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**Technical Assistance to National Experts in Georgia to Link
the National Customs IT to C2C Exchange Platform**

Draft Final Report¹

Transmitted by the Economic Commission for Europe

¹ Reproduced as received. Pending final revision and editing.

**Strengthening the Capacities of Developing Countries and
Countries with Economies in Transition to Facilitate
Legitimate Border Crossing, Regional Cooperation and
Integration**

FINAL REPORT

(Draft)

Technical Assistance to National Experts in Georgia to Link the
National Customs IT to C2C Exchange Platform

Prepared by Ekaterine Katamadze, Consultant

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

In December 2011, the General Assembly approved the project “Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration”. In December 2012, the Review Group met under the auspices of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and approved the final version of the project document.

Today, only a few international conventions provide a legal basis for the exchange of information related to the international transport of goods. Among them, the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) has the broadest geographical scope (67 countries worldwide). The exchange of electronic information is being addressed in the framework of the so-called eTIR project, which has been administered by UNECE since 2002. The eTIR project aims at full computerization of the TIR procedure and will eventually replace customs paper documents with the exchange of electronic messages. The requirements of the necessary electronic systems have already been determined, including the establishment of a centralized C2C (Customs to Customs) information network.

Based on the work already completed by the eTIR project and other further innovations to the systems it created, the proposed project aims at implementing and strengthening the capacity to use a versatile C2C information network in up to five pilot developing countries and countries with economies in transition with their neighboring countries and trading partners. This will ensure a secure exchange of information related to goods in transit, inter alia those under cover of the TIR procedure. In the long term, the network will be designed to facilitate the exchange of C2C and Business-to-Customs (B2C) information globally. The sustainability of such a network could easily be ensured by means of a minimal fee-for-use that would provide the necessary funds to maintain the system. Secure electronic exchange of C2C information will lead to increased security and reduced border-crossing delays.

As a first step, based on the Gap analysis assessing the legal and technical requirements, Georgia was selected to start the exchange of electronic TIR data (as a pilot project) with Turkish Customs, as contained in the TIR Carnet and stored/available in the national ICT systems, through the C2C Exchange Platform (Hereinafter in the document the 'pilot project' is used as a reference to the project).

The project was implemented in parallel with development of the Central Exchange Platform (hereinafter in the document the 'Central Exchange Platform' of 'CEP' is used as a reference to the mentioned project).

The purpose of the pilot project was to further facilitate legitimate trade and transport between Georgia and Turkey through an extended use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and to increase cooperation between the customs authorities concerned, by means of customs-to-customs (C2C) electronic exchange of TIR related information.

The exchange of information will allow customs authorities to carry out risk analysis at central level in advance in order to facilitate and to accelerate the border crossing of goods consignments to, from and through Georgia and Turkey as well as to avoid possible repetitious keying in of TIR information.

The pilot project also has the ultimate goals:

- To enable exchange of information between participants of the pilot project through the Central Exchange Platform, rather than “peer-to-peer” communication;
- To demonstrate, at a reduced scale, the practical feasibility of the complete eTIR project and, possibly, identify areas of improvement.

In order to ensure the link of the Georgian Customs IT system to the CEP, the technical assistance to the Georgian Customs IT was provided with the overall scope to deliver the relevant software solution, enabling exchange of electronic data. The scope of the assistance included:

- Gathering of information about the current IT environment, compare the eTIR message requirements (as contained in the eTIR reference Model v.4.1) with data available in the IT system of Georgia;
- Preparation of functional and technical specification and elaboration of detailed project plan;
- Programming, testing and documenting of required interfaces that will allow to automatically exchange the TIR data Georgia and Turkey have in common via the CEP;
- Transfer of the software to the IT department of the Georgian Customs, including development of capacity of the IT staff to use and maintain the software.

