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**BOTTLENECKS ON CUSTOMS AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AS REGARDS  
SHORT SEA SHIPPING**

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**Recommendations for possible solutions**

The MIF ad hoc Working Group Customs and Documentary procedures met on 31 January 2002 and on 12 April 2002 with as main item the establishment of a working programme as a follow up to the bottleneck exercise of the Commission and the recommendations of the Workshop held on 20 November 2001 in Brussels.

The Working Group agreed to cluster the action points/recommendations in 10 categories to facilitate the exercise. The 10 categories are:

1. Enhanced co-operation between Customs Authorities of different EU Member States and further simplification of procedures.
2. Practical points to be addressed to DG TAXUD.
3. Distortion between transport modes through different administrative procedures.
4. Actions on information and training
5. Use of IMO FAL forms
6. Ship certificates and licences
7. Documentary procedures regarding dangerous goods
8. Action on transport documents (Bill of Lading/Way Bills, etc.)
9. Boarding of vessels.
10. Veterinary and (phyto) sanitary controls.

**I. Enhanced co-operation between Customs Authorities of different EU Member States and further simplification of procedures.**

1. Customs procedures and controls should be standardised and harmonised on EU-level according to best practices, such as the Customs 2007 programme and the RALFH-programme. The possibility to widen the use of NCTS (New Computerised Transit System), in the case of (only) transit, should also be explored. The final aim is to come to only one IT-platform.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States (local and central administrations and port authorities)**

2. An information campaign should be launched towards customs administrations concerning the uniform application of EU customs legislation. (same as I.1)

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission and Member States**

3. Customs documentation requirements should be simplified across Europe.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission and Member States**

4. An IT-system should be developed to better align and integrate the customs and ports systems as well as VTS on a national and EU level, in relation to the transportation actors. To that end, compatibility standards should be developed. In this respect NCTS and BICS can serve as best practice.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with European Commission, Member States (customs authorities), port authorities and the Maritime industry**

5. An EU customs portal site, composed of sub-portal sites per Member State should be created. In the meantime, an analysis should be made of the best existing system in order to take it up as best example to be used by all (e.g. existing port community systems).

◆ **Action point to be taken up with DG TREN (both Research Unit and SSS Unit)**

6. Since customs are part of a logistic chain, solutions should be found to avoid unnecessary interruptions of or duplications in this chain as much as possible in order to avoid unnecessary costs (e.g. sealing of containers, examination at consignee's premises, etc.). Therefore, communication between customs authorities should be improved (e.g. through the Customs 2007-programme and/or national customs programmes). (same as I.1)

◆ **Action point to be taken up with European Commission, Member States (customs authorities), EU port authorities and the Maritime industry**

7. Individual customs authorities should place final and exclusive checks of transit cargo to/from EU-countries (feeder cargo) in the original port of loading or in the final port of discharge.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with Member States (customs authorities) and the Commission**

8. Guidelines should be written in order to harmonise and to come to a standard level (to improve the quality) of customs controls. Member States should however remain competent to control. This action should be brought forward in the context of the Vademecum that DG TREN is preparing.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with DG TREN (Unit of SSS) and DG TAXUD**

9. Simplified procedures should apply in a transparent way, e.g. through Centres of excellence in which best practises are applied according to Benchmarking. (same as I.3)

◆ **Action point to be taken up with European Commission**

10. A common language and common formats should be used across Europe in order to avoid time-consuming and expensive translations and to avoid errors.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with European Commission**

11. Goods transport by sea-river vessels from and to inland ports as part of their short sea shipping activity should only be controlled in the respective inland port of origin or of the destination of the goods. (similar to I.7).

◆ **Action point to be taken up with European Commission**

12. Communication should be improved between customs authorities of Member States (e.g. through identifying best practices). The Customs 2007-programme, the Impact-seminar (i.e. a Conference in Stockholm aimed at improving co-operation between trade and customs and mainly focused on cross-border co-operation) and Customs knowledge centres can be instruments in this respect. With a better communication between customs authorities it should be avoided that customs controls create unnecessary interruption and duplications. (same as I.1)

◆ **Action point to be taken up with European Commission and Member States (customs authorities)**

13. Communication should be improved between DG TREN and DG TAXUD.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with DG TREN and DG TAXUD**

14. Communication should be improved between Customs authorities and DG TAXUD on the one hand and DG Agriculture on the other hand.

