



ECP Action Plan for Phase IV

(Item XVI on the Agenda)

I. Background

1. The Economic Competitiveness Package (ECP) was launched in 2012 to support trade facilitation at the global, regional and national levels. The ECP is designed primarily to support the first pillar of the WCO Strategic Plan (Promote the security and facilitation of international trade, including simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures). It is comprised of existing WCO tools and instruments, which contribute to the enhancement of economic competitiveness by promoting trade facilitation while ensuring the security of global supply chains. The principles laid down in the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) are recognized as the core elements of the ECP.
2. In addition, the ECP may provide practical implementation guidance for issues related to Customs for the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA). In this regard, the scope of the ECP includes the TFA, and the ECP and the Mercator Programme reinforce each other.
3. The ECP also enables Members to promote regional integration. Referring to global standards defined by the RKC and other ECP tools and instruments, Customs administrations may harmonize various regulations and procedures in their regional or bilateral frameworks.
4. The WCO has been developing new tools and instruments and has been delivering capacity building projects in accordance with the ECP Action Plans. The first ECP Action Plan was endorsed at the Policy Commission in December 2012. The second ECP Action plan was adopted at the Policy Commission in December 2014. The ECP Action Plan for Phase III running from January 2017 to December 2018 was endorsed at the Policy Commission at its 76th Session in December 2016.
5. Since the implementation of the ECP Action Plan for Phase III will end in December 2018, the Action Plan for the Phase IV from January 2019 to December 2020 needs to be developed.

6. The draft Action Plan for Phase IV of the ECP, after approval by the PTC, would then be submitted to the next Policy Commission in December 2018 for endorsement.

II. Main Progress under ECP Action Plans

ECP Action Plan for Phase I

7. The first ECP Action Plan aimed to develop new instruments and tools to contribute to the enhancement of economic competitiveness. Tools and instruments developed under this Action Plan include:
 - Transit Handbook;
 - Model Business Lens Checklist for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises;
 - Compendium on Coordinated Border Management; and
 - Customs-Business Partnership Guidance.
8. Awareness-raising was one of the most important components of the first ECP Action Plan. Attention has been drawn to the ECP and its relevant tools and instruments at more than 90 meetings and during regional workshops on the ECP in all six WCO regions. Useful material has been developed, including the ECP Toolkit, the WTO Trade Facilitation Toolkit and the RKC Toolkit.

ECP Action Plan for Phase II

9. Bearing in mind the ever-changing trade and business environment, the ECP Action Plan for Phase II required regular updates to existing WCO tools and instruments and further development of new tools. The following tools and instruments were newly developed or updated under the ECP Action Plan II:
 - 2015 edition of the SAFE Framework of Standards (FoS);
 - Advanced Pillar of the Customs-Business Partnership Guidance;
 - IT Guide for Executives;
 - Voluntary Compliance Framework;
 - Guidance for National Committees on Trade Facilitation (NCTF);
 - Study Report on Customs Brokers;
 - TFA Implementation Guidance;
 - WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the WCO Mercator Programme Approach to Implementation;
 - 2015 and 2016 editions of the AEO Compendium;
 - Updated Guidelines for the Procurement and Deployment of Scanning/NII Equipment;
 - Transparency and Predictability Guidelines;
 - GNC Handbook;
 - Single Window Supplement;
 - Guidelines for strengthening cooperation and the exchange of information between Customs and Tax authorities at the national level.
10. In order to develop practical and useful instruments and tools for Members, examples of innovative practice are being collected from Members and shared on a continuous basis. Members' practices in the areas of E-Commerce and Digital Customs are currently being collected and analysed in order to be shared with the WCO membership.

