



## RECOMMENDATIONS from the

### Sixth Technical Cooperation Workshop for the Western Balkans ***EU ELECTRONIC FREIGHT TRANSPORT INFORMATION REGULATION AND THE USE OF UN/CEFACT SEMANTIC STANDARDS AND MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT REFERENCE DATA MODEL IN THE WESTERN BALKANS*** Skopje, hotel Aleksandar Palace, 8-9 February 2024

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), working with partners in North Macedonia and the region, with support from the Transport Community, organized the sixth technical cooperation workshop on trade facilitation, data sharing and Single Window for the Western Balkans on 8-9 February 2024, in Skopje, North Macedonia. The workshop was a response to the demand of the countries in the Western Balkans to help understand the implementation of the EU Regulations 2020/1056 on Electronic Freight Transport Information (eFTI) and 2022/2399 establishing the European Union Single Window Environment for Customs, as well as the related recommendations, [semantic standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model](#) of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). It continued the discussion on the steps in implementing Single Window systems for export and import clearance in the Western Balkans. The workshop will aim at improving the understanding of the EU regulations, and how UN/CEFACT global semantic standards and reference data models help implement them. In this sense, the workshop helped the countries in their ongoing preparations to align to align with the EU *acquis communautaire*. The workshop established synergy between Single Window and digitalization of transport document exchange and opened a way for longer-term collaboration between digitalization projects in both areas.

Representatives of the countries in the Western Balkans, the business community and assisting international organizations: 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, GIZ, USAID and others participated in the workshop.

The workshop focused on keynote presentations of:

- DG MOVE on the implementation of the eFTI Regulation and the creation of an eFTI data set aligned to the UN/CEFACT standards,
- DG TAXUD on the latest developments in implementing the EU Customs Single Window Environment regulation,
- the UN/CEFACT Chair on UN/CEFACT's semantic standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model, as they support the implementation of the EU eFTI Regulation,

as well as:

- the concept of platforms for the implementation of the eFTI Regulation, as discussed at the Digital Transport and Logistics Forum (DTLF),
- the state of play of the Single Window project in North Macedonia,
- World Bank projects on trade facilitation, Customs modernization, and Single Window.

followed by presentations and discussions on:

- the UNECE projects on the development and implementation of the package of standards for digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange to create a common standard foundation for digitalization of supply chain information exchange <https://unttc.org/stream/electronic-trade-and-transport-documents-and-data>,
- the publication of these standards on the [www.unece.org/cefact](http://www.unece.org/cefact) website,
- the work of the Transport Community on studying the economic aspects of digitalization of information flows in the perspective of implementing the EU eFTI Regulation,
- projects in the framework of the EU4Digital in support of implementing the provisions of the eFTI Regulation,
- UNCTAD-ASYCUDA's work on digitalizing the collection of data from transport and business sources for Customs and possibilities for combined projects,
- the CEFTA secretariat and eSEED+ on their work on integrating business information with Customs information exchange.

The second day of the workshop focused on possibilities to implement in practice, using the package of standards of UNECE for the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange, aligned with the UN/CEFACT semantic standards <https://unece.org/trade/uncefact/mainstandards>) Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model (MMT RDM) (<https://unttc.org/stream/electronic-trade-and-transport-documents-and-data>).

The participants underlined the importance of standardized digitalization of data and document exchange in cross-border supply chains in the region, using UN and EU standards, best practices, and legislation. Alignment and convergence between international standards, in particular the the UN/CEFACT reference data models and the WCO Data Model, was encouraged to ensure smooth bridging of the different business domains and their data models. This will help overcome the major problem of fragmentation of digitalization efforts and will improve the efficiency of trade and transport in the region. Further combined implementation of Single Window projects and digitalization of documents accompanying goods transported by different modes of transport will significantly improve the integration of the countries in the European and regional common markets.

