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**Economic Commission for Europe****Administrative Committee for the TIR Convention, 1975****Seventy-sixth session**

Geneva, 13–14 October 2021

Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda

**Activities and administration of the TIR Executive Board****Report of the eighty-fifth session of the TIR Executive Board (TIRExB)****I. Attendance**

1. The TIR Executive Board (TIRExB) held its eighty-fifth session on 12 October 2020 in Geneva, with the possibility of online participation.
2. The following members of TIRExB were present: Mr. M. Ayati (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. M. Ciampi (Italy), Ms. D. Dirlik Songur (Turkey), Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission), Mr. H. R. Mayer (Austria), Mr. S. Somka (Ukraine), Ms. E. Takova (Bulgaria) and Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan). Mr. S. Amelyanovich (Russian Federation) was excused.
3. Ms. T. Rey-Bellet and Mr. Y. Guenkov attended the session as observers, representing the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

**II. Adoption of the agenda (agenda item 1)***Documentation:* Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2020/85

4. TIRExB recalled that it had postponed its eighty-fifth session, to be held in June 2020 to October 2020 due to COVID-19.
5. TIRExB adopted the agenda of the session in Informal document TIRExB/AGE/2020/85, with the addition that Informal document WP.30/AC.2 (2020) No. 9 by the Romanian customs authorities would be discussed under “Other matters” and with the modification of weblink in the footnote 2.<sup>1</sup>

**III. Adoption of the report of the eighty-fourth session of TIRExB (agenda item 2)***Documentation:* Informal document TIRExB/REP/2020/84draft

6. TIRExB adopted the report of its eighty-fourth session as in Informal document TIRExB/REP/2020/84draft.

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<sup>1</sup> New link [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/bcf/wp30/documents/2020/ECE-TRANS-WP30-2020-09e-ECE-TRANS-WP30-AC2-2019-25e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/bcf/wp30/documents/2020/ECE-TRANS-WP30-2020-09e-ECE-TRANS-WP30-AC2-2019-25e.pdf)

#### **IV. Budget proposal and cost plan of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat for the year 2021 (agenda item 3)**

*Documentation:* ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/16, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/15, ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/16 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/17

7. TIRExB took note of its final accounts for the year 2019, together with a report covering the period from 1 January 2020 until 30 June 2020, prepared by the secretariat and contained in documents ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/14 and ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/15, respectively. Further, the Board took note of document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/16, containing the audit certificate for the year 2019 related to the account kept by IRU for the invoicing and advance transfer of the money required for the operation of the TIRExB and the TIR secretariat.

8. The Board considered and endorsed the budget proposal and cost plan of TIRExB and the TIR secretariat for the year 2021, as well as the net amount to be transferred by IRU (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/17).

#### **V. Audit report on the management of the TIR Trust Fund issued by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (agenda item 4)**

*Documentation:* Informal document No. 4 (2019)

9. 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, 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 continues consideration of the appropriate procedures concerning evaluation of qualified organizations and the periodic assessment as in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/11.
- Recommendation No. 5: The Executive Committee (EXCOM) did not approve the amendment proposals by ECE on the revision of the relevant Internal Directive, which included a proposal for fulfilling the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) recommendation as well. However, the secretariat stated that, apart from the revision of the Internal Directive, whenever a new project that needs the approval of EXCOM exists, the secretariat would first seek the consent by AC.2 before submitting it to EXCOM.
- Recommendation No. 6: Regarding the letter sent to the Ethics Office on 20 December 2019, two meetings took place between the secretariat and the Ethics Office during 2020. The Ethics Office informed the secretariat that it would complete its assessments soon and that its report would be available probably before the end of the year.
- Recommendation No. 7 (a): (see paras. 28–29).
- Recommendation No. 7 (b): AC.2 continues consideration of an appropriate alternative financing arrangement to ensure the sustainability of TIR operations as in document ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/10.
- Recommendation No. 10: AC.2 supported the action plan drafted by the secretariat at its February 2020 session. However, the secretariat prepared an updated action plan, mainly by adapting to the challenges caused by COVID-19, for consideration by AC.2 at its October 2020 session (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/23).