1.2 Status Quo

The project was launched in April 2015 and was initially expected to be completed by August 2015. However, the implementation of the project was prolonged due to several reasons, mainly connected to implementation of the CEP. The project, enabling implementation of CEP, was launched in September 2015 and the platform became available for connection and testing in the first half of 2016 (February 2016).

Since May 2016, the software is fully operational, hosted by the infrastructure of the Revenue Service of Georgia and working in the regular mode. However, as the second participant of the Pilot Project (customs authorities of Turkey) is not fully linked to the Central Exchange Platform (but the work is undergoing and expected to be completed soon), inbound communication (inbound messages, including notifications and query of information) are tested based on either test data sets, or data sets, generated by the Georgian customs itself and delivered to the exchange platform. No operational testing of inbound communication is done so far.

As of today (taking into account limited availability of information provided by the third parties), the information is not completely integrated into the existing business processes, but is available for the functional staff (mainly, the Risk Management Department) for monitoring.

It must be mentioned, that the source of information, as well as full availability and completeness/consistency of information was a main challenge of the project. Several and not fully successful exercises (due to objective factors) to implement the TIR module in the IT system, as well as enable real-time integration with systems, maintained by IRU (RTS/ TIR-EPD) caused limited availability of TIR information in its original format. The alternative sources of information, such as export declaration and internal transit documents were used to ensure completeness of information. Launching the eCustoms/TIR module and thus restoring the RTS/TIR-EPD systems remains a top priority for the Georgian customs. Once the information from the original sources becomes available in the systems (either eCustoms of ORACLE), the flexible architecture of the provided software will enable quick switch from current approach of sourcing of the information to the accumulation of the appropriate information from the original sources.

It should be also mentioned, that due to extensive engagement of the IT staff of the Revenue Service of Georgia in implementation of the project, the knowledge regarding the software was transferred smoothly and in parallel with implementation of the project. The IT staff, who is expected to ensure maintenance of the system, is fully capable to enable maintenance and future enhancement of the provided software.

1.3 Content and Structure of the Report

The current report describes details of implementation of Technical Assistance. The report:

- Highlights the work undertaken, issues encountered during implementation of the project and final results (Chapter 2);
- Briefly describes the delivered product (Chapter 3);
- Propose vision for future development and maintenance of the delivered software (Chapter 4).

1.4 Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Revenue Service of Georgia for active engagement in the project and the time they spent for discussions. The author would like to thank Mrs. Irina Sigua, Mr. Nodar Kakriashvili, Mrs. Ana Gogorishvili, Mr. Girogi Kvatatskhelia, and Mr. Anzor Ergeshidze for their collaboration.

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Finally, the author would also like to thank the UNECE/Transport Division, and especially Mr. Andre Sceia, for supporting and encouragement of the project.

2 Work Undertaken

2.1 Implementation Timeline

The project was launched in April 2015 and was initially expected to be completed by August 2015. However, the implementation of the project was prolonged due to several reasons, mainly connected to implementation of the CEP. The project, enabling implementation of CEP, was launched in September 2015 and the platform became available for connection and testing in the first half of 2016 (February 2016).

1. The first stage of project, ensuring elaboration of The Functional and Technical Specification Document was completed in July 2015;
2. Due to unavailability of the data exchange platform, the second stage of the project (August 2015 – January 2016) was fully dedicated for design and development of the data base and business logic of the software, enabling collection of information from the internal IT systems and transformation of information to the format, appropriate for exchange. The interfaces with the internal IT systems (ASYCUDA and “ORACLE” systems¹) were established, and collection and structuring of information, as well as business logic for transformation of information and storage of inbound information became fully available by the end of January 2016;
3. The third stage of the project (February – April 2016) was fully dedicated for enabling of linkage with the CEP as the last became available for exchange of information consequently in test (on testing infrastructure provided by the CEP’s development team) and piloting (on production infrastructure hosted by the UNECE) mode. The stage was also dedicated for analysis of consistency and completeness of information, as provided by the internal IT systems and implementation of corrective actions, to improve the quality of data.
4. The final stage of the project (May 2016) was dedicated for continues monitoring of the exchange of information, identification of gaps in the software and ensuring of elimination of technical and functional gaps.

