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Administrative Committee for the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods, 1982

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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda

Application of the Convention:

**Annex 8 on facilitation of border crossing procedures
for international road transport**

Outcome of the 2018 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe survey

Note by the secretariat

I. Background

1. On 20 May 2008, Annex 8 to the Harmonization Convention came into force. According to Article 7 "Reporting mechanism" of the Annex, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) shall carry out, every second year, a survey among Contracting Parties on progress made to improve border crossing procedures in their countries.
2. The last survey was conducted in 2016 and its results were published in 2017 (document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2017/13).
3. In November 2018, the UNECE secretariat initiated the present biennial survey. The survey has been conducted by the questionnaire which was approved by the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) at its 122nd session (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2009/8 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/244, para. 15). The current document contains the summary and the analysis of replies on the progress in implementing Annex 8 on road transport at the national level.

II. Replies

4. The following 25 countries replied to the questionnaire: Albania (incomplete), Belgium, (incomplete), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France (incomplete), Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Latvia, Lithuania, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain (incomplete), Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Uzbekistan (incomplete). Most of the replies were prepared by the national customs administrations. Some replies were prepared by the respective Ministries



of Transport. It is also worth underlining that the countries that had responded to the previous survey(s), were requested to indicate only the changes since then.

III. Results of the survey

5. Statistics of the replies to specific questions is given below.

Question 1. *Please provide information regarding the official publication of Annex 8 in your country.*

	It has been published on _____ (date of publication)
	It is scheduled to be published on _____ (expected date of publication)
	It has neither been published nor scheduled to be published
	Other (please specify) _____

Fifteen countries indicated that they have already published Annex 8. Two countries indicated that it is scheduled to be published. Four countries replied that it has neither been published nor scheduled to be published, whereas one of these countries is a Member State of the European Union, which has already published Annex 8. Another country indicated not having accepted Annex 8.

Question 2. *Has your country taken measures to facilitate the granting of visas for professional drivers in accordance with national best practice for all visa applicants, national immigration rules and/or international commitments?*

	Yes. Please briefly describe these measures: _____
	No. Please briefly explain the reason: _____

Ten countries, which are members of the Schengen Agreement, pointed out that they grant visas in line with this agreement, whereas four others did not, although being Schengen countries as well. Three other countries also indicated granting visa facilitations. Two countries replied not having taken any measures.

Several countries provided as additional information that the visa facilitation process is conducted in the framework of bilateral agreements with third countries or in on the basis of reciprocity.

Question 3. *Does your country regularly exchange information with other Contracting Parties on best practices with regard to the facilitation of visa procedures for professional drivers?*

	Yes
	No

Any additional comments:

Eleven respondents indicated that they regularly exchange information with other contracting parties. Nine countries replied "No".

Some countries commented that such exchange of information is carried out at bilateral consular meetings.

Some countries indicated that this exchange of information is done at meetings among Schengen countries.

Question 4. *How does your country regularly inform all parties involved in international transport operations:*

(a) *on border control requirements for international road transport operations in force?*

(b) *on border control requirements for international road transport operations planned?*

(c) *on the actual situation at borders?*

Six countries skipped this question. Other respondents inform all parties involved in international transport operations on (a) to (c) by the following means:

- via websites in general, and, in particular, to inform about the situation at border crossings;
- at bilateral and multilateral meetings between authorities, associations and private companies;
- by publishing official instructions;
- by publishing announcements at border crossings;
- by correspondence to competent authorities of foreign countries;
- through seminars, workshops and trainings.

Some countries indicated that planned regulations are subject to consultation procedures with other state authorities and trade associations concerned.

Question 5. *Which control procedures have been transferred to the places of departure and destination of the goods transported by road so as to alleviate congestion at the border crossing points?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	None;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medico-sanitary inspection;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Veterinary inspection;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Phytosanitary inspection;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Controls of compliance with technical standards;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quality controls;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vehicle inspections;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Weighing of vehicles;
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

Any additional comments:

The numbers of respondents that have transferred the relevant controls to inland offices are given in the table below.

Medico-sanitary inspection	5
Veterinary inspection	5
Phytosanitary inspection	9
Controls of compliance with technical standards	7
Quality controls	7
Vehicle inspections	4
Weighing of vehicles	3
None	5

One country replied that it inspects the permits for trucks in the inland customs offices to make the journey faster as of 23 June 2014.

One country pointed out that controls are only being processed if legally prescribed and are aimed to be “one stop shop” when possible. Furthermore, phytosanitary inspections can be conducted at the place of destination if certain conditions are met in accordance with Council Directive 2000/29/EC (EU legislation).

One country indicated that, in exceptional circumstances, the competent authorities (veterinary, phytosanitary) may decide to carry out physical inspections inland. That country also pointed out that vehicle inspections are preferably carried out inland, to the extent possible.

