UN/CEFACT PROGRAMME OF WORK 2019 - 2020

Summary

This document presents the Programme of Work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) for 2019-2020.


The document was then presented to the 105th meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe’s Executive Committee on 29 May 2019 where it was approved (ECE/EX/2019/L.5).

Economic Commission for Europe
Executive Committee
Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Twenty-fifth session
Geneva, 8-9 April 2019
Item 8 of the provisional agenda
United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)
structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures


Summary
This document presents the Programme of Work of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) for 2019-2020.

Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/21 is submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau to the twenty-fifth session of the Plenary for approval.
I. Introduction

1. This document presents the Programme of Work (PoW) of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) for 2019-2020.

2. It is submitted by the UN/CEFACT Bureau to the twenty-fifth session of the Plenary for discussion and approval, and will be subsequently submitted for approval to the Executive Committee of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/CEFACT).

3. It is consistent with the streamlined project-oriented management approach adopted at the Plenary’s eighteenth session in February 2012 and the associated revised foundation document updated during the twenty-fourth session “UN/CEFACT Structure, Mandate, Terms of Reference and Procedures” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2017/15/Rev.1). The PoW for 2019-2020 also aligns with the document “UN/CEFACT Prospective Directions” (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20/Rev.1).

4. Activities are driven by the expressed needs of the member States and the recommendations of the UNECE Executive Committee for UN/CEFACT.

II. Key elements of UN/CEFACT’s vision and mandate

5. UN/CEFACT’s vision is “simple, transparent and effective processes for global commerce”.

6. Within the United Nations framework, under the Economic and Social Council, UNECE serves as the focal point for trade facilitation recommendations and electronic business standards, covering both commercial and government business processes that can foster growth in international trade and related services. In this context, UN/CEFACT was established as a subsidiary intergovernmental body of UNECE, mandated to develop a Programme of Work of global relevance to achieve improved worldwide coordination and cooperation in these areas.

7. UN/CEFACT supports activities dedicated to improving the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations from developed, developing and transition economies to trade in products and relevant services effectively. Its principal focus is on facilitating national and international transactions through the simplification, standardization and harmonization of processes, procedures and information flows, thereby contributing to the growth of global trade.

8. UN/CEFACT provides an opportunity for public and private sector experts to work together under the guidance of its Plenary, Bureau and secretariat in order to develop a body of freely available recommendations, standards and guidance materials that can help reduce regulatory and procedural barriers to facilitate trade. Its experts conduct projects within the Plenary-approved Programmes of Work, using a transparent methodology and the Open Development Process\(^1\), respecting the Intellectual Property Rights Policy\(^2\) and adhering to its Code of Conduct\(^3\).

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\(^2\) See Updated UN/CEFACT Intellectual Property Rights Policy (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/ 2010/20/Rev.2) at
III. Programme of Work for 2019-2020

9. Cross-border standardization, simplification and harmonization are fundamental tools for the facilitation of international trading processes and form the nucleus of UN/CEFACT work. This trade facilitation mission supports the objectives of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which references and emphasizes the importance of several topics covered by UNECE recommendations (Single Window, National Trade Facilitation Bodies, etc.) and encourages the use of international standards.

10. The focus areas of the PoW for 2019-2020, described below, reflect the UN/CEFACT Prospective Directions (ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2016/20/Rev.1) adopted by the UN/CEFACT Plenary at its twenty second session. By taking this approach, it is possible to streamline the presentation of the PoW and to bring to the attention of the Plenary and Executive Committee the different types of substantive work that experts intend to address.

11. The key focus areas of the PoW for 2019-2020 demonstrate the following:
   (a) An emphasis on efforts to study, develop or revise trade facilitation recommendations and standards;
   (b) An emphasis on supporting interoperability across the many existing, new and future technology platforms (in other words the ability of these systems to exchange data) by acting as a semantic hub that advances the development of technology-neutral semantics, code lists, process and data reference models and best practices;
   (c) Increased accessibility of UN/CEFACT work products, especially to new stakeholders involved in the development of web and mobile applications; and
   (d) Support to member States and stakeholders who wish to take full advantage of the UN/CEFACT family of standards to address their requirements in trade facilitation and electronic business.