ECP Action Plan for Phase III

11. The main areas of progress made with the implementation of the ECP Action Plan for Phase III running from January 2017 to December 2018 are outlined below.
12. The following tools and instruments were newly developed or updated under Action Plan for Phase III with a view to enhancing the economic competitiveness of the WCO members.
 - Transit Guidelines;
 - Customs Brokers Guidelines;
 - 2018 edition of the SAFE FoS and SAFE Package;
 - FoS on Cross-Border E-Commerce;
 - Handbook on Data Analysis;
 - Updated WCO IT Guide for Executives;
 - Updated Guide for the Time Release Study;
 - Updated Integrated Supply Chain Management Guidelines;
 - Updated Immediate Release Guidelines;
 - Guidance on the use of ICT in the TFA implementation;
 - Updated Coordinated Border Management Compendium;
 - Recommendation and Guidelines for the Trader Identification Number;
 - WCO Data Model release, Version 3.7.0;
 - Handbook on Inward and Outward Processing Procedures;
 - Survey Tool as part of the WCO TFA Implementation Guidance (Oct 2017, TFAWG);
 - MRA Strategy Guide and MRA Implementation Guidance;
 - Advance Cargo Information(ACI) Implementation Guidance;
13. As a part of the WCO's supporting and promotion activities, the following activities should also be highlighted under Action Plan for Phase III which are relevant to the growth of economic competitiveness of the members;
 - Global Transit Conference in July 2017;
 - 3rd round of regional TFA workshops;
 - IT Conference & Exhibition in Tbilisi, June 2017;
 - Regional Transit Workshops for the ESA, WCA and AMS regions;
 - WCO session on trade facilitation and E-Commerce at the 6th Global Review of the WTO Aid for Trade in Geneva, July 2017;
 - WCO session on E-Commerce in the margins of the WTO Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, December 2017;
 - Regional Transit Workshop will be held in Baku in November 2018 for selected Members of the EUR and AP regions;
 - Regional Workshop for WCA (August 2017), ESA (March 2018) and AMS (May 2018) on Digital Customs and E-Commerce;
 - The 4th WCO's Global Conference on AEO in Kampala, Uganda in March 2018;
 - Promotion of the implementation of the WCO Data Model in workshops held in El Salvador in February 2018, in Cuba also in February 2018, and in the Bahamas in March 2018;
 - Time Release Study workshops in Burkina Faso in February 2018 and the Bahamas in April 2018;

- Action Plan for Special Customs Zones/Free Zones;
- Support on processes of accession to the RKC (The Republic of Congo, Kiribati and Vanuatu are the RKC's 113th, 114th and 115th Contacting Parties);
- WCO attended relevant meetings organized by other international organizations and the International Organizations and regional bodies attended WCO meetings;
- A number of MoUs have been signed (GCC, SACU, CARICOM, OSJD, IOM);
- WCO Memorandum of Understanding with OSJD and OTIF (Railway Organization);
- Workshop on Coordinated Border Management in Samoa in March 2018;
- National Single Window Workshop in Malawi in March 2018;
- IT Conference & Exhibition in Lima, June 2018;
- WCO Session on Customs and latest technologies at the WTO Public Forum 2018 in Geneva, October 2018;
- A one-day Workshop on Data Analytics in Belgium in January 2018;
- WCO conducted or participated in several events related to Single Window including Accreditation Workshops.

III. New Projects for Phase IV

14. The draft ECP Action Plan for Phase IV is appended as an Annex to this document. The continuous actions of the previous Action Plans were maintained for this Phase as well since they remain valid. In a few actions, only the timeframe/deadlines were adapted. The new Action Plan also includes several new projects/actions to further enhance the economic competitiveness of the WCO Members.
15. The following are the main new projects to be carried out by the end of 2020:
 - Compendium of the Best Practices in the Area of Transit;
 - Study Report on E-Seals;
 - Guidelines on Interoperability/Interconnectivity of IT Systems/Single Windows;
 - Guiding Principles for Pre-loading Advance Cargo Information (PLACI);
 - Guidelines on the Alignment of the WCO' AEO and ICAO's Regulated Agent/Known Consignor Programmes;
 - Research report on Special Customs Zones;
 - Discussion on Special Customs Zones that could potentially lead to the development/revision of Guidelines;
 - Revision of the technical and non-technical Guidelines of the WCO Data Model;
 - Comprehensive review of the RKC (by June 2021);
 - Study Report on Disruptive Technologies;
 - Guidance on Customs' role in the collection of indirect taxes on imported goods;
 - Mercury Pilot Project for the e-ATA Carnet;
 - Joint WCO-UPU Guidelines on the implementation of electronic advance data between posts and Customs;
 - Discussion on the development of Guidance on Railway;
 - Discussion on small island economies that could potentially lead to the development of a guidance.
16. In addition to these projects, under the ECP Action Plan for Phase IV WCO will organize a number of global, regional and national conferences, seminars, workshops and technical assistance missions on various topics like transit, AEO, Special Customs Zones, E-commerce, digital customs and Air Cargo Security.

