


Economic Commission for Europe

Inland Transport Committee

Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport
147th session

Geneva, 10-13 October 2017

Item 3 (b) (ii) 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 twenty-sixth 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	3
V. eTIR pilot projects (agenda item 4)	6-9	3
A. UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project between Iran and Turkey	6	3
B. eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey	7-9	4
VI. Findings of the Group of Experts on Legal Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (agenda item 5)	10-13	4
VII. eTIR conceptual, functional and technical documentation (agenda item 6).....	14-35	5
A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points	14	5
B. Version 4.2 of the eTIR conceptual, functional and technical documentation	15-16	5
C. Amendments	17-35	6

1.	Safety and security data elements in eTIR messages	18-21	6
2.	Accompanying document	22-23	7
3.	Usage of the eTIR functional and technical specifications	24-26	7
4.	Direct submission of advance cargo information by transport operators	27	7
5.	Refusal by customs to begin a TIR transport or to start a TIR operation	28	8
6.	Attribute for the termination type	29	8
7.	Change of seals en route	30	8
8.	Sequence of messages	31	8
9.	Holder and guarantee information in TIR operation related messages ..	32	8
10.	Compatibility with standards	33-34	9
11.	Amendments related to the GE.2 findings	35	9
VIII.	Other business (agenda item 7)	36-38	9
A.	World Customs Organization activities	36	9
B.	Other activities of interest	37	9
C.	Date and place of next session	38	9

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 twenty-sixth session on 18 and 19 May 2017 in Geneva (Switzerland).

2. The session was attended by experts from Bulgaria, Estonia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Experts from the European Union (EU), the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the World Customs Organization (WCO) also attended the session.

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2013)

3. The Expert Group adopted its provisional agenda as contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 1 (2017).

III. Election of officers (agenda item 2)

4. The Expert Group elected Mrs. K. Markó from Hungary as Chair of the Expert Group for the year 2017 and Mr. H. Greven from the Netherlands as Vice-Chair.

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

5. No new information and communication technology developments in the TIR system were brought to the attention of the Expert Group under this agenda item.

V. eTIR pilot projects (agenda item 4)

A. UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project between Iran and Turkey

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2017)

6. The Expert Group welcomed the final report of the UNECE-IRU eTIR pilot project between Iran and Turkey contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 2 (2017) as well as the information on the project provided by the Turkish delegation, IRU and the secretariat. It welcomed the successful conduct of 64 eTIR transports. The Expert Group recalled that the pilot project allowed, inter alia, a first important step towards a fully-fledged eTIR international system, namely the development and deployment at UNECE of a first lightweight version of the eTIR international system. Considering that most of the issues raised in the course of the pilot project had already been included in Informal document GE.1 No. 9 (2017), the Expert Group decided to discuss the feedback from the pilot project under agenda item 6 (c).

B. eTIR pilot project between Georgia and Turkey

7. The Expert Group took note of progress in the Georgia-Turkey eTIR pilot project launched in the framework of the United Nations Development Accounts project “Strengthening the Capacities of Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition to Facilitate Legitimate Border Crossing, Regional Cooperation and Integration”. The Expert Group recalled that, at this stage, this project does not involve the private sector as the project focuses on testing the customs-to-customs exchange of TIR data.

8. Moreover, the Expert Group noted that, following the successful conduct of tests allowing the secure “push” of information from the central exchange platform (CEP) to the Turkish customs IT system using a web service developed for that purpose, the project should soon be ready to be moved from the test environment to the production environment.

9. The secretariat informed the Expert Group that, in the framework of the collaboration between UNECE and IRU on eTIR, efforts will be made to find synergies between both projects and, possibly bring the private sector into this project.

VI. Findings of the Group of Experts on Legal Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (agenda item 5)

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2017)

10. The Expert Group considered Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2017) on the activities and findings of the Group of Experts on Legal Aspects of the Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.2) at its third session and took note of the oral information provided by the secretariat on the main findings of GE.2 at its fourth session, held on 16 and 17 May 2017.