## **VI. Application of specific provisions of the TIR Convention (agenda item 5)**

### **A. Consideration of amendment proposals**

#### **Proposals to introduce more flexibility in the guarantee system**

10. TIRExB reiterated its decision to commence considerations of the matter only subsequent to the deliberations of AC.2 (TIRExB/REP/2020/84final, para. 9).

### **B. Recommendation to Annex 3 on a code system to report defect remarks in the certificate of approval**

*Documentation:* Informal document No. 1 (2020)

11. TIRExB took note of the results of a survey of a Recommendation to Annex 3 on a code system to report defect remarks in the certificate of approval, contained in Informal document No. 1 (2020). It noted that twenty-five countries (including Azerbaijan, which, by mistake, had not been included in the results) had replied to the survey, with nineteen countries replying that they were familiar with the Recommendation, whereas six reported they were not. On the other hand, fifteen countries reported not applying the code system, whereas ten reported positively about their national experience with the Recommendation.

12. TIRExB established that, although most reporting countries seem to be familiar with the Recommendation, not many apply the code system. The Board requested the Chair to transmit its findings to the TIR Administrative Committee for further consideration, leaving it up to the Committee to assess whether or not it seems appropriate, at this point in time, to continue the code system as a Recommendation or that the time had come to introduce the code system in the legal text of the TIR Convention, possibly as an Appendix to Annex 3.

### **C. Exchange of views on the implementation of the TIR procedure during COVID-19 pandemic**

13. The secretariat mentioned that, since the last session of the Board, it had taken considerable actions to promote the TIR system, particularly the eTIR, as a tool that would facilitate border crossings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The secretariat mentioned particularly the following actions:

- The report by the United Nations Secretary General in March 2020 on “Shared responsibility, global solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19” mentions the eTIR and eCMR as the tools that had to be used by the governments in order to ensure contactless and paperless borders operations.<sup>2</sup> Further, in a joint statement by eight United Nations entities in September 2020 the critical role of the international transport for COVID-19 recovery was stressed, mentioning especially the role that eTIR could play.<sup>3</sup>
- The Observatory on Border Crossings Status due to COVID-19<sup>4</sup> was established at the very beginning of the pandemic. The Observatory became the only source worldwide providing daily updates on the status of inland transport border crossing. During the period of 18 March–15 September 2020, the Observatory webpage had 106,624 unique page views from 208 States/regions, with a peak of more than 2,000 unique page views per day in April and May. Updated information was

<sup>2</sup> See the report at [unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/SG-Report-Socio-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19.pdf](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/SG-Report-Socio-Economic-Impact-of-Covid19.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See the statement at [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/206\\_Final\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_IMO-ICAO-5\\_RegComms\\_without\\_signatures.pdf](https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/206_Final_Joint_Statement_IMO-ICAO-5_RegComms_without_signatures.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See [wiki.unece.org/display/CTRBSBC/Observatory+on+Border+Crossings+Status+due+to+COVID-19+Home](https://wiki.unece.org/display/CTRBSBC/Observatory+on+Border+Crossings+Status+due+to+COVID-19+Home)

collected and provided for 174 United Nations Member States. The Observatory is supported by several international and regional organizations.

- The secretariat initiated the “Open the borders” campaign including special measures for the TIR Convention. The Executive Secretary of ECE and the Secretary General of the International Road Transport Union (IRU) sent a joint letter to all Heads of Customs authorities on 16 April 2020 calling on them to consider the application of specific measures and good practices to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on the international supply chains. The recommended measures were based on internationally agreed policies and conventions and included among other things the prevention of discriminatory measures, use of the TIR Convention and minimizing the controls and checks at borders.
- Further to observing, together with IRU, the difficulties in the distribution of the TIR Carnets, especially for intermodal operations where TIR Carnets were sent by post, and in obtaining new/renewed approval certificates for vehicles, ECE sent a letter to all TIR contracting parties offering the following temporary measures:
  - (a) Extension of the validity of the vehicle approval certificates for 6 months;
  - (b) Use of the print@home TIR carnets.
- ECE had participated in the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project on “Transport and trade connectivity in the age of pandemics: United Nations solutions for contactless, seamless and collaborative transport and trade”. The secretariat, through this project, managed to raise funds that would support the interconnection of national customs systems with the eTIR international system (see para. 18).

