A Strategic Roadmap for the PICARD Programme in 2020

DRAFT

1. Background

Since the launch of the WCO Partnership In Customs Academic Research and Development (PICARD) Programme in 2006, its two objectives have been to advance Customs professionalism and to enhance and promote research and knowledge-based Customs. Since the beginning of the programme, the WCO has enjoyed a sound partnership with academic partners, which aims at the creation of a co-operation framework, where WCO Member administrations, Customs practitioners and academic partners can work on and contribute to two main objectives, fundamental to Customs reform and modernization: to advance Customs Professionalism and to advance Customs-related research. This co-operation has among others led to the creation of the PICARD professional standards for operational and strategic Customs managers and to the annual PICARD Conferences as a regular exchange and discussion platform for researchers and practitioners in the Customs context.

Since the launch of the Programme, the world economic context has changed significantly.¹ For Customs to adequately deal with these challenges and to remain agile, responsive and visible, one of the tasks mandated by the WCO Capacity Building Committee during its 3rd session has been to draft a PICARD 2020 strategic document. Such a strategy was also an expectation from the 6th PICARD Conference which took place in Geneva in September 2011.

The aim of this PICARD 2020 strategic document is to outline the vision, strategy and key elements to further enhance the PICARD Programme partnership between the WCO and partners from academia and the private sector related to effective tackling of key questions raised in the Programme’s past development, in the series of annual PICARD Conferences as well as those emphasized by the WCO Capacity Building Committee. These questions include:

- How to integrate research outcomes and advice in Customs modernization efforts?
- How to make best use of and build on the WCO Professional Standards developed within the PICARD Programme?
- How to further promote Customs as a knowledge-based profession?

¹ More information on the Customs environment and further links can also be found in the WCO Orientation Package for Decision Makers, endorsed by the WCO Council in June 2012, http://www.wcoomd.org/members/files/Members%20PDF%20EN/Capacity%20building%20PDF/Orientation_package_decision_makers/Or_package_decision_makers_en.pdf
- How to enhance regional representation and global coverage within the PICARD Programme?
- How to consolidate cooperation between academic institutions and regional and national Customs training centres?
- How to secure, maintain and expand involvement of WCO Member administrations, academia and the private sector in this Programme, including in the PICARD management structure?

1.1 Trends related to Customs Professional Development and Academic Research

The following trends and challenges have been identified that impact on the two main objectives of the PICARD Programme in their potential needs and development by the year 2020.

A Professional and Dedicated Workforce is in Demand

The changing global trade landscape, increasing volumes and complexities, new business models and requirements, and the resulting need to work on increased trade facilitation while contributing to the protection of societies bring a set of challenges to the capability and professionalism of Customs. Automatization of information handling / processing will increase also in the future. The challenges for the workforce include especially the ability of Customs officers and Customs practitioners to understand and apply WCO and international standards and to drive respective modernization processes within their administrations. In addition, especially in times of fiscal austerity programmes in a number of WCO Member countries, scarce human resources need to be used efficiently.

Indispensable ingredients towards a professional and dedicated workforce are a strategic approach to Human Resource Management, including education and training as well as a systematic collation, sharing and utilization of knowledge and information. The need for effectiveness of the Customs workforce will have to follow and be more proven by performance management approaches.

Research as the engine of innovation

As is the case for the professionalism pillar, the Research pillar of the PICARD Programme is also part of a wide range of WCO activities in the research area. The WCO has successfully launched the Research and Strategies Unit within the Secretariat. Research outcomes are presented at various WCO Committee meetings, and the WCO’s Club de la Réforme is an interactive tool inviting researchers as well as practitioners to exchange views and research results. To underline the importance of these expanding activities, the Capacity Building Committee during its 3rd Session made reference to research as “the engine of innovation”, related to the changing Customs environment and ongoing reform and modernization processes.
Regional initiatives

WCO Members in each WCO region seek the ability to improve knowledge-based decisions, reform and modernization. Examples of these initiatives are indicated in the table below.

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<th>WCO Europe region</th>
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| - EU Feasibility Study on a potential EU academic programme for the customs profession, 2011.  
- 2 editions of the Scientific Customs journal released by WCO ROCB and RTCs of the region. |

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<th>WCO Asia and Pacific region</th>
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| - Shanghai Customs College, a WCO RTC, was the first institute that hosted the annual PICARD Conference outside the WCO Headquarters.  
- RTCs developing towards “Centres of Excellence” in different Customs topics, incl. training and research. |

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<th>WCO American and Caribbean region</th>
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| - First steps by US CBP to develop Customs academic programmes at graduate and certificate level, based on the PICARD Professional Standards.  
- Canadian CBSA and US CBP have started to involve academic and national education partners to enhance Border Management education curricula. |

