United Nations Development Account

Strengthening the Capacities of Developing Countries and Countries with Economies in Transition to Facilitate Legitimate Border Crossing, Regional Cooperation and Integration

Project ROA: 1213AA

Implemented by

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

in collaboration with

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP),
Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA),
Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA),
and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)

EVALUATION REPORT

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Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
AMLD	Moroccan Agency for Logistics Development
ATA	"Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission".
BADR	Base Automated Networked Customs
B2C	Business to Customs
BCP	Burden of Customs Procedure
CACM	Central American Common Market
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CAUCA	Unified Central American Customs Code
CONAVI	National Roads Council
C2C	Customs to Customs
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EA	Expected Accomplishments
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GAFTA	Greater Arab Free Trade Area
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCAA	Georgian Civil Aviation Agency
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDB	Islamic Development Bank
IRU	International Road Transportation Union
IT	Information Technology
PLI	Logistics Performance Index
LTA	Land Transport Agency
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MAD	Moroccan Dirham
MESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
METC	Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRDI	Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure
MTA	maritime Transport Agency
NRN	National Road Network
NSDS	National Sustainable Development Strategy
NTP	National Transport Plan
PTSD	Plan for Transition of the Kyrgyz Republic to Sustainable Development
RS	Revenue Service
SIECA	Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration
UAIS	Unified Automated Information System
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
RC	Regional Commission
RKC	Revised Kyoto Convention
RS	Revenue Service
TIR	"Transports Internationaux Routiers" or "International Road Transports"
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia
TVC	Cantonal Road Network
UAIS	Unified Automated Information System

XML	Extensible Markup Language
WCO	World Customs Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

I.   Executive Summary

The evaluation of the project "Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration" was carried out by an external evaluator in May-September 2016.

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for evaluating development projects and programs: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. A mixed-method approach was applied which incorporated quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis. Fieldwork included in-person interviews with: the project managers from all Regional Commission (RCs)[1], external experts hired to assess gaps at local levels, the consulting company contracted out to develop a Customs-to-Customs (C2C) digital platform, project focal points in pilot countries, and the participants of capacity building activities. The evaluation resulted in the following findings:

1) The project was designed to cater the needs and priorities of all beneficiary countries. It was consistent with relevant national strategies and plans of beneficiary countries that prevailed at the time of gap analysis;

2) The project was relevant to the regions' needs and priorities. All pilot countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and each of them plays an important role in the international trade scheme serving as a cross-point of trans-regional transport corridors;

3) The project was designed in accordance with the agenda and strategic frameworks of all five Regional Commissions (RCs);

4) The objectives of the project remained very relevant and valid either for pilot countries or for regions throughout the project's implementation and have been fully achieved;

5) The C2C information exchange platform can be configured (without difficulties) to serve any number of national Customs agencies. Likewise, relevant capacity building activities can be easily launched to address the needs of parties interested;

6) The project activities and outputs were completely consistent with and relevant to project objectives, intended impacts and expected accomplishments (EA).

7) The expected accomplishments of the project had been fully achieved in capacity building domain. A pilot version of the C2C platform developed within the project frameworks was in compliance with technical requirements and fully functional, albeit, not fully tested in operational environment.

8) Diverse workshops and seminars organized in the course of the project greatly increased technical capacities of participating authorities on securing electronic C2C transit information;

9) The project did not demonstrate any gender balance in the course of its implementation;

10) All RCs confirmed that, in total, financial and human resources allocated to the project were sufficient to achieve the results;

11) The project faced certain delays in launching its activities and delivering achievements;

12) Apart from a budget initially allocated for gap analysis, the resources were allocated and used sparingly;

13) Budget allocation structure demonstrated certain discrepancy the project currently being evaluated and other similar projects implemented by the UNECE;

14) Stakeholders and implementing agencies agreed that the budget allocated for gap analysis consultancies was insufficient; and

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[1] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA); United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC); United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP); and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

15) The sustainability of project achievements had been envisioned through a fee–for-service arrangement to be in force in the long run for the usage of the C2C data (TIR related data) exchange platform.

The evaluation resulted in the following conclusions:

- The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) took the lead in the design (technical and budget) of the project, addressing the needs and priorities of participating countries and Regional Commissions (RGs). Although, an initial budget allocation scheme, which did not reflect existing market realities, delayed the commencement of the project activities.
- The UNECE established a good collaboration with RGs and the relevant state agencies of participating countries, which ensured accomplishment of expected results and guaranteed that the objectives of the project had remained relevant throughout its implementation.
- The project made a solid contribution to strengthening national capacities with regard to TIR and eTIR agendas. It provided a solid basis upon which to frame the cooperation and dialogue on facilitating trade and transit through the use of international standards.
- The project's risk assessment never considered certain internal and external risk factors such as: political and country context, unavailability of complete and consistent data sets, the introduction of a new UN ERP system[2]. As a result, no relevant risk mitigation mechanism had been developed and applied.
- The project design paid scant attention to gender mainstreaming and equality matters. The project reports do not demonstrate either development or use of gender –sensitive indicators. The only gender-related reference was made while presenting the list of participants partaking in capacity building activities.
- The platform developed within the framework of the project can be easily replicated in the countries which demonstrate relevant readiness in technological, infrastructure, human resource and legal frameworks domains.
- Sustainability of the project achievements heavily depends on follow-up interventions aimed at raising the awareness of practical benefits of the C2C electronic data exchange platform and providing technical assistance (legal, human resources, hardware/ infrastructure, software and data security protection) to those countries interested in becoming connected to the platform.

Based on the evaluation findings, it is highly recommended to continue running the project into the second phase considering the following:

- The project team should consider developing a strategic/sustainability business plan that will focus on turning the pilot C2C data exchange platform into a full-scale functioning system;
- Conduct a risk assessment and propose risk mitigation measures at the early stage (design) of the project;
- Strengthen the gender-sensitive aspects of the project through developing relevant indicators at the early stage of the project design;
- Utilize a coherent and cost saving approach through strengthened collaboration with the specialized agencies; and
- Continue engagement with national stakeholders and potential users of the platform to identify their needs and provide technical support (legal, advisory, etc.) to streamline processes and precondition required to access the platform.

