



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
31 July 2012

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport

132th session

Geneva, 9–12 October 2012

Item 8 (b) (i) of the provisional agenda

**Customs Convention on the International Transport of
Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention, 1975):
Revision of the Convention –
Preparation of Phase III of the TIR revision process**

Report of the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure on its twentieth session

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Attendance.....	1–2	3
II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)	3	3
III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)	4	3
IV. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system (agenda item 3)	5–6	3
V. Reference model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 4)	7–11	4
A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points	7–8	4
B. International declaration mechanisms.....	9–10	4
C. eTIR Reference Model, version 3.0.....	11	5
VI. Financial implications of the introduction of the eTIR international system (agenda item 5).....	12–14	5
VII. eTIR in a single window environment (agenda item 6)	15	6
VIII. Dematerialization of documents attached to the TIR Carnet (agenda item 7).....	16–18	6

IX.	Other business (agenda item 8)	19-22	7
A.	World Customs Organization activities	19-20	7
B.	Other activities of interest.....	21	7
C.	Date and place of next session	22	7

I. Attendance

1. The Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (further referred to as “the Expert Group”) held its twentieth session on 19 and 20 April 2012 in Prague, at the kind invitation of the Czech Customs administration. In her opening statement Mrs. Vendulka Hola, Deputy Director General of Customs, confirmed the ongoing support of the Czech Customs authorities for the activities of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in general and the eTIR Project in particular.

2. The session was attended by experts from Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. Experts representing the European Commission (EC) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also attended the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2012)

3. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2012) without further amendments.

III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

4. The Expert Group re-elected Mr. P. Arsic from Serbia as Chair of the Expert Group for the year 2012 and Mrs. N. Özyazıcı Sunay from Turkey as Vice-Chair.

IV. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system (agenda item 3)

5. IRU presented their continuous efforts to fully computerize the private aspects of the TIR procedure. More specifically, IRU presented the latest developments of their CUTE-Wise, TIRCUTEweb and AskTIRweb applications as well as the increased use of the TIR-EPD and Real Time SafeTIR (RTS) applications. To date, 21 countries accept pre-declarations made through TIR-EPD and 12 countries transmit termination data using RTS. IRU also informed that it had started considering the issuance of electronic guarantees by national associations.

6. The Expert Group confirmed that its meetings constitute an important platform for experts to share information and best practices on developments and experiences regarding information and communication technology (ICT) usage in the framework of the TIR procedure and encouraged participants and interested Parties to continue this practice in the future.

V. Reference model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 4)

A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2012)

7. The Expert Group took note of Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2012) and welcomed the recent nomination of additional eTIR focal points. It decided to consider the comments provided by eTIR focal points on document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/9 under agenda item 4 (b), together with the rest of the results of the survey undertaken among focal points on the use of electronic signatures.

8. The Expert Group invited eTIR focal points to become more proactive and provide inputs for GE.1 meetings at their own initiative. It also stressed the importance for those Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention that have not yet nominated an eTIR focal point to do so in the near future.¹

B. International declaration mechanisms

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2012), ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/9

9. The Expert Group reconsidered the proposal to introduce international declaration mechanisms in the eTIR project, as presented in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/9, in the light of the results of the survey on the use of electronic signatures in the framework of the eTIR project, contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2012), as well as comments by eTIR focal points, in Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2012).

10. The Expert Group acknowledged the necessity to provide the transport industry with a variety of options to submit electronic information to Customs. Considering that, despite the introduction of a standard declaration message in the eTIR Reference Model, national declarations mechanisms might still differ between countries, in particular when it comes to authentication of the sender of the information, the Expert Group felt that it was essential to include international declaration mechanisms in the eTIR project. The survey on the use of electronic signatures in the framework of the eTIR project confirmed that most countries require the use of electronic signatures or other authentication mechanisms for the transmission of advance cargo information. In most countries, only national (or at best: regional) electronic signatures are accepted and, at present, only a few countries recognize foreign certification authorities (CA) for the issuance of legally binding electronic signatures. The Expert Group confirmed that, as long as internationally recognized CA's have not been developed and recognized, it will be extremely difficult to implement the cross-border use of electronically signed documents. The Expert Groups noted that 50 per cent of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that an international CA could be used if recognized by an international agreement and half of those considered that the TIR Convention could be considered as providing an appropriate platform for that purpose. Consequently, the secretariat was requested to further explore the possibilities to include international declaration mechanisms, for example by means of trusted third party solutions and directly in the eTIR international system, possibly linked with the authorization procedure of TIR Carnet holders. Finally, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to redraft a proposal to include international declarations mechanisms in the eTIR Reference Model for its next meeting, underlining that a realistic proposal should be based on

¹ The list of eTIR focal points is on the eTIR web site: www.unece.org/trans/bcf/eTIR/focals.html.

authentication mechanisms (e.g. user/password) and trusted system-to-system information exchanges (e.g. Virtual Private Network), rather than on electronic signatures.

C. eTIR Reference Model, version 3.0

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2011/4, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/4, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/10

11. The Expert Group took note of minor errors in the eTIR Reference Model. It requested their correction (including in the XML schemas published on the eTIR website) and the issuance of a version 4.0 of the eTIR Reference Model containing chapters 1 to 4, as already published in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2011/4, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/4 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/10 and available at the TIR and eTIR websites.

VI. Financial implications of the introduction of the eTIR international system (agenda item 5)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 4 (2012), Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2012), Informal document GE.1 No. 6a (2012), Informal document GE.1 No. 6b (2012), Informal document GE.1 No. 6c (2012), Informal document GE.1 No. 6d (2012), Informal document GE.1 No. 6e (2012).