- ◆ **Action point to be taken up with customs authorities, DG TAXUD and DG Agriculture**

**II. Practical points to be addressed to DG TAXUD.**

1. The European Commission should abolish customs procedures for SSS but therefore problems with mixed consignments have to be overcome.
2. The status of a customs authorised regular liner service should be linked to the line and not to the ship. It should also be expanded to non-EU ports in function of the expansion of the EU and privileged trade partners. An additional difficulty in this respect is that liner status cannot be obtained when touching third country port.
3. Transport of goods per sea and river barge between inland ports and short sea shipping should only be controlled at the destination of the goods. (same as I.11 and similar to I.7)
4. Ships should be allowed to start discharging operations immediately after their arrival without being obliged to first complete reporting formalities.

**III. Distortion between transport modes through different administrative procedures.**

1. Standard customs procedures and controls should apply to all transport modes in order to make intermodal transport easier, in particular between road transport and Short Sea Shipping. Reference in this respect should be made to the White Paper on Transport Policy "Time to Decide", where the main aim is to shift road cargo to other transport modes. This can only fully be realised if the same procedures apply to all transport modes.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission**

2. A harmonisation of both the ADR (regarding road transport) and IMDG (regarding sea transport) Codes should be stimulated. The final aim should be the development of one set of rules for documentation of transport of dangerous goods both for road and sea transport, preferably based on the IMDG Code. The uniform set of rules should, however, take into account the specific characteristics of both transport modes as well as local specificities/ circumstances (e.g. the nature of obligations should be adapted whether a ship is calling at a port located in the neighbourhood or far away from a densely populated city). (same as VII)

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States and Port authorities**

3. A harmonisation or at least a co-ordination of customs controls should also be aimed between all Member States. (same as I.1, I.2, I.6, I.12)

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States and Port authorities**

#### **IV. Actions on information and training**

1. Customs knowledge centres should be developed in all Member States. These centres should act as a single point of entry for shippers, forwarders and liner agents when they have problems concerning the possibilities of simplified procedures. They should be equipped with a procedure database, which could be consulted through the Internet.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States and the Maritime industry**

2. Language problems should be solved. Solutions may be found through a revision of the Transit manual or in the context of the Vademecum that DG TREN is preparing. This Vademecum, should consist of a glossary of all terms that are used as well as of an index of all terms being translated in languages of all Member States. The Vademecum should also be available in IT-format. (similar to I.10)

**◆ Action point to be taken up with DG TREN (Unit of SSS)**

3. The use of English as an official language for all documents should be promoted across Europe, without prejudice to the use of national languages, in order to avoid time-consuming and expensive translations and in order to avoid errors. (similar to I.10 and IV.2)

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission**

4. Any modification to customs procedures and controls should be reported by customs authorities in advance.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission**

5. The special position of SSS should be further promoted by promotion agencies and customs information centres

**◆ Action point to be taken up with Member States**

6. Customs authorities should explain the logic behind customs legislation applied to the transport community.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with Member States (customs authorities)**

7. The maritime industry should be consulted during the preparation of new legislation in order to test it by practise. Especially with DG TAXUD consultation should be improved. This may be done by informing DG TAXUD on the process of short sea shipping and of the MIF activities.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with DG TAXUD**

8. An EDI platform should be established for cargo related information (including information for customs and information related to dangerous goods). This platform should be managed on EU-level, ensuring a uniform implementation and operation without 'national' exceptions. The European Commission should financially support such project. A first step may be to make an inventory of the existing EU port community systems. (see I.4)

**◆ Action point to be taken up with Member States, the European Commission and Port authorities**

9. An automatic registration of cargo by means of chip or transponder before ships enter EU-ports should facilitate the entry of cargo details into a computer-system and their electronic transmission (via the European EDI platform). The different levels of information connected to the chip or transponder should also facilitate the transmission of information for other purposes (e.g. dangerous goods, customs controls, export to third countries, etc.). It should be the aim to extend automatic cargo registration to the whole transport chain combining different transport modes.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with Member States, the European Commission and Port authorities**

10. The (electronic) exchange of information on dangerous goods should be further improved between port authorities and should be harmonised on EU level. This may be done in analogy with the MARPOL-directive or in the context of the proposed 'Directive establishing a Community monitoring, control and information system for maritime traffic. VTS should also be taken into account.

