THE RECENT PROGRESS OF TRADE FACILITATION AND UN/EDIFACT IN THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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1. The preparation of the present Regional Report coincided with the issue of the Final VEDIP Report (Visegrad EDI Project) - COMMERCE LINK", elaborated with EDIFRANCE. The CEEC/EB Secretariat therefore recommends to consider both reports, despite the risk of some duplication.

2. It can be concluded from both reports that the integration of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the European and world economic structures stimulates further the development of Trade facilitation and UN/EDIFACT. The situation in some of the countries in the region, according to the national reports received, is as follows.

1. BULGARIA

3. The structural reform carried out by the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria aims at a thorough change of proprietors' market behaviour and at the creation of modern conditions for the fulfilment of economic activities, including the introduction of advanced technologies. That is precisely the aspect of consideration of the development of Trade facilitation and UN/EDIFACT in Bulgaria.

1.1. Institutions and Standardization

4. According the Decision No 313 taken in 1993 by the Bulgarian Government for the procurement of conditions for Trade Facilitation and UN/EDIFACT, an Inter-Institutional Commission has been set up, comprising representatives from most ministries, the National Statistical Institute, the National Bank; this commission coordinates the actions of the state administration in that area.

5. A wide activity is being conducted on the harmonization of Bulgarian standards with the International and European standards:

- the Bulgarian Committee on Standardization has approved Bulgarian State Standards, equivalent to the following ISO standards related to Trade Facilitation: ISO 6422, ISO 8440, ISO 3166, ISO 8601 and ISO 4217. Other Bulgarian Standards, equivalent to ISO 7372 and ISO 9735, are in the process of approval;

- the Technical Committee on Standardization in the telecommunications, in close cooperation with ETSI (European Telecommunications Standards Institute) has created and introduced in Bulgaria a number of equivalents to ISO and ETSI standards in the field of telecommunications;

- the National Statistical Institute, in accordance with ECE/FAL Recommendation Nr. 8 "UNIC", has set up a new system of unique national classification of enterprises and companies - BULSTAT;

1.2. Awareness and Education
6. The Bulgarian Foundation "Development of the Civil Society", in collaboration with the Association of Bulgarian EDI users EDIBUL, has undertaken a Special Programme for awareness in the non-economic areas, such as health care, social security, justice, employment, environment protection etc. including:

- the creation of a Special Information Fund collecting the data about applications of EDI and UN/EDIFACT in the areas mentioned above;
- fulfilment of corresponding inquiries;
- seminars, publications etc.

7. BULPRO has published in Bulgarian the majority of ECE/FAL Recommendations for Trade Facilitation.

8. Students education:
- at the Plovdiv University, in the "Informatics" Department, "EDI" has been made a subject;
- at the University for National and World Economy in Sofia, in the "Business logistics" department, a cycle of lectures on EDI has been set up;

1.3. EDI - initiatives

9. In banking, EDI has been implemented in the following aspects:

- a number of banks (around 20) are linked to the international SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) system;

- the National System for Interbank Payments "BISSERA", operated by "BankService" Ltd, implements EDI between the National Bank and the commercial banks under an internally adopted standard "BUS" adopted by the Committee of Unification and Banking Standards (CUBS). The new version of the system will support new communication environment and will implement the UN/EDIFACT standard for developing exchanged messages;

- to support relations "bank-client", the Association of the Commercial Banks is studying the development of a subset corresponding to the payment documents accepted by CUBS.

10. In the transport area:

- in the frame of COST 320 project of EU, a pilot project has been undertaken to perform EDIFACT exchange of international railway CIM-consignment notes, arrival notices and cargo manifests;

- in the air cargo transport, experiments have been conducted through the international telecommunication system SITA for EDIFACT-exchange of air bills of lading.

- the project to build up a modern Financial Management System for the Bulgarian State Railways includes EDI-applications.

- the Ministry of Transport is setting up a Special programme for the implementation of EDI in Transborder Transport Corridors.

11. In commerce - a group of Bulgarian companies for wine trading is launching an investigation aiming at the implementation of EDI-exchange in co-operation with EDIVIN.
12. In social security - the recently created National Institute for Social Security under the umbrella of the Ministry of Labour and Social Care has begun the creation of a national-wide Information System for Social Security with the financial support from EC. The technology of the system includes the exchange of EDIFACT messages (primarily, in the field of pensions fund).

2. POLAND

13. In 1995, after the liquidation of the Organization "Foundation for Polish Export" and of the POLPRO Office, the development for promotion and implementation of EDI and UN/EDIFACT in Poland was taken over by a new Organization, "EDI Center -Poland" (CEDIP) - formerly "PLODETTE", under the auspices of the Polish Federation of Science - Technical Association in close cooperation with the Group of experts for electronic documents in the frame of the Board for Teleinformatic of the Board of Ministers Office and private company EDIPOL Ltd.

14. CEDIP formally took over the POLPRO Office and, as an independent non-governmental organization, has 43 members (the number of members will exceed 100 by the end of 1996). The members of CEDIP are from the industry, banks, administration and others, and are the potential users of EDI. CEDIP is an official member of the ODETTE organization. Working through the Group of experts, CEDIP implement EDI and EDIFACT in the Polish industry, trade, transport and administration. The practical transmission of UN/EDIFACT messages (ORDERS, ORDRSP, ORDCHG, INVOIC, DELFOR, DESADV) between the companies of automotive industry and their suppliers has been implemented. For the transmission between Polish suppliers and GM-OPEL factories in use, are the ODETTE messages DELINS and AVIEXP but they will be changed for EDIFACT messages. The exchange of EDIFACT messages also covers Trade, Shipyards, Metallurgy, Telecommunications and Transport.

