



TIR EXECUTIVE BOARD (TIRExB)
COMMISSION DE CONTROLE TIR (TIRExB)
ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ МДП (ИСМДП)

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Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975

TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)

Eighty-sixth session

Geneva, 3 and 4 December 2020

Report of the eighty-sixth session of the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)

I. Attendance

1. The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) held its eighty-sixth session on 3 and 4 December 2020 (mornings only) in Geneva with the possibility of online participation.
2. The following members of TIRExB were present: Mr. M. Ciampi (Italy), Ms. D. Dirlik Songur (Turkey), Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission), Mr. H. R. Mayer (Austria), Ms. E. Takova (Bulgaria) and Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan). Mr. S. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation), Mr. M. Ayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) and Mr. S. Somka (Ukraine) were excused.
3. Ms. T. Rey-Bellet attended the session as observer, representing the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)

Documentation: Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2020/86draft

4. TIRExB adopted the agenda of the session in Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2020/86draft.

III. Adoption of the report of the eighty-fifth session of TIRExB (agenda item 2)

Documentation: Informal document TIRExB/REP/2020/85draft

5. TIRExB adopted the report of its eighty-fifth session as in Informal document TIRExB/REP/2020/85draft.

IV. Audit report on the management of the TIR Trust Fund issued by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (agenda item 3)

Documentation: Informal document Nos. 4 (2019) and 4 (2020)

6. The Board took note of following information by the secretariat about the progress in the implementation of the audit recommendations since its previous session, while noting that Recommendation Nos. 4, 5, 8 and 9 were already implemented:

- Recommendation No. 1: TIR Administrative Committee (AC.2) continues consideration of the updated list of documentation as in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/8.
- Recommendation No. 2: AC.2 continues consideration of the draft Terms of Reference of TIR Focal Points as in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/9.
- Recommendation No. 3: AC.2, at its October 2020 session, considered and adopted document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/11 on appropriate procedures concerning evaluation of qualified organizations and the periodic assessment, on the understanding that it only will apply in case a new organization (and not IRU) requests the Committee to become authorized. As long as IRU continues as authorized international organization it will have to comply with the submission of documents as decided by the Committee (see Recommendation No. 1). AC.2 considered OIOS Recommendation No. 3 as approved and implemented (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/149, para. 40).
- Recommendation No. 6: Regarding the letter received from the United Nations Ethics Office as in Informal document No. 4 (2020), based on secretariat's understanding and internal discussions within ECE, the advice by the Ethics Office is as follows:
 - importance of establishing an independent oversight over the funds allocated to ECE for eTIR through the relevant governing bodies such as AC.2, if not yet done so,
 - the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ECE and IRU dated October 2017 be revisited, revised and updated, once Annex 11 to the TIR Convention enters into force, to ensure a full alignment of the MoU with the financing structure regulated in Annex 11 and the legislative decision of the contracting parties,
 - undertake a comprehensive review of its contractual or other administrative arrangements currently in effect as well as individual transactions with IRU and may wish to carefully consider IRU's possible other commercial activities which may reflect on the reputation of ECE.

Concerning the first advice, the secretariat had already informed both AC.2 and TIRExB that any new extra budgetary project proposal would be first submitted to AC.2 seeking their consent and then it would be submitted to the Executive Committee (EXCOM) for its final approval (TIRExB/REP/2020/85final, para. 9). Furthermore, following the action plan that the study on the declining number of TIR Carnets stipulates, the secretariat considers that a type of business plan, analysing all future costs related to the operation of the eTIR international system and proposing different financing mechanisms ensuring its sustainability, should be prepared.

Concerning the second advice, the secretariat, after holding internal discussions within ECE and then with IRU, came up with a plan to prepare a new MoU, revised and updated based on the developments that took place especially during 2020, which would be a continuation of the previous one signed in 2017 and ensuring direct reporting of the secretariat to AC.2 concerning eTIR development and implementation projects. ECE and IRU have agreed in principle with this approach pending the preparation of the new MoU and its approval by AC.2 before submitting to EXCOM.

Concerning the third advice, the secretariat requested further clarification from the Ethics Office before proceeding with any concrete action.

- Recommendation No. 7 (a): (see paras. 20-22).
- Recommendation No. 7 (b): AC.2, at its October 2020 session, considered document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/10 on an appropriate alternative financing arrangement to ensure the sustainability of TIR operations but decided to pursue, for now, the current financing mechanism of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat, due to the absence of any realistic alternative arrangement. With this decision, AC.2 decided to close OIOS Recommendation No. 7 (b) without implementation (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/149, para. 39).
- Recommendation No. 10: AC.2, at its October 2020 session, took note of the updated status of the action plan in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/23 and, in particular, of the fact that most activities are organized at no cost. With this additional information, AC.2 considered OIOS Recommendation No. 10 as approved and implemented (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/149, para. 37).

7. TIRExB noted the progress about the audit report. Further, the Board took note of the letter by the Ethics Office and the information submitted by the secretariat, while acknowledging that the issue needs to be considered at AC.2 level and reminding the secretariat the need for an AC.2 mandate for its planned activities. The Board also took note of the information that ECE-IRU MoU on eTIR would be revised and underlined that for all future TIR related projects a mandate had to be given by AC.2.

