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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982 (Harmonization Convention)

Outcome of the 2023 Survey on the application of Annex 8

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. On 20 May 2008, Annex 8 to the Harmonization Convention came into force. According to Article 7 "Reporting mechanism" of the Annex, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) shall carry out, every five year, a survey among Contracting Parties on progress made to improve border crossing procedures in their countries.
2. The last survey was conducted in 2016 and its results were published in 2017 (document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2017/13).
3. In April 2023, the ECE secretariat initiated the present 5 years survey. The survey has been conducted by the questionnaire which was approved by the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) at its 122nd session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2009/8 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/244, para. 15). The Working Party may wish to recall that, at its 162nd session (February 2023), it mandated the secretariat to circulate the 5-year survey on the application of Annex 8 of the Convention among the regular delegates from governments (and, in the absence thereof, TIR focal points) as addressees in April 2023 with 1 July 2023 as deadline for reply (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/324, para. 26). Due to the limited responses received, the Working Party at its 165th session (February 2024) requested the secretariat to re-circulate the survey to regular delegates from governments (and, in the absence thereof, TIR focal points) that had not responded with a new deadline until end of March 2024 for responses. In parallel, the Working Party advised the secretariat to directly contact the delegates from those contracting parties that had not responded to date to ensure the survey is indeed received. The current document contains the summary and the analysis of replies on the progress in implementing Annex 8 on road transport at the national level.



II. Replies

4. The following 6 countries replied to the questionnaire: Belarus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Switzerland, and Turkiye,. Germany, Greece and Bulgaria replied that there were no changes comparing to their replies in 2016. Turkiye provided only one update comparing to the reply of the country in 2016. It should be reminded that in 2016 seventeen countries had replied to the questionnaire. It is also worth underlining that the countries that had responded to the previous survey(s), were requested to indicate only the changes since then.

III. Results of the survey

5. Statistics of the replies to specific questions is given below.

Question 1. Please provide information regarding the official publication of Annex 8 in your country.

<input type="checkbox"/>	It has been published on _____ (date of publication)
<input type="checkbox"/>	It is scheduled to be published on _____ (expected date of publication)
<input type="checkbox"/>	It has neither been published nor scheduled to be published
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Four countries replied that they had already published Annex 8. One country replied that it has neither been published nor scheduled to be published.

In the 2016 survey twelve respondents indicated that they have already published Annex 8. One country indicated that it was scheduled to be published in 2017. Four countries replied that it has neither been published nor scheduled to be published, whereas two of these countries were Member States of the European Union which had already published Annex 8.

Question 2. Has your country taken measures to facilitate the granting of visas for professional drivers in accordance with national best practice for all visa applicants, national immigration rules and/or international commitments?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes. Please briefly describe these measures: _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	No. Please briefly explain the reason: _____

Switzerland mentioned that it has signed visa facilitation agreements with various countries including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldavia. These agreements provide for facilitations for drivers directly, notably with regard to the duration of validity of visas and the visa fee.

Hungary replied that for Schengen visas (visas for intended stays in the territory of the Member States not exceeding 90 days in any period of 180 days), professional drivers can apply for a business visa. Supporting documents, such as employer's certificate, are checked by the consulate. For visas under national jurisdiction ("D" types of visas for a period exceeding 90 days), if the purpose of the journey is supported by an employer's certificate issued by a qualified employer, professional drivers can apply for an employment visa.

Belarus replied that "the issue of visas is not within the competence of the customs authorities of the Republic of Belarus".

Lithuania replied "Yes".

Czech Republic replied "Yes" and commented "CZ doesn't have any external land border. We have already provided this information in previous surveys".

Question 3. Does your country regularly exchange information with other Contracting Parties on best practices with regard to the facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Any additional comments: _____

Hungary replied “Yes”, Switzerland, Lithuania and Czech Republic replied “No”.

The Hungarian Consular missions concerned pay particular attention for informing the parties. For example the Hungarian Consulate General in Istanbul organizes regular meetings and training sessions for freight forwarding companies, and we regularly present the procedures introduced for freight forwarders to the Turkish organization of the Association of International Forwarding and Logistic Service Providers.

Belarus replied that “the issue of visas is not within the competence of the customs authorities of the Republic of Belarus”.

Question 4. How does your country regularly inform all parties involved in international transport operations:

(a) on border control requirements for international road transport operations in force?

Lithuania replied “The main information is provided in writing. Also press releases are being prepared. Stakeholders form associations that approach the authorities. Legislation is adopted in coordination with these associations. Therefore, they reach all the latest information”.

