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Strategic Questions of a Horizontal and Cross-sectoral Policy or Regulatory Nature: Strengthening Border Crossing Facilitation (TIR Convention, eTIR project, Harmonization Convention and Other Customs Transit Facilitation Measures)

The eTIR International System

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document contains an historical review on the development of the eTIR international system as well as a summary of the activities that took place in 2022 to finalise interconnections of the eTIR international system with the national customs systems of the contracting parties to the TIR Convention.

The Committee may wish to take note the developments on the implementation of the eTIR procedure and the international TIR Data Bank which achieve already one of the main goals of the ITC agenda for 2030 and to invite the TIR contracting parties that have not done it so far, to interconnect their national customs systems with the eTIR international system at the earliest of their operational convenience.

I. Background and Mandate

1. This document has been prepared in accordance with the 2022 programme of work of the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) (ECE/TRANS/316, paragraph 33 and ECE/TRANS/2022/8, programme activity 4 (l): Customs Questions affecting Transport). It reports on the progress made in 2022 by the contracting parties and TIR secretariat on the development of the eTIR international system and its interconnection with national customs systems.

II. The Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, 1975 (TIR Convention)

2. The TIR system is promoted under the auspices of the United Nations to ensure wide availability for all countries wishing to make use of it. In 1984, the Economic and Social



Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) adopted a Resolution (1984/79) which recommends that countries worldwide examine the possibility of acceding to the Convention and introducing the TIR system. Furthermore, it recommends that international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and in particular the regional commissions of the United Nations, promote the introduction of the TIR system as a global customs transit system.

3. Since, on 16 June 2021, the TIR Convention, 1975 entered into force for Egypt. the convention has 77 contracting parties. The TIR system has 65 active TIR countries.

4. The implementation of the TIR Convention can also help countries to meet the numerous transit-related objectives of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO-TFA), which entered into force on 22 February 2017. From the availability and the publication of information to the cooperation between customs administrations, but in particular when it comes to the freedom of transit, the TIR system can be and should be viewed as a valuable tool which would ensure that the transit facilitation commitments arising from WTO-TFA are met.

5. Furthermore, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) recognized the potential of the TIR system in keeping with the objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the decade 2014–2024. The implementation of the TIR Convention can play a significant role in transforming landlocked countries into land-linked countries and thus, greatly increase their trade potential.

III. The Road towards electronic TIR and the development of the eTIR International System

6. At its ninety-fifth session (19–23 June 2000), the Working Party expressed the view that, following the conclusions of Phases I and II of the TIR revision process, the next logical step was to provide the TIR regime with the legal and administrative basis to allow for the use of modern information, management and control technology based on highly automated and secured electronic procedures. The Working Party recognized that computerization of the TIR procedure was inevitable (TRANS/WP.30/190, paragraph 26).

7. The following table summarizes the main milestones in the preparations of annex 11 as well as of the concepts, functional and technical specifications of the eTIR international system since 2000 when the decision to start working on electronic TIR was taken by WP.30.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Main decisions by the Intergovernmental bodies</i>	<i>Versions of eTIR international system specifications approved</i>
2000	WP.30 decided to start working towards the electronic TIR	-
2000	WP.30 decided to establish an ad hoc group of experts on the computerization of the TIR regime	-
2015	WP.30 considered and supported version 4.1 of the eTIR Reference Model, as a basis for future work of GE.2 as well as for pilot projects.	Version 4.1 of the eTIR Reference Model was prepared
	ECE and International Road Transport Union (IRU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the performance of pilot projects based on the version 4.1	-

<i>Year</i>	<i>Main decisions by the Intergovernmental bodies</i>	<i>Versions of eTIR international system specifications approved</i>
	Establishment of the Group of Experts on the Legal Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.2) in order to prepare the new annex 11 to the Convention	-
2017	A new MOU was signed between ECE and IRU for the development of eTIR (5-year project)	Version 4.2 of the eTIR specifications were prepared but not approved by AC.2
	Group of Experts on the Legal Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.2) finalised its mandate	
2020	Adoption by the Administrative Committee of annex 11 and of various amendment proposals to the body of the Convention	-
2021	Annex 11 came into force	The version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications (concepts, functional and technical) were prepared for first time as consolidated documents and in the three ECE languages
	eTIR international system developed by the TIR secretariat based on version 4.3	
	The Technical Implementation body (TIB) as foreseen in annex 11 was established.	
	The 2017 MOU between ECE and IRU was revised and updated based on the new developments (annex 11 coming into force) and extended for addition two years meaning until 2024 included.	
2022	Interconnections of eTIR international system with National Customs Systems started	TIB at its first session (January 2022) adopted version 4.3 of the eTIR technical specifications and confirmed their alignment with version 4.3 of the eTIR concepts and the eTIR functional specifications
	Azerbaijan, Georgia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Türkiye, Uzbekistan and IRU finalised the interconnection projects. Armenia finalised the requirements analysis study. A proof of concept was prepared and agreed with European Commission in order to interconnect the TIR international system with NCTS of the European Union.	AC.2 at its seventy-seventh session (February 2022) adopted the eTIR concepts and the eTIR functional specifications. This provided a complete legal and technical basis for those countries that are willing to implement the eTIR procedure as soon as possible.
	Azerbaijan, Georgia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Uzbekistan and IRU finalised the conformance tests and became operational regarding the eTIR procedure.	
	The first ever eTIR transport based on the convention took place between Azerbaijan and Georgia initiating a new era for the TIR system.	