14. Under this agenda item, the Board also took note of a presentation of the results of the meetings of the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis, held on 9 June 2020 and 8 September 2020. The Board welcomed the recommendations from the meetings, as summarized also in document ECE/TRANS/WP.5/2020/10,<sup>5</sup> and requested the secretariat to inform it about the final outcome of the recommendations, particularly the consideration by the Inland Transport Committee.

15. Further, the Board exchanged views on the state of play regarding TIR transports during the COVID-19. Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) gave examples of the flexibility provided to transporters, emphasizing that all those actions remained unilateral. Mr. P. J. Laborie (European Commission) stated that flexibilities were provided to the transporters also within the European Union, including on the vehicle approval certificates. Mr. M. Ayati (Islamic Republic of Iran) informed about two new corridors launched during this period on the Iran-Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan and Iran-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan routes. Ms. T. Rey-Bellet (IRU) explained the initiatives taken by IRU such as publishing information about the situation on daily basis through IRU Flash Info -an online service with real-time country information-, joint efforts with ECE and practical measures as extending the deadlines for the use and return of TIR Carnets. Mr. F. Valiyev (Azerbaijan) mentioned that, given the need for a harmonized approach during a pandemic or emergency situations, there would be merit in drafting a Resolution to the TIR Convention, which would elaborate a set of measures, to ensure unhindered and smooth TIR transports in such times.

16. The Board considered that the experience with the COVID-19 until then revealed the need for a global framework as well as a holistic approach. It considered that, in terms of border crossings, the Observatory and the Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group constituted a good basis and the computerization of existing tools was of great importance. Further, the Board agreed the need for mutually accepted measures to be applied at such times, however some members expressed concern about the appropriateness of introducing those measures in the form of a Resolution. Finally, the Board emphasized that introducing

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2020/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-2020-10e.pdf](http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/2020/wp5/ECE-TRANS-WP5-2020-10e.pdf)

such measures in the TIR system could be decided at AC.2 by the contracting parties. The Board decided continuing discussions at its next session.

## VII. Computerization of the TIR procedure (agenda item 6)

### A. eTIR project

17. The Board took note that, on 7 April 2020, the ECE Executive Secretary sent a letter to all contracting parties to the TIR Convention, inviting them to contact the TIR secretariat in case they would be interested to connect their national customs system to the eTIR international system, in preparation to the entry into force of Annex 11. The following countries have indicated an interest in such interconnection project, either in the form of a request for additional information or the willingness to start a connection project: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Tunisia, Turkey and Ukraine. To date, project kick-off meetings have been organized with Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Tunisia and Turkey. Furthermore, the secretariat has been working with the European Commission and some of the European Union Member States on a New Computerized Transit System (NCTS)- eTIR Proof of Concept, aimed at identifying the most effective method to connect European Union customs administrations to the eTIR international system. The secretariat also informed interested countries about the availability of assistance funds for interconnection projects to hire Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts who could assist customs administrations.

18. Referring to the funds raised through the UNDA project (see para. 13), the secretariat informed the Board that assistance funds were available to interested countries for interconnection projects to hire Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts which would assist customs administrations.

19. The Board also noted that the Informal Ad hoc Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure (GE.1) held its thirty-first session on 10 and 11 March 2020 in Geneva and that the report had already been submitted to the Working Party on Customs Questions affecting Transport (WP.30) (ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/5). It noted that GE.1 asked the advice of TIRExB regarding the forms in which a national itinerary (Box 22 of the TIR Carnet) could be prescribed by the customs office of departure or entry (en route). However, in the absence of documentation submitted ahead of the meeting and taking into account that the members of the Board do not represent their administrations, the Board did not provide comments on the question.

20. Further, the Board noted that, in May 2020, EXCOM agreed to the conversion of GE.1 into the formal “Expert Group on Conceptual and Technical Aspects of Computerization of the TIR Procedure” (WP.30/GE.1). However, due to a liquidity crisis at the United Nations and the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat could not obtain slots in 2020 to organize sessions of WP.30/GE.1 with interpretation in the three ECE official languages. In order to make progress with the preparation of the crucially needed version 4.3 of the eTIR specifications, the secretariat, after consultation with TIR and eTIR focal points, decided to organize a virtual informal (English only) first session of WP.30/GE.1 on 3–4 November 2020. For the year 2021, sessions of WP.30/GE.1 are planned for 27–29 January 2021, 25–27 May 2021 and 13–15 September 2021.

