



WCO WORKING GROUP  
ON THE WTO  
TRADE FACILITATION  
AGREEMENT

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INCLUDING THE JOINT  
SESSION WITH THE  
223<sup>rd</sup>/224<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF  
THE PERMANENT  
TECHNICAL  
COMMITTEE

-  
11<sup>th</sup> Meeting

-  
4-5 March 2019

Brussels, 28 January 2019.

**TIME RELEASE STUDY**

National experiences with using TRS for monitoring TFA implementation

**(Item VII on the Agenda)**

**I. Background**

1. Time Release Study (TRS) is one of the World Customs Organization (WCO)'s strategic tools that has been widely used by WCO' Members to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Customs, Other Government Agencies (OGAs) and Private Sector stakeholders in relation to international movement of cargo. This tool measures the actual time taken for the release and/or clearance of goods, from the time of arrival until the physical release of cargo, and helps in identifying associated bottlenecks so that policy decisions to improve such performance can be well conceived and effectively implemented.
2. The WCO TRS is specifically referenced in Article 7.6 of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)<sup>1</sup> as a tool for Members to measure and publish the average release time of goods. The TRS is being increasingly used by Members with respect to strategic planning and the proper sequencing of TFA measures in accordance with the National Committee on Trade Facilitation (NCTF).

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tradfa\\_e/tradfa\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tradfa_e/tradfa_e.htm)

3. In this context, the TRS enables Customs administrations working in close collaboration with other relevant government agencies to conduct self-evaluation, measure the implementation impacts of specific trade facilitation measures, and provide data-based evidence of the progress made.
4. The tool has been updated recently. The updated TRS Guide version 3.0 incorporates several important elements such as :
  - detailed information on the use of TRS in the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the TFA.
  - the use of modern technologies in data collection, collation and analysis for improving the TRS process (e.g. electronic processing systems, Single Window, smartphones, RFID seals, and GPS-enabled track and trace).
  - An additional Phase (Phase-IV) in the TRS methodology, known as ‘monitoring and evaluation phase’, which allows a country to conclude one TRS cycle and evaluate it before preparing for the next one.
5. The Guide also presents a structured approach in the form of a ‘Model National Action Plan for Implementation of the TRS Recommendations’ for countries to monitor and evaluate the implementation of trade facilitation measures (see Appendix 6 to the TRS Guide) and encourages them to share their respective TRS experiences at regional and international fora.

## **II. Sharing of National Experiences**

6. A greater sharing of TRS experiences and outcomes by Members can be a useful way forward. It helps in measuring the tangible progress made by Members with the implementation of trade facilitation measures. Additionally, Members’ TRS experiences would be valuable to other Members and stakeholders to better understand challenges, lesson learned, and innovative solutions employed, especially those Administrations that are either planning to conduct TRS or at very early stages of this exercise.
7. Furthermore, the sharing of TRS results enables the WCO to analyse and identify trends, gaps and opportunities at the national, regional and international levels that could help Members make their own self-assessment along their implementation journey including through benchmarking.
8. To this end, as part of the ongoing process some Members from different regions have been invited to share experiences and outcomes of their TRS activities including in terms of using TRS for monitoring TFA implementation.
9. Following Members’ presentations, delegates would be invited, through breakout and plenary sessions, to consider the following points (but not limited to) :
  - Going beyond national TRS, what are the key principles and processes on conducting TRS in international trade corridors in respect of the cross-border movement/transit of consignments from one end to another, involving partner countries?
  - How can the TRS data be widely used and promoted as a global tool for measuring the WTO TFA implementation and associated challenges?

- What could be a sustainable mechanism for the periodic sharing of Members' TRS experiences and outcomes with the WCO for a detailed analysis at the sub-regional, regional and global levels?
- What additional instruments, tools or approach can the WCO and its Members use to supplement and enhance TRS activities?

### III. **Action required**

10. The Joint Session of the TFAWG and the PTC is invited to :
- take note of TRS experiences and outcomes shared by Member Customs Administrations; and
  - examine and provide guidance on the questions set out in paragraph 9 above for carrying out future work in the area of TRS that can further support Member Customs Administrations, partner government agencies and private sector stakeholders in terms of enhanced implementation of TFA measures.
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