

WCO Mercator Programme

Information sheet

The Mercator projection enabled mariners to plot straight courses and take correct compass readings, thus supporting trade. Just as the cartographer Gerardus Mercator provided the tools which became fundamental to understanding the world and which ultimately led to increased interconnectivity, so will the World Customs Organization (WCO) Mercator Programme increase global interconnectivity, expand trade volumes and enhance economic competitiveness by providing tailor-made assistance for implementing trade facilitation measures. The Mercator Programme also supports Members' preparation for implementing the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

What are the key objectives?

1. Harmonized implementation based on WCO's global standards

The Mercator Programme is aimed at assisting governments worldwide to implement trade facilitation measures expeditiously and in a harmonized manner by using core WCO instruments and tools such as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC). The Mercator Programme also ensures connectivity at borders and along international trade supply chains in order to provide a consolidated platform for advancing the smooth flow of goods being traded around the world.

2. Tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building

With a wealth of expertise and experience in global Customs technical assistance and capacity building, including a network of accredited experts at its disposal and comprehensive donor engagement mechanisms, the Mercator Programme provides tailor-made support for implementing trade facilitation measures.

3. Effective coordination among all stakeholders

Based on a long-standing history of cooperation with the WTO, other international organizations and the private sector, the Mercator Programme provides a consolidated platform for coordinating needs and priorities of all stakeholders.

What are the benefits?

1. Benefits for developing and least developed countries

Developing and least developed countries (LDCs) may request and receive tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building according to their own needs for implementing trade facilitation measures. The Mercator Programme also provides necessary assistance to assess their needs with the WCO's expertise.

2. Benefits for donor institutions

The WCO has extensive experience in managing technical assistance and capacity building projects along results-based management principles. The Mercator Programme ensures tangible and evidence-based solutions which satisfy the interests of donor institutions.

3. Benefits for all government agencies

Customs administrations and all other government agencies may learn about existing WCO tools and Member practices and experiences of various measures for trade facilitation. It reduces the risk of a non-standardized approach which may lead to divergent implementation practices.

4. Benefits for the private sector

The Mercator Programme promotes trade facilitation measures of all Members, including developing countries and LDCs, in a harmonized manner. It will contribute to predictable and modernized trade procedures and reduce trade costs and clearance times at borders.

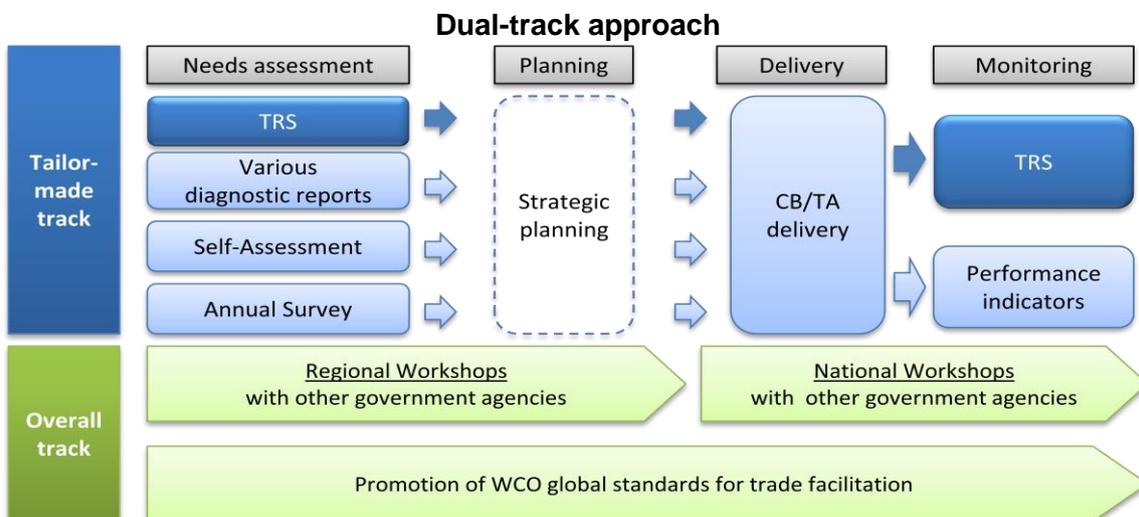
Dual-track approach

(1) Tailor-made track

- The Mercator Programme matches needs of recipient Members and interested donor institutions. Taking into consideration the results of WCO, WTO and/or other organizations' needs assessments, as well as the results from self-assessments and Time Release Studies (TRS), developing countries and LDCs may submit their requests for assistance to the WCO Capacity Building Directorate (capacity.building@wcoomd.org) at any time. The WCO Regional Capacity Building Offices (ROCBs) may assist Members in this respect.
- Interested development partners and donor institutions may contact the WCO Office of External Relations (external.relations@wcoomd.org) with regard to further cooperation, including financial support for technical assistance and capacity building projects.
- The WCO will develop the tailor-made technical assistance projects together with donor institutions and recipient Members. The WCO will identify appropriate Customs-accredited experts from its Customs network.
- The WCO ensures results-based management support activities in the area of TRS and Performance Measurement as part of the monitoring.

(2) Overall track

- The Mercator Programme encompasses all relevant WCO instruments and tools in support of trade facilitation, such as the RKC, SAFE Framework of Standards, Time Release Study and WCO Data Model. Further tools like the Customs and Business Partnership Guidance and the new Transit Handbook will be released soon. It also provides Member trade facilitation practices and experiences.
- All stakeholders, including the private sector, may access the TFA Implementation Guidance, an online Web resource (<http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/atf.aspx>). Customs administrations are encouraged to share their experiences with the WCO.



The TFA Working Group

- The WCO Working Group on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFAWG) will serve as the Mercator Programme's support and monitoring vehicle. The TFAWG provides a link with relevant WTO Committees. It is also the platform for sharing experiences regarding the implementation of trade facilitation measures among the 179 WCO Members, and for enabling Members to coordinate with the donor community and engage with other international organizations and bodies, as well as with the private sector.
- Your participation is welcomed. For more information, please contact the WCO Procedures and Facilitation team (facilitation@wcoomd.org).