8. The final objective of the computerization of the TIR procedure encompassed the computerization of the whole TIR Carnet life cycle from distribution, issuance and via the TIR transport to return and repository and it should, ultimately, be aimed at replacing the current paper TIR Carnet without changing the basic philosophy of the TIR Convention. In order to streamline the work towards this challenging objective, it was agreed among the contracting parties that the approach of the computerization process should be focused on the establishment of an international, centralized database, whose aim should be to allow the management by customs of data on guarantees and the exchange of information between customs authorities, being two elements of the TIR Carnet life cycle not computerized so far.

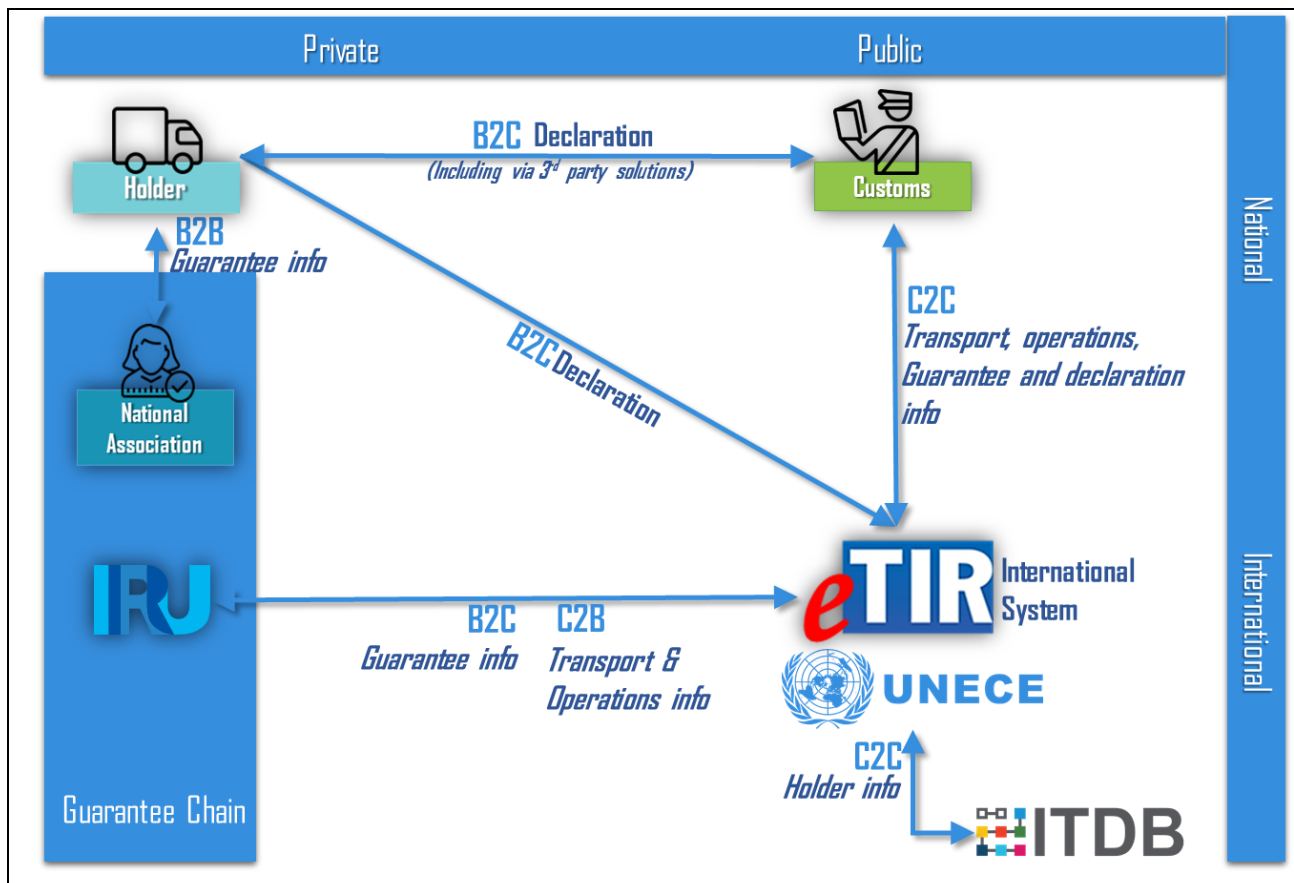
9. Holders, or representatives thereof, are required to send their advance TIR data and advance amendment data only to countries of departure of the TIR transports. The holder can send this information directly to the country of departure using the national declaration mechanisms. Alternatively, the holder can use the national customs system in the holder's country of residence to send declarations to third countries (this functionality is optional for customs systems), use the declaration mechanism in the eTIR international system or use other private services. The eTIR functional specifications define standard messages for that purpose.