II.   Introduction

In December 2012, the Transport Division of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) introduced the project "Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration". The project was launched at the beginning of 2013, by the UNECE, in cooperation with RGs (the UNESCAP, UNESCWA, UNECA and UNECLAC) and Customs administrations of pilot countries. It was completed in June 2016 and comprised the following six activities:

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[2] UMOJA project

1) First session of the Inter-regional Expert Group;

2) Provision of technical assistance to national experts in at least five pilot countries;

3) The development and deployment of a C2C data exchange platform to secure exchange of electronic transit-related data between customs administrations.

4) Deliverance of five technical workshops to build capacity of developing countries;

5) Second session of the Inter-regional Expert Group; and

6) Deliverance a seminar to promote the electronic exchange of Customs information.

The evaluation was conducted by an independent evaluator, in May-September 2016 and was based on a comprehensive desk review of related documents and reports and individual consultations with key stakeholders.

A. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to review the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project "Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration". A particular focus was made to assess the development and tailoring of methods and technology for information exchange between national customs offices in the pilot countries selected within the project framework.

B. Scope of Evaluation

The scope of the evaluation envisaged reviewing and gauging the activities of the project implemented in all five pilot countries from January 2013, through June 2016. The evaluation assessed trade and transport facilitation measures as well as C2C electronic data exchange support provided within the project's framework. The evaluation heeded the extent to which the main project objective was achieved and how the inputs and resources were utilized in achieving the outputs. The scope of evaluation also addressed gender equality aspect of the project.

The evaluation was guided by the objective, indicators of achievement, activities and means of verification stipulated in the logical framework of the project document. It was built around key evaluation questions outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and assessed the project through:

- *The relevance* of the project's design, objectives, activities and output to national governments and the RCs;
- *The effectiveness* of the project in terms of achieving its objectives;
- The e*fficiency* of the project in terms of its cost-efficient structure; and
- The s*ustainability* of the project achievements.

C. Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation aimed at providing answers to key evaluation questions listed out below in order to assess whether the project did achieve its objectives, whether these achievements are sustainable, and to identify key lessons with a view to design similar programs in the most cost-efficient way.

1. **Questions on Relevance:**

1) To What Extent Did the Project Respond to the Priorities and Needs of the Beneficiary Countries?

2) To What Extent is the Project Aligned with the Policies and Strategies of the Recipient Pilot Countries?

3) How Relevant Was the Project for the Regions' Needs and Priorities?

4) What is the Relevance of the Project for the Work of 5 Regional Commissions (RCs)?

5) To What Extent are the Objectives of the Project Still Valid?

6) How Can the Project be Replicated in Other Contexts?

7) To What Extent are the Activities and Outputs of the Project Consistent with and Relevant to the Overall Objective, Expected Accomplishments, Intended Impacts and Effects?

2.   Questions on Effectiveness

1) To What Extent the Objective of the Project was Achieved?

2) To What Extent the Expected Accomplishments of the Project Were Achieved?

3) To What Extent the Planned Activities Contributed to Achieving the Objective and the Expected Accomplishments?

4) What Were the Challenges/obstacles to Achieving the Expected Results? What has Prevented to Achieve the Desired Results?

5) How Did the Project Address Gender Balance Issue?

3.   Questions on Efficiency

1) Were the Resources Sufficient for Achieving the Results? Were the Results Commensurate with the Resources?

2) Were the Activities and Results Achieved on Time?

3) Were All Activities Organized Efficiently and on Time?

4) To What Extent the Resources Were Used Economically? How Could the Use of Resources Been Improved?

5) Where there any alternatives to achieve the same results? Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? How do the costs and use of resources compare with other similar projects ?

6) How Was the Difference Between Planned and Actual Expenditure Justified (if any)?

4.   Questions on Sustainability

1) Could the results be further sustained?

III.   Evaluation Methodology and Data Limitation

The evaluation applied a mixed-methods approach to gather sufficient data for triangulation and cross validation and to establish a solid evidence-basis for further analysis. Information gathering tools incorporated a range of qualitative and quantitative data such as:

- Desk study of the project documents (progress reports, project outputs and a review of similar projects) provided by the UNECE;
- Country context analysis and review of strategic priorities and plans of the regional commission (UNESCAP, UNESCWA, UNECA and UNECLAC);
- Trade and freight turnover statistics as well and assessment of world development indicators such as Burden of Customs Procedures (BCP) and Logistics Performance Index (LPI). The aforementioned indicators (BCP and LPI) are benchmarking tools that measure efficiency and consistency of applied customs procedures, and help to identify the challenges and opportunities countries face in their performance on transportation and trade logistics.
- Financial and budgetary analytics and the budget allocation comparison;
- Online research and review of strategic needs, priorities and development plans of relevant national governments with regard to transportation trade facilitation and customs; and
- Contextual analysis of stakeholders' feedback on the project's planning, inception and implementation phases.

The methodology considered gathering feedback on the project accomplishment from key stakeholders such as: state sector representatives partaking in project activities, the project implementing partner and external consultants hired in the course of the project implementation. The evaluator also questioned relevant staff members of all five United Nations Regional Commissions (RGs) on the strategies, experiences, and challenges encountered in the course of the project's implementation.

The evaluation faced certain limitations while gathering the feedback from the participants of the inter-regional group meetings, workshops and the final seminar. Despite the questionnaires having been distributed among all participants of the aforementioned events, the response rate was very modest.

IV. Findings

A. Relevance

1. To What Extent Did the Project Respond to the Priorities and Needs of the Beneficiary Countries?

> **FINDING 1:** **The project was designed to cater the needs and priorities of all beneficiary countries.**

During the early stages of the project the gap analyses were conducted to assess the needs, capacities, and readiness of candidate countries taking part in the electronic exchange of transit-related data with their neighboring countries.