A. Progressing trade facilitation and supporting its implementation

12. UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and other deliverables can be used by governments and businesses to implement different aspects of the WTO TFA. The TFA specifically encourages member States to follow best practices in the form of international standards and to participate in the review and development of these standards. In addition to contributing to the implementation of trade facilitation under the WTO TFA, UN/CEFACT deliverables can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.\footnote{At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25 September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes a set of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300} UN/CEFACT will continue to develop further deliverables to support...
implementation of the WTO TFA, to help achieve the United Nations SDGs and to help advance trade facilitation in general.

13. Current research activities indicate several potential projects, including a number of revision projects for existing deliverables that may benefit from maintenance and possible updating. These include:

(a) Recommendations and other deliverables related to different aspects of Single Window including a revision of the base guidance of Recommendation 33, a project on the core principles of Single Window operation, and deliverables related to integrated risk management, Single Window environment, and Single Submission Portal initiatives that can facilitate trade for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) such as the Integrated Services for MSMEs in International Trade (ISMIT);

(b) Development of studies, recommendations and standards for traceability, transparency and visibility in the supply chain (including agriculture products and bi-products, fisheries/fish catches and other commodities as well as for circular and sustainable supply chains in textile, garment, leather and food products and raw materials in general) in order to encourage responsible consumption and production patterns;

(c) Support of food safety, animal health and a reduced environmental footprint in food production through the electronic exchange of harmonized information about chemical and drug usage in food production and products to ensure responsible consumption and production, as well as climate control action;

(d) Maintenance and development of standards, recommendations and guidelines supporting the sustainable procurement process;

(e) Updating and expanding the United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG);

(f) Development and maintenance of standards, including the Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (FLUX), Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF), electronic laboratory results (eLAB), electronic Sanitary/Phyto-Sanitary Certificate (eCert), and electronic quality certificate;

(g) Development and maintenance of standards on Sustainable Tourism Experience Programs information processes; and

(h) Development and maintenance of standards, including standards related to supply chain management, visibility, transport, logistics and other domains.

B. Providing semantic interoperability

14. The semantics of business data exchange, i.e. the basic, common and shared meanings for business terms and information, are essential to the standardization and harmonization of business interactions across the world.\(^5\) UN/CEFACT develops deliverables which support this harmonization such as the United Nations Core Component Library (UN/CCL) and Business Requirement Specifications (BRS) (describing syntax neutral business processes). UN/CEFACT will be the semantic hub for all its internal

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\(^5\) See Plenary document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/27 on the importance of semantics in standards and trade facilitation.
deliverables and will also aim to coordinate and bring together the needs of other organizations.

15. Activities that enable UN/CEFACT to provide and support semantic interoperability include:

(a) Continued development and maintenance of the United Nations Core Component Library (UN/CCL);

(b) Continued development and maintenance of the Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) standard;

(c) Continued development and maintenance of the United Nations Location Codes For Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE);

(d) A project to separate the Code Lists from the syntax to make their reuse easier;

(e) Projects to promote reconciliation for traders, including revisions of Supply Chain Cross Industry artefacts such as Catalogue, Quotation, Ordering, Delivery, Receiving Advice, etc.;

(f) Projects to support regulatory oversight and control and to support certification; and,

(g) Work on the supply chain process, procurement process, and in areas such as agriculture, transport and others.

16. In addition, UN/CEFACT will continue to maintain and develop Reference Data Models (RDMs) which provide a logical grouping of information by sector and facilitate the reuse and dissemination of its semantic work. There are plans to expand the offerings from the initial RDMs for Supply Chain (SCRDM) and Multi-Modal Transport (MMT RDM) to include those for other sectors, including an overarching RDM for Buy-Ship-Pay, and those for Accounting and Audit, Agriculture, Cross-Border, Travel and Tourism and potentially others.

C. Developing further guidance and standards

17. UN/CEFACT is structured in Programme Development Areas, each supported by several domains and focal points. These have an important role in helping to monitor emerging business processes as well as new information and communication technologies. UN/CEFACT will provide guidance to governments, business and its experts on how to leverage the power of new developments, such as blockchain technology, through the use of existing UN/CEFACT deliverables or the development of new deliverables. In addition, UN/CEFACT will, at the request of the user community, develop guidelines on how to use its deliverables, including in the context of new technologies.

