



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 November 2011

Original: English

Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport

130th session

Geneva, 7–10 February 2012

Item 10 (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 nineteenth session

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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 nineteenth session on 13 and 14 September 2011 in Belgrade, at the kind invitation of the Serbian Customs administration.
2. The session was attended by experts from Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia, Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Turkey as well as from the European Union (EU). Experts representing the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)/World Chambers Federation (WCF) and from the International Road Transport Union (IRU) also attended the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/6

3. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/6.

III. New information and communication technology developments in the TIR system (agenda item 2)

4. The Expert Group conducted this part of the session by means of presentations delivered by various participants. All presentations are available on the eTIR website (<http://etir.unece.org>).
5. The presentation by Poland clarified the use of the NCTS-TIR module in Poland and presented various developments in the Polish Customs, such as, the integration of the IRU TIR Electronic Pre Declaration (TIREPD) and its usage by transport operators. At present, TIREPD in Poland is used by 15 per cent of the operators submitting data electronically to NCTS. The presentation also highlighted some shortcomings resulting from the fact that TIR is not yet fully computerized, such as the absence of benefits for trade as long as electronic TIR data are used in addition to the paper TIR Carnet. IRU presented the latest developments of their AskTIR and TIRCute applications as well as increased usage of TIREPD and Real Time SafeTIR (RTS). Finally, the Expert Group was informed of the status of the SEED project (Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data) in the Balkan region and welcomed that this project was making full usage of the eTIR Reference Model to allow the exchange of TIR related information.
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.

IV. Reference model of the TIR procedure (agenda item 3)

A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/8

7. The Expert Group took note of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/8 and decided to discuss its content under agenda item 3 (b). The Expert Group invited eTIR focal points to be more proactive and provide inputs for GE.1 meetings at their own initiative. It also stressed the importance for all Contracting Parties to the TIR Convention to nominate an eTIR focal point.¹

B. eTIR Reference Model, version 3.0

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/9, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2011/4, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2011/5

8. The Expert Group took note of requests by WP.30 at its 128th session, and reconsidered two proposals to amend the eTIR Reference Model, version 3.0a, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2011/4.

9. On the basis of the proposal contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2011/5 and the recommendations by the eTIR focal points, contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/8, the Expert Group reconsidered the proposal to make use of the guarantee chain's database(s) to validate guarantees which have not yet been accepted by Customs. The Expert Group was of the view that, though technically feasible, the proposal would increase the complexity of the eTIR system without there being any indication or justification given with regard to possible benefits. On the contrary, this proposal does not entail a necessity for the guarantor to register guarantees with the eTIR international system in the first place, nor is there any consequence attached to the guarantor's failure to do so. This could have very negative consequences on the functioning of the backup procedures. In conclusion, it was decided to inform WP.30 that, from a technical and conceptual perspective, the Expert Group recommended not pursuing this proposal, leaving it up to WP.30 to decide if, for political reasons of the system, this option could nevertheless be maintained.

10. The Expert Group also reconsidered the proposal to include international declaration mechanisms in the scope of the eTIR project on the basis of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2010/9, prepared by the secretariat in collaboration with experts from Czech Customs. While highlighting the absence of global international agreements on electronic signatures, the Expert Group took note that some countries impose the use of national certification authorities when it comes to signing electronic documents intended for governmental agencies. The Expert Group felt that there was insufficient information to take a decision on the issue and requested the secretariat to launch a survey among both TIR and eTIR focal points, aimed at gathering information from all TIR Contracting Parties on the current and expected practice, rules and regulations on electronic signatures. In the absence of internationally recognized certification authorities, the Expert Group also considered two alternative options: on the one hand, the Expert Group envisaged that the advanced cargo information could be signed by a representative (an entity that would assist transport operators to submit their data electronically and sign on their behalf), and, on the other hand, it also considered that authentication of the electronic advance cargo

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

information by means of a hash code could be sufficient. In the latter case, transport operators would not need to be authenticated to be able to send their electronic information and the actual act of submission of the declaration would be accomplished by means of the presentation of the vehicle, the goods and the reference to the information submitted electronically by the transport operator at the Customs office of departure or entry (en route).

C. Chapter 4 – Design

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

11. The Expert Group welcomed document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/10, containing the eTIR XML messages structures and guidelines and thanked Dutch Customs for their extensive contribution. The Expert Group confirmed that XML Schema Definition (XSD) files will not be included in the eTIR Reference Model but rather made available on the eTIR web site. The Expert Group decided to keep the E9 and E10 XML messages fully compatible with the World Customs Organization (WCO) implementation guidelines and agreed that they would be amended in case WCO would decide to introduce more generic message headers in the WCO DM version 4. It also decided that, at this stage, it will only use those supplementary components that are used in UN/EDIFACT messages.