Recognizing the importance of the transportation sector, the governments of all pilot countries introduced a set of masterplans to reform their transport sectors and customs administration systems. In 2010, the Government of *Costa Rica* introduced a National Transport Plan (NTP) for 2011-2035. The plan prioritized and secured investments in transport infrastructure by upgrading strategic road corridors and nodes (ports, airports, border crossings), and strengthening intermodal transport and services to increase the efficiency of local and international transportation. Doing so would contribute to the trade and regional integration of the country. In 2010-2014[3], the Government negotiated four major road improvement projects, three of which were funded through external loans (two by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Development Bank of Latin America, and one by private concession). Costa Rica has a maritime port system on its Pacific and Caribbean coasts (Puerto Limon on the Atlantic Ocean and Caldera on the Pacific Ocean), both of which have international shipping facilities, and port facilities that serve coastal and inland waterways[4]. The vast majority (over 75 percent) of Costa Rica's exports is transported by sea (Annex 2).

Morocco's transport sector has benefited from substantial infrastructure rehabilitation investments from both, private and state–led development programs. Over the last decade, the Moroccan government had made significant efforts to promote international trade and stimulate competition in the transport sector through a series of sector liberalization reforms covering road transport (2003), air transport (Open Sky agreement with the EU in 2006)[5], maritime and port reforms (2006)[6]. Maritime transportation remained to be a main transportation mode in Morocco. In 2008-2013, freight turnover via maritime transportation was over 60 percent, reaching 80 percent in 2010 (Annex 2). The Government of Morocco also introduced the National Investment Plan for 2008-2012[7] aimed at developing the transport infrastructure, specifically: roads, highways, railways, airports and ports. The total budget of the plan amounted 120 Billion Moroccan Dirham (MAD) which was allocated to infrastructure construction and maintenance work. In 2010, Morocco designed the five-year National Strategy for Logistics Competitiveness[8] aimed at, inter alia,

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[3] Under the Chinchilla government
[4] Costa Rica has 42,430 km of roads and 19[4] percent of it belongs to the National Road Network (RVN) maintained by the National Roads Council (CONAVI). The remaining 81 percent[4] belongs to the Cantonal Road Network (RVC) maintained by the municipalities.
[5] http://icnwarsaw2013.org/pre-icn/pre-icn-4b_Abouelaziz_-_Morocco_air_transport_liberalisation.pdf
[6] The Law 15-02 (2006): http://www.anp.org.ma/Publications/Documents/Lois_et_reglementation/Loi_n15-02/Loi_n15-02.pdf
[7] http://www.finances.gov.ma/Docs/2013/depf/5007_transport_ang.pdf
[8] Stratégie Nationale de Développement de la Compétitivité Logistique, Ministère de l'Equipement et des Transport, http://www.invest.gov.ma/upload/secteurs/fr_Document_98.pdf

improving the quality and efficiency of logistics services both locally and internationally[9]. In 2009, the Government approved the National Pact for Industrial Emergence (EINP)[10], a formal roadmap aimed at building and developing high value –added competitive sectors, including transportation.

In 2010, as part of its sectoral development strategy, the Government of Morocco introduced a large-scale five-year (2010-2015) strategic plan for developing the logistics sector competitiveness. The plan revolved around five key pillars: developing an integrated national network of multi-flow logistics zones, optimizing the flow of goods, encouraging competitiveness, developing human resources, and setting up a sector governance framework.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Equipment, Transport and Logistics (METC) adopted a new strategic plan for 2012-2016[11] which prioritized both transport infrastructure investments and sector regulatory reforms. This initiative resulted in a series of institutional reforms in transport sector. Notably, the government established the Moroccan Agency for Logistics Development (AMLD)[12].

Tunisia's strategic location on the Mediterranean Sea offers numerous benefits in terms of international trade. Following its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Government of Tunisia has been steadily implementing market –oriented policies and reforms to liberalize the transport sector and develop its existing transport infrastructure. Tunisia initiated a number of projects to upgrade its infrastructure. Thus, in 2007, the Government proposed a national infrastructure plan centered on the following transport sector priorities: reinforcement of maritime and rail transport infrastructure, improvement of interconnectivity of freight transport, and development of a logistics strategy. In 2012, The Ministry of Regional Development and Planning (MRDP) issued the Development Strategy of the New Tunisia[13] in which it confirmed the commitment of the Government to deepen integration into the regional and global economy and to continue improving logistics and transport sector services. The Strategy, inter alia, considered:

Reinforcing the main highways network and linking it to the most important economic, regional and urban zones;

Developing national, regional and local road networks to ensure efficient traffic flow between production and consumption centers;

Strengthening modern transport infrastructure by addressing the demands of the logistical hubs, and production and distribution centers.

Due to its convenient geographic location, *Georgia* benefits from serving as a transport corridor between East and West (Central Asia and Europe) and North and South (Russian Federation and Turkey). IN Georgia, railway carried over 88 percent of total freight and motor vehicles comprised around 11 percent of total freight turnover in 2014. Overland transportation remains the main means of transportation comprising around 99 percent of total freight turnover in 2012-2014 (Annex 2). The Government of Georgia has recognized that the transportation sector is of significant importance to the national economy. Moreover, the expected increase in the transit of oil and by-products in the near future makes transport infrastructure rehabilitation a top priority on the country's development agenda. In its 10-point strategic plan for 2011-2015[14], the Government of Georgia listed transport and logistics among 10 strategic areas. The Government expressed its commitment to invest in high quality transport infrastructure and trade facilitation. The country carried out sector reforms initiatives that would turn Georgia into a regional and logistical hub.