21. The Board also noted that an eTIR meeting planned between Azerbaijan, Georgia and Iran (Islamic Republic of) had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, with regard to the extension of the Iran-Turkey eTIR project, Iran (Islamic Republic of) sent comments on the Memorandum of Understanding and is awaiting feedback from Turkey.

22. Finally, the Board noted the following developments regarding the eTIR international system:

- Implementation and tests of all messages according to the version 4.1 of the eTIR specifications were finalized and work on the updates according to the versions 4.2 and 4.3 had started,

- Important changes were applied to the eTIR database and the number of internal automated tests tripled,
- Efforts continued on the development and maintenance of the eTIR data model, including the submission of amendment proposals to the next session of GE.1,
- Three guides were published on the eTIR documentation portal<sup>6</sup> and preparations continued for additional technical guides to assist the customs authorities.

23. The Board also noted the next priorities of the secretariat as finishing the implementation of the changes according to the eTIR specifications version 4.3, supporting the customs authorities in the context of the eTIR interconnection projects and preparing the conformance tests.

## **B. International TIR Data Bank**

24. TIRExB welcomed the status report on the International TIR Data Bank (ITDB), delivered by the secretariat, in particular and in particular the following figures on data recordings: 32,362 authorized holders, 252 stamps and seals, 2,474 customs offices and 1,063 web application users. The Board also noted that the secretariat had completed the security upgrades on the ITDB servers, invited TIR focal points by email to review the ITDB user accounts related to their countries, improved ITDB Service Desk processes, deployed customs office code validation web services to the test environment, deployed region-based notifications and other minor improvements to production, fulfilled tasks associated to the support of the eTIR international system development and created nine read-only accounts in the ITDB web application for IRU staff.

25. Further, the Board was informed about future releases and other activities planned, namely rolling out the customs office code validation web service, supporting contracting parties wishing their customs office data to be imported in ITDB and developing the certificate of approval module. The Board took note of the progress in ITDB and requested the secretariat to complete its work on the ITDB customs offices module and the new module on the certificates of approval until December 2020, considering both activities take place in the programme of work of the Board for 2019–2020. The secretariat mentioned that, even though all efforts are focused on the finalization of the eTIR international system and its interconnection with national customs systems, it would do everything possible to accomplish the above-mentioned tasks, especially the long-lasting ones.

## **VIII. Adaptation of the TIR procedure to modern business, logistics and transport requirements (agenda item 7)**

### **Implementation of the intermodal aspects of the TIR procedure**

*Documentation:* Informal document No. 12 (2019)

26. The secretariat informed the Board that, following the previous session, it had initiated many pilot projects involving the private sector, in order to further enrich the study on intermodal aspects of the TIR procedure with concrete case studies. These efforts included the discussions on the road-maritime and road-rail transports with China Ocean Shipping Company Limited (COSCO) and on the road-rail transport with Hupac Intermodal Ltd and Sinotrans Ltd as well as discussions with the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) and the International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport (UIRR) for strengthening cooperation and initiating more projects. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, priorities, especially for the private sector, changed and, therefore, none of these discussions resulted in actions.

27. The Board requested that the study was completed until December 2020, considering it takes place in the programme of work of the Board for 2019–2020. The secretariat

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://wiki.unece.org/display/ED/>

mentioned that, in case the same situation continued, in order to ensure that the study was finalized in 2020, it would include the analysis of those cases as potential intermodal TIR transports in the study. The Board also requested that the study reflected the COVID-19 impact on transport. The secretariat informed the Board that the final study would be submitted at its next session, including with an update according to the comments and suggestions provided by the Board at its current and previous sessions.

## **IX. To provide support in the application and strengthening of the TIR Convention (agenda item 8)**

### **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

28. TIRExB took note that WP.30, at its 154th session, had requested the secretariat to distribute the study on the reasons of the decreasing number of TIR Carnets used among TIR focal points of customs and associations for their views and, at the proposal of the secretariat, agreed that the results and the further progress of the study would first be assessed by TIRExB before bringing the study again to the table of WP.30, AC.2 or both (see ECE/TRANS/WP.30/308, paras. 29–32).

