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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Customs Questions

affecting Transport

(19-22 June 2001)

Ad hoc Expert Group on the Computerization
of the TIR Procedure

(21 June 2001)

**PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF THE
AD HOC EXPERT GROUP ON THE COMPUTERIZATION
OF THE TIR PROCEDURE**

**to be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
starting at 10.00 hours on Thursday, 21 June 2001 ^{*/}**

^{*/} For reasons of economy, delegates are requested to bring copies of the documents mentioned in this provisional agenda to the meeting. There will be no documentation available in the meeting room.

Before the meeting, missing documents may be obtained directly from the UN/ECE Transport Division (Fax: +41-22-917-0039; e-mail: martin.magold@unece.org). Documents may also be downloaded from the Internet web site of the UN/ECE Transport Division (www.unece.org/trans). During the meeting, documents may be obtained from the UNOG Documents Distribution Section (Room C.111, 1st floor, Palais des Nations).

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1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

In accordance with the Commission's rules of procedure, the first item to be considered is the adoption of the agenda (TRANS/WP.30/2001/11).

2. MANDATE

The Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), at its ninety-seventh session, had requested the secretariat to prepare and convene, possibly in June 2001, a second session of the ad hoc expert group with a view to arriving, following identification of objectives, at a consensus on the objectives to be achieved and on Customs requirements to be taken into account in the computerization of the TIR procedure (TRANS/WP.30/194, para. 37).

3. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION BY THE EXPERT GROUP

Following the first session of the ad hoc expert group on 19 February 2001, the secretariat, in consultation with the Chairman, has prepared a document containing a summary of the deliberations made at this session as well as detailed information on the background and earlier discussions held in this respect in the Working Party and the TIR Administrative Committee (TRANS/WP.30/2001/5).

At its first session, the ad hoc expert group had identified the following aspects of the computerization process that should be considered at its second session:

- (a) Objectives of the computerization process;
- (b) Elements for computerization at the international level;
- (c) Repercussions of the computerization process on the existing legal provisions of the TIR Convention and current national administrative procedures;
- (d) Role of the various actors in the TIR procedure in the computerization process (Governments, trade, national associations, IRU, secretariat, Working Party and TIR Administrative Committee);
- (e) Technical aspects accompanying the computerization process (standardization of information as a prerequisite for achieving an effective exchange of electronic messages)
(TRANS/WP.30/2001/5, para. 81).

In addition, the secretariat has prepared a questionnaire, which has been sent to Customs authorities and selected transport operators of the Contracting Parties, aimed at gathering in-depth information on the requirements of computerization of Customs transit procedures at the national level as well as on the technologies used to capture and disseminate them. The first results of this questionnaire are contained in Informal document No. 12 (2001).

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPUTERIZATION PROCESS

At its ninety-fifth session, the Working Party had already considered in some detail the objectives to be achieved in the computerization of the TIR procedure as well as the elements to be addressed. The Working Party felt that the introduction of modern technologies in the TIR procedure was inevitable:

- (a) in the light of today's extremely rapid technological developments, particularly affecting international transport and trade;
- (b) the ever increasing need for improved efficiency of Customs transit procedures; and
- (c) the fight against fraudulent activities which must be conducted with the most appropriate and effective means (TRANS/WP.30/190, paras. 25-30).

The expert group may wish to review and confirm the importance of these objectives taking also account of the arguments put forward in document TRANS/WP.30/2001/5, paras. 14-30.

5. ELEMENTS FOR COMPUTERIZATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

At its ninety-fifth meeting, the Working Party had already expressed the opinion that the computerization of the TIR procedure would have to focus on the possibility of linking national Customs transit procedures via a standard electronic and/or paper-based data file containing all information of the TIR Carnet. The newly to be created electronic data file would need to be compatible with most, if not all, possible technical EDI solutions applied or yet to be applied in the Contracting Parties to the Convention.

The link between national Customs procedures and the transfer of data files should be possible via:

- (a) International EDI systems, as being done in the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS);
- (b) Computerization of the TIR Carnet by means of supplementing it with a bar code and TIR Carnet holder identification systems or by replacing it by a so-called Smart Card that could be filled-in and carried along by the transport operator as well as filled-in, read and validated by Customs authorities (TRANS/WP.30/190, paras. 27 and 28).

The establishment of an international EDI system, such as the NCTS system with on-line links between all Customs posts of the countries utilizing the TIR system, presupposes the establishment of a common Custom code, close co-operation between Customs administrations and coordinated enforcement procedures. It, therefore, does not seem to be in line with the basic philosophy and structure of the TIR Convention, which does not necessarily require Contracting Parties to work closely together in order to allow for efficient international transport. For that reason it does not seem useful to embark on a detailed study of the requirements of such a system.

