the sealed cargo space. The bolts and nuts that are accessible need to be fixed.

39. Curtain side road vehicles are completed so that they have two tensioning rods for the side curtain and one tensioning rod and one tensioning bar. Tension of the sheet, vertical rods and the handle of the tensioner of the curtain side road vehicles should be fixed with a cover flap, a tensioner of a vertical rod to be fixed with a wire cable or tensioning handle not prone to tampering.

40. The fixing handles of the back doors of the cargo space must be fastened to the bottom part of the frame with fixing bolt or bolts' retainers, rivets or fastened to the frame by welding (see figures 3 and 4).

Figures 3 and 4
Bolts' retainers



41. In order to avoid misunderstandings, it would be necessary to add an explanatory note to the requirement set forth in Article 3, paragraph 6 of Annex 2 of TIR Convention that the requirements set forth in Article 4, paragraph 2 (ii) of Annex 2 of TIR Convention shall be applied to sheeted trailers. In 2012, three TIR operations involving Estonian curtain sided road vehicles have been stopped. It was noted in box 10 of the Certificate of Approval that the sheet shall overlap the solid parts at the bottom of the vehicle by at least 250 mm and referred to Article 3, paragraph 6 of Annex 2 of TIR Convention.

42. The back vertical straps of the curtain side road vehicles with opening roofs shall be fastened to the side sheet with compression rivets which cannot be removed from the sealed cargo space and replaced by adequately secured rivets without leaving obvious traces. In practice the removed rivets are replaced with blind rivets which can be easily removed and replaced.

G. Inspections at the offices of departure, entry, destination and exit – enforcement issues – cases from real life (Finnish Customs, Jouni Väkevä, Ari Peltonen)

43. Finnish inspectors came across the various issues when inspecting or checking vehicle used for TIR transports.

44. Some constructions do not fulfil the requirements of the TIR Convention. Loose sheets allow the hook to be unfastened and refastened without visible trace. Sheets are sometimes not fastened with an appropriate wire loop. Wire loops installed onto the channel beneath structurally prevent entering the load compartment even if there is no solid board over 250mm.

45. Continuous bands of reflective material are inconvenient to use since they stiffen the sheets and make them difficult to fold. The problem does not exist when using patches.

46. It is unclear how to handle structural issues which are weakening the TIR security en route when they are discovered en route. It seems that reloading to an approved vehicle should takes place. When the problem does not imply risks of smuggling, the TIR transport can continue and box 10 of the TIR approval certificate should be filled in.

47. More generally, in vehicles with sliding sheets, the space between thongs tends to allow access to the load compartment. Over time, sheets tend to stretch more, thus further facilitating the access to the load compartment. Therefore, having an acceptable distance between thongs does not seem a viable option, in particular when recalling that in principle

it should be possible to access the sealed load compartment without leaving a visible trace or tampering the seal.

48. Finally it should be recommended that thongs should be fastened from the inside of the sheet, preferably using two rivets and an additional secured seam.

H. Enforcement issues – cases from real life (Danish Customs, Bent Rasmussen)

49. In Denmark, numerous vehicles inspected at border crossing points or at customs stations appeared to have one of the following issues: (a) fundamental technical problems, (b) tampering and manipulation, (c) mistakes made by customs when affixing the seal or (d) special unsecure construction of a vehicle. Furthermore, (e) Danish Customs also collaborates with maintenance companies to learn more about all sorts of security issues.

(a) Often vehicles with sliding sheets present fundamental technical problems with the upper cantrail, the lower cantrail and the tensioning devices.

(b) There are a number of examples of vehicles where sealing devices have been manipulated – mainly on refrigerated / insulated vehicles. This highlights the importance for Customs officers to remove the seals themselves – otherwise such manipulations will not be discovered.

(c) In some cases, Customs do not affix the seals in the proper manner, thus leaving a possibility to open the vehicle without breaking the seals. It is also important that seals are not affixed on elements that can easily be broken and replaced without leaving traces.

(d) Vehicles with special construction of the floor such as those with loose floorboards should not be approved.

(e) A cooperation between Danish Customs and maintenance companies allows inspectors to have additional information about infringement or tampering trends that are identified during the maintenance of trailers, in particular those owned by rental companies.