In the transport sector, the Government has started to implement some structural changes. In 2005, the Government of Georgia created the Revenue Service (RS) agency[15] that merged the customs and tax administration functions. Since its establishment in 2005, the RS carried out a number of institutional reforms and legislative amendments to improve tax and customs administration measures and to support the digitization of customs administration. In 2009, the Ministry of

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[9] The implementation of the National Strategy for Logistics Competitiveness improved country's ranking in terms of logistics

[10] Le Pacte Nationale Pour l'Emergence Industrielle

[11] http://www.equipement.gov.ma/Gouvernance/Strategie/Pages/Strategie-du-Ministre.aspx

[12] A state agency created in 20013 with a mission to help the logistics sector boost economic competitiveness.

[13] http://www.mici-events.tn/fileadmin/user_upload/Docs_Forum_ang/Development_Strategy_New_Tunisia.pdf

[14] Strategic 10-Point Plan of the Government of Georgia for Modernization and Employment for 2011-2015

[15] The RS of Georgia is a legal entity of public law under the Ministry of Finance (MoF) of Georgia

Regional Development and Infrastructure (MRDI) was established to oversee regional development, transport infrastructure and service as well as local self-governance reforms. Simultaneously, the Government created the Road Department under the MRDI, which became responsible for roads maintenance and supervision. In 2011, the Government formed several technical regulators under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MESD): the Land Transport Agency (LTA), the Maritime Transport Agency (MTA), and the Georgian Civil Aviation Agency (GCAA)[16]. Later on, in July 2012, the MoF of Georgia requested[17] all customs-crossing points or customs clearance zone applications to be submitted via an electronic system.

The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous, landlocked country. It holds a key geographic position in Central Asia located on major transit routes connecting Europe and Asia. This unique location predetermined the exclusive role of road transportation in realizing the transit potential of the country. Overland transportation (railroad and motor vehicles) is a main transportation mode counting over 88 percent and 91 percent of freight turnover in 2012 and 2015 respectively (Annex 2). The Road Sector Development Strategy for 2007–2010, adopted by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic outlined key transport and logistics sector development priorities such as: (i) rehabilitating and maintaining key roads, (ii) creating transport interdependence, (iii) improving road financing, (iv) encouraging the private sector to participate in construction and maintenance, (v) involving local communities in local road maintenance, (vi) reforming the Ministry of Transport and Communications and road network management, (vii) improving road safety, and (viii) using modern technologies in the construction and management of roads[18]. The Kyrgyz Republic received a US$7.5 million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB to modernize its customs service and to develop its infrastructure. Overall the project incorporated two major components: development of Unified Automated Information System (UAIS), and development of the infrastructure of external checkpoints[19]. In addition, the Strategy of Development of Road Transport of the Kyrgyz Republic (2012- 2015)[20] of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, highlights the value of road transport to the country[21]. Furthermore, the Government approved the National Sustainable Development Strategy for 2013–2017 (NSDS) which highlights the importance of international transport corridors. In addition, the Government also developed a five-year plan for the Kyrgyz Republic's sustainable development (PTSD) to implement measures stipulated in NSDS and transport master plan[22] for the road, rail, and aviation subsectors.

2.   **To What Extent is the Project Aligned with the Policies and Strategies of the Recipient Pilot Countries?**

FINDING 2:   The project was very much consistent with relevant national strategies and plans of beneficiary countries that prevailed at the time of gap analysis.

By the time of the gap analysis, all pilot countries had been operating internally developed customs information management systems (Table 1). The development of aforementioned software applications had been backed up by a series of legal and administrative reforms implemented in each country.

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[16] LTA, MTA and GCAA are Legal Entities of Public Law
[17] The amendment to the Order No.290 dated 26 July 2012.
[18] http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/42399-02-kgz-dc.pdf
[19] http://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/events/2013/TRS-Training-UZB/009_103_209_Kyrgyz-presentation.pdf
[20] Approved by the Resolution № 677, on October 4, 2012.
[21] Providing 95 percent of the total freight and 97 percent of the passenger transport.
[22] With support of ADB

Table 1: Customs Information Management Systems in Pilot Countries

Country	Software	Launch date
Costa Rica	Customs IT (TICA) System & International Transit of Goods (TIM[23]) system	2005
Morocco	Base Automated Networked Customs (BADR)	2009
Tunisia	SINDA Software	1982 (1st version) and 2000 (modified version)
Georgia	eCustoms (built on ASYCUDA World) & "Oracle"	2007
Kyrgyz Republic	Uniform Automated Information System (UAIS)	December 2012

Source: Project Gap analysis Reports, 2014

In 2011, the National Customs Service of Costa Rica requested the WCO's support and facilitation with the development of the five-year Costa Rica Customs Strategic Plan[24]. The Plan, covering the 2012-2017 period, highlighted the implementation of the customs computerized system as one of the most important achievements. It also listed "Simplifying of International Trade in Goods" among its four key strategic development objectives. Likewise, the updated Strategic Plan for 2015-2018[25], under its strategic objective pillar "Facilitate movement of goods, vehicles and people in the territory", confirms the commitment of the Government to strengthen the quality of and control over, processes and customs procedures through ICT support. In 2005, the Government launched a national customs system (TICA system) to administer the customs procedure of admission, deposit and import. In addition, the Government operates the International Transit of Goods [26] system (TIM system) which is common for Central American countries and is used to monitor international transits and to exchange information with Costa Rica's TICA system. The TIM system is used to implements a common operating procedure at the borders of some countries of the region[27].

Following the diagnostic assessment conducted in Morocco in 2010, the Customs and Excise Administration Agency of the country issued its strategic development plan for 2011-2015. The plan addressed the strategic priorities of the nationwide masterplans adopted by the Government: the Strategic Plan for Developing of Logistics Sector Competitiveness (2010-2015) and the National Pact for Industrial Emergence. The economic objectives of the plan include facilitating international trade through applying technological solutions, and organizational and legal framework adjustments. By the time of the gap analysis, Morocco was operating its own customs IT system called the Base Automated Networked Customs (BADR)[28], which allows it to modernize the management and control of customs activities and offers its users a set of online services of clearance of goods (imported and exported).