Thus, computerization of the TIR Carnet, whereby the present paper-based document will be either complemented with or replaced by a bar-code, covering all information contained in the TIR Carnet, or by a portable data file, which can be filled in and carried by the transport operator, seems to be a more suitable approach in the computerization of the TIR procedure in the short and middle term.

The expert group may wish to consider these two fundamental approaches for computerization of the TIR procedure taking account of the arguments put forward in document TRANS/WP.30/2001/5, paras. 31-39.

6. REPERCUSSIONS OF THE COMPUTERIZATION PROCESS ON EXISTING LEGAL PROVISIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

The main objective of Phase III of the TIR revision process is to allow for the introduction of modern information, management and control technologies based on automated and secured electronic procedures. These procedures should not affect the basic philosophy of the TIR procedure, even if some of the legal and administrative structures may need to be revised (TRANS/WP.30/2001/5, para. 11).

The preparation, adoption and entry into force of the required measures will take considerable time, while, in the meantime, more and more Customs authorities, trade and transport companies will introduce their own computerized systems. Therefore, in order not to complicate the situation more than strictly necessary, the computerization of the TIR procedure must now be tackled by the Working Party and its ad hoc group of experts in order to safeguard the future of the TIR Customs transit system as an important element for the facilitation of international transport and trade.

The expert group is invited to discuss the possible extent of the computerization process on the basis of an informal document, to be prepared by the secretariat, which outlines the possible repercussions on the legal provisions of the Convention and its annexes as well as on existing administrative procedures (Informal document No. 12 (2001)).

7. ROLE OF THE VARIOUS ACTORS IN THE TIR PROCEDURE IN THE COMPUTERIZATION PROCESS

Modern Customs transit systems, such as the TIR procedure, consist of thousands of operations every day, involving a large number of, often repetitious, actions. Controlling, processing and managing these procedures has become a complicated and complex task, in which many actors play a role, both at the national and international level.

Computerization of the TIR procedure will have consequences for the persons and organizations dealing with the issuance and distribution of TIR Customs declarations, the filling-in of the required data as well as for the certification of the necessary, possibly individually flexible, guarantee coverage. It will also have an impact on Customs officers at the offices of departure, en route and destination, who have to check and process this data. In addition, the use of automated risk management systems, with the capability to act in anticipation of emerging situations, in combination with the ongoing internationalization of trade and crime alike, will increasingly influence the work of Customs authorities and associations at the national level as well as of the International Road Transport Union (IRU), insurers and the TIRExB at the international level.

The expert group may wish to elaborate on the future role and functioning of the various actors in the TIR procedure.

8. TECHNICAL ASPECTS ACCOMPANYING THE COMPUTERIZATION PROCESS

In a computerized environment the electronic exchange of information between the various actors in the TIR procedure (TIR Carnet holder, Customs administrations, national associations, IRU and TIRExB) can only be effective if done by means of standardized messages.

Various international organizations are already active in the field of standardization of format and content of electronic messages. Some time ago already UN/EDIFACT has been especially designed to serve as such a tool and the World Customs Organization (WCO) has recently amended the so-called Kyoto Convention with an annex dealing with the application of information technology. The guidelines to this annex contain detailed information on the benefits and application possibilities of standardized information.

The expert group may wish to have a first preliminary discussion on the standardization of information in the framework of the TIR procedure. At a later stage a detailed analysis of the various standardization options together with proposals regarding the introduction of standardized messages could be made.

9. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES BY THE EXPERT GROUP, THE TIREXB AND WP.30

The group of experts, taking account of the considerations at its present session, may wish to provide guidance on concrete further steps to be taken at future sessions, by the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) or the Working Party in order to make progress in the computerization process.

Since computerization of the TIR procedure affects all parties involved in the TIR procedure, it may be useful to convene, before the end of 2001 and following a first round of discussions in the expert group, the Working Party and the TIR Administrative Committee, a meeting of the TIR Contact Group. This meeting will provide an opportunity to all parties concerned to obtain complete information about the envisaged mechanisms and to comment on them.

Following this session of the expert group, the secretariat will prepare a short report for transmission to the Working Party.



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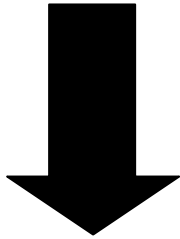
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