2.2 Activities Performed

The following activities were performed during the implementation of the project:

1. Intensive consultations with the IT department of Georgian Customs to gather information about the IT environment, availability of information in the internal systems;
2. Intensive consultations with functional staff of the Georgian Customs (risk management, customs operations) to gather information about business processes and

¹ The automation of customs operations in Georgia is organized through two independent information systems: ASYCUDA World, updated to its newest version, which has been named **eCustoms**, customized off-the-shelf software, and an in-house developed information system based on the Oracle® Database 10g platform ('ORACLE' system hereafter). eCustoms and ORACLE are used as a reference to the internal IT systems, operated by the Georgian customs.

- information flows, enabling collection of information in the internal systems, as well as events, triggering changes in status of information, relevant to the task;
3. Facilitation of discussion with functional staff of the Georgian Customs about requirements on structure and completeness of information, received through the platform, as well as discussion of options of possible utilization of information in processes;
 4. Consultation with Turkish Customs and UNECE to communicate status of the project, as well as critical issues, requiring discussion and confirmation;
 5. Documenting and communication functional and technical requirements;
 6. Development, documenting and testing of the software, as well as installation of the software on the infrastructure of the Revenue Service of Georgia;
 7. Intensive consultations with the CEP development team about implementation of data exchange interfaces, as well as contribution to operational testing of the CEP;
 8. Drafting of technical documentation and transfer of relevant knowledge to the staff of IT department;
 9. Presentation of the status of the project to key participants during several events, organized by UNECE and/or Revenue Service of Georgia, including
 - a. UNECE C2C Workshop, Tbilisi, Georgia, June 22-23, 2015;
 - b. Georgia – Turkey Coordination Workshop, Tbilisi, Georgia, 3 - 4 November, 2015.

2.3 Products and Services Delivered

The following products and services were delivered:

1. Functional and Technical Specification Document, defining a sub-set of the functional and technical specifications set out in the “eTIR Reference Model – Version 4.1a”, applicable for the scope of the current pilot C2C project, including detailed project plan;
2. Amendments to the Functional and Technical Specification Document, describing in details the flow of information, triggering exchange of data in accordance with the technical specification;
3. The software package, enabling collection of information from the existing IT system and exchange of data with the CEP, as well as enabling access to the collected information from existing IT systems;
4. Onsite installation of the system and testing of the interfaces, based on test scenarios, elaborated in cooperation with the Georgia Customs and CEP’s development team, including analysis of tests and provision of recommendation for improvement of the operational practice to ensure consistency of information, as well as contributing to testing of the CEP;
5. Development of capacity of the IT staff of the Revenue Service of Georgia to ensure future maintenance and enhancement of the software;
6. Documentation, including User Manual and Development Manual².

² At the moment of preparation of the report, draft documentation is available and is under the process of discussion and confirmation.

2.4 Status Quo and Issues Encountered

2.4.1 Status Quo

Since May 2016, the software is fully operational, hosted by the infrastructure of the Revenues Service of Georgia, working in the regular mode and contributing for operational testing of the CEP.

It should be mentioned, that due to extensive engagement of the IT staff of the Revenue Service of Georgia in implementation of the project, the knowledge regarding the software was transferred smoothly and in parallel with implementation of the project. Correspondingly, no special trainings appeared to be necessary. The IT staff, who is expected to ensure maintenance of the system, is fully capable to enable maintenance and future enhancement of the provided software.

2.4.2 Availability of Information from Third Parties

As of today, the second participant of the Pilot Project (customs authorities of Turkey) is not fully linked to the CEP (the work is undergoing and expected to be completed soon).

Correspondingly, all inbound communication (inbound messages, including notifications and query of information) are tested based on either test data sets, or data sets, generated by the Georgian customs itself and delivered to the exchange platform.

