Recommendations from the

Fourth Technical Cooperation Workshop

*Single Window and Data Sharing in the Western Balkans*

online, 26-27 January 2022, 14:00–18:00 CET

Representatives of the Western Balkans and international organizations assisting the implementation of trade facilitation in the region met for a fourth workshop on Single Window and Data Sharing on 26-27 January 2022 to reinforce their cooperation on the implementation of Single Window and multimodal transport data sharing using international standards. Representatives from Customs, other government agencies, academia, and the business communities in Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, the rest of the Western Balkans, as well as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the European Commission (DG TAXUD and DG MOVE), the CEFTA Secretariat, and the Transport Community Treaty Permanent Secretariat, presented their experience and proposed ways to advance the Single Window projects in the region. This would imply a whole-of-government approach, involving all relevant regulatory agencies, as well as the business community in the digitalization of information flows and establishing Single Window systems.

The workshop “Single Window and Data Sharing in the Western Balkans”, 26-27 January 2022, ([https://unece.org/info/Trade/events/364318](https://unece.org/info/Trade/events/364318)) focused on: progress in Single Window projects in the region; the need for national data models using international standards in an “all-of-government” approach to Single Window for export and import clearance; possibilities to integrate in the Single Window UNECE standards for the digitalization of data and document exchange in multimodal transport; and possible next steps. The workshop started with statements by Ms. Slavica Kutirov, OiC of the Customs Administration of North Macedonia, formerly the lead technical expert and manager of EXIM (the Single Window project in the country), and Ms. Elisabeth Tuerk, Director of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division, which helped such projects in the region for two decades. Representatives of the Customs administrations of Albania (Ms Enkeleda Hitaj, Head of Office, Trade Facilitation, Directorate General of Albanian Customs), North Macedonia (Mr. Anastas Mazenkovski, Deputy Director, Customs administration of Republic of North Macedonia), and Serbia (Mr. Duško Marinković, Acting Deputy Director General of the Serbian Customs Administration) presented the blueprints for Single Window development in their countries. The three blueprints are structured along the same eight clusters of activities. Mr. Christer Andersson from the KGH company, which assisted the development of the blueprints
under World Bank tender, presented their work and ideas for next steps. Ms. Sue Probert, the Chairperson of UN/CEFACT, spoke about the need for a data model to operationalize a National Single Window (NSW). Mr Zahouani Saadaoui, project leader on the Single Window in DG TAXUD of the European Commission, spoke about the Single Window integrated environment in the European Union, which combines Customs and transport data flows, supported by collaboration between SG TAXUD ad DG MOVE and integration between Customs and maritime Single Window data flows. He stressed that the standardization of transport data flows, using the UN/CEFACT standards, would significantly benefit the collection of data for Customs and regulatory controls, as it decreases the number of transformations of data and errors before sending data from business to Customs. Mr. Bill Gain and S.P. Sahu presented the “all-of-government” approach of the World Bank to building a Single Window. They highlighted the need to integrate Customs and other agency information flows, using the European Union’s Customs Data Model for Customs, as recommended by the previous workshops. Mr. Emir Djikic presented the work of CEFTA on trade facilitation, including the digitalization of data exchange on tariffs and movement of non-authorized products, putting the simplification of procedures at the centre. Mr. Vladimir Obućina spoke about the preparations for the next SEED+ project: opportunities and challenges, including work on the collection of pre-arrival data by electronic means. This smoothly opened the way for the discussion on standardization of the digitalization of data and document exchange in multimodal transport using UN/CEFACT’s Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model (MMT RDM) and its integration into Single Window systems.


Ms. Sue Probert, Chairperson of the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT), presented the package of standards and artefacts - XSD schemas, data structures and subsets of the UN/CEFACT Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model (MMT RDM) for key documents in the five modes of transport - for the digitalization of data and document exchange in multimodal transport. The MMT RDM is part of a family of UN/CEFACT reference data models. It provides a foundation for interoperability of data exchange in multimodal transport and with other sectors in the supply chain, including regulatory controls. Ms. Vania Zlateva, a UNECE and EU expert, spoke on the possibilities to map and harmonize data between the package of standards for multimodal transport and Customs data sets and data models, notably the EU Customs Data Model, using the UN/CEFACT reference data models. Ms. Lia Potec, Policy Officer, DG MOVE, the European Commission, explained the work on the electronic Freight Transport Information Regulation (eFTI) of the EU and noted the importance of the MMT RDM. Mr. Mario Apostolov, Regional Advisor, UNECE Economic Commission and Trade Division, presented the UN Development Account project on standards for digitalizing data and document exchange in multimodal transport, with special focus on the need to increase efficiency and exchange information along supply chains without physical contacts during the pandemic. The package of specifications, standards and supporting tools, as well as the first pilot implementation projects are
completed. Mr. Dmytro Iakymenkov, a freight forwarding and IT UN/CEFACT expert from Ukraine, presented the results of a pilot project on the implementation of the standards for MMT data and document exchange in a real-world digital twin operation between Belarus and Serbia using several modes of transport. Mr. Mate Gjorgjievska, Desk officer in charge of Transport Facilitation in the Transport Community, presented their work on transport development in the Western Balkans and European integration. Constantine Ciuta, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD ASYCUDA, presented the ASYHUB data exchange and data integration platform between ASYCUDA System and ship data provider’s ICT systems to facilitate the processing of electronic Sea Cargo Manifest pre-arrival (Entry) and pre-departure (Exit). He spoke about the possible use of the standards for digitalization in multimodal transport.