IV. ECP Action Plan and other work programmes/plans of the WCO

WCO Strategic Plan

17. The WCO Council adopted the three-year WCO Strategic Plan for the years 2016/2017 to 2018/2019. The WCO Strategic Plan is a comprehensive and high-level policy instrument, which directs the programmes, projects and other initiatives implemented by the WCO Secretariat. The Strategic Plan was prepared using a multi-step process, including consultations with Members, Regions and all the key governance bodies of the WCO.
18. The Annex to the Strategic Plan contains the annual Operational Plan for 2018/2019 which defines the tactical activities of the Organization.
19. The first Strategic Goal of the WCO Strategic Plan, “**Promote the security and facilitation of international trade, including simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures**”, is defined as one of the main goals of the ECP. The Strategic Plan sets out the four strategic activities of the ECP which are:
 - (1) Develop, manage and promote conventions, guidelines, standards and tools on trade security and facilitation;
 - (2) Support effective implementation of WTO TFA provisions through use of WCO instruments, tools and assistance;
 - (3) Promote cooperation with other border agencies to enhance border efficiency and effectiveness;
 - (4) Enhance partnership with private sector.
20. In addition, the ECP may contribute to Strategic Goal 5 “**Promote Digital Customs to support, in particular, Coordinated Border Management and information exchange between all stakeholders**”.
21. Moreover, the ECP may also contribute to Strategic Goal 6 “**Raise the performance and profile of Customs**”.
22. The ECP Action Plan for phase IV sets out concrete actions for the strategic goals and activities. In this sense, the ECP Action Plan complements the Strategic Plan’s Operational Plan that presents the tactical activities for 2018/2019.

WCO working bodies and the ECP Action Plan

23. Since the ECP covers a wide range of issues, it is relevant not only to the PTC but also to other WCO Committees and Working Groups. The following are the main WCO working bodies to which the ECP Action Plan is relevant:
 - (1) Permanent Technical Committee;
 - (2) Revised Kyoto Convention Management Committee;
 - (3) Working Group on the Comprehensive Review of the RKC;
 - (4) TFA Working Group;
 - (5) SAFE Working Group;
 - (6) Information Management Sub-Committee;
 - (7) Working Group on e-Commerce;
 - (8) Administrative Committee on the Istanbul Convention and the ATA Convention
 - (9) Technical Experts Group on Air Cargo Security (TEGACS)

V. Action Required

24. The PTC is invited to take note of the progress made with the implementation of the ECP Action Plan for Phase III and discuss and approve, as appropriate the draft ECP Action Plan for Phase IV that will be submitted to the Policy Commission in December 2018.

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Draft ECP Action Plan for Phase IV

(January 2019 to December 2020)

1. Develop, manage and promote conventions, guidelines, standards and tools on trade security and facilitation

Bearing in mind the ever-changing trade and business environment, regular updates to existing WCO tools and instruments, as well as the development of new tools are to be expected. In order to develop practical and useful instruments and tools for Members, examples of innovative practice will be collected from Members and shared on a continuous basis.

Existing WCO Committees' and Working Groups regularly review existing WCO tools and instruments on trade facilitation and security. For instance, based on the decision made by the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) Management Committee, the Policy Commission/Council at June 2018 session established a Working Group on the Comprehensive Review of the RKC to conduct comprehensive review of the RKC. The TFA Working Group regularly discusses tools supporting the implementation of trade facilitation measures and the SAFE Working Group has also produced new instruments. The Working Group on E-Commerce has been developing e-commerce related tools, for example the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce.

In addition to the regular activities undertaken by the WCO working bodies, the ECP Action Plan for phase IV envisages further discussions on developing or refining certain WCO tools and instruments with a view to enhancing the economic competitiveness of WCO Members.

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme or Action Plan	Timeframe
1	Collect, analyse, and share examples of innovative practice	WCO Secretariat		Continuous activity
2	Small Island Economies : Study of Customs' procedures and practices, peculiarities and challenges and develop potential recommendations/solutions			December 2020
3	Conduct a comprehensive review of the RKC	Working Group on the Comprehensive Review of the RKC	WGRKC Work Plan	June 2021
4	Compile a Compendium of best practices in the area of transit	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	December 2020

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme or Action Plan	Timeframe
5	Consider new Guidance on Regional Integration	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme	December 2020
6	Discuss the development of Guidance on Special Customs Zones	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme	December 2019
7	Develop new WCO tools and instruments on trade security and facilitation (e.g., e-commerce, mutual recognition), based on Members' needs	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	Continuous activity
8	Refine existing WCO tools and instruments on trade security and facilitation based on Members' needs	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	Continuous activity
9	Develop Guidance on Customs' role in the collection of indirect taxes on imported goods	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups		December 2019
10	Guidelines on the alignment of the WCO' AEO and ICAO's Regulated Agent/Known Consignor programmes	WCO Secretariat, SAFE Working Group and TEGACS	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	Continuous activity
11	Guiding principles for Pre-loading advance cargo information (PLACI)	WCO Secretariat, SAFE Working Group and TEGACS	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	December 2020
12	Mercury Pilot Project for the e-ATA Carnet	WCO Secretariat, International Chamber of Commerce World Chambers Federation (ICC WCF)	Cooperative work among WCO, ICC WCF, and volunteering members of WCO	From October 2018 to March 2019
13	The 5th WCO's Global Conference on AEO	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	December 2020
14	Study Report on E-Seals	WCO Secretariat, SAFE WG		December 2020
15	Discuss the development of Guidance on Railway	WCO Secretariat, PTC, API/PNR	PTC Work Programme	December 2020