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<th>WCO Middle East and North Africa region</th>
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| - Especially after immense political changes, WCO Member countries are sensitive to research and knowledge-based reforms.  
- For instance, Algerian Customs set up a specific research partnership with universities.  
- First Customs Master programme in the region being developed by a Moroccan University. |

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<th>WCO East and Southern Africa region</th>
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| - First application from an African university for PICARD recognition of their curriculum received.  
- RTCs developing towards “Centres of Excellence” in training in specific Customs areas. |

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<th>WCO West and Central Africa region</th>
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| - Members like Cameroon and Togo have combined research and reform with pilot research projects.  
- Newly developed WCO training material on HR management, which is based on Members’ input, will be first used in the WCA region as part of a regional WCO Capacity Building project. |

Also worth noting are recent initiatives similar to the WCO PICARD Programme in the international Police/Law Enforcement context. The International Association of Police Academies (INTERPA) was established in July 2011. Its objectives include maximizing co-operation and coordination among Member institutions, and increasing management capabilities. INTERPA aims to hold annual meetings and conferences, as well as publishing an international journal. Another of its aims is to conduct exchange programmes between institutions, for their directors, trainers and students.

2. Strategic Goals of the WCO PICARD Programme

PICARD 2020 Vision Statement

The WCO PICARD Programme aims to be

- indispensable to the professional development for all Customs practitioners,
- influential to Customs decision makers by knowledge-based research, and
- successful by partnering with academia and other relevant stakeholders.
Thus, it will constantly improve its nature of a worldwide, responsive and agile Programme that will contribute to top level education and research in core customs matters. It is supported by a sound governance structure and a culture of enablement.

3. The 2 pillars of the PICARD Programme

3.1 Professionalism Pillar

Professionalism, as understood in this PICARD 2020 strategic document, consists of a combination of professional standards and related skills. Recognizing Customs as a profession that follows professional standards and stands for skills that meet these standards will increase confidence in the quality and integrity of government institutions and likewise of private sector companies.

Standardization Building: the WCO PICARD Professional Standards

The PICARD Programme will continue to promote international professional standards in the field of Customs – which can be used as benchmarks for Customs officials and private sector professionals to have their knowledge and expertise developed and recognized.

The existing PICARD Professional Standards will be reviewed and could be adjusted if needed by defining new sets of skills, knowledge and competencies of the Customs profession. WCO Member administrations who ask for support to potentially develop national education standards in accordance with the PICARD Professional Standards will be supported by the WCO Secretariat and/or academic partners within the PICARD Programme. Regional initiatives as mentioned under 1.1 are invited to base their ongoing work on academic programmes on the internationally recognized PICARD Professional Standards.

Strategic Human Resource Management and Leadership and Management Development

The WCO’s work on Customs Career Path development and strategic Human Resource Management has so far led to the inclusion of respective chapters in the WCO Capacity Building Development Compendium. It has become evident that any Customs Career Path is indispensably linked to the definition of job profiles and the respective skill sets that need to be fulfilled for these profiles. The acquisition of the skill sets is closely connected with adequate training and education. The PICARD Programme will continue to contribute to these developments.

As the WCO continues to roll out its Leadership and Management Development Programme (LMDP), academic partners will continue to be involved in its delivery as well as in the potential acknowledgement of the programme as pre-learning to studies at their universities.

Training and Education

Key to development and any modernization process is a capable and skilled workforce. The WCO has developed a number of training tools including various Compendiums, manuals, e-learning courses and the CLiKC! platform and has been able to establish a regional infrastructure on training, composed of the Regional Offices for Capacity Building and the Regional Training
Centres, as well as to accredit expert trainers in various Customs areas. Many Member administrations have established Customs National Training Centres or they benefit from joint governmental training centres at national level.

The PICARD Programme will further look into the co-operation of and with these Training Centres. There is still high potential of finding synergies between Customs Training Centres and academic partners in the area of training – be it in exploring joint or complementary training and education modules and programmes, developing and using joint or complementary training materials, books and documents or sharing course, curricula and programme contents. Such material could also be incorporated in the WCO e-learning modules and/or shared via the CLiKCI platform. Stakeholders of the PICARD Programme via the constant exchange of experience between academics and practitioners will need to continue developing education contents to meet the requirements of the Customs in the 21st century.

Universities will also be invited to introduce Customs related components (possibly even compulsory) to undergraduate courses majoring in management and economies. Such courses could serve to demystify Customs work and its importance to the economy as a whole, in a globalized context.

A WCO database (maybe the WCO Project Map Database could be further developed to also cover this purpose, pending respective external funding) collecting offers of training to Customs and Customs practitioners could be envisaged to gain a better overview of training and education possibilities on global level. The WCO in co-operation with potential partners could also envisage hosting a global conference on Customs training and education involving Member administrations and their training centres, the regional structures, academic partners and the private sector.