The discussion focused on the need to develop national data models and the possibility to use the UNECE package of technical specifications, standards and supporting tools. The Customs Administration of North Macedonia requested its inclusion in the pilot project on the mapping and harmonization of data between the package of standards for multimodal transport and Customs data sets and data models.

The participants recognized the relevance of the recommendations from the previous workshops and further **RECOMMEND** to national authorities in the Western Balkans to:

1. Strengthen efforts in implementing the blueprints or further prepare for projects on national Single Window systems, as defined in UNECE Recommendation 33, with the use of international standards and data modelling: enhance the understanding of the national business communities of the benefits from a Single Window; build political will; ensure the coherence of data to be shared between all border-control agencies and with the private sector, using international standards.
2. Use the EU Customs Data Model and the Buy-Ship-Pay and Multimodal Transport reference data models developed by UN/CEFACT for defining standardized and structured collection of information from business entities for cross-border regulatory agencies and Single Window systems.
3. Further adopt an all-of-government approach to building a Single Window, data harmonization and data modelling, involving data flows from the business community. Involve the business and academic communities in this work. All relevant trade regulatory agencies in the Western Balkans are encouraged to participate in the data harmonization and modelling exercises. Use the Single Window blueprints as a basis for the integration of data harmonization and modelling efforts.
4. Clearly define the role and tasks of the other regulatory agencies in implementing the international standards for data exchange, in particular the multimodal transport standards.
5. Continue the implementation of fully automated electronic customs declarations and foster convergence towards the EU Single Window environment for Customs.
6. Recognize the key importance of data models for a structured and standardized exchange of information. Work with UNECE, the European Commission, the World Bank, the WCO, CEFTA, UNCTAD, their subsidiary bodies and other organizations, to build capacities to create national data models and carry out data harmonization (as defined in UN/CEFACT Recommendation 34), using international standards, the EUCDM, UN/CEFACT and WCO
data models. Align existing and new systems to these standards and data models. In this sense:

a. request IT developers for Single Window environments and regulatory IT systems to integrate the latest international standards and data models in the solutions they advance, compatible with the EU and UN standards,

b. integrate the use of international standards for data exchange in the work on cluster 6 in the national Single Window blueprints (business process re-engineering, team leadership, etc.), as well as other clusters dealing with relevant issues (e.g., legal, governance and capacity-building),

c. EU CDAM as well as the UN/CEFACT relevant standards for regulatory and trade transactions (Reference Data Models, UNTDED, UN/CCL, recommendations, codes, and other tools)

7. Define the structure of relationships among agencies and business entities participating in the Single Window, as well as the flows of information among them, and build the relevant Single Window IT architectures around them, using international standards.

8. Use data mapping developed by KGH and UNECE to EUCDM, the Multimodal Transport and other reference data models of UN/CEFACT, the WCO Data Model, the different modal transport documents, agricultural, technical, and other standards, cross-industry invoice, and other additional documents, in compliance with relevant international legal acts.

9. Work with the European Commission on the use of the EU CSW-CERTEX\(^1\) and TRACES platforms.

10. Work with UNECE and UN/CEFACT on using the standards and reference data model for the digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange\(^2\) as well as other documents accompanying goods.\(^3\) Consider the integration of operational transport data into the architecture and governance structures of the Single Window. Prepare for a transition to digital multimodal transport information exchange, in compliance with the EU Electronic Freight Transport Information Regulation (eFTI) (EU) 2020/1056\(^4\). Consider the use of the future eFTI platforms, including those that will be established in the Western Balkans as part of the alignment with the EU *acquis communautaire*, as a source of authenticated electronic transport information/documents. Cooperate with the Transport Community Treaty Permanent Secretariat on the project 'deployment of e-freight in Western Balkans and implementation of the (EU) 2020/1056 Regulation on electronic freight transport information’.

11. Explore the possibility for cross-border exchange of transport documents using the Single Window systems.

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\(^1\) Stakeholders can use the EU Customs Single Window CERTEX (EU CSW-CERTEX) Guide for the integration of electronic certificates and licenses in the national Single Window systems.


\(^3\) Standardization of multimodal transport and other area data flows can reduce the number of data transformations, reduce possibilities for errors and improves the quality of official controls.

12. Explore possible pilot implementation projects for the package of standards for digitalization of multimodal transport data and document exchange.

13. Further deepen the collaboration between experts in the Western Balkans, UNECE, UN/CEFACT, DG TAXUD, the World Bank, CEFTA, ASYCUDA, WCO, USAID and other partners, so that support can be aligned with the region’s European integration.

14. Customs services using ASYCUDA may consider integrating the UN/CEFACT standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model in the implementation of the ASYHUB transport data processing tool.

15. Continue the organization of practical training events to raise the capacity of technical experts in the region on system development and data harmonization for the tools discussed at the workshop.

16. International agencies supporting international trade semantic standards and data models to continue efforts on maintaining their coherence, e.g., UNTDED, the WCO Data Model, the EU Customs Data Model, the UN/CEFACT Multimodal Transport, Buy-Ship-Pay and other reference data models.

17. Organize a follow-up meeting (physical or virtual) in one year to review progress. Consider a project approach to the above issues, in collaboration with the World Bank, CEFTA, UN/CEFACT, the European Commission, UNCTAD, USAID, and other partners.

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