



PERMANENT TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE

PC0388E1a

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205th/206th Sessions

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27– 31 October 2014

Brussels, 16 September 2014.

**TIME RELEASE STUDY (TRS) RESULT OF SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE
SECRETARIAT**

Background

1. In order to determine the level of effectiveness of normal Customs operations as well as that of simplified procedures, many Customs administrations conduct regular reviews and audits to assist them in streamlining their operations.
2. One of the methods used for the review of clearance procedures is to measure the average time taken between the arrival of the goods and their release. This facilitates Customs to identify both the problem areas and potential corrective actions to increase their efficiency. The use of automation and other sophisticated selectivity methods can allow Customs to improve compliance and at the same time improve facilitation for the majority of low risk goods.
3. Measuring the time taken for the release of goods also meets the concerns of trade circles regarding long delays in Customs clearance. It helps Customs to respond to trade requirements where the operators need to plan ahead for the movement of goods across borders in order to meet tight production schedules and just-in-time inventory systems that require forward planning.
4. In 1994, the WCO's Permanent Technical Committee adopted a study to measure the time required for the release of the goods which was based on similar initiatives undertaken by the Customs Administrations of Japan and the United States. This study was considered to be a useful tool to identify problems and bottlenecks that existed in the clearance of goods and to stimulate efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Customs clearance procedures.
5. In 2001, the Permanent Technical Committee reviewed and updated the study in an effort to simplify its application. The revised document is presented as a Guide to Measure the Time required for the Release of Goods, and it provides the methodology to assist administrations in designing their study, including a simplified version. In this connection, over the years, the WCO Secretariat has been invited by many WCO Members to support and assist them in the implementation of TRS.

6. Recently the World Trade Organization (WTO) concluded the Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA) and one measure included in this agreement is a potential element encouraging Members to conduct TRS based on the appropriate WCO Guidelines. In other words, reducing the clearance time appears as one of the most important elements included in the TFA. According to article 7.6.1 of this agreement, "WTO members are encouraged to measure and publish their average release time of goods periodically and in a consistent manner, using tools such as, inter alia, the Time Release Study of the World Customs Organization (referred to in this Agreement as the "WCO").
7. During the fiscal year 2013/14, the WCO secretariat developed an TRS implementation plan including many areas such as development of standard training materials (power point presentations and standard workshop program, accreditation of TRS experts, internal training workshop within the WCO Secretariat, regional workshop on TRS to be conducted, development of a database for TRS (TRS reports by Members and good practices) and support conducting TRS by Members.
8. Based on experience of several countries that have already undertaken TRS, the Secretariat envisages that sharing TRS challenges, report, results and benefits would be useful for any Customs Administration, particularly to those Administrations that may wish to prepare for the possibility of doing TRS for the first time. With this in mind, a Questionnaire was sent to all WCO Members on 7 January 2014, requesting relevant information to develop a WCO database on TRS.

Survey Design

9. In general, the questionnaire comprised six questions more related to whether a country has or has not done a TRS, and if they were willing to share the TRS reports with other WCO Members (See annex I). By responding positively to the questionnaire, WCO members could share with the WCO secretariat the relevant material and information that will help in developing a simple database allowing the Secretariat to share experiences among the Members. Of course, the WCO Secretariat will share the information with the authorization of the concerned WCO Members.
10. The Questionnaire contained 6 questions concerning mainly the results obtained by those countries having conducted TRS, the challenges encountered and the public availability of the TRS report as well as possible authorization to be given to the secretariat to share the content of the report with WCO members if the report is not publicly available.
11. Out of 179 Members, 52 Customs Administrations (30%) have responded to the Questionnaire. The responses given by Members cover all six WCO regions, but the Europe (EUR) and Asian Pacific regions (AP) have the highest response, adding to 21 and 16 responses, respectively. . The Secretariat also received 4 responses from AMS region, 7 from ESA region, 3 from MENA region and 1 from WCA region.

Key findings from the responses

12. The responses to the questionnaire received indicated that 25 WCO Members conducted a TRS either by using the approach outlined in the previous versions of the WCO TRS guide or based on the current version, the latter being the WCO TRS Guide Version-2 along with the WCO TRS software. The Members also expressed that they have done TRS more than once since the development of the first WCO TRS guide whether or not using the WCO software.

13. With regard to whether TRS reports have been available to the public, some Members reported that they shared the TRS report with the public and some of the Members also provided a website link to the reports. . Furthermore, some responses suggested that that the results of the TRS have been used as a base not only to improve the role of Customs clearance process, but also to improve the work of other border agencies. Improvements are made by introducing trade facilitation measures, which, from a Customs perspective, include: compliance programs, post clearance audit initiatives, risk management practices, Authorized Economic Operator facilities and other measures, such as IT infrastructure improvement.
14. As some Customs Administrations still have the system with Customs declaration being lodged manually or electronically, these Members recognized that collecting data in respect of Customs declarations submitted manually was a major challenge. However, other challenges such as achieving the desired level of cooperation between border agencies, raising public awareness, drafting a questionnaire, and analyzing the collected data have also been reported by Members.
15. Regarding whether Members were in a position to share with the WCO Secretariat the final report of their latest experience in conducting a TRS, some among the 52 Customs Administrations have informed that they were in a position to share the report with the Secretariat.

Expected Outcome

16. Delegates of the PTC are invited to take note of the findings Survey that will allow the Secretariat to develop a WCO database on Time Release Study for the purpose of sharing information at the request of Members.
17. They are also requested to provide guidance on the development of this database.

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Questionnaire

This Questionnaire is prepared with the aim to develop a WCO database on Time Release Study (TRS). Please answer the following questions, and reply to Mr. Samson Bilangna, Compliance and Facilitation Directorate (samson.bilangna@wcoomd.org) or/and to Mr. Takashi Matsumoto, Office of the WCO Secretary General (takashi.matsumoto@wcoomd.org), **by Friday 14 February 2014.**

COUNTRY

Q1. Has your Administration implemented TRS before?

Yes No

Q2. If the answer to Q1 is Yes, when and how many times has your administration undertaken a TRS?

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Q3. If the answer to Q1 is Yes, are the report and the results of the TRS publicly available?

Yes Please specify where the report can be found (e.g. link to a website)

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No

Q4. If the answer to Q1 is Yes, how is your Administration utilizing the results of the TRS?

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Q5. If the answer to Q1 is Yes, what kind of challenges did your Administration face when undertaking the TRS?

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Q6. If the answer to Q3 is No, are you able to share your last report (soft or hard copy) with the WCO Secretariat?

Yes

No