2.4.3 Use of Information

Due to lack of information from the counterparties (Turkish customs so far), the Georgian Customs has limited ability to make final decision on possible use of information in internal customs procedures.

However, the work to enable incorporation of the information in customs processes (risk management, customs proceedings) is initiated by the Revenue Services by the means of facilitating of analysis of available information and active discussion. Some preliminary technical exercises are also undergoing.

To facilitate the above mentioned process, the Revenue Service decided to elaborate simple user interfaces, incorporated to the operational ORACLE system, enabling user-friendly real time monitoring of messages (both inbound and outbound), including full content of messages and functionality to query the information from the CEP, as well as having simple reporting capabilities.

The interface will provide the relevant staff of the Georgian customs with tool, enabling:

1. Analysis of quality and consistency of the information, provided by the Georgian side, enabling proper planning and implementation of corrective actions, aimed at improvement of quality of information and streamlining of back processes;
2. Analysis of composition and completeness of information, provided by the third parties (Turkish customs so far), aimed at facilitation of the final decision on use of the information and integration of data exchange in the context of other processes.

2.4.4 Source and Completeness of Information

It must be mentioned, that the source of information, as well as full availability and completeness/consistency of information was a main challenge of the project.

Several and not fully successful exercises (due to objective factors) to implement the TIR module in the eCustoms system, as well as enable real-time integration with systems, maintained by IRU (RTS/ TIR-EPD) caused some unexpected constraints, related to sourcing of information for the current project. This constraints (as well as solutions to manage those constraints) were as follows:

Guarantee Data and Cargo Information: The Advance Cargo Declaration, as filled for the TIR guarantee issuing purposes, is not available in the system in its original form. However, the information (data set), containing the reference to the TIR guarantee and verified by the customs staff (compared to the TIR information), is available in several documents, maintained by the IT systems. Two types of documents (Export Declaration and Internal Transit Document (T1 form) were used as a source of information on case-by-case basis. However, due to lack of unique (one-to-one) reference between TIR guarantee and above mentioned documents, the additional effort to extract information properly appeared to be necessary. Unfortunately, the proposed and used business logic, enabling extraction of information from mentioned documents, cannot guarantee completely consistency of information.

TIR Operations: The TIR operations are still processed using paper documents and stand-alone interfaces, provided by IRU. However, the execution of TIR operations are closely tied to several operations, processed by the customs during the transportation under the customs regime. The reference to the TIR guarantee is stored/reflected in the documents, accompanying mentioned customs operations (Internal Transit Document, Export Release, and etc.). In order to ensure proper identification and capture of links (events) between TIR and regular customs operation, the set of business rules was elaborated and additionally implemented. Though use of such approach enabled proper triggering of messages to the CEP, there is some discrepancy in timing of TIR operations.

The approach, highlighted above, was discussed with the counterparty (Turkish customs) and confirmed as acceptable for the Pilot Project, targeted at enabling exchange of information through the platform. Use of this approach limits completeness and credibility of the information, but still provides valuable input for the risk management purposes.

It should be mentioned, that the provided software enables processing of full sets of information, as required by the eTIR reference model and described in the Functional and Technical specification document. To enable implementation of corrective actions in the future (switch to the original sources of information), the software has been designed in the way, separating exchange of information (link to CEP) and business logic, enabling collection of information from the internal systems (see Chapter 3. *Brief Overview of Capabilities of the Software* for more details). This approach will enable the IT of the Georgian customs to change the information collection part smoothly without any intervention to the part of the software, enabling exchange (sending and receiving) of full set of information with CEP.

2.4.5 Streamlining of Operational Practice

It is worth to be mentioned, that the above mentioned constraints triggered some important initiatives, aimed at streamlining of the operational practice.