One country responded that it has not transferred any of the mentioned control procedures, apart from the control procedures related to the TIR regime.

Two countries did not provide an answer to this question.

Question 6. *Which measures have been undertaken at the border crossing points in your country in order to give priority to urgent consignments, e.g. live animals and perishable goods?*

Waiting times for vehicles transporting such goods have been minimized;

Required controls are carried out as quickly as possible;

Refrigerating units of vehicles carrying perishable foodstuffs are allowed to operate during the time of crossing the border;

Cooperation with other Contracting Parties regarding sanitary inspections of such goods.

The numbers of respondents that have undertaken relevant measures are given in the table below.

Waiting times for vehicles transporting such goods have been minimized	14
Required controls are carried out as quickly as possible	20
Refrigerating units of vehicles carrying perishable foodstuffs are allowed to operate during the time of crossing the border	14
Cooperation with other Contracting Parties regarding sanitary inspections of such goods	812

Question 7. *Is your country a Contracting Party to the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections (1997)?*

Yes (go to question 9)

No (go to question 8)

Seven countries stated they are contracting parties to the 1997 Agreement, twelve responded “No”, whereas three countries did not provide an answer, whereas one of them is a contracting party and the other two are signatories.

Question 8. *Does your country accept the International Technical Inspection Certificate as provided for in the above Agreement (also reproduced in Appendix 1 to Annex 8)?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Four countries accept the certificate, whereas seven do not.

Question 9. *Is your country a Contracting Party to the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and the Special Equipment to be used for such Carriage (1970)?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Nineteen respondents are contracting parties to the 1970 Agreement, whereas four are not.

Question 10. *Does your country accept the International Vehicle Weight Certificates (please refer to Appendix 2 to Annex 8) issued in other Contracting Parties?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes (go to questions 11, 12 and 13)
<input type="checkbox"/>	No (go to question 14)

Any additional comments:

Nine countries responded that they accept the International Vehicle Weight Certificate (IVWC), whereas ten countries do not. Four countries did not provide a reply.

One country, while accepting IVWC issued in other countries, mentioned not yet having assigned a national competent authority.

Question 11. *Has your country approved weighing stations which are authorized to issue the International Vehicle Weight Certificates?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Any additional comments:

Most respondents skipped this question. Five countries indicated the approval of weighing stations which are authorized to issue the IVWCs.

Question 12. *Has your country published a list of all weighing stations authorized to issue the International Vehicle Weight Certificates?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Any additional comments:

Three countries which responded positively to the previous question, indicated that they have published a list of weighing stations authorized to issue the IVWCs, whereas two countries indicated that this falls outside the competence of customs.

Question 13. *Has your country transmitted this list to UNECE?*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

Any additional comments:

Two countries responded to this question positively, however ECE has not received any list until now.

Question 14. *Which of the following infrastructure requirements for border crossing points open for international goods traffic does your country meet?*

	Facilities for joint controls with neighbour States (one-stop technology), 24 hours a day;
	Separation of traffic for different types of traffic on both sides of the border allowing to give preference to vehicles under cover of valid international Customs transit documents or carrying live animals or perishable foodstuffs;
	Off-lane control areas for random cargo and vehicle checks;
	Appropriate parking and terminal facilities;
	Proper hygiene, social and telecommunications facilities for drivers;
	Adequate facilities for forwarding agents, so that they can offer services to transport operators on a competitive basis.

The numbers of respondents that have met the relevant infrastructure requirements are given in the table below.

Facilities for joint controls with neighbour States (one-stop technology), 24-hour a day	8
Separation of traffic for different types of traffic on both sides of the border allowing to give preference to vehicles under cover of valid international Customs transit documents or carrying live animals or perishable foodstuffs	11
Off-lane control areas for random cargo and vehicle checks	13
Appropriate parking and terminal facilities	15
Proper hygiene, social and telecommunications facilities for drivers	9
Adequate facilities for forwarding agents, so that they can offer services to transport operators on a competitive basis	10

Four countries pointed out that, as European Union member States, they do not have external borders crossed by road.

One country informed about preparing its ports for Brexit.