10. Annex 11 and the eTIR specifications provide a set of provisions and instructions on how to implement the eTIR procedure. However, unless a specific provision of annex 11 replaces or complements a provision of the TIR Convention, all provisions of the TIR Convention apply, mutatis mutandis, to the eTIR procedure, such as the approval of an international organization, national associations, transport operators and vehicles the organization and functioning of the guarantee system or the management of claims.

11. However, the proper implementation of the eTIR procedure replaces the legal requirements for data submission, as set out in annex 10, paragraphs 1, 3 and 4, and annex 11 contains specific provisions related to the administration of the eTIR specifications.

Figure

The eTIR International System High-Level Architecture



12. The eTIR international system is devised to allow the management by customs of data on guarantees and the secure exchange of data between national customs systems related to the international transit of goods, vehicles and/or containers according to the provisions of the TIR Convention. Therefore, only a part of the information flow required for the functioning of the eTIR procedure is managed using the eTIR international system.

13. On the one hand, the guarantee chain transmits, to the eTIR international system, information on the guarantees it has issued to the holders so that they can be registered in the eTIR international system. The guarantee chain can also query at any time the status of guarantees it has issued and obtain related TIR transport information. On the other hand, customs authorities use the eTIR international system to check the status of guarantees and to exchange information related to the TIR transport and to TIR operations.

14. The management by customs of the data on guarantees and the secure exchange of data between national customs systems in relation to TIR transport information are therefore the two fundamental features of the eTIR international system. Furthermore, the declaration mechanisms allowing the submission of advance TIR data and advance amendment data by the holder to customs authorities are detailed in annex I.

15. The management by customs of data on guarantees requires a strong relationship between the guarantee chain and the eTIR international system. The guarantee chain sends information on each issued guarantee to the eTIR international system. The recording of this information in the eTIR international system is conditional on checks made against the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB) concerning authorized holders.

16. The eTIR system is built around a central platform, the eTIR international system, which is composed of hardware and software, including databases and web services and is developed and hosted by the ECE TIR secretariat. The databases serve to store and make the information available and act as a repository for all information concerning the TIR system, whereas the web services allow for an efficient and secure interfacing between the contracting parties, the guarantee chain and the central platform. The eTIR international system shall store and archive data for a minimum period of ten [10] years.

17. While the introduction of the eTIR procedure (annex 11) does not remove the possibility for transport operators to continue using paper TIR Carnets, the greater facilities provided by the eTIR procedure should progressively encourage transport operators to use it for itineraries where it is possible. However, before being able to replace the TIR procedure by the eTIR procedure along an itinerary, all parties involved in a TIR transport will have to be able to securely exchange declaration data, TIR operations data and data on guarantees.

18. Furthermore, customs administration will have to ensure that national and foreign transport operators can submit advance TIR Data and advance amendment data. As a result, for TIR transports involving countries not yet interconnected with the eTIR international system, the usage of paper TIR Carnets will remain the only possibility to benefit from the TIR Convention. In view of the wide geographical coverage of the TIR Convention, the different levels of technological development of the countries concerned and the existence of customs unions, the duration of the transition may vary from country to country.

IV. Considerations by the Committee

19. The Committee may wish to take note of the developments regarding the implementation of the eTIR procedure and the international TIR Data Bank achieving already one of the main goals of the ITC agenda for 2030 and invite the TIR contracting parties that have not done it so far, to interconnect their national customs system with the eTIR international system at the earliest of their operational convenience.