Upon launching of the software in the test mode, the information, collected from different sources, uniformly structured and consolidated, became available to the functional staff of the Georgian customs. Consolidated information, in line with needs to process the information in consistent manner, enable analysis of quality of information, entered and/or confirmed (entered by the trading operators) by the front line operators.

Based on consolidated information, several critical cases were identified (sequence of information, format of information, and etc.) and corrective actions to systemized and improve data entry practice were implemented. The regular monitoring of quality of data is currently in place to ensure continuity of improvements.

2.4.6 Data Base Structure

Due to several reasons, as mentioned in the sections above, the information, assumed to be stored and processed, is not fully complete and consistent, which did not harm significantly the value of the Pilot Project, but created particular constraints for the physical design of the system.

The most critical issue was lack of strictly unique and consistent relationship between sets of information (e.g. between guarantee and several goods, or transport means).

Although this circumstance was managed on the level of the business logic, enabling tracking and linking of information through several dimensions (including TIR guarantee number), it appeared to be unreasonable to keep data in the database, on the physical level structured in accordance with the eTIR Reference Model requirements.

The decision to keep data in accordance with the above mentioned structure only partially (on the level, enabling identification, tracking and provision of information, but in compliance with the WCO data set and data model) was made and confirmed during consultations with IT staff of the Georgian Revenue Service.

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3 Brief Overview of Capabilities of the Software

3.1 Architecture

The system is organized as a two-layer application, working in two components, communicating with each other through secured internal channels:

1. Data layer, enabling storage, consolidation and transformation of data to the appropriate structure, also including the full business logic of transformation of data, collected from different sources;
2. Application Layer, enabling data exchange interfaces, communicating with the CEP and also including the business logic, enabling processing (formation, transformation) of XML messages.

The ORACLE 10G database is used for the data layer. The application layer is developed on the .Net platform.

The automation of customs operations is organized through two independent systems: eCustoms (built on ASYCUDA World) and ORACLE. While the eCustoms system is dedicated entirely to support customs operations, the ORACLE system represents a unified integrated platform that processes all revenue collection-related data and operations.

In the context of the data exchange project, the eCustoms systems is used as a source of information, when the ORACLE system is used for consumption of information, collected during the exchange of information.

According to adopted (and requested) by the IT department practice, the delivered software is integrated with the eCustoms and ORACLE systems through direct links between databases.

3.2 Functional Coverage

The following messages are implemented within the scope of the project:

Table 1. List of implemented messages

<i>No. (eTIR Ref. Model)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status (As of date of Report)</i>
I5	Query guarantee	<i>Implemented, but tested using the test data (no operational testing)</i>
I6	Query results	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I7	Record Advance Cargo Information	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I8	Record Advance Cargo Information results	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I9	Start TIR operation	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I10	Start results	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I11	Terminate TIR operation	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I12	Termination results	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I13	Discharge TIR operation	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I14	Discharge results	<i>Implemented and tested in operational setting</i>
I15	Notify Customs	<i>Implemented, but tested</i>

<i>No. (eTIR Ref. Model)</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Status (As of date of Report)</i>
I16	Notification confirmation	<i>using the test data (no operational testing)</i>

3.3 Information Set

The following set of guarantee, consignment and operations information are available (from Georgian side) to circulate (submitted, stored, and delivered) in the sequence of operations through different steps of the end-to-end (TIR transport) process:

