



PERMANENT TECHNICAL  
COMMITTEE

-  
221<sup>st</sup>/222<sup>nd</sup> Sessions

-  
5 - 8 November 2018

Brussels, 10 October 2018.

**FACILITATION PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT**

**Use of Time Release Study for measuring performance**

**(Item XVIII. a on the Agenda)**

**I. Background**

1. Time Release Study (TRS) is an internationally accepted strategic tool to measure the actual time taken for the release and/or clearance of goods, from the time of arrival until the physical release of cargo. Ascribing Customs as the lead agency in carrying out the TRS, the tool allows cross-border regulatory agencies and the private sector to measure the actual performance of Customs and other stakeholders involved in import, export and transit movement of cargo, with a view to identifying bottlenecks in border-related procedures and addressing them in an efficient and effective manner through appropriate policy and operational responses.
2. The tool was updated recently to incorporate new opportunities for measuring performance. It continues to remain the most relevant, efficient and effective WCO initiative to assess the performance of all actors involved in trade across borders. The cornerstone of TRS methodology is the data-based objective assessment of performance instead of a subjective assessment based on the perception on border clearance processes. In this connection, the WCO recommends the use of, and assists with carrying out, TRS for their 'performance management' and 'perception management', adopting through a comprehensive and evidence-based performance measurement approach.

**II. Latest work in the areas of TRS**

3. Since the 219<sup>th</sup>/220<sup>th</sup> Sessions of the Permanent Technical Committee (PTC), held in April 2018, the Secretariat have undertaken the following main activities in the area of TRS:

- provided a number of TRS technical assistance missions to Members that included Lebanon, Uganda, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Belize, Myanmar, Vanuatu, Nigeria and etc.
- organized a TRS accreditation workshop for the WCO Americas and the Caribbean Region in May 2018. The workshop was aimed at increasing the number of TRS experts to assist Members for future TRS activities. As result of the workshop, 5 Customs official from the region were pre-accredited as WCO TRS Technical and Operational Advisors.
- concluded the TRS e-learning course which will be hosted on the WCO CLiKC! Platform. With 3 different modules, the course is currently going through a quality assurance process.
- encouraged Customs Administrations to continue carrying out TRS and release the results, taking into account that some Members perceive TRS as a more reliable alternative for them in dealing and managing perceptions with evidence based data.
- initiated preliminary discussions on updating the TRS software. The updated TRS software is expected to bring a new approach to generate, among other things, statistical diagrams such as graphs, pie-chart, and other figures to interpret TRS results and gain deeper insights. The technical feasibility to merge data from various sources, special electronic systems, into one single master data component and other new features are planned to be introduced in the updated software.

### **III. Engagement with the World Bank**

4. Concerning the World Bank Group (WBG)'s "Doing Business" survey, Members have been expressing concerns about their perception-based scoring and ranking exercise. The Secretariat has engaged with the WBG with a view to enhancing the methodology used, particularly in the "Trading Across Borders" section, and to facilitate input from Customs to improve the quality of the survey.
5. The April 2018 PTC had put forward a number of recommendations in terms of further enhancing the engagement with the WBG and improving the results of the "Doing Business" survey, as well as the role that the Time Release Study should play in that respect :
  - Parts of the survey could be subdivided to provide more clarity on the different steps in the clearance procedures;
  - The creation of a special group could be considered to identify the concerns and ways for improving the process;
  - The TRS results should have an important role not only in improving the results of the "Doing Business" survey, but also in being a more reliable alternative to the survey, to be published on a regular basis, as TRS provides reliable data; and
  - The WCO should continue such engagement with the WBG.
6. The aforementioned PTC suggestions were presented to the June 2018 Policy Commission and Council that took note of the activities reported by the Secretariat and the potential opportunities in respect of ongoing cooperation with the WBG and tasked the Secretariat to prepare an information paper with input from interested Members to analyse

the “Doing Business” methodologies, and identify concerns and ways to improve the process. The Policy Commission and Council also agreed to establish a new Working Group on Performance Measurement to examine the possible development of a comprehensive WCO performance measurement tool for Customs and review the WBG’s “Doing Business” survey, and endorsed the proposal that the WBG explain its work in relation to the “Doing Business” survey and have a dialogue with the Customs community at the Policy Commission session in December 2018.

7. An oral update will be provided to the PTC on the Secretariat’s further engagement with the WBG following the decisions of the Policy Commission and the Council.
8. Going forward, efforts are underway to promote TRS as the main tool for an evidence-based performance measurement and to continue engagements with the WBG on the use of the key tenets of TRS and Customs’ administration clearance and release data for a more objective assessment of the prevailing situation.

#### **IV. Action required**

9. The PTC is invited to :
    - take note of ongoing work in the area of TRS, including the ongoing discussion between the WCO and the WBG on improving the “Doing Business” survey methodology through the use of the Time Release Study in calculating the indicators for Trading Across Borders; and
    - provide guidance on the enhanced use of TRS for performance measurement, in particular with regards to the monitoring and evaluating Customs reforms and modernization initiative.
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