



## Conclusions and Recommendations from the second technical workshop

### *“Single Window and Data Sharing in the Western Balkans: Implementing Specific Trade Facilitation Measures”*

Skopje, 4-5 September 2019

For a second time, as part of the overall work on improving connectivity in the Western Balkans, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Customs Administration of Northern Macedonia, working this time with the World Bank, organized a technical cooperation workshop on Single Window and Data Sharing in the region: *“Single Window and Data Sharing: Implementing Specific Trade Facilitation Measures”*, in Skopje, Northern Macedonia, from 4 to 5 September 2019. The target audience were experts from the Western Balkans and the international community dealing with Single Window for export and import clearance, data harmonization and data sharing. The objectives were to review progress in the Western Balkans since the previous workshop (Skopje 15-16 November 2018), strengthen the network of experts in the Western Balkans, UNECE, UN/CEFACT, the European Commission, and especially with other actors: the World Bank, CEFTA, and the SEED project on customs cross-border data exchange. The work on data sharing harmonization is expected to be linked to the upcoming World Bank-supported Single Window and other customs modernization project in six Western Balkan countries. A specific goal of the workshop was to review international standards for data and document exchange and data modelling that could be included in the blueprints for the national Single Window projects in the Western Balkans. Interoperability of Single Window and other IT systems facilitating international trade in the broader European space can only be achieved by using in these systems harmonized semantic standards for data sharing in the process of regulation of international trade.

This was an interactive workshop where representatives from the Western Balkans presented their work on the Single Window, digital Customs, interagency and international data exchange. Experts from UNECE, the Directorate General for Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) of the European Commission, and the Chair of the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), project managers of the World Bank Single Window project, CEFTA and the SEED project presented their current work on the Single Window, and discussed how to use international standards and data models.

Mr. Gjoko Tanasoski, Director General of the Customs Administration of Northern Macedonia strongly supported the objectives of the workshop.

The participants put forward the following recommendations:

1. The workshop urges the Western Balkan countries to strengthen their efforts in preparing for their projects on national Single Window systems, as defined in UNECE Recommendation 33, with the use of international standards and data modelling:
  - a. Enhance the understanding in the national trading communities of the benefits from the Single Window for export, import and transit clearance;
  - b. Build political will for establishing Single Window, especially for interagency cooperation for the Single Window;
  - c. Ensure the coherence of customs data and other cross-border agencies with the B2B information originating from the private sector. Use UN/CEFACT tools (Reference Data Models) for harmonizing data from various sources, which can be fed into the regulatory Single Window.
  - d. Work with the international community (UNECE, the European Commission, the World Bank, and other organizations) on building national capacities for data harmonization using international standards for data exchange.
2. Strengthen the focus of these projects on integration of data flows with the European Union, reflecting the orientation of trade flows and the European integration perspective of the Western Balkans.
3. The Western Balkan countries, the European Commission, the UNECE and its subsidiary body UN/CEFACT, the World Bank, CEFTA and SEED should strengthen the network of experts in support of regular cooperation on the national Single Window and data harmonization issues. Continue efforts to engage UNCTAD/ASYCUDA and other organizations in this supportive network.
4. The use of the following standards and tools should be emphasized: the Buy-Ship-Pay Reference Data Models developed by UN/CEFACT and the EU Customs Data Model. These will be used for defining standardized collection of information from business as required by cross-border regulatory agencies to be fed into the Single Window.
5. Explore with the European Commission the use of the EU CSW-CERTEX<sup>1</sup> and TRACES platforms, both of which utilize the UN/CEFACT standards as well as the EUCDM.
6. All Western Balkan countries should continue working on implementing fully automated electronic customs declarations. Cooperation and convergence towards the EU Single Window environment for Customs could be a strategic objective.
7. They should intensify efforts to involve all relevant regulatory agencies to participate in the Single Window projects.
8. They should also use Business Process Analysis, to re-engineer business processes and make them suitable for Single Window electronic data exchange.
9. Existing systems, such as the EXIM Single Window, should be updated to integrate paperless Customs declaration. These systems should be aligned to the EU CDM as well as the UN/CEFACT relevant standards for regulatory and trade transactions (Reference Data Models, UNTDED, UN/CCL, recommendations, codes and other tools) and the EU CSW-CERTEX. Capacity-building on these tools should be envisaged.

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<sup>1</sup> The Western Balkan countries could use the EU Customs Single Window CERTEX (EU CSW-CERTEX) Guide for the integration of electronic certificates and licenses in each of their national Single Windows.

10. The participants recommended deepening the collaboration between the experts in the countries, UNECE, UN/CEFACT, DG TAXUD, the World Bank, CEFTA, ASYCUDA, USAID and others, so that the World Bank's support to Western Balkan countries can be aligned with their general orientation to European integration.
11. Continue the organization of practical training events to raise the capacity of technical experts in the Western Balkan countries on system development and data harmonization. Arrange a train-the-trainer exercise on data harmonization and the use of the EU CDM, TRACES and EU CSW-CERTEX for relevant experts from the Western Balkans. Request the World Bank and CEFTA to support this work.
12. All relevant trade regulatory agencies in the Western Balkan countries are encouraged to participate in the data harmonization exercises and use data modelling instruments.
13. North Macedonia shall elaborate, with the National Trade Facilitation Committee as the focal point and make a best effort to implement a National Trade and Transport Facilitation Monitoring Mechanism (NTTFMM) as defined in UN/CEFACT Recommendation 42. All Western Balkan countries are invited to consider establishing a NTTFMM.
14. Organize a follow-up meeting (physical or virtual) in 2020 to review progress. Consider a project approach to the above issues, in collaboration with the World Bank, CEFTA, DG TAXUD, UNCTAD, USAID, and other partners.