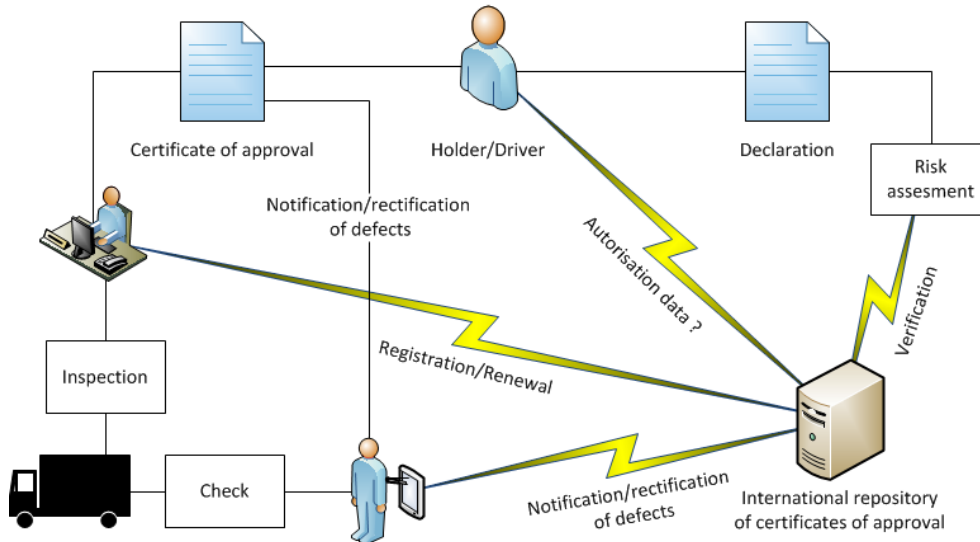
I. New ideas related to the approval procedure (UNECE, André Sceia)

50. Some provisions of the TIR Conventions related to the approval and control of Customs secure vehicles for TIR operations have evolved over time, in particular to keep up to date with the introduction of new types of vehicles, like the vehicles with sliding sheets. At the contrary, some aspects have remained almost unchanged since the entry into force of the TIR Convention, 1975. A good example is the certificate of approval that has not change much over time. Therefore, the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1), while analysing the documents that are attached to the TIR Carnet and how these documents could be attached to an electronic declaration, suggested that the certificates of approval should, in the long term, also be fully computerized. The idea was brought to the attention of TIRExB, which welcomed the idea and decided to explore it further and possibly start a project. The objective would be to develop a centralized repository (database) for the certificates of approval which could be accessed by customs at any time, but in particular, during risk assessment processes to ensure the validity of the certificate. Furthermore, such databases could be of use to notify defects discovered during checks, thus ensuring that those defects are adequately rectified before a new TIR operation or transport starts, depending on the severity of the defect. Figure 5 presents schematically the various usages for such database. At this stage the TIRExB is considering a survey to assess the level of computerization of

the approval procedure in TIR Contracting Parties (see TIRExB Informal document No. 8 (2013)).

Figure 5

Envisaged functioning of the international repository of certificates of approval



51. Concerning the notification of defects, practice has demonstrated that (a) box 10 of the certificate of approval is limited in space and (b) noted defects are often illegible, due to personal handwritings and the usage of national languages or scripts. Therefore, the Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975 (AC.2), is considering recommending competent authorities to replace handwritten defects by a code system indicating the place and type of any defect. The code shall be composed of four (4) digits:

- The first digit indicates the section of the load compartment: left side, right side, floor, roof, front wall, back wall or other.
- The second digit indicates where the defect is located longitudinally: front, centre, back.
- The last two digits indicate the defect itself.

52. More details on this coding system can be found in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2012/12.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

53. All speakers and participants at the seminar stressed that the security of vehicles and containers used for TIR transports remains of utmost importance and is recognized as one of the five pillars of Convention.

54. Furthermore, the presentations illustrated the importance of cooperation, exchange of experiences and comparison of working methods between Contracting Parties. At the end of the day all efforts made to improve and assure that inspection of vehicles is carried out in a uniform manner is an advantage for all parties involved – including the transport industry.

55. More specifically, the following conclusions and recommendations have been made.

A. Training and number of locations for TIR approval inspection

56. Although this issue has been highlighted during several TIR Seminars, it was quite obvious that the number of locations for TIR Approval inspection still varies significantly (e.g. more than 100 in Poland, 30 in Bulgaria, 15 in the Czech Republic and 5 in Denmark).

57. As it was demonstrated by several presentations, the complexity of construction of vehicles is constantly changing due to the introduction of new parts and assembly methods, and construction of new types of vehicles. It is a major task for the authorities to keep staff updated and well trained at all times. Therefore, the more approval places the more complex it gets to keep all the necessary staff updated and trained.

58. Therefore, in order to ensure that inspectors have the necessary skills and experience, it is recommended to limit their number and, if necessary, the number of locations where inspections can take place, in particular for those Contracting Parties that do not approve a large number of vehicles each year and where qualified inspectors cannot travel between the various offices. At the same time, for the sake of trade and transport facilitation, transport companies should not be requested to travel large distances to obtain their certificates. This would contribute to more uniform of inspections and approvals of vehicles.

B. Articles 3 and 4 of Annex 2

59. The presentation prepared by the Estonian Customs Administration clearly illustrated challenges related to the interpretation of the Art. 3 (sheeted vehicles) and the Art. 4 (vehicles with sliding sheets). It is well known that vehicles with sliding sheets are challenging vehicles to inspect for TIR Approval and the references to Articles 1,2 and 3, where applicable, in Article 4 does not make it any easier.