The participants recognized the relevance of the recommendations from the previous workshops. Further discussion focused on the need to develop pilot projects for the roll out of the UN standards: business requirement specifications and supporting tools, for the implementation of the EU eFTI Regulation and alignments of the Single Window efforts to the EU Single Window Environment for Customs in view of the EU enlargement process. In their statements, the Ministry of Transport and the Customs Administration of North Macedonia, representatives from the other countries, and other participants requested the following areas to be considered for follow up pilot projects.

1. Develop a technical specification for software to digitalize the key trade and transport documents accompanying goods transported by various modes of transport in the region (consignment notes, bills of lading, and additional documents) and ways to feed this information in the regulatory (customs and other) IT systems and other hubs for multimodal data and document exchange. Carry out a data mapping on how to reuse the data from the primary documents, where the information is generated (the consignment notes, etc.) to the regulatory systems. This software would be used in any regulatory system in the region.
2. As a specific case, explore possibilities that UNECE, UN/CEFACT, UNCTAD-ASYCUDA, and other experts work on the development of a module for digital data exchange for trade and transport documents accompanying goods transported by the various transport modes, using the UN/CEFACT standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model, aligned with the EU eFTI Regulation. The results of this work can be used in the countries using the ASYCUDA system in the region, other countries, and digital corridors.
3. Analyze the legal aspects of the multimodal digitalization of trade and transport documents accompanying goods, in relationship to various projects on the Single Window, coordinated border management in the region. Consider the INCOTERMS in analyzing legal responsibilities, data modelling and procedures of data exchange.
4. Review national regulatory requirements in the areas where digitalization of data and documents accompanying goods is envisaged and compare with the requirements in the eFTI Regulation. Develop data sets and electronic document equivalent prototypes on that basis.
5. Explore possibilities to generate integrated data sets for both transport documents and the Single Window. Undertake a Western Balkan regional mapping of the data requirements to the eFTI dataset.
6. Select lead institutions in each country for the digitalization and other relevant projects.
7. Explore the possibility to develop pilot projects focused on multimodal data and document exchange in digital corridors. Select feasible combination of documents. Focus on multimodal data interoperability.
8. Explore the possibility to develop a railway consignment note (CIM) electronic document equivalent aligned with the UN/CEFACT semantic standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model linked with the eFTI Regulation data set, providing data from the railway consignment note to regulatory agencies and their IT systems, as well as Single Window systems.
9. Carry out a pilot project, led by the Transport Community, with the road consignment note (eCMR) using the UN/CEFACT semantic standards and Multimodal Transport Reference Data Model. Explore SEED to be used as eFTI gateway for pilot as suggested by TCT TA.
10. Invite ports and port community systems in the region, as connectivity hubs in the cross-border supply chains, to prioritize interoperability in data exchange between different modes of transport.
11. Explore the possibility to develop a centre of excellence that would help raise capacity to implement the standards and digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange in the region.

12. Prepare a set of pilot project concept notes, review interest among the countries and user community, and explore possibility for support from the development partners.
13. Request the European Union and DG TAXUD of the European Commission and continue providing assistance and information on the development of the Single Window initiative in the EU to be used in the relevant projects in the Western Balkans, in particular to facilitate the data mappings between the CEFTA TRACES NT certificates and the customs environments of the parties involved in its use.
14. Reinforce the exchange of information among government agencies, the business community, and international agencies on best practices and achievements in the areas of Single Window, trade, and transport document digitalization.
15. 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 European Commission, UNCTAD, the Transport Community, the World Bank, CEFTA, UN/CEFACT, USAID, and other partners.
16. The participants and organizers of the workshop express their gratitude to the hosts from the Republic of North Macedonia, notably the Ministry of Transport and the Customs Administration, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, government agencies from the Western Balkans, the Transport Community, the European Commission, UNCTAD, UN/CEFACT experts, the World Bank, CEFTA, GIZ, USAID, and other partners for their active participation in the workshop. Their creative ideas and willingness to cooperate for further advancement of the digitalization of multimodal data and document exchange using the UN standards and reference data models, implementing the provisions of the EU eFTI Regulation and aligning to the design and data mappings of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs Regulations are highly valued.