Czech Republic replied “Regular meetings with transport companies, information on CZ customs web pages, ad-hoc meetings, seminars held by CZ customs or other state administrations, European Union meetings and working groups”.

(b) on border control requirements for international road transport operations planned?

Lithuania replied “Before the planned changes, coordination of the legal act with interested parties is carried out. They can provide comments on requirements. Discussions and consultations are ongoing”.

Czech Republic replied “see (a)”.

(c) on the actual situation at borders?

Hungary replied that the National Tax and Customs Administration provides information materials regarding customs matter at the border crossing points and on the internet in the NTCA’s website: www.nav.gov.hu.

Belarus replied that “the official website of the State Border Committee of the Republic of Belarus has information on queues of freight vehicles at the border”.

Lithuania replied “On websites: <https://www.ltsiena.eu/yphis/borderQueueInfo.action> ; <https://pkpd.lrv.lt/lt/eiles-pasienyje>”. Czech Republic replied “see (a)”.

Question 5. Which control procedures have been transferred to the places of departure and destination of the goods transported by road so as to alleviate congestion at the border crossing points?

<input type="checkbox"/>	None;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medico-sanitary inspection;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Veterinary inspection;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phytosanitary inspection;

	Controls of compliance with technical standards;
	Quality controls;
	Vehicle inspections;
	Weighing of vehicles;
	Other (please specify) _____

Any additional comments: _____

Hungary replied “None”. Because these control procedures could be conducted at the border crossing points too, when appropriate. In this question the customs authority is not competent. Order, rule and supervision of border crossing point is the scope of Police Authority.

Switzerland replied that in the veterinary and phytosanitary field, Switzerland and the European Union are considered a common veterinary and phytosanitary area, which means that border controls are mutually recognized. Therefore, veterinary and phytosanitary inspections only take place at the European Union external border. In Switzerland, only the airports of Geneva and Zurich are the external border of the European Union. A veterinary or phytosanitary inspection is only carried out at these two points of entry. For shipments from the European Union (or from a third country via the European Union) by road, controls are carried out by the competent authorities of the Canton of destination.

Belarus checked the following boxes Medico-sanitary inspection, Veterinary inspection, Phytosanitary inspection, Controls of compliance with technical standards, Vehicle inspections and Weighing of vehicles and commented “Customs authorities use inspection and examination complexes to reduce the time required for customs control”.

Lithuania checked the following boxes Medico-sanitary inspection, Veterinary inspection and Phytosanitary inspection and commented “We have these types of procedures: Border control, customs inspection, phytosanitary inspection of plants, plant products and other objects related to plants and plant products, Food and veterinary checking”.

Czech Republic checked the following boxes Medico-sanitary inspection, Veterinary inspection, Phytosanitary inspection, Controls of compliance with technical standards, Vehicle inspections and Weighing of vehicles and commented “valid only for transport by air, as explained above, CZ doesn’t have any land external border”.

Question 6. Which measures have been undertaken at the border crossing points in your country in order to give priority to urgent consignments, e.g., live animals and perishable goods?

	Waiting times for vehicles transporting such goods have been minimized;
	Required controls are carried out as quickly as possible;
	Refrigerating units of vehicles carrying perishable foodstuffs are allowed to operate during the time of crossing the border;
	Cooperation with other Contracting Parties regarding sanitary inspections of such goods.

Hungary replied to this question indicating the first three.

Belarus replied to this question by checking all four boxes.

Lithuania replied to this question by checking the first three boxes.

Czech Republic replied to this question by checking the second box.

Question 7. Is your country a Contracting Party to the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections (1997)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (go to question 9)
<input type="checkbox"/>	No (go to question 8)

Hungary and Belarus replied “Yes” while Switzerland, Lithuania and Czech Republic replied “No”.

Question 8. Does your country accept the International Technical Inspection Certificate as provided for in the above Agreement (also reproduced in Appendix 1 to Annex 8)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Switzerland and Lithuania replied “No”. Czech Republic replied “Yes”.

Question 9. Is your country a Contracting Party to the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and the Special Equipment to be used for such Carriage (1970)?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Hungary, Belarus, Lithuania and Czech Republic replied “Yes”.

Question 10. Does your country accept the International Vehicle Weight Certificates (please refer to Appendix 2 to Annex 8) issued in other Contracting Parties?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (go to questions 11, 12 and 13)
<input type="checkbox"/>	No (go to question 14)

Any additional comments: _____

Switzerland replied “No” but also made the comment that for “Questions 7 – 10: Switzerland has signed both agreements, but they have not yet been ratified”.