18. Potential guidance and standards projects include:

(a) A project to rationalize and harmonize maintenance procedures for all semantic artefacts;

(b) The development of a financial value chain solution, (e.g. purchase order financing request);

(c) A project on accounts reconciliation (a key, resource intensive activity in accounting, finance and logistics);

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6 Blockchain is a new technology widely used to develop new applications for the trustworthy exchange of financial and trade data.
(d) A study to examine existing cyber security issues, including digital stakeholder identification for trade, data production and retention rules and to potentially develop guidance in this area;

(e) Work on the digitalization of international motor insurance certificates to ensure innovation and infrastructure;

(f) Projects on the reimbursement of health claims to support access to quality, essential healthcare services and access to safe, effective and affordable essential medicine and vaccines for all;

(g) The development of standards and recommendations to enhance the harmonization, exchange and processing of certificates used in trade;

(h) Work on a mutual recognition mechanism to facilitate domestic and cross-border paperless trade; and,

(i) Recommendations and standards relevant to existing UN/CEFACT domains such as Transport and Logistics; Supply Chain Management and Procurement; Agriculture, Fisheries and Agrifood; Travel and Tourism; etc.

19. UN/CEFACT foresees the need for guidance and standards on new technologies to ensure the continued applicability of its deliverables in the context of an evolving technological environment. Work in this area may include:

(a) The creation of Naming and Design Rules (NDRs), technical guidelines and other artefacts that support the publication of UN/CEFACT hierarchical data exchange semantics in a way that is accessible to web developers and which will facilitate the accessibility of these deliverables to a broader audience of web platform implementers;

(b) The specification of NDRs for Core Component Business Document Assembly (CCBDA) to provide standard methods to define the business documents in eXtensible Markup Language (XML) using semantic components of standardized CCBDA Message Assemblies;

(c) The exploration of technologies like blockchain and their potential incorporation into various areas of UN/CEFACT work such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence, modern-day web development tools and into specific trade-related areas—followed by the development of relevant standards and guidance material for their application, including recommendations and other deliverables; and

(d) Examination of possible trade finance applications such as in the IoT field engaging with subject matter experts and collaborating with other domains.

D. Updating existing deliverables

20. UN/CEFACT will monitor its deliverables through its domains and working teams. The objective of such reviews shall be to identify the continued relevance of these deliverables and their coherence with other current UN/CEFACT deliverables.

21. The following deliverables are among those targeted for update:

(a) (BRS, Requirements Specification Mappings (RSM), CCBDA artefacts and reference data models;

(b) UNECE Recommendation n° 2: “Codes in Trade Documents”;


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(c) UNECE Recommendation n° 7: “Numerical Representation of Dates, Time and Periods of Time”;

(d) UNECE Recommendation n° 16: The rules governing the maintenance of the United Nations Location Codes for Trade and Transport (UN/LOCODE);

(e) UNECE Recommendation n° 18: “Facilitation Measures Related to International Trade Procedures”; and

(f) Improvement of the codes, code lists and identifiers used in relation to persons, goods, products and locations in trade and agriculture, as well as their usage, definitions, harmonization and legal base.

E. Proposing comprehensive deliverables based on the Buy-Ship-Pay model

22. Efforts will continue to be made to ensure that comprehensive end-to-end solutions based on the Buy-Ship-Pay model are freely available to the trade user community. Gap analyses will be conducted to identify areas where guidance or standards are needed to cover the full set of supply chain processes involved in cross-border and domestic trade for different sectors.

23. This will be achieved through the development of deliverables that address all areas covered by Buy-Ship-Pay including:

(a) Detailing the standard state changes of Buy-Ship-Pay entities so that more granular data streams can be traced to meaningful, higher-level events—to enable supply chain monitoring and visibility;

(b) Track and trace for logistics, supply chain and regulatory needs, including continued work on the tracking and monitoring of devices linked to containers and/or goods;

(c) Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) to support animal health and wellbeing; and

(d) Identifying new projects in areas relevant to the Buy-Ship-Pay scope such as data pipelines for on-time and accurate cross-border regulatory reporting, manufacturing, materials management, scheduling, public procurement and purchase order financing.

F. Improving communications, increasing participation and advisory services

24. UN/CEFACT will develop guidance material for the use of its deliverables, adapted to different target audiences. Particular focus will be placed on the creation of guidance material to make current deliverables more discoverable, accessible and adapted to various audiences.