V. Application of specific provisions of the TIR Convention (agenda item 4)

A. Consideration of amendment proposals

Proposals to introduce more flexibility in the guarantee system

8. TIRExB reiterated its decision to commence considerations of the matter only subsequent to the deliberations of AC.2 (TIRExB/REP/2020/85final, para. 10).

B. Exchange of views on the implementation of the TIR procedure during COVID-19 pandemic

9. The Board noted that the initiative and facilities run by the secretariat for the purposes of supporting the authorities and the transport industry during the time of the pandemic continued. The secretariat added that the recommendations of the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group, considered at the previous session (TIRExB/REP/2020/85final, paras. 13-16), would be on the agenda of the eighty-third session of the Inland Transport Committee to be held on 23- 26 February 2021.

10. The Board decided continuing its consideration of the matter at its next session.

VI. Computerization of the TIR procedure (agenda item 5)

A. eTIR project

11. The Board noted that the informal preparatory meeting for the Group of Experts on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (WP.30/GE.1) was held online on 3 and 4 November 2020. The report of the session,

contained in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/GE.1/2021/1, has been submitted for the first session of WP.30/GE.1, which will finally take place on 20-22 January 2021. The second and third sessions of WP.30/GE.1 are still planned for 25-27 May 2021 and 13-15 September 2021 respectively.

12. Moreover, the Board noted that, since its last session in October, projects had been started with Pakistan and Republic of Moldova for the connection of their customs ICT systems to the eTIR international system. The secretariat stated that it continued assisting the customs authorities with the interconnection projects, and in particular for Azerbaijan, Georgia and soon Turkey for the implementation stage. It was added that, since the last session in October, a new technical guide on messages I7/I8 had been published on the eTIR documentation portal¹. Finally, the secretariat underlined that, with all its resources, it was focused on the finalization of the eTIR international system development and preparation of supporting documentation as well as on the interconnection with national customs systems.

13. Mr. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) informed the Board that Azerbaijan had successfully carried out eTIR pilot movements with Iran (Islamic Republic of) in 2019. He added that Azerbaijan planned to finish the second stage of its eTIR interconnection project, aimed at connecting their national customs system with the eTIR international system and implementing all eTIR messages, soon.

B. International TIR Data Bank

Documentation: Informal document No. 5 (2020)

14. The Board took note of the status report on the current status of data recordings and usage figures in International TIR Data Bank (ITDB). The Board welcomed the completion of the customs office module and requested the secretariat to notify the contracting parties via official letters and to activate the ITDB public pages to avail the transporters consult the customs offices information online.

15. Further, the secretariat presented the initial analysis of the certificate of approval (CoA) module as in Informal document No. 5 (2020). The Board provided feedback regarding the aspects of the CoA module requiring clarification listed in para. 11 of the document, as follows:

- (a) On Informal document No. 34 (2014): An in-depth analysis by the secretariat of the document is needed before adoption by the Board, in particular about which annexes should be attached to the electronic records of the CoA, and whether the scope should include the recording of CoA for containers,
- (b) On the survey: The Board agreed for the secretariat to issue a new survey to assess the up-to-date status of the digitalization of the CoA processes in the contracting parties,
- (c) On the question of a fully digitalized CoA: The Board recognized that it should be the way forward, but observed that implementing a digital version of the CoA would require considerable legal workload for the contracting parties, and that such a change was not a prerequisite to the launch of the eTIR international system. Therefore, it recommended not to initiate this task immediately.
- (d) On the role of national associations: Ms. Rey-Bellet (IRU) pointed out that all national associations already had records of the CoA belonging to the TIR Carnet holders they manage, and that giving them access to this new module would allow them to check their data against ITDB data. She also suggested that once CoA is integrated in ITDB, its

¹ See <https://wiki.unece.org/display/ED/Technical+Guides>

absence or non-updated status in ITDB should not block the TIR transport. The Board requested the secretariat to further analyse this question.

(e) On the question of delegating the management of CoA to other competent authorities or technical bodies: The Board recognized their limited role and requested the secretariat to seek feedback from the customs authorities on this question.

16. In order to better decide on the questions, the Board requested the secretariat to launch, as soon as possible, a survey to collect feedback from contracting parties. The Board also requested the secretariat to send the draft survey to Board members for review before distributing. It agreed that a step by step approach for the implementation of the CoA module should be adopted based on the survey results so that the secretariat could refine the new module specifications, but that the development of basic features of the module could already be started in the meantime.