60. For example, Article 4.2.(ii) clearly specifies the overlap required at the bottom of the vehicle – 50mm – and also mentions that the maximum space allowed between the sheet and the solid part of the vehicle is limited to maximum 10mm. However, the Estonian Customs Administration seems to require an overlap between the sheet and the solid part at the bottom of the vehicle to be 250mm. This overlap is the requirement specified in Art. 3.6. (a) for “standard” sheeted vehicles. This might indicate a need to further clarify the provisions of both articles in order to avoid any confusion. An explanatory note, including a sketch of a modern vehicle with sliding sheets, could be introduced, as modern vehicles with sliding sheets do not have the structure shown in sketch 9 of Annex 2.

C. Articles 1 (a) of Annex 2

61. Annex 2 and 7 of the TIR Convention provide a good general guidance on the construction of vehicles approved for TIR transport. Nevertheless, some parts are sometimes too general and could be further specified with additional sketches, with explanatory notes, comments or best practices. For example, article 1 (a), which states that “no goods can be removed from or introduced into the sealed part of the vehicle without leaving obvious traces of tampering or without breaking the Customs seal” could be further defined in order to clarify what is meant by the term “goods”. A specification of the size of the object that should not be removed from or introduced into the sealed part could be indicated, e.g. a pack of cigarettes. This would further ensure that all TIR vehicles would undergo similar inspections in all TIR Contracting parties.

D. Differences in the security requirements

62. Different vehicles types, e.g. curtain siders or refrigerated vehicles, have different security requirements. At this moment, the requirements for curtain siders are the less strict, thus making this type of vehicles less secure than others. It was stressed that those vehicle are very much use by the transport community and should therefore remain approved for TIR transport. The increased risk due to the use of curtain siders can be taken into account in risk assessment processes.

E. New construction types

63. New types of secure constructions have been invented since annex 2 and 7 have been devised. These new type of constructions might require to be mentioned in explanatory notes, comments or best practices to further harmonize the approval of vehicles among all TIR Contracting parties.

F. Introduction and use of TIR Approval Reports

64. The Czech Customs administration is already satisfactorily using the approval reports available on the UNECE web site and the Finnish customs administration will start using them soon. All six reports (for various construction types) have been translated into Finnish and their use will be a mandatory when inspecting vehicles for TIR Approval. The use of such reports is an important tool, ensuring that inspection is carried out in a uniform way at all inspection locations. The seminar recognised the usefulness of the approval reports and recommended their use. It also requested the UNECE TIR secretariat to publish an editable version of the certificates on the TIR website, thus facilitating their use.

G. Introduction of a Coding system for defects noted by Customs authorities – box 10 of the Approval Certificate

65. As illustrated during several presentations at the Seminar there is a need for simplification when defects are noted in box 10 of the Approval Certificate. Each country is filling in the field in plain text and in local language. On top of the language challenge, there is limited space in the field which often makes it difficult to write all defects and afterwards to read the notes.

66. The coding system currently considered by AC.2 in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2012/12 should be recommended. Once the coding system would be approved, the challenge will be to make the coding system available for all officers and the publication and dissemination of a leaflet (or similar document) would be highly recommended.

H. The future: Central register and database of approval certificates

67. The system of record keeping and filing of Approval Certificates and accompanying documents, such as pictures, varies significantly between Contracting Parties. Some countries still only keep paper records at local customs offices whereas others have already implemented national electronic registries. The idea of introducing an international central data base for all approval certificates is recommended in view of the long term effort to computerize the TIR procedure. Such a system would not only allow customs authorities to

check the validity of a specific approval certificate, but also to record centrally the defects found on vehicles.

68. It is recommended to pursue this project and keep in mind possible issues with national data protection legislation. This might also be an opportunity to introduce a uniform “number-system” for approval certificates.

I. Issues for consideration by the competent TIR bodies, in particular TIRExB

69. The seminar requested the secretariat to bring the following issues to the attention of the competent TIR bodies:

- More details are required for some of the provision related to the construction and approval of Customs secure vehicles for TIR operations (in the form of sketches, explanatory notes, comment, best practices, practical guide or a repository of approved vehicles types), e.g. article 1 (a), in connection with article 4. Furthermore, some designs in the convention are outdated as new types of secure constructions have been introduced;
- The security requirement currently vary for different vehicle types (curtain siders vs refrigerated vehicles);
- The model approval report is very useful and should be made available in electronic editable format on the UNECE web site (ready to be used or translated in national languages);
- Certification processes (registries) are more and more computerized at national level. The creation of an international database should be pursued, while keeping in mind issues related to data protection;
- Certificates printed on multiple pages should be secured by means of stamps on every page or secure bindings;
- The importance of keeping inspectors up to date (continuous learning) should be further promoted by mean of seminar and workshops. TIR Customs focal points could also have a role to play in the exchange of information and good practices regarding the approval procedure;
- The costs of the issuance of certificates of approval vary between countries. In some cases, the use of forms sold by associations is mandatory;
- Annex 3 paragraph 19 and 20 might require clarification. Customs officers feel unsecure about their powers related to foreign vehicles which in their eyes should not have been approved;
- The provisions related to the fastening of the thongs seem unclear and possibly not provide sufficient security. It might be necessary to add securing stiches on top of the rivets.