Since 2000, the Government of *Tunisia* created a semi-public agency, the Tunisia Trade Net (TTN) system that facilitates electronic data exchange among interested parties and expedites the processing of trade documents. The TTN system serves all parties involved in international trade including the customs agency, the ministries, technical control agencies, the Central Bank, ports, private traders, agents, freight forwarders, customs brokers, and banks. By the time of gap analysis was conducted, the Customs of Tunisia was using an automated customs information system (SINDA). The system was created in 1982 and was upgraded in 2000. It allows for the simplifying and expediting customs clearance procedure, and controlling the flow of imported and exported goods. The Government continuously invests in sector modernization activities. Thus, in 2014, the

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[23] Tránsito Internacional de Mercancías (TIM)

[24]

http://www.hacienda.go.cr/docs/51c35a2d55478_PLANESTRATEGICOSERVICIONACIONALDEADUANAS20122017.pdf

[25] http://www.hacienda.go.cr/docs/559af1fc15c84_Plan%20Estrategico%20SNA%202015-2018.pdf

[26] Gap analysis,
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/themes/UNDAC2C/presentations/Chehebar081214.pdf

[27] Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama

[28] Base Automatisée des Douanes en Réseau

World Bank approved a USD 50 million equivalent loan to the Government of Tunisia to launch the "Export Development Project"[29]. The project's sub-components include:

- Upgrading the Customs Information System (SINDA);
- Introduction of a comprehensive computerized post review risk management system for customs;
- Developing operating procedures and the related computerizing system for logistic zones; and
- Supporting the improvement of Customs procedures manuals and guidelines.

The *Georgian* Revenue Service (RS), which operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) of Georgia, is a national agency responsible for customs operations. The Customs Department and the Information Technology Center are structural units of the RS governed by the Constitution of Georgia, international agreements, the Tax Code of Georgia, and other normative acts of Georgia.

In 2012, the MoF of Georgia approved[30] the Instruction on Movement and Clearance of Goods across the Customs Territory of Georgia. The instruction defines basic rules and regulations on core customs operations. Inter alia, it also stipulates restrictions and requirements for operations under transit and TIR regimes and outlines the electronic data processing framework. In addition, the RS of Georgia approved[31] the Instruction for Implementation of Procedures Related to Entering Goods into the Customs Territory of Georgia, Leaving the Customs Territory of Georgia and Declaration. The instruction defines types of customs documents to be submitted as well as submission rules. In 2007, the RS of Georgia launched two independent information systems: eCustoms (based on ASYCUDA World) that supports all customs operations, and an information system based on the Oracle Database platform that handles revenue collection related operations.

The State Customs Service under the Government of *Kyrgyz Republic* is a state entity with strategic objectives, inter alia, to reform customs and near-customs infrastructure, and to modernize existing information exchange channels through utilizing innovative information and communication technology (ICT) solutions. To facilitate foreign trade and development of key export-oriented areas of the economy through reforming and modernization of customs service, in 2010 the Government approved[32] the Customs Service Development Strategic and Action Plan for 2010-2013[33].The Plan prioritized certain UAIS related activities: developing technical assignments on components of UAIS, implementing prototype testing, and conducting training and capacity building activities for UAIS software users. In 2013, as part of the introduction of the SafeTIR[34] system, the Customs Service updated and launched a new version of UAIS application. Furthermore, in 2014, the Government signed an agreement with the Customs Service, the International Road Transport Union (IRU) and the Association of International Road Carriers of the Kyrgyz Republic AIRTO KR to develop software for the TIR Electronic Pre-Declaration (TIR-EPD) system[35].

3.   **How Relevant Was the Project for the Regions' Needs and Priorities?**

> **FINDING 3:**   **The project was relevant to the regions' needs and priorities. All pilot countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and each of them plays an important role in the international trade scheme serving as a cross-point of trans-regional transport corridors**

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[29]
http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/468231468174537734/pdf/PAD5720PAD0P13010Box385222B00O UO090.pdf
[30] Approved by Order No. 290 of 26 July 2012.
[31] Approved by Order No. 12858 of 1 August 2012.
[32] Approved by the Resolution of the Government of Kyrgyz Republic, № 342, on December 30, 2010..
[33] Approved by the Resolution of the Government of Kyrgyz Republic, № 342, on December 30, 2010;
http://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/events/2013/TRS-Training-UZB/009_103_209_Kyrgyz-presentation.pdf
[34] A control system for managing the use of TIR Carnets.
[35] Was introduced by the customs authorities of the EU in order to broadcast carriers preliminary information data of the TIR Carnet.

All pilot countries except Costa Rica were contracting parties to the TIR[36] Convention[37] by the time of the project design (Table 2) and members of the International Road Transportation Union (IRU)[38].

Table 2: TIR Carnet (TIR Convention) in Pilot Countries

#	Contracting Party	Association Code	National Associations
1	Costa Rica[39]	-	-
2	Morocco	085	Moroccan Association of Road Transport Intercontinental of Morocco[40] (AMTRI Morocco)[41] http://www.cgem.ma/
3	Tunisia	063	Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Tunis (CCiT)
4	Georgia	054	Georgian International Road Carriers Association "GIRCA (GIRCA)[42]
5	Kyrgyz Republic	080; 092	Association of Road Transport operator of Kyrgyz Republic (AIRTO-KR)[43]

Source : http://www.unece.org/tir/system/tir-system-countries.html

Since 1962, **Costa Rica** has adhered to the General Treaty of Central American Economic Integration[44] which obliges each partner to establish a "Common Customs Service" and to apply uniform procedures, systems and guidelines. Moreover, the Central American Tariff and Customs Regime, created on the basis of the Central American Agreement on Tariffs and Trades[45], established a Unified Central American Customs Code (CAUCA). The Code came into effect in 2008. It established new provisions of securing international trade and facilitating customs procedures among the countries of Central America. The Code was signed by all Central American countries[46] and is an essential element of information exchange between customs on a uniform basis. Costa Rica signed a number of free-trade agreements with different countries including Mexico, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic and Canada. The free-trade agreement with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was approved by the Legislative Assembly in 2005. Moreover, Costa Rica is a member of the Central American Common Market (CACM)[47], and is located in close proximity to the Panama Canal. The country's customs regimes and procedures deeply the affect regional trade agenda.