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme or Action Plan	Timeframe
		related WCO body		

2. Support effective implementation of WTO TFA provisions through use of WCO instruments, tools and assistance

In June 2014, the WCO launched the Mercator Programme to ensure the uniform implementation of the WTO TFA, using WCO instruments and tools, as most of the TFA provisions are related to Customs.

The WCO established the TFA Working Group, inviting Member Customs administrations, trade ministry representatives, international organizations relevant to border management, the private sector, academia and other stakeholders to participate. It has examined each article of the TFA and developed new tools for the uniform implementation of the TFA provisions, drawing on existing WCO instruments, tools and examples of best practice from Members. The TFA Working Group has discussed how its own work programme can support the effective implementation of the WTO TFA provisions.

The ECP Action Plan for phase IV highlights the main points of action, but leaves concrete and detailed actions to the TFA Working Group and other relevant Committees.

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/ Action Plan	Timeframe
16	Update and implement the TFA Working Group Work Programme	WCO Secretariat, TFA WG	TFA WG Work Programme, TFA WG Annual Work Plan	Continuous activity
17	Accredit more Mercator Programme Advisors and Technical and Operational Advisors in the areas addressed by the TFA	WCO Secretariat, TFA WG, other relevant committees or working groups	TFA WG Work Programme, TFA WG Annual Work Plan	Continuous activity
18	Deliver tailor-made capacity building projects for TFA implementation	WCO Secretariat, TFA WG, other relevant committees or working groups	TFA WG Work Programme, TFA WG Annual Work Plan	Continuous activity
19	Enhance cooperation with the World Trade Organization and other international/regional organizations	WCO Secretariat, TFA WG	TFA WG Work Programme, TFA WG Annual Work Plan	Continuous activity

3. Promote cooperation with other border agencies, and with other international organizations to enhance border efficiency and effectiveness

Coordinated Border Management (CBM) refers to ensuring a coordinated approach by border control agencies, both domestic and international, in order to seek greater efficiencies in managing trade and travel flows, while maintaining a balance with compliance requirements. It was used as the international Customs community's slogan in 2015. The WCO has already developed several tools in the area, such as the CBM Compendium and Guidance on National Committees on Trade Facilitation (NCTF). The SAFE Framework of Standards was revised to include Customs to other Government Agencies cooperation as its third pillar in 2015.

Under the ECP Action Plan for Phase IV, the WCO will strengthen its supporting activities for NCTF, Single Window and One Stop Border Control as they are the main components of CBM.

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/ Action Plan	Timeframe
20	Support the establishment or management of National Committees on Trade Facilitation	WCO Secretariat, WCO TFA WG	TFA WG Work Programme and TFA WG Annual Work Plan	Continuous activity
21	Support the establishment or management of One Stop Border Control	WCO Secretariat		Continuous activity
22	Promote the implementation of a Single Window paperless environment and interoperability	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, PTC	PTC Work Programme, Work Programme on Digital Customs	Continuous activity
23	Develop Guidelines on interoperability /interconnectivity of IT systems /Single Windows	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	December 2020
24	Enhance cooperation with other international organizations	WCO Secretariat		Continuous activity
25	Regional ICAO-WCO joint training workshops on Air Cargo Security and Facilitation	WCO Secretariat, TEGACS	TEGASC work plan	December 2019
26	Joint ICAO-WCO Conference on Air Cargo Security and Facilitation	WCO Secretariat, TEGACS	TEGACS work plan	December 2020
27	Guidance on Customs' role in the collection of indirect taxes	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups	PTC Work Programme, TFA WG Work Programme	December 2020

4. Enhance partnership with the private sector

Considering the exponential increase in global trade and the changing dynamics of the international supply chain, there is an increasing need for Customs administrations and businesses to collaborate both with each other and with other stakeholders to ensure that regulations, policies and programmes can effectively respond to an ever-changing environment. The WCO has thus developed a Customs-Business Partnership Guidance document to assist Members with putting in place processes for regular consultation and establishing a robust partnership with business.