29. The secretariat stated that, following the decision of WP.30, it had distributed the survey to all TIR focal points and that the survey had been replied by only one customs administration (Portugal) and three associations (Iran (Islamic Republic of), Poland and Turkmenistan) to date. The secretariat added that it would suggest WP.30 sending a reminder, and, under any circumstances, it would submit the final study at the next session of the Board. The Board emphasized the completion of the study until December 2020 since it takes place in the programme of work of the Board for 2019–2020.

## **X. Prices of TIR Carnets (agenda item 9)**

*Documentation:* Informal document No. 2 (2020)

30. The Board considered Informal document No. 2 (2020), containing the prices of TIR Carnets for the year 2020, together with an analysis by the secretariat. Taking note that no significant changes had arisen since the last survey, the Board instructed the secretariat to publish the 2020 prices on the TIRExB website and submit the prices and analysis to AC.2 at its February 2021 session.

## **XI. Functioning of the TIR international guarantee system (agenda item 10)**

*Documentation:* Informal document No. 3 (2020)

31. TIRExB considered Informal document No. 3 (2020), containing the results of the survey on customs claims and the guarantee level for the period 2015–2018. It regretted that only thirty-five customs administrations had replied to the survey. The Board stressed that the absence of responses from contracting parties, particularly the important users of the TIR system, did not allow a proper comparison with the results of previous years or assess adequately the complete situation with regard to claims in the TIR system. It requested the Chair to bring this matter to the attention of AC.2. However, it highlighted that those countries that had responded seemed satisfied with the functioning of the guarantee system and that, also in line with the information provided by IRU to WP.30 (Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 9), the TIR system was subject to less customs claims. Finally, the Board requested the secretariat to make a few corrections to Informal document No. 3 (2020), including inserting the data for Turkey.

## **XII. Problems reported by transport companies from the Republic of Moldova in Ukraine (agenda item 11)**

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

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

## **XIII. Activities of the secretariat (agenda item 12)**

### **General activities of the secretariat**

33. See para. 13.

## **XIV. Other matters (agenda item 13)**

### **A. Model of the TIR Carnet**

*Documentation:* ECE/TRANS/WP.30/2020/9–ECE/TRANS/WP.30/AC.2/2020/25 and Informal document WP.30 (2020) No. 7/Rev.1 – Informal document WP.30/AC.2 (2020) No. 6/Rev.1

34. TIRExB took note of the model of the TIR Carnet prepared by IRU to accommodate the amendments to the TIR Convention on increasing the number of loading and unloading places from four to eight. Mr. Y. Guenkov (IRU) informed the Board about the changes made according to the comments raised by WP.30 and mentioned that the final format seemed to be the optimal solution for accommodating higher number of customs offices without restraining the practical use of the TIR Carnet. The Board noted that the new model of the TIR Carnet would be considered by WP.30 and AC.2 at their meetings the same week.

### **B. Letter by Romanian customs authorities**

#### **Draft new Explanatory Note to Article 6, paragraph 2 of the TIR Convention**

*Documentation:* Informal document WP.30/AC.2 (2020) No. 9

35. TIRExB recalled that, at its previous session, it had finalized its considerations on a draft new Explanatory Note to Article 6 and requested the secretariat to submit its conclusion to AC.2 (see TIRExB/REP/2020/84final, paras. 19–22). It further noted that the issue would be under consideration at the seventy-third session of AC.2 on 14–15 October 2020. In this regard, the Board took note of a letter by the Romanian customs authorities in Informal document WP.30/AC.2 (2020) No. 9, submitted to AC.2, regarding the conclusions of TIRExB. The Board did not necessitate to consider the letter at this stage, since the issue was under consideration at AC.2.

## **XV. Restriction in the distribution of documents (agenda item 14)**

36. TIRExB decided to keep documents issued in relation to the current session restricted.

## **XVI. Date and place of next session (agenda item 15)**

37. The Board decided to conduct its eighty-sixth session on 3 December 2020 in Geneva and requested the secretariat to make the appropriate arrangements, subject to the COVID-19 limitations.