12. Finally, in view of the current lack of available resources, the Expert Group was of the view that the rest of Chapter 4, as contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/4, should be completed at a later stage, when resources would be available or as part of the development of the eTIR international system, but certainly not before any specific technical architecture of the eTIR international system would have been selected, most likely on the basis of a, still to be conducted, cost-benefit analysis.

V. Financial implications of the introduction of the eTIR international system (agenda item 4)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/11

13. The Expert Group considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/11, submitted by IRU. The Expert Group thanked IRU for the information provided but noted the absence of specific estimates of the costs of its IT systems. It welcomed an invitation to visit, in conjunction with one of its future sessions in Geneva, the IRU IT services to be informed of the architecture and resources used.

14. The Expert Group expressed its appreciation of all information received so far, and decided that all contributions received until 30 November 2011 would be considered as constituting a sufficient basis to prepare a cost-benefit analysis of the eTIR system (to be prepared by the secretariat, or an independent contractor, for consideration at its next session).

VI. eTIR in a single window environment (agenda item 5)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/12

15. The Expert Group considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/12 and confirmed that eTIR integrates in the general evolution towards the implementation of single windows (SW) for two main reasons: on the one hand, it is based on international standards, such as the WCO data model, ensuring the re-usability of information. On the

other hand, eTIR further facilitates the work of transport operators by means of accepting the submission of “one time” declarations, thus acting as an international SW.

16. The Expert Group decided to consider, at its next session, a study undertaken by the European Union Directorate General Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) on SW, before establishing, if and how, eTIR could also provide information to participating governmental agencies (PGA) other than Customs authorities. The Expert Group was of the view that the inclusion of all PGA requirements did not fall within the scope of the eTIR Project, except, perhaps, in those cases where such information would be provided by means of an efficient solution for the dematerialization of attached documents.

VII. Dematerialization of documents attached to the TIR Carnet (agenda item 6)

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/13

17. The Expert Group considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2011/13, prepared by the secretariat. The Expert Group thanked WCO for having accepted to amend its questionnaire, which now includes some specific questions on TIR. It took note that in a significant number of countries documents need to be attached to the TIR Carnet and discussed the various options for the dematerialization of attached documents proposed by the secretariat. As a first step, rather than selecting a single option, the Expert Group decided that some options could already now be discarded, i.e. the options to include a scanned image of the document as part of the declaration. In addition, the Expert Group recommended that further parameters, such as additional costs and time impact be considered when deciding on the most appropriate option(s).

18. The Expert Group highlighted that it is important to first identify the specific moment in time when documents are required before being in a position to decide which option(s) would be the best to pursue. It looked forward to receiving the full results of the WCO questionnaire to clarify this issue. For now, the Expert Group considered that the option to provide a link and the hash code of documents stored securely by the transport operators, seemed very promising. The Expert Group requested the secretariat to further liaise with WCO to pursue this issue.

VIII. Other business (agenda item 7)

A. World Customs Organization activities

19. The Expert Group was informed that the Data Model Project Team (DMPT) had started working on version 4 of the WCO Data Model. The DMPT is now working in subgroups, one of which deals with the issue of supporting document. The UNECE secretariat will take part in the discussions of this subgroup at the DMPT, in October 2011.

20. The Expert Group also took note that an eATA² feasibility study had been undertaken but that, so far, the results of that study remained confidential. In addition, the

² The ATA is a system allowing the free movement of goods across frontiers and their temporary admission into a Customs territory with relief from duties and taxes. The goods are covered by a single document known as the ATA carnet that is secured by an international guarantee system. The term "ATA" is a combination of the initial letters of the French words "Admission Temporaire" and the English words "Temporary Admission".

Expert Group would appreciate receiving information on progress made in the Global Networking Customs (GNC) project at its next meeting.

B. Other activities of interest

21. The secretariat informed the Expert Group about the preparation of its United Nations Development Accounts (UNDA) project. While awaiting the forthcoming approval of the project by the UN General Assembly, the secretariat was already in the process of preparing a detailed project description.

C. Date and place of next session

22. The Expert Group, not being in a position to agree on a specific date for its next session, requested the secretariat to propose tentative dates for its next session, possibly in the second half of April 2012, and transmit them to the Group at the first opportunity.