Since joining the WTO in 1995, both **Morocco and Tunisia** have made efforts to facilitate trade ties with WTO member countries. They signed several bilateral trade agreements with the European Union, and joined: the League of Arab States[48], Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA)[49], the

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[36] TIR can help to implement WTO TFA provisions such as article 11

[37] http://www.unece.org/tir/system/tir-system-countries.html

[38] The world road transport organization

[39] In 2016, the IRU organized a workshop in Mexico to outline the benefits of TIR for Latin American trade, and in particular how it can help countries in the region implement the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement.

[40] Association Marocaine des Transports Routiers Internationaux (AMTRI)

[41] http://www.amtrimaroc.com/

[42] http://girca.org

[43] http://airto-kr.com/

[44] http://www.sice.oas.org/Trade/sica/PDF/AdhesionCR62.pdf

[45] https://docs.wto.org/gattdocs/q/.%5CGG%5CL4799%5C4731.PDF

[46] Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

[47] CACM incorporates five members; Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica

[48] Was founded in 1945 and incorporates 22 countries including Morocco and Tunisia.

[49] An 18-member trading bloc assembled in 1997 with a goal to coordinate tariff policy, stimulate inter-member and global trade, establish uniform customs policy, and coordinate tax and duty legislation. GAFTA is also referred as an Arab Free Trade Area or Pan Arab Free trade Area.

Agadir Agreement[50], the Arab Maghreb Union[51], the Gulf Cooperation Council[52], and the Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area[53] Agreement. They are also signatories to the International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontiers Controls of Goods[54]. In addition, Morocco adheres to the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) which aims to facilitate trade by harmonizing and simplifying customs procedures and practices[55]. It is also a contracting party to the eight main UNECE agreements which relate to road transport[56].

Georgia: Since 1998, Georgia has been part of the Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia (TRACECA[57]) and has participated in over 30 international conventions on transportation. Georgia signed several international cooperation agreements that facilitate border crossing processes. In addition, the country signed an agreement with the Government of Turkey on the joint use of land crossing points and the Memorandum of Understating (MoU) with the Georgian International Road Carriers Association and the International Road Transport Union (IRU) for the Capture, Transmission, Management and Dissemination of Data for the Termination of the TIR Carnet Operations at Customs Offices of Destination. There is also a protocol on Organizing the Exchange of Preliminary Information on Goods and Vehicles Transiting across the State Borders of Georgia and Ukraine.

The Government of Georgia is in the process of negotiating an agreement with the Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the joint use of land customs crossing points. A protocol between the Customs Administrations of GUAM[58] member states on organizing the exchange of preliminary information on goods and vehicles transiting across the state borders of GUAM member states is at ratification stage. In 2014 Georgia signed an association agreement with the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their member states, covering the accession of Georgia to the Convention on a Common Transit Procedure.

The Kyrgyz Republic is an active member of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program[59]. CAREC serves as the development coordination entity (at the regional level. The CAREC Transport and Trade Facilitation Strategy[60] defined transport and trade facilitation vision in the region up to and including 2020. It outlined three major trade facilitation goals:

- Reduce transaction time and costs significantly by improving administrative efficiency, and simplifying, standardizing, and harmonizing trade procedures;
- Encourage free movement of people and goods; and

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[50] The agreement was signed in Morocco in 2004 and is aimed at establishing free trade between Jordan, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco.

[51] Was established in 1989 and incorporates five countries: Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania (Sahara).

[52] A regional intergovernmental political and economic union consisting of all Arab states of the Persian Gulf, except for Iraq. Its member states are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

[53] includes all 27 EU Member States, along with 16 partners across the Mediterranean (Southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia, and Turkey; Balkans: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro; Libya; and Mauritania.

[54] http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/conventn/harmone.pdf

[55] http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/facilitation/instrument-and-tools/conventions/pf_revised_kyoto_conv/instruments.aspx

[56] Road Traffic (1968); Signs and Signals (1968); International carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR) whose provisions are applicable to both international and national transport; International carriage of perishable foodstuffs and on the special equipment to be used for such Carriage (ATP, 1970); CMR (1956); TIR (1959); Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982); Customs on the temporary importation of private road vehicles (1954).

[57] An international transport programme involving the European Union and 14 member States of the Eastern European, Caucasian and Central Asian region

[58] A regional organization of four post-Soviet states: **G**eorgia, **U**kraine, **A**zerbaijan, and **M**oldova.

[59] CAREC is a partnership of 10 countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and six multilateral (ADB, EBRD, IMF, ISB, UNDP and the World Bank) development partners

[60] http://www.carecprogram.org/uploads/docs/CAREC-Publications/CAREC-Transport-TradeFacilitation-Strategy.pdf

- Enhance the transparency of laws, regulations, procedures, and forms, and share information about these and other trade issues.

The Kyrgyz Republic signed bilateral intergovernmental agreements on border crossing points with the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan. These agreements envisaged that, when required, the parties will establish conditions for joint control. The procedure of joint control organization and implementation will be defined by separate agreements among the frontier, customs and other relevant government agencies of involved state.