**Recognition of University curricula meeting the PICARD Professional Standards**

The WCO will continue to offer recognition of University curricula meeting the PICARD Professional Standards.

In the future, the promotion of the PICARD Programme and the work done under the Programme, including the benefits of co-operation with and access to national and regional Customs Training Centres, will lead to an increased number of university applications for WCO recognition coming from all WCO regions.

The WCO will examine the creation of a WCO (international) certificate for students graduated from accredited universities.

### 3.2 Research Pillar

Under the Research Pillar, the PICARD Programme will continue to support the WCO Members related to informed decision-making by Customs Managers and thus in Customs reform and modernization. The PICARD Programme will continue to examine how academic research can inform Customs decision making on national, (sub-) regional or global level.
The PICARD Programme will thus continue to support the development of research talents by providing an attractive platform and networking opportunity for bright and creative minds to extend research activities of high quality. WCO Member administrations will continue to be encouraged to invest in partnerships with their national academic institutions.

The World Customs Journal (WCJ), published by the University of Canberra and the University of Münster, has provided a useful means for academics and practitioners to publish research outcomes and experiences on Customs matters. Due to its independent nature and rigorous screening process, the WCJ has produced a high-quality journal and avoided politicization. It is in the interest of the PICARD Programme for the WCJ to continue to thrive. Moreover, researchers should continue to be encouraged to publish in other renowned journals.

The WCO Club de la Réforme should continue to provide researchers and practitioners with the possibilities to share and discuss matters of mutual interest and to serve as a depository of research ideas and needs, research projects, finalized papers etc. The application or a - to be developed - database (perhaps using the WCO’s Club de la Reform or the WCO Project Map Database) could also be used to identify research capacities of universities worldwide.\(^2\) The WCO, supported by the PICARD Advisory Group, could play a role in brokering research offers and needs. The research projects could then be tagged as “PICARD research projects” – and the outcomes of the research could be presented at the PICARD Conference. Best PICARD research papers could be awarded annually, upon advice by the PICARD Advisory Group. Attracting young/university researchers into the field of Customs might also be facilitated by offering placements within the WCO and Member organizations.

4. The Annual PICARD Conference

The PICARD Conferences have provided a successful platform and networking opportunity for Customs administrations, Customs practitioners, academic partners and increasingly donor and international organizations on global level. Research outcomes have been presented and discussed – and have after peer review been published in the World Customs Journal.

In the future, it is hoped that this annual PICARD Conference will become an even wider acknowledged forum to exchange views, experiences, lessons learned and research findings on both PICARD pillars. It is envisaged to plan future Conferences (places and dates) well in advance, so that research topics might also be developed over more than one year.

Recommendations from the annual PICARD Conference will regularly be reported to the WCO Capacity Building Committee. PICARD could also examine the feasibility of publishing a collective book, as a result of the conference, in partnership with professional publishers.

Regional Conferences

Under the umbrella of the PICARD Programme, also regional conferences on specific topics, research or HR-related, organized by the WCO regional structures, by academia and/or by Members, are imaginable.

\(^2\) Incl. capacities to include Customs-related topics as dissertation topics for PhD students.
5. Programme Governance

5.1 The PICARD Advisory Group

As its name implies, the PICARD Advisory Group shall advise the WCO on relevant developments for the PICARD Programme and support the preparation and organization of the annual PICARD Conference. The Terms of Reference of the PICARD Advisory Group can be found at annex II of this document. These Terms of Reference aim at a balanced composition of WCO Member administrations from different WCO regions and academic partners, and also a representative from the private sector to benefit from perspectives from the private sector. A rotation mechanism will be introduced.

5.2 Assessment of University applications for PICARD recognition of their curricula

The PICARD recognition guidelines are enclosed as annex III to this document. They describe the roles, responsibilities and composition of the respective academic assessment group as well as the Members’ assessment group.

5.3 Partnerships with donors

The WCO together with Member administrations and academic partners will support any co-operation with and approaches towards donor organizations related to initiatives under the PICARD Programme. Such co-operation with donors from governmental as well as private sector partners might include financing of research activities, funding of the annual PICARD Conference (including travel and other scholarships for PhD students and new academics or those from developing countries).

6. Final remarks

This strategic document is not supposed to compete with any other WCO capacity building strategies or programmes. In fact it builds on the success of other WCO Capacity Building initiatives. It aims to guide the development of partnerships with and between the WCO Secretariat, Member administrations, academia and the private sector in advancing Customs professionalism and Customs and trade related research. It outlines an ambitious, future-oriented, dynamic, but also pragmatic approach to further develop these 2 pillars of the PICARD Programme. To successfully implement the strategies outlined in this document, strong co-operation between all stakeholders mentioned above will be key.