25. Internal communication will be maintained, and external communication will be enhanced.

26. Through the UNECE secretariat, UN/CEFACT will work together with other organizations of the United Nations system and relevant organizations to provide advisory services in developing and transition-economy countries adopting its recommendations, standards and best practices.

27. The following activities are among those that will promote improved communications and increased participation:
(a) The organization of meetings, seminars/webinars and capacity-building workshops to inform stakeholders about UN/CEFACT deliverables, to encourage their participation in UN/CEFACT work and to assist governments and other stakeholders in the use of UN/CEFACT deliverables and best practices;

(b) The preparation of implementation guidelines for UN/CEFACT deliverables at the policy, operational and technical levels;

(c) Engagement in targeted outreach to other relevant organizations on specific issues (e.g. the Transport and Logistics Domain in order to increase awareness of the MMT RDM, and the Supply Chain Domain to increase awareness of the SCRDM) to encourage wider contributions to the work and reuse of these standards; and

(d) Identification of and engagement with relevant international and regional users of international standards in Single Window and National Trade Facilitation Bodies.

G. **Enhancing cooperation with other United Nations bodies**

28. In order to ensure the coherence of guidance provided by United Nations bodies in the spirit of the “One UN” principle, UN/CEFACT works closely with the UNECE Executive Committee, the secretariat, and other bodies of the UNECE and United Nations such as the other United Nations Regional Commissions, United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL); United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); International Trade Centre (ITC); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); International Telecommunication Union (ITU); Universal Postal Union (UPU); International Maritime Organization (IMO); International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

29. To effectively fulfil its mandate of global outreach, UN/CEFACT will also seek to enhance, through the UNECE secretariat, collaboration with all the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions.

30. Activities to enhance cooperation with other United Nations bodies include involving them according to their expertise and interest in:

   (a) Relevant areas of United Nations Core Component Library (UN/CCL) development, including Reference Data Models;

   (b) The global and regional survey on trade facilitation and paperless trade in cooperation with the other UN Regional Commissions; and

   (c) Supporting all United Nations bodies in the trade facilitation and electronic business aspects of their work, including to achieve relevant goals in the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development.

H. **Enhancing cooperation activities with other standards bodies through bilateral agreements**

31. UN/CEFACT will seek to actively engage with other organizations, through the UNECE secretariat, to ensure the coherence of its work with that of other organizations, to announce its projects in a timely manner (in order to avoid duplication of efforts) and to find ways to further enhance cooperation. An important vehicle for this will be the Memorandum of Understanding on e-Business between the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNECE.
32. Some activities for consideration for enhancing cooperative activities with other standards bodies through bilateral agreements include:

(a) Developing the UN/CCL and RDM;
(b) Holding webinars on subjects of joint interest;
(c) Preparing informative reports for other standards committees to highlight and disseminate our work;
(e) Enhancing collaboration with the World Customs Organization on regulatory issues related to cross-border management;
(f) Working jointly with IEC on core components used in energy (electricity and gas);
(g) Working jointly with ISO TC/154 on UN/EDIFACT, the United Nations Trade Data Element Directory (UNTDED) and others, as appropriate;
(h) Updating and publishing the UNTDED; and
(i) Improving cooperation with appropriate standardization committees and bodies.

I. **Seeking new cooperation with other standards bodies**

33. Cooperation with other standards bodies will be sought by:

(a) Encouraging them to join the development and review work within UN/CEFACT;
(b) Engaging with them in discussions on cooperation, establishing liaison or contact points; and,
(c) Where useful and appropriate, establishing new bilateral agreements through the secretariat.

34. Activities to consider that may enhance cooperative activities with other standards bodies (without bilateral agreements) include UN/CCL and RDM development.
Annex

Proposed publications for 2019-2020

A. Recurrent publications

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B. Non-recurrent publications

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Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Committee

Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Twenty-fifth session
Geneva, 8-9 April 2019

Item 8 of the provisional agenda
United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)
structure, mandate, terms of reference and procedures


Addendum

Summary


Document ECE/TRADE/C/CEFACT/2019/21/Add.1 is submitted to the twenty-fifth session of the Plenary for approval.
Annex

Proposed publications for 2019-2020

B. Non-recurrent publications

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<td>Trade Facilitation Recommendations on Disaster Recovery Relief Importations</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Trade Facilitation: An English-Russian-Chinese Glossary of Terms</td>
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