4.   What is the Relevance of the Project for the Work of 5 Regional Commissions (RCs)?

> **FINDING 4:   The project was designed in accordance with the agenda and strategic frameworks of all five RCs**

The strategic framework of the UNESCWA (under its "Economic Development and Integration" pillar) supports the Arab region to attain long-term economic growth through policy support and capacity building initiatives. The UNECE and UNESCAP constantly undertake activities focused on transport and border-crossing facilitation, particularly with regard to the eTIR international system. The UNECA distinguishes the project as a mean of accelerating regional integration and addresses it through its two sub-programs: "Macroeconomic Analysis, Finance and Economic Development", and "Trade, Economic Cooperation & Regional Integration" (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Relationship to the Strategic Framework of RGs
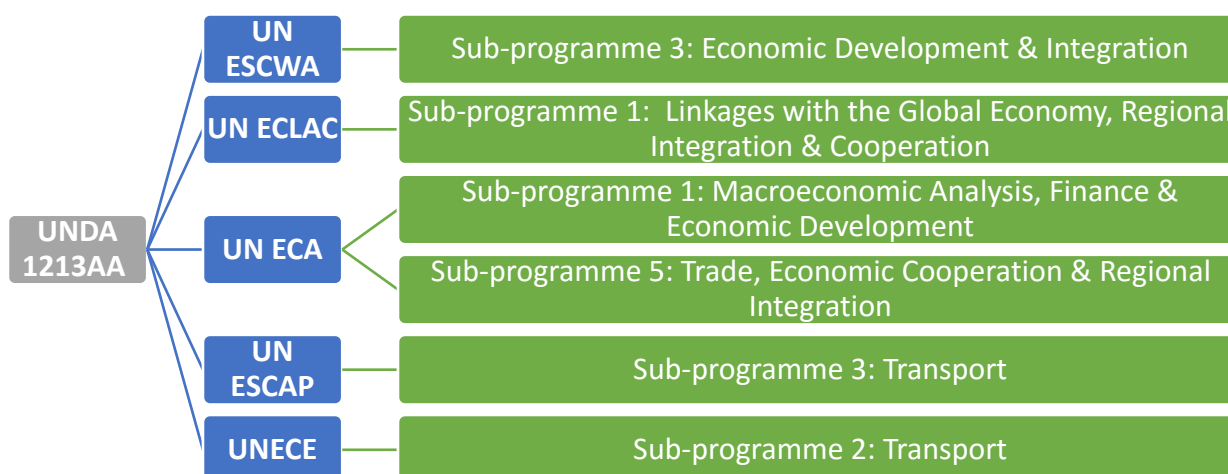
Source: Project Concept Note and Evaluation Data, 2016

Trade facilitation is a core component of the UNECLAC's sub-program "Linkages with the Global Economy, Regional Integration and Cooperation" that addresses the priorities of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean region to increase competitiveness and cooperation among customs agencies in the region.

5.   To What Extent are the Objectives of the Project Still Valid?

> **FINDING 5:   The objectives of the project remained very relevant and valid either for pilot countries or for regions throughout the project's implementation.**

Key stakeholders confirmed that a set of diverse performance indicators for customs administration demonstrate a continuous need for improvement in selected pilot countries. Thus, the Burden of Customs Procedure (BCP) indicator shows slight variations from 2011 to2015 for all pilot countries.

As a result, an average BCP indicator for 2013-2015[61] shows a medium level of efficiency of customs procedures[62], varying from 3.4 to 5.5[63] (Annex 3).

Over the course of the project, all five beneficiary countries demonstrated a middling[64] level according to the Logistics Performance Index (LPI)[65]. Moreover, in 2012-2014, LPI decreased by almost 9.5 percent for Georgia, 19.5 percent for Tunisia, 6 percent for the Kyrgyz Republic and 1.8 percent for Morocco (Annex 3). Overall, this decline exhibits the challenges faced by countries in their performance on trade logistics which are mainly brought about by customs formalities. Stakeholders mentioned that the project granted certain flexibility to RCs to coordinate the work in accordance with the priorities and need so pilot countries.

6. How Can the Project be Replicated in Other Contexts?

> **FINDING 6:** **The C2C information exchange platform can be configured (without difficulties) to serve any number of national Customs agencies. Likewise, relevant capacity building activities can be easily launched to address the needs of interested parties.**

The project design and methodology was innovative in a way of developing a new C2C information exchange platform which can be easily customized and replicated for being used in other countries, participants of TIR convention. Among its characteristics, the stakeholders mentioned:

- It can support any number of System Agents of National Customs Authorities. Addition of new members require no significant changes;
- It has a very user-friendly interface which potentially delivers any type of document (message) to the Central Exchange Platform and then to the appropriate system agent(s) used by the National Customs Authorities;
- The platform can configure separate incoming messages' validation rules for each type of incoming Extensible Markup Language (XML) message. Moreover, in case of necessity, it potentially can configure different validation rules for each specific National Customs Authority system agent.

Moreover, within the project framework, there had been developed the C2C Platform Developer's Guide and Service's Integration Guide. In the meantime, the stakeholders also mentioned two main prerequisites for replication:

- Countries should be legally and technologically ready to utilize the platform;
- Computerization of customs procedures required;
- New participating countries need to obtain the permission/license to connect along with the security certificates from the UNECE.

As soon as the permission is granted, a new record regarding the new participant (country agency) will added to the database to manage messages exchange between the platform and new customs authority.

7. To What Extent are the Activities and Outputs of the Project Consistent with and Relevant to the Overall Objective, Expected Accomplishments, Intended Impacts and Effects?

> **FINDING 7:** **The project activities and outputs were completely consistent with and relevant to project objectives, intended impacts and expected accomplishments (EA).**

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[61] No BCP data was reported for Tunisia in 2012
[62] It measures business executive's perceptions of their country's efficiency of custom procedures
[63] 1=extremely inefficient to 7=extremely efficient
[64] The index ranges from 1 to 5, with a higher score representing better performance; Overall (1=low to 5=high)
[65] LPI covers six areas: efficiency of customs clearance, quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure, ease of arranging competitively priced shipments, competence and quality of logistics services, ability to track and trace consignments, and timeliness of shipment to consignee within scheduled time.

The project compassed six activities and two expected accomplishments stipulated at the early stage of the project (Annex 4). With regard to the EA1[66], the project succeeded in launching a pilot Georgas-Turkey project with the aim to exchange C2C electronic information on transit. All regional commissions provided support to pilot countries in developing their action plans to introduce and utilize a new C2C platform developed with the project framework, by the end of 2015, the action plans had been developed for Kyrgyz republic in the UNESCAP region and Costa Rica in the UNECLAC region. The action plan was under preparation in other two RGs (UNESCWA and UNECA). Besides, at the start phase of the project the RGs carried out an expert group meeting (First Inter-Regional Expert Group Meeting) to raise awareness on the TIR Convention and eTIR project and review the results of "gaps" analysis on legal and technological readiness of interested countries. Moreover, C2C electronic data exchange platform had been developed as planned.