Table 2. Set of information

<i>Group</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Status</i>
Guaranty	• TIR Carnet number	<i>In place</i>
	• Guaranty expiration date	<i>Not in place</i>
Holder	• Holder Name	<i>Not always in place</i>
	• Holder identification	<i>Not always in place</i>
Consignment	• Goods type and HS code	<i>In place</i>
	• Total gross weight	<i>In place</i>
	• Consignee name, code	<i>In place</i>
	• Consigner name, code	<i>Partially in place</i>
	• Heavy and bulky goods indication	<i>Not in place</i>
	• List of attached documents, including number, issuing date, type, coded	<i>Not in place</i>
	• Internal reference number (declaration, transit document etc.)	<i>In place</i>
	• Packaging (Marks and numbers, Number of packages, Type, coded)	<i>In place</i>
	• Equipment	<i>Partially in place</i>
	• Seals	<i>In place</i>
	• Transport means (Identification, Type, coded, Nationality)	<i>In place</i>
	• Transport means (Conveyance reference number)	<i>Not in place</i>
	• Itinerary (fixed within the scope of the project, only Georgia and Turkey will be included)	<i>Only destination country is available</i>
TIR Operations	• Customs offices of departure, destination and discharge, as well as intermediate customs offices (coded)	<i>In place</i>
	• Start, termination and discharge operation (date, time, status)	<i>In place</i>
	• Control actions conducted (seal checks) and results of checks	<i>Partially in place</i>

3.4 Scenarios

The following scenarios are implemented, tested and ready to be provided (as required by the TOR³):

1. Departure – Exit (from Georgia) – [Destination⁴];
2. [Departure] – Entry (in Georgia) - Destination (in Georgia)
3. [Departure] – Entry (in Georgia) – Destination (in Georgia) – Destination (in Georgia);
4. [Departure⁵] – Entry (in Georgia) – Destination (in Georgia) – Destination (in Georgia) – Destination (in Georgia).

3.5 Timing of the Information Exchange

The information exchange takes place without delay as soon as the relevant information is available in the customs ICT system and in the exchange platform.

3.6 Fall-Back Procedure

Considering that the Pilot Project is implemented in parallel to the regular paper TIR procedure and does not carry out the nature of sole and official sources of information, no additional fall-back procedure is deployed (all currently adopted procedures are in force).

³ Terms of Reference for eTIR PILOT PROJECT ON ELECTRONIC EXCHANGES OF TIR DATA BETWEEN GEORGIA AND TURKEY, Version 4, As of 8 January 2016

⁴ Technically, submission of full rout is available, but identification only of the country of destination is available in this version due to limited information.

⁵ The software is capable to process information of any root, provided by the third party.

4 Future Development and Maintenance

Several opportunities, preliminary plans and commitments by the Georgian Customs to extend capability and use of the platform are identified as follows.

4.1 Integration and Utilization

Once the Turkish Customs is connected to the CEP and exchange of data between Georgia and Turkey goes to its active stage, the Georgian Customs will be able to collect sufficient information to evaluate its quality and completeness.

The final decision regarding integrated use of information will be done and integration will be implemented by the IT department.

4.2 Transition to full eTIR Model

As mentioned above, that the provided software enables processing (sent and reception) of full sets of information, as required by the eTIR Reference Model and described in the Functional and Technical specification document, but not full set of data is available due to lack of electronic access to sources of TIR related original information.

The architecture of the software enables the IT of the Georgian customs to change the information source smoothly without any intervention to the part of the software, enabling exchange (sending and receiving) of full set of information with CEP.

Launching the eCustoms/TIR module and thus restoring the RTS/TIR-EPD systems remains a top priority for the Georgian customs.

Once the information from the original sources becomes available in the systems (either eCustoms or ORACLE), the flexible architecture of the provided software will enable quick switch from current approach of sourcing of the information to the accumulation of the appropriate information from the original sources.

The IT Department has sufficient capabilities (and provided preliminary commitment) to enable switch to original sources in the future.

4.3 Extension: Implementation of Full eTIR Reference Model

As mentioned above, due to limited availability of data (as the secondary source of information is used), the simplified database structure is physically designed and implemented.

The IT staff of the Georgian Revenue Service confirmed its readiness to enhance the structure of the database in accordance with the eTIR Reference Model requirements in the future, when needs for such enhancement will be raised, as well as completeness of information will enable implementation of such exercise.

As mentioned above, the architecture of the delivered software ensures implementation of such changes on the level of data layer, without intervention to the data exchange part of the system.