15. The GE for Electronic Documents conducted by the Polish National Bank (Department of Informatics) in which participate the experts from banks, administration, trade and industry, is working on EDI legal regulation on the basis of documents issued by the ECE and taking into account the documents developed in EU on the legal problems concerning the use of electronic documents and EDI.

16. Special groups under the auspices of the Polish Bank Union and the Commercial Bank in Warsaw, in cooperation with CEDIP and EDIPOL, works on the implementation of UN/EDIFACT messages for banking procedures. The first five messages are ready to be implemented (PAYORD, FINSTA, BANSTA, CREADV and DEBADV); others are in progress. The Banking Group through CEDIP will cooperate with SWIFT - "Core financial Implementation Guidelines Group". CEDIP will also cooperate with EUROPROM, CEFACT and other organizations dealing with EDI and Electronic Commerce.

17. After the improvement of the telecommunication infrastructure in Poland (4 national and 5 private packet switching network operators and private VAN operated by EDIPOL named VANPOL devoted specially for EDI), there is a good base for the development of EDI and the wide implementation of standard messages.

18. One of the main topics of the CEDIP activity is the awareness, promotion and popularization of UN/EDIFACT. All basic materials of the UN/EDIFACT standard base, such as directories, guidelines, status 2 messages, have been translated into Polish and published. The interested companies have access to the EDI reference database which is served by SEDIP. The “Compendium of Trade Facilitation Recommendations” has also been translated into Polish. "The Trader's ABC", received
from EFTA, was distributed to interested trade companies. Over 140 specialists participated in the "IV National EDI Conference"(Lodz, June 1996) . The II Conference "EDI in Polish Industry" organized by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and CEDIP for biggest companies in Poland is scheduled 7-8 October 1996. CEDIP obtained support from EC "PHARE" for the organization of 8 regional conferences, seminars and awareness campaign on EDI. The PHARE support covers also the wide publications issue on EDI, EDIFACT and Electronic Commerce; among them are "The Practical EDI Implementation Guidelines", "EDI Glossary" etc. The permanent training and courses for EDI users are organized for companies which have decided to implement EDI.

3. SLOVAK REPUBLIC

In the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) the so-called SLOVAKPRO section started work in March 1996 on the Programme on Facilitation of Trade Procedures. This section was created in June 1995 and nowadays comprises 17 private companies.

3.2. The SLOVAKPRO section is not yet accredited to represent the Slovak Republic (SR) abroad but it cooperates closely with the Ministry of Economy of SR and with the Central Customs Administration of the SR (CCA). In the legislation field, it cooperates with the Ministry of Finance of SR.

3.3. The section is fulfilling its mission. The working plan for 1996 year concentrates on two main goals:

- education;
- support of the EDIFACT pilot project.

3.4. The Ministry of Economy of the SR, in cooperation with SCCI and the Office for Normalization, Metrology and Testing (ONMT), organized in June 1995 a special seminar "Implementation EDI-EDIFACT" in which participated Mr. Willis J. Keenan, regional adviser, UN/ECE in Geneva. Participants received the Fifth booklet in a series of five EFTA publications, which describe different aspects of trade procedures, with the aim of providing guidance in international trade relationships. SCCI translated one serie on the implementation of EDI-EDIFACT and published it as a "Set of recommendations on Facilitation of Trade Procedures and Implementation of EDI-EDIFACT".

3.5. Education is mainly provided by a specialist on EDI - Mr. Herbert E. Thomas. His work has been funded by PHARE. Mr. H. Thomas has already trained members of the SLOVAKPRO section and has participated on the pilot project EDIFACT. Training for regional representatives of the SCCI will be provided in October this year.

3.6. The EDIFACT pilot project is prepared by the banking sector. The SLOVAKPRO section is participating on the localisation of EDIFACT messages. 12 messages from the areas of finance, trade, customs and transport have been selected. Particular messages are prepared in the working groups of specialists with the assistance of Mr. Herbert E. Thomas. The INVOIC and PAYMUL messages are ready.. Other financial messages (CREMUL, DEBMUL, FINSTA) are in under progress. The pilot project is expected to be completed by the end of December this year.

3.7. In accordance with the pilot project, cooperation with CCA is taking place. The CCA works on its own system for customs. The CCA is interested in participating in the project.

3.8. The SLOVAKPRO section is preparing the seminar on EDIFACT which will be held in November. This seminar is designed for companies and state organizations in the Slovak Republic.
4. YUGOSLAVIA

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is not a member of CEEC/EB. Notwithstanding this, the Secretariat of CEEC/EB has included in the present Regional Report an excerpt of the National Report on the EDI/EDIFACT development in this country.

4.1. The Federal Institute for Standardization has approved as JUS standards the following ISO standards: ISO 9735, ISO 7372, ISO 6422, ISO 8440, ISO 3166, ISO 8601, ISO 4217;

4.2. The Association of EDI users YUEDI now comprises over 120 members. Since June 1993, YUEDI has organized three National Conferences and over 10 promotive meetings throughout Yugoslavia. The Association has been setting up a BBS - the information system for dissemination of EDI-related documents. The section for Automobile Industry of YUEDI hopes to become a member of ODETTE in 1996;

4.3. Currently more than 5000 organizations are linked to the network of the Agency for Clearance and Payment of the National Bank of Yugoslavia and are performing remote payments through EDI applications developed by the Agency. It is expected that this system will be changed to a central financial EDIFACT service provider;

4.4. In the new Draft Law of Accounting that the Government has sent to the Parliament, the electronic documents based on JUS/UN/EDIFACT standards and registered by authorized service providers are accepted as legal documents.