Hungary, Belarus, Lithuania and Czech Republic replied “Yes”. Czech Republic commented “Replies to questions 7 and 9 are already known to UNECE secretariat, status can be checked, therefore no need to ask in the survey”.

Question 11. Which of the following infrastructure requirements for border crossing points open for international goods traffic does your country meet?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Facilities for joint controls with neighbour States (one-stop technology), 24 hours a day;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Separation of traffic for different types of traffic on both sides of the border allowing to give preference to vehicles under cover of valid international Customs transit documents or carrying live animals or perishable foodstuffs;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Off-lane control areas for random cargo and vehicle checks;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate parking and terminal facilities;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proper hygiene, social and telecommunications facilities for drivers;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate facilities for forwarding agents, so that they can offer services to transport operators on a competitive basis.

Hungary checked the first three boxes making the comment that the “first one does not apply to trucks”.

Turkiye made a more general comment: “With regards to the renovation of our BCPs in line with the One Stop Project, Karkamış, Çobanbey, Kapıköy, Sarp, Kapıkule, Hamzabeyli, Öncüpınar, İpsala and Habur BCPs are modernized. The works on Pazarkule, Dereköy, Türkgözü, Gürbulak, Üzümlü and Zeytin Dalı BCPs are ongoing”.

Belarus checked the last five of the six boxes. Lithuania checked the last five of the six boxes. Czech Republic commented “As stated above, we don’t have any external land border”.

IV. Preliminary conclusions from the survey

6. Since only five countries replied to the questionnaire and Turkiye provided some updates, we cannot really provide any analysis or preliminary conclusions from the survey. Instead, we are reproducing the preliminary conclusions of 2017 if they are of any value for the Working Party.

Preliminary conclusions of 2017 survey.

7. The analysis of the replies shows that the Contracting Parties have achieved progress in improving border crossing procedures in their countries under several topics. The progress is widespread, in particular concerning provisions such as: providing information to all parties involved in transport operations: creating priority to urgent consignments (perishable goods and live animals) and improving infrastructure at border crossing points.

8. With regard to specific parts of the survey, conclusions are as follows:

(a) Official publication of Annex 8: Whereas most respondents mentioned their publishing Annex 8, there are countries who stated that the Annex has neither been published nor scheduled to be published. In this regard, it should be pointed out, once more, that regardless of domestic approval/publication procedures, Annex 8 has become legally binding for all Contracting Parties as of 20 May 2008.

(b) Facilitation of visa procedures: Most respondents indicated that measures have been taken in their countries in order to facilitate the granting of visas for professional drivers. What is noticeable about these measures is that they are provided mostly on a basis of reciprocity. Furthermore, there is still a significant number of Contracting Parties that have not acted on this issue yet.

(c) Providing information to all parties: All the countries that responded, share information with parties involved in transport about border control requirements in force or planned and the actual situation at borders. They utilize several different instruments, including electronic means, to send information as soon as possible.

(d) Transfer of control procedures: The progress is rather limited on this topic. Particularly, the transfers of inspection and weighing of vehicles, and quality controls to the places of departure and destination are rarely realized.

(e) Priority for urgent consignments: All respondents indicated that they have taken measures to give priority to urgent consignments. However, among these measures, cooperation with other Contracting Parties regarding sanitary inspections seems to be the least applied.

(f) Technical inspection of vehicles: There is very limited application of the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections, 1997. Most of the respondents are neither Contracting Party to this agreement nor accepting the International Technical Inspection Certificate as provided for in the agreement (also reproduced in Appendix 1 to Annex 8).

(g) Carriage of perishable foodstuffs: Almost all respondents indicated that they are Contracting Party to the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and the Special Equipment to be used for such Carriage, 1970 (ATP).

(h) Use of IVWC: There are some respondents who state that they accept IVWCs issued in other Contracting Parties, however there is no progress in the Contracting Parties in authorizing weighing stations to issue certificates since the last survey.

(i) Infrastructure requirements: Most countries meet several of the infrastructure requirements, whereas the level of conformity is limited in the cases of separation of traffic and the availability of facilities for drivers and forwarding agents.

9. The conclusions from the analysis indicate that Contracting Parties are successfully implementing several provisions of Annex 8. However, there is also a need for further action on topics such as: use of IVWC; facilitation of visa procedures; transfer of control procedures from the border crossing points to places of departure and destination; accession to the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections (1997) and acceptance of the International Technical Inspection Certificate, etc.

10. The Working Party may wish to consider actions to stimulate further implementation of the provisions of the Harmonization Convention and of its Annexes.