12. The Expert Group took note of Informal document GE.1 No. 4 (2012) containing the contribution of the World Customs Organization (WCO) to the cost assessment for establishing the centralized eTIR international system. It recognized, in particular, the many similarities between the eATA and the eTIR projects and the envisaged IT architectures to enable them and noted, with appreciation, that the general magnitude of the estimated costs of both projects was similar. At the same time, it recalled that, a comparison of the exact figures might be misleading, as the functionalities of the two systems are different.

13. The Expert Group also welcomed information on the SPEED project, provided by the EC in Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2012) and noted positively that SPEED could be ultimately used to link the European Union (EU) Customs transit systems with the eTIR international system.

14. The Expert Group welcomed the draft cost-benefit analysis (CBA), presented in Informal documents GE.1 Nos. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d and 6e (2012). The Expert Group welcomed the summary presentation by the secretariat, but expressed its regret that the consultants had not been in a position to attend the meeting themselves in order to present the CBA and take part in the ensuing discussions. The Expert Group expressed its general consent with the methodology used by the consultants, while, at the same time, raising preliminary comments with regard to various assumptions used by the consultants in the course of the CBA. Inter alia, the Expert Group was of the opinion that the two scenarios described in the CBA (gradual introduction of eTIR Carnets versus the one time replacement of the paper TIR system by an electronic system, the so-called “big-bang” scenario) were too optimistic and requested the unrealistic “big-bang” scenario, to be replaced by a more pessimistic (read: more realistic) one. In reply to suggestions that the scenarios used should be based on complex forecasts on the long-term development of transport flows between TIR Contracting Parties, the secretariat explained that, considering the limited budget, the consultants were not requested to undertake such a complex simulation exercise. As a consequence, it should be clearly understood that, while comments to improve quality are most welcome, suggestions which go beyond the defined scope of the CBA cannot be taken into consideration. To wrap up its initial discussions on the issue, the Expert Group

requested additional time in order to provide the secretariat in writing with its comments on the draft CBA and proposed that eTIR focal points would also be given the opportunity to submit their contributions. Further to this request, the secretariat was requested to send an email to eTIR focal points, soliciting their considerations on the draft CBA. Deadline for submission of written contributions for both the Expert Group and eTIR focal points was set at 15 May 2012. The secretariat stressed the importance that comments, rather than being generic or proposing a substantial or methodological re-assessment of the CBA, be accompanied, to the extent possible, by concrete proposals in order to allow the consultants to improve the final CBA.

VII. eTIR in a single window environment (agenda item 6)

15. The Expert Group took note of the European Union Taxation and Customs Union Directorate General (DG TAXUD) plans relative to the implementation of the Single Window (SW) concept. It noted that the objective was to develop an EU Customs Single Window that would in the first phase focus on the automated electronic validation of documents/licences submitted with Customs declarations. Finally, the Expert Group welcomed the long term objective to enable economic operators to request and access information or documents from various competent authorities in a centralized and harmonized way across all EU member States.

VIII. Dematerialization of documents attached to the TIR Carnet (agenda item 7)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/13.Rev.1, Informal document GE.1 No. 7 (2012)

16. The Expert Group considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/13/Rev.1, prepared by the secretariat on the revised results of the TIR specific questions included in the WCO survey on dematerialization. The Expert Group reiterated its thanks to WCO for having accepted to amend the questionnaire and also for having agreed to distributing the full results of the questionnaire to the Expert Group (see Informal document GE.1 No. 7 (2012)).

17. France informed the Expert Group that it had started projects to dematerialize both commercial and governmental documents. The first are, so far, made available on third party repositories as scanned images, and the latter are fully dematerialized, so that the information so far contained in the paper documents is now available directly in databases and can be accessed in both human and machine readable formats. The Expert Group invited France to present its experiences with this issue in more detail at the next session.

18. Aware of the various options available to dematerialize attached documents, GE.1 requested the secretariat to prepare a document for its next session presenting concrete amendments to the eTIR Reference Model to reference, link or send dematerialized attached documents. To the extent possible, the amendments should be based on the WCO Data Model and, if necessary, the secretariat should submit data modification requests (DMR) to the Data Model Project Team (DMPT) with the aim to include the missing options in the "Attached documents" class.

IX. Other business (agenda item 8)**A. World Customs Organization activities**

19. The Expert Group was informed that the DMPT has amended the WCO Data Model to include information related to intellectual property rights. The DMPT has also remodelled the overall message structure to allow for the electronic exchange of licences and permits.

20. The Expert Group welcomed a presentation by Belarus, elaborating its initiative to request the inclusion of transit as a utility block (UB) in the WCO Globally Networking Customs (GNC) project. GE.1 expressed its support for this initiative and invited the Belarus representative to keep the Expert Group informed of further progress on this issue. The Expert Group recognized that including eTIR in such a UB would not only leverage the development of the eTIR project as such but also the activities of GE.1 as a whole. Thus, the Expert Group invited Customs authorities and the TIR secretariat to support the Belarus initiative.

B. Other activities of interest

21. The secretariat informed the Expert Group of the approval by the UN General Assembly of the United Nations Development Accounts (UNDA) project and briefly presented the scope of the project and the activities envisaged in the project document.

C. Date and place of next session

22. The Expert Group welcomed the kind invitation of the Slovak Customs administration to host the twenty-first session in Bratislava on 25–26 September 2012.