VII. Adaptation of the TIR procedure to modern business, logistics and transport requirements (agenda item 6)

Implementation of the intermodal aspects of the TIR procedure

Documentation: Informal document Nos. 12 (2019) and 6 (2020)

17. The secretariat presented the revised version of the study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure as in Informal document No. 6 (2020). It underlined that, due to the ongoing pandemic, it had not been possible to launch the planned pilot projects involving the private sector (TIRExB/REP/2020/85final, paras. 26-27) and therefore it included the analysis of those cases as potential intermodal TIR transports in the study. The secretariat also mentioned that the revised document addressed all the comments by the Board at previous sessions such as the importance of authorised consignor/consignee and subcontractor concepts, reference to postal items and the COVID-19 impact on the transport (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/13, paras. 27-30 and TIRExB/REP/2020/85final, para. 27).

18. The Board appreciated Informal document No. 6 (2020) as a well-advanced version of the study and noted that first time there had been such a comprehensive study with inputs from such diverse sources. However, some Board members stated that, though this activity was in the TIRExB programme of work for 2019-2020, they needed further time to thoroughly analyse the document and that they were not able to finalize and approve the study for submission to AC.2 at this stage.

19. Ms. Rey-Bellet (IRU) stated that, in order to extend the intermodal use of the TIR procedure, the focus should be on chosen scenarios with a clear plan, especially taking into account the dependency of some new contracting parties on modes of transport other than road. She added that the stakeholders in those countries were eager to use the TIR, however the main challenge was that there were too many actors involved in an intermodal transport such as freight forwarders, transporters etc. She mentioned that IRU was working on certain corridors such as India-Iran-Afghanistan to coordinate all those actors and streamline the procedures. So far, the experience showed that paperless TIR Carnet, especially under the pandemic conditions, and close collaboration between customs and port authorities were crucial for the success of the operations.

20. The Board decided continuing its consideration of the matter at its next session, with a wish to finalize its activity before the end of its term. The Chair invited Board members to provide comments, if any, meanwhile.

VIII. To provide support in the application and strengthening of the TIR Convention (agenda item 7)

Study the reasons resulting in the decreasing number of the TIR Carnets used and make recommendations to improve the TIR system

Documentation: ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/3 and Informal document No. 7 (2020).

21. The Board recalled that, following the decision of the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30), the secretariat had distributed a survey to all TIR Focal Points to collect feedback on the study concerning the reasons resulting in the decreasing number of the TIR Carnets used and that the survey had received only few replies (TIRExB/REP/2020/85final, paras. 28-29). The Board noted that the secretariat sent a reminder to TIR Focal Points from customs and associations with 31 October 2020 as final deadline in line with the decision by WP.30 at its 155th session in October 2020 (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/310, para. 24).

22. The secretariat presented the revised version of the study as in Informal document No. 7 (2020), which also included the feedback from TIR Focal Points. The secretariat mentioned that the requests from the Board members such as including statistical data about the use of TIR Carnets in the last decade, setting links between inputs and complementing the study with an action plan were all addressed (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/13, paras. 36-37).

23. The Board finalized the document with some modifications and requested the secretariat to submit the study to AC.2 for its consideration.

IX. Prices of TIR Carnets (agenda item 8)

24. The Board mandated the secretariat to send out the survey for the collection of the 2021 TIR Carnet prices before 31 December 2020 with a deadline for responding until 1 March 2021.

25. The secretariat mentioned that, following the comment by the Board at its eighty-third session that Part III of the analysis was rather technical and, for the analysis of the 2020 TIR Carnet prices, some additional explanation for non-economists could be beneficial (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/13, para. 39), it was going to give the analysis a second look, bearing in mind that the method of the analysis had been approved by AC.2.

X. Problems reported by transport companies from the Republic of Moldova in Ukraine (agenda item 9)

Documentation: Informal documents Nos. 37 (2014) and 8 (2015)

26. TIRExB noted that there was no new information on the agenda item.

XI. Self-evaluation (agenda item 10)

Documentation: Informal document No. 8 (2020)

27. TIRExB considered Informal document No. 8 (2020) including a review of its main activities and achievements during its term of office and the consolidated replies of the survey on self-evaluation.

28. Based on the self-evaluation survey, the Board considered the discussions on the computerization of the TIR procedure, supervising and promoting the ITDB as building block of the future eTIR system and the study on the intermodal use of the TIR procedure as the major achievements of the current term of office. The Board also pointed the timely submission of documents by all stakeholders and further opportunities for online contact to compensate the lack of in-person meetings due to the COVID-19 as areas for improvement, and underlined that full commitment of all members throughout the entire term of office is essential for having in-depth discussions.

29. The Board finalized the document and requested the secretariat to submit it to AC.2 for consideration, with few modifications aiming at highlighting its activities.

XII. Activities of the secretariat (agenda item 11)

General activities of the secretariat

30. The Board noted that the secretariat updated the training page on the TIR website².

XIII. Other matters (agenda item 12)

31. TIRExB did not consider any other matter.

XIV. Restriction in the distribution of documents (agenda item 13)

32. TIRExB decided to keep documents issued in relation to the current session restricted, except Informal document No. 4 (2020).

XV. Date and place of next session (agenda item 14)

33. The Board decided to conduct its eighty-seventh session on 8 February 2021 (half-day) in Geneva and requested the secretariat to make the appropriate arrangements, subject to the COVID-19 limitations.

² See <https://unece.org/english-10>.