11. More specifically, the Expert Group noted that GE.2 had decided to develop an optional Annex to the TIR Convention and necessary amendments to the main body of the TIR Convention, including the establishment of a Technical Implementation Body (TIB) that would be tasked with maintaining and updating the functional and technical documentation of the eTIR international system. The Expert Group was also informed that GE.2 had, for the sake of legal clarity, introduced a definition of the eTIR procedure to be included in Article 1 of the TIR Convention. Concerning financing, GE.2 confirmed the recommendation by the Expert Group namely that maintenance costs of the eTIR international system could be covered by means of an amount per transport. However, GE.2 was of the view that a decision on the required funds for the initial development and deployment of the system should be taken by the Contracting Parties. To this effect, the issue will be brought to the attention of the Working Party at its next session in June 2017.

12. Other decisions by GE.2 that the Expert Group considered to be of relevance for its work included:

(a) to include a definition of the accompanying document and fall-back procedure in the legal framework;

(b) to stipulate a minimum duration of data storage for the eTIR international system;

(c) to stipulate, in the legal framework, that other than the mandatory acceptance of data submitted via the eTIR international system, national authorities can decide on other nationally applicable methods of submitting advance cargo information, as well as other authentication methods;

(d) to make the use of the International TIR Data Base (ITDB) mandatory for those Contracting Parties applying the optional Annex;

(e) to mandate the secretariat to look into appropriate ways of incorporating the requirements of Annex 10 into the application of the new optional Annex.

13. As a final point, the Expert Group noted that GE.2 had requested to hold virtual consultations for finalizing the draft Annex and necessary amendments to the TIR Convention, in order to transmit a complete draft for the consideration of the Working Party on Customs Question affecting Transport (WP.30) at its October 2017 session. Against this background, GE.2 was of the view that, pending any final decision by WP.30, an extension of its mandate will not be necessary and that any further work on the draft can take place within the forum of WP.30 and with the participation of all Contracting Parties. In this context, the Expert Group decided to take due account of the findings of GE.2 and to make any necessary adjustments to the conceptual, functional and technical documentation.

VII. eTIR conceptual, functional and technical documentation (agenda item 6)

A. Contributions by the network of eTIR focal points

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 4 (2017)

14. The Expert Group took note of Informal document GE.1 No. 3 (2016), in particular that thirty-one countries have nominated one or more eTIR focal points.¹ The Expert group requested the secretariat ask eTIR focal points to provide their comments on version 4.2 of the eTIR conceptual, functional and technical documentation as soon as all documents are finalized. The Expert Group also requested the secretariat to copy TIR focal points in this communication.

B. Version 4.2 of the eTIR conceptual, functional and technical documentation

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2017), Informal document GE.1 No. 6 (2017)

15. The Expert Group welcomed Informal document GE.1 No. 5 (2017) and Informal document GE.1 No. 6 (2017). It also took note that, due to a delayed recruitment procedure at the TIR secretariat, Informal document GE.1 No. 7 (2017) and Informal document GE.1 No. 8 (2017) could not have been finalized on time for the session. The Expert Group recalled the main changes, which were introduced at its request:

- the subdivision of the eTIR Reference Model in four documents, i.e. eTIR introduction, eTIR concepts, eTIR functional specifications and eTIR technical specifications;
- the addition of an annex containing the Joint Statement on the computerization of the TIR procedure, as endorsed by AC.2 on 11 June 2015;
- the deletion of Chapter 1.4;
- the deletion of the UN/EDIFACT message descriptions;

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

- the deletion from the documents of code lists that are not eTIR specific. However, for ease of reference, the code lists will be published in Extended Markup Language (XML) and PDF on the eTIR website or, whenever possible, a link to the code list published by the code list maintaining agency will be included on the eTIR website;
- various minor amendments.

16. The Expert Group also agreed with a proposal from the Netherlands that XML guidelines should be added to the technical specifications.