The ECP Action plan for phase IV will require the private sector to be more involved in the WCO Committees and Working Groups and the survey on private sector stakeholders in supply chain management in order to allow us to better understand their roles and expectations.

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/Action Plan	Timeframe
28	Enhance cooperation with the Private Sector Consultative Group (PSCG)	WCO Secretariat, SAFE WG		Continuous activity
29	Involve the private sector in relevant WCO committees, working groups, seminars and workshops	WCO Secretariat, PTC, other related WCO committees or working groups		Continuous activity
30	Develop a study report on the roles and expectations of various private sector stakeholders in supply chain management	WCO Secretariat, SAFE WG		December 2020

5. Promote Digital Customs to support, in particular, Coordinated Border Management and information exchange between all stakeholders

The Digital Customs Concept intends to provide a thematic overview of existing WCO tools and instruments. Its aim is to serve as a conceptual framework to support Member administrations in understanding and implementing the ICT-related tools, instruments and guidelines that have already been developed by the WCO. At the Policy Commission in July 2016 a two-year WCO Work Plan on Digital Customs for 2016-2018 was endorsed as a living document. It aims to consolidate the topics that the WCO will be dealing with during the upcoming two-year period.

The ECP for phase IV highlights the main actions only and leaves concrete and detailed actions to the Work Programme on Digital Customs

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/Action Plan	Timeframe
31	Provide a framework to consolidate the development, promotion and deployment of the WCO's Information Technology (IT)-related standards, instruments, tools, guidelines and systems	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups	WCO Digital Customs Agenda	Continuous activity
32	Development of a Handbook on Information Security	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups		June 2019
33	Promote the implementation of Globally Networked Customs (GNC)	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups	WCO Digital Customs Agenda	Continuous activity
34	Use IT to support Coordinated Border Management	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups	WCO Digital Customs Agenda	Continuous activity
35	Revision of the technical and non-technical Guidelines of the WCO Data Model	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups	WCO Digital Customs Agenda	Continuous activity
36	Enhancement of Electronic services (including Cloud computing solutions) in Customs and border processes	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups		December 2019
37	Exploration of new and emerging technologies (e.g., Blockchain)	WCO Secretariat, IMSC, other related WCO committees or working groups		Continuous activity

6. E-Commerce

The effectiveness and efficiency of a Customs administration has a significant impact on the extent to which a country can benefit from the increase in cross-border trade caused by the growth in e-commerce. The Policy Commission and the Council in July 2016 decided to establish the Working Group on e-Commerce to discuss political challenges and solutions related to the growth of e-commerce. The ECP Action plan follows initiatives and projects to be agreed on at the Working Group on e-Commerce. The Working Group on E-Commerce has developed the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce and updated the Immediate Release Guidelines. Going forward, the Framework of Standards will be further enriched with technical specifications, data elements, implementation strategy, and case studies to ensure its expeditious, effective and harmonized implementation, thus further supporting the

implementation of relevant TFA measures in the E-Commerce context, as well as the ongoing work on the WTO's Work Programme on E-Commerce

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/Action Plan	Timeframe
38	Enrich the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce and developed associated technical guidance and case studies.	Working Group on E-commerce PTC		June 2019
39	Provide capacity building support to Members with the implementation of the Framework of Standards on Cross-Border E-Commerce in a harmonized and effective manner, in terms of the June 2018 Council Resolution on the Framework.	Working Group on E-commerce PTC CBC		Continuous activity

7. Raise the performance and profile of Customs

The WCO has already developed a range of instruments and tools relevant to the growth of economic competitiveness, and the ECP lists these. Raising the awareness of existing and newly developed WCO tools and activities contributes to enhancing the economic competitiveness of WCO Members. The WCO may offer comprehensive tailor-made operational and technical support to implement ECP tools and instruments, based on WCO Members' needs. The WCO undertakes a range of promotion activities in order to disseminate its instruments and tools. As a means to promote the importance of Customs to national economic competitiveness, the WCO uses multiple platforms to communicate information about its activities and tools to its stakeholders. The PTC will review the progress of the ECP Action Plan.

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/Action Plan	Timeframe
40	Capacity building to support the implementation of the WCO's existing instruments and tools	WCO Secretariat		Continuous activity
41	Publish useful awareness-raising material	WCO Secretariat		Continuous activity

	Action	Responsible body	Relevant Work Programme/Action Plan	Timeframe
42	Ensure effective use of the WCO Web site to promote existing WCO tools and instruments	WCO Secretariat		Continuous activity
43	Report regularly to the PTC	WCO Secretariat		PTC sessions