**◆ Action point to be taken up with the European Commission and Port authorities of Member States as well as candidate countries**

## **V. Use of IMO FAL forms**

1. A uniform set of ship arrival and departure forms should be applied in the ports of all Member States. These forms should be based on IMO FAL forms 1, 3, 4 and 5.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with Member States and the European Commission**

2. An information campaign should be launched to counter distrust towards the use of IMO FAL forms in order to increase the (harmonised) use of these forms.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, the Maritime Industry and the SSS-promotion agencies.**

3. A pilot project at EU level should be financially supported to create a simple web-related electronic carrier for the IMO FAL forms and to simulate the electronic availability of the IMO FAL forms on EU-level (e.g. through an increased use of EDI).

◆ **Action point to be taken up with Member States, the European Commission and the Maritime Industry**

4. Each Member State administration should clearly indicate where the IMO FAL forms are available. DG TREN should have a copy of these administrations;

◆ **Action point to be taken up with Member States (Transport Ministers)**

5. The European Commission should analyse what information requirements indicated in IMO FAL forms for ship arrivals and departures are necessary to be fulfilled, e.g. in the context of the “directive concerning the notification of formalities of vessels entering or leaving a EU-port” that DG TREN is now preparing.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission (DG TREN)**

## **VI. Ship certificates and licenses**

1. Ships certificates and licenses should be harmonised and simplified on EU-level and their electronic availability should be further stimulated. The Flemish ports' ECOWARE-project, constituting a web-based solution for ship and loading residues, may serve as best practice.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States, the MIF and port authorities of Member States and candidate countries**

**VII. Documentary procedures regarding dangerous goods**

1. A harmonisation of both the ADR (regarding road transport) and IMDG (regarding sea transport) Codes should be stimulated. The final aim should be the development of one set of rules for documentation of transport of dangerous goods both for road and sea transport, preferably based on the IMDG Code. The uniform set of rules should, however, take into account the specific characteristics of both transport modes as well as local specificities/ circumstances (e.g. the nature of obligations should be adapted whether a ship is calling at a port located in the neighbourhood or far away from a densely populated city). (same as 3.2)

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States and port authorities of member States**

### **VIII. Actions regarding bills of lading**

1. One single document should be developed for intermodal transport, covering all transport and customs obligations at the same time. In this perspective, it might be opportune to test the uniform intermodal document inspired by the FIATA bill of lading.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission and the MIF**

2. The North Sea Standard Conditions of Carriage should be extended to “European Standard Shortsea Conditions of Carriage”, consisting of clear and commonly accepted conditions and liabilities of carriage and allowing bookings to be accepted and shortsea transport to be carried out. With this mechanism the cargo details can be transferred separately and bills of lading would no longer be required. Especially for transshipment cargo there is a direct link with the destination of the cargo. To that end, a special group should be created;

◆ **Action point to be taken up with Shipowners, especially P&I-Clubs and BIMCO**

3. More publicity should be made of the use of waybills and of electronic bills of lading (see Bolero-project).

◆ **Action point to be taken up with Shipowners, especially P&I-Clubs and BIMCO**

**IX. Boarding of vessels**

1. Only one competent authority should board ships or at least all competent authorities should board vessels in a co-ordinated way;
  2. Tasks should be delegated to the port authority or to shipagents, especially regarding routine SSS arrival and departure procedures.
- ◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission, Member States and ports of Member States and candidate countries**

**X. Veterinary and (phyto-) sanitary controls.**

Veterinary and (phyto-)sanitary procedures and controls should be harmonised on EU level through

1. the use of EDI;
2. the creation of a single format for all cargoes and all types of control;
3. the establishment of one single administrative checking point within ports for all veterinary and (phyto-)sanitary inspections;
4. the acceptance of mobile checks within ports.

NCTS (New Computerised Transit System) may serve as best practise.

◆ **Action point to be taken up with the European Commission (DG TREN, DG TAXUD and DG Agriculture) and Member States. The Ministries of Transport of Member States should take the initiative**

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