C. Amendments

Documentation: Informal document GE.1 No. 9 (2017)

17. The Expert Group carefully considered the various amendment proposal contained in Informal document GE.1 No. 9 (2017) and took the following decisions:

1. Safety and security data elements in eTIR messages

18. The Expert Group welcomed the presentation by the secretariat and extensively discussed data requirements other than those contained in the TIR Carnet, which can include, inter alia, safety and security data requirements. The Expert Group was of the view that since those data requirements result from alternative legislation they could not be included as such as TIR data requirements. However, the Expert Group recalled that the data elements recommended for transit by the World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE² Framework of Standards have already been included as optional data elements in eTIR messages. Consequently, countries that wish to include other data elements, required nationally for transit operations, could request their inclusion in the list of data elements required for transit by SAFE. Those data elements could then be included as optional in later versions of the eTIR messages so that eTIR messages could serve to make a single data submission for the purpose of eTIR transports.

19. Recognizing that additional data required for transit could stem from a whole range of laws and regulations, e.g. phytosanitary or veterinary, the Expert Group recommended, for the time being, leaving the responsibility of the submission of those additional data to the transport operator. The group further proposed that only the data contained in the eTIR messages would be exchanged between customs administrations via the eTIR international system.

20. However, the Turkish delegation raised concerns with regard to the idea of not including all safety and security data elements in eTIR messages and the Iranian delegation made the following statement:

“The objective of the TIR Convention is facilitation of transit and trade. If we leave the issue of additional information open, then it will be easy for each Contracting Party to interpret it independently. We believe that we should concentrate on simplification, standardization and unification of the data needed as additional information if need be. It means that the data exactly relevant to TIR should be targeted, defined and accepted by all. In this way, the TIR objective of facilitation of transit and trade will come true.”

² WCO Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Trade

21. The delegation of the EU indicated that, further to the introduction of the new Union Customs Code (UCC), a new comparison between the messages of eTIR and the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS) was necessary.

2. Accompanying document

22. The Expert Group considered the draft accompanying document prepared by the secretariat and requested the following amendments:

- add a bar code (guarantee number);
- include a box with the itinerary (possibly with national references to the transport);
- include a box for the HS code;
- clarify that the parts for the stamps is reserved for the fallback procedure;
- include the certified report on the back side of the accompanying document;
- include detailed printing instructions for the accompanying document (box dimensions, font, font size, ...);
- include guidelines for the use of the accompanying document in case of fallback.

23. Furthermore, the Expert Group considered whether the accompanying document could also be printed by the transport company but could not take a decision on the issue. Finally, the Expert Group mandated the secretariat to prepare a new version of the accompanying document, taking into account the discussions and requests made at this session.

3. Usage of the eTIR functional and technical specifications

24. The Expert Group took note of the lack of clear instructions with regard to the usage of the eTIR material (documents and Schema Definitions (XSDs)). The Expert Group was of the general view that this material should remain in the public domain.

25. The delegation of the EU and other delegations from EU member states shared their experience with regard to the NCTS documentation. In the EU, the European Commission shares the documentation with Member States only and it is up to Member States to distribute the relevant documents to the private sector (taking into account the specificities of their national IT customs system).

26. The Expert Group mandated the secretariat to propose wordings for a usage clause and a disclaimer, in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs, and to submit it directly to WP.30 for consideration at its October 2017 session.

4. Direct submission of advance cargo information by transport operators

27. The Expert Group discussed the possible consequence of the requirement to submit advance cargo information prior to the arrival of the vehicle, in particular in cases where the office of departure is very close to the border and the customs-to-customs exchange of data would not arrive sufficiently in advance. The Expert Group pointed out that the requirement to submit advance information originated from safety and security regulation and does not apply to the standard TIR data. Consequently, and recalling the decision taken earlier with regard to the submission of additional information (see paras. 18-21), the Expert Group was of the view that no changes were required in the eTIR documentation.

5. Refusal by customs to begin a TIR transport or to start a TIR operation

28. The Expert Group discussed the need to include new messages to notify that a TIR transport does not begin or that a TIR operation is not allowed to start, the later meaning that the TIR transport is interrupted. The Expert Group agreed that there was no reason to include a message that a TIR transport does not begin but recognized the need to notify the interruption of a TIR transport. The following reasons were put forward to justify the need for such message: (1) to avoid that the guarantee status would remain “in use” in the eTIR international system, (2) to ensure that, as in the paper system, the guarantee chain would be made aware of the interruption of a TIR transport, and (3) to notify subsequent countries that the transport will not reach them. Consequently, the Expert Group mandated the secretariat to propose a new message to be sent by customs in case of refusal to start a TIR operation. The Expert Group requested the secretariat to include in such a message the reason(s) that had led to the refusal to start the TIR operation.