With regard to the ER2[67], the project reports confirm the completion of four technical workshops aimed at sharing best practices and raising awareness of customs administrations on the benefits of C2C electronic data exchange as well as the adoption of international standards. In addition, the RGs organized, as planned, the Second Inter-Regional Expert Group Meeting and the Seminar for the Promotion of Electronic Exchange of Customs Information and the Adoption of Standard Electronic Messages.

B.   Effectiveness

1.   To What Extent the Objective of the Project was Achieved?

> **FINDING 8:   The objectives of the project have been fully achieved.**

The workshops, seminars and capacity building activities organized within the project framework greatly contributed to increasing the capacity of customs officials in pilot countries and other participating countries to exchange secure electronic customs-to-customs (C2C) transit information and to utilize international standard electronic messages (Annex 5). Specifically, the project entailed and initiated:

- A gap analysis that assessed the legal and technical frameworks for C2C exchange of transit data among certain countries of the MENA region (Jordan, Morocco and Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia), Georgia and its neighboring countries (Turkey and Ukraine), the Kyrgyz Republic and its neighboring countries, and Costa Rica and its neighboring countries;
- Developing and deploying a secure electronic C2C information exchange platform to benefit all parties interested; and
- A series of workshops, seminars and regional expert group meetings to build the capacity of partnering countries and promote the electronic exchange of customs information and the adoption of standard electronic messages.

More specifically, within the project framework two Inter-Regional Expert Group Meetings were organized: the first meeting took place on 8 December 2014, and the second meeting took place on 22 June 2016. A seminar to promote the electronic exchange of customs information and the adoption of standard electronic messages and four technical workshops took place on 20-21 June 2016. Finally, four workshops were successfully organized in order to raise awareness of customs administration and to share the best practices in the benefits of C2C electronic data exchange in the field of transit as well as the adoption of international standards. The first workshop was organized by UNCLAC and took place on 16-17 June 2015 in San Jose (Costa Rica). The second workshop was organized by the UNECE and took place on 22-23 June 2015 in Tbilisi (Georgia). The third workshop was organized by UNESCAP and took place on 7-8 September 2015 in Issyk-Kul (Kyrgyzstan). The fourth workshop was jointly organized by UNESCWA and UNECA and took place on 2-4 December 2015 in Casablanca (Morocco).

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[66] EA1: Increased capacity to exchange secure electronic C2C transit information by the five pilot countries with their neighboring countries and trade partners.

[67] EA2. Increased capacity to utilize international standard electronic messages in the field of transit procedures by the pilot countries and their neighboring countries, in particular B2C information.

Moreover, within the project's framework, the Minister of Finance of Georgia, and the Minister of Customs and Trade of Turkey, signed a protocol on electronic data exchange in 2016. In addition, Costa Rica's Customs office has sent written appreciations of the project's contributions to facilitating cross-border trade and C2C data exchange through improved risk assessment and electronic import invoices, and has requested follow-up technical assistance.

In addition to the planned workshops, the *Georgia-Turkey Collaboration workshop* was carried out in November 2015. The workshop benefited both countries (Georgia and Turkey) in reaching a new level of collaboration on systematic exchange of TIR related information. As a result, Turkish counterparts also volunteered to launch a C2C e-TIR Pilot Project with Georgia. In 2016, within the framework of the eTIR Pilot Project, Georgia and Turkey signed a protocol on electronic data exchange. The eTIR Pilot Project, started as a part of the UNDA 1213AA project, was designed to promote electronic exchange of information related to TIR transport crossing the Georgian-Turkish border. The project's partnering parties plan to improve risk assessment procedures further to simplify border crossing as well as to help prevent smuggling, terrorism, illegal trade and immigration.

The *National Technical Workshop on Electronic Exchange of Data on International Transport between Customs Authorities* was carried out in Tajikistan in May 2016. The workshop was attended, inter alia, by representatives of the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Customs Service of the Republic of Tajikistan, the State Service for the Supervision and Regulation in the Field of Transport, the Association of International Automobile Carriers of Tajikistan (ABBAT), and the Association of International Automobile Transport of Tajikistan (AIATT). The workshop resulted in concrete measures and the outlining of steps to be taken to commence C2C data exchange between Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic.

2.   **To What Extent the Expected Accomplishments of the Project Were Achieved? What Were the Challenges/Obstacles to Achieving the Expected Results? What has Prevented to Achieve the Desired Results?**

FINDING 9:	**The expected accomplishments of the project had been fully achieved in capacity building domain. A pilot version of the C2C platform developed within the project frameworks was in compliance with technical requirements and fully functional, albeit not fully tested in operational environment.**

The workshop participants greatly valued the projects' achievements and mentioned that the project helped to bring together all relevant constituencies: IT officers and managers, customs authorities and senior managers. As a result, participating parties were able to share their experiences of the e-TIR system and other C2C projects they operate locally, and increase their awareness of existing international practices, electronic invoicing, the WCO Data Model and the use of business intelligence for facilitating legitimate trade and transportation. In addition, the project helped to boost awareness on the role of the Central American Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA) in increasing C2C electronic information exchange through its TIM platform. All interviewed shareholders (workshop participants) highly valued the workshops and seminars they attended because of the networking and information sharing opportunities. According to stakeholders' feedback, the workshops, meetings and seminars were very useful in:

- Helping them to gain knowledge and improve professional capacity;
- Establishing cross-country contacts;
- Becoming familiar with the new trends in the area of C2C and B2C electronic information exchange; and
- Getting the opportunity to share experiences of benefits and challenges (legal and technical) faced while introducing C2C platforms.

More specifically, the participants highlighted several topics of high