One country (Turkey) elaborated on its national legislation, the objective of which is to prevent the congestion and delays at border crossing points (BCPs). At BCPs only transit transactions are performed; whereas import and export transactions are performed at inland customs. In order to improve and reinforce insufficient infrastructure of BCPs, which is sometimes seen as obstacles to international road transport operations, Turkey has introduced a Build-Operate- Transfer Model that is mainly based on Public-Private Partnership. In this modernized BCPs, proper infrastructure necessities, such as offices for control and inspection staff, laboratories, parking areas, side roads, electric and communications services are available. The modernization projects were completed for Kapıkule (Bulgaria), Gürbulak (Iran), Habur (Iraq), Cilvegözü (Syria), Hamzabeyli (Bulgaria) and Sarp (Georgia) BCPs. By doing so, congestion at these BCPs was alleviated, the pass and legal procedures were also facilitated. Furthermore, by means of the U-NET Automation System located at almost all BCPs, the availability of licenses, vehicle identification cards, permits and their validity are checked automatically. By means of this system, procedures that used to last 30–35 minutes now only take 3–4 seconds. The system

enables express consignments, live animals and perishable goods to pass quickly through BCPs. A new tool to facilitate declaring advance cargo information (including Ro-Ro) to the customs system, called TIRCUS, was introduced on 25 April 2017.

IV. Preliminary conclusions from the survey

6. The analysis of the replies shows that, since the entry into force of Annex 8, contracting parties have achieved progress in improving border crossing procedures in their countries for several topics. The progress is widespread, in particular concerning provisions such as: providing information to all parties involved in transport operations: creating priority to urgent consignments (perishable goods and live animals) and improving infrastructure at border crossing points.

7. With regard to specific parts of the survey, conclusions are as follows:

(a) Official publication of Annex 8: Whereas most respondents mentioned having published Annex 8, there are still four countries which stated that the Annex has neither been published nor is it scheduled to be published. One contracting party reported not having accepted Annex 8. In this regard, it should be pointed out, once more, that regardless of domestic approval/publication procedures, Annex 8 has become legally binding for all contracting parties as of 20 May 2008.

(b) Facilitation of visa procedures: Most respondents indicated that measures have been taken in their countries in order to facilitate the granting of visas for professional drivers. What is noticeable about these measures is that they are provided mostly on a basis of reciprocity or within the framework of the Schengen Agreement.

(c) Providing information to all parties: Only about half of the countries that responded, share information with other parties involved in transport about border control requirements in force or planned and the actual situation at borders. They utilize several different instruments, including websites, the publication of official communications and announcements at borders, to send information as soon as possible.

(d) Transfer of control procedures: The progress is rather limited on this topic. Particularly, the transfers of inspection and weighing of vehicles, to the places of departure and destination are rarely realized.

(e) Priority for urgent consignments: The great majority of respondents indicated that they have taken measures to give priority to urgent consignments and to conduct required controls as quickly as possible. However, among these measures, cooperation with other Contracting Parties regarding sanitary inspections seems to be the least applied.

(f) Technical inspection of vehicles: There is very limited application of the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections, 1997. Most of the respondents are not a contracting party to this agreement nor do they accept the International Technical Inspection Certificate as provided for in the agreement (also reproduced in Appendix 1 to Annex 8).

(g) Carriage of perishable foodstuffs: Almost all respondents indicated that they are contracting party to the Agreement on the International Carriage of Perishable Foodstuffs and the Special Equipment to be used for such Carriage, 1970 (ATP).

(h) Use of IVWC: About half of the respondents state that they accept IVWCs issued in other Contracting Parties, whereas the other half does not. Five countries reported having approved weighing stations authorized to issue such certificates. Three out of them reported having published a list of weighing stations, whereas two reported having transmitted this list to ECE. At present, no such lists are known to be archived with ECE.

(i) Infrastructure requirements: Most countries meet several of the infrastructure requirements, in particular off-lane control areas for random cargo and vehicle checks.

8. The conclusions from the analysis indicate that Contracting Parties are successfully implementing several provisions of Annex 8. However, the need remains for further

improvement on topics such as: use of IVWC; facilitation of visa procedures; transfer of control procedures from the border crossing points to places of departure and destination; accession to the Agreement Concerning the Adoption of Uniform Conditions for Periodical Technical Inspections of Wheeled Vehicles and the Reciprocal Recognition of such Inspections (1997) and acceptance of the International Technical Inspection Certificate, etc.

V. Preliminary assessment by the secretariat of all surveys each

9. Since the entry into force of Annex 8 in 2008, five biennial surveys have been conducted, having between seventeen and twenty-five respondents. And whereas, all in all, thirty eight countries have ever replied to the survey, only three countries replied to each one of them, whereas fourteen countries have only replied once, making it difficult to judge the quality of the data or allowing to make useful comparisons between the various surveys, considering, also, that it remains unclear whether any further developments have taken place since then or whether future surveys simply remained unanswered. The fact that the results of the surveys are anonymous further complicates any reasonable comparison, for example by means of following the developments in one or the other area for any given country. Also, surveys are often incomplete, due to the fact that customs, not being the only competent authority, failed to collect data falling within the competence of other ministries or agencies.

10. The Committee may wish to consider how to address the survey of Annex 8 for the future.