6. Attribute for the termination type

29. The Expert Group took note that the current termination message does not allow to specify the type of termination, i.e. partial unload, final unload, exit or intermediate loading place. The Expert Group pointed out that the type of termination is a data element related to the application of Annex 10 of the TIR Convention and that this Annex was out of the scope of the eTIR project. However, the Expert Group stressed that, once fully implemented, eTIR would render the provisions of Annex 10 superfluous if all data elements customs need to transmit to the guarantee chain would be included in the termination messages. Consequently, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to introduce a “termination type” field in the termination message and, if necessary, to request the necessary amendment of the WCO data model.

7. Change of seals en route

30. The Expert Group considered and discussed the need to include an additional message to notify the changes of seals in the course of a TIR operation. It concluded that the transmission of new seals by means of the termination message at the end of the TIR operation is sufficient to inform the following countries about the number and type of the new seals affixed. At the same time, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to clarify this case in the guidelines for the use of the attached documents in case of fallback procedures.

8. Sequence of messages

31. The Expert Group took note of the remarks of software developers that worked for the pilot project, which had indicated that the eTIR documentation is not clear enough when it comes to understanding the possible sequences of the various eTIR messages. Consequently, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to include diagrams in the functional specifications to clarify this matter.

9. Holder and guarantee information in TIR operation related messages

32. The Expert Group acknowledged that messages related to TIR operations do not require detailed information about the guarantee and the holder, in particular when this information does not change in the course of the transport. Consequently, it requested the secretariat to simplify those messages accordingly.

10. Compatibility with standards

33. The Expert Group took note that eTIR messages could be based on the latest version of the WCO data model. The delegation of the Netherlands stressed that, while version 4.1a of the eTIR messages is based on version 3.5 of the WCO data model, version 4.2a should be based on version 3.7, which includes changes requested by UNECE to provide for the possibility to provide a reference to the certificate of approval (for each vehicle or container) in the messages. Consequently, the Expert Group requested the secretariat to use version 3.7 or 3.8 of the WCO data model for version 4.2a of the eTIR messages.

34. Furthermore, the Expert Group asked the secretariat to consult with the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) secretariat to consider the feasibility and the usefulness of an eTIR data model based on the Core Components Library (CCL) and to report on this issue at the next session of the Expert Group.

11. Amendments related to the GE.2 findings

35. The Expert Group took note of the proposal by GE.2 to include in the optional annex a minimum duration for the storage of information in the eTIR international system of 10 years and requested the secretariat to include such requirement in the eTIR documentation.

VIII. Other business (agenda item 7)**A. World Customs Organization activities**

36. The Expert Group welcomed the presentation by WCO and took note of the progress made with the WCO Transit Guidelines, which will be launched at the WCO Transit Conference to be held in Brussels on 10-11 July 2017. The Expert Group also took note of the Mercator program, launched in 2014, which aims at, inter alia, helping customs administrations with the implementation of the World Trade Organization Transit Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). The Expert Group also noted with interest the similarities between the eATA and the eTIR project, in particular that the centralized approach is also under consideration for the eATA project.

B. Other activities of interest

37. The Expert Group welcomed the presentation of the new ITDB by the TIR secretariat and took note of its launch on 9th May 2017. The Expert Group noted with appreciation that the new ITDB already had more users than the previous version and welcomed the new design as well as all the improvements brought into the new application. The Expert Group stressed the importance for all Contracting Parties to use the ITDB Web Service to automatically and systematically check the status of TIR Carnet holders at the start of each TIR operation, as this would ultimately push association and customs administration to keep the ITDB up-to-date.

C. Date and place of next session

38. The Expert Group was not yet in a position to agree on a date for its next session. It requested the secretariat, in coordination with the Chair, to propose dates, possibly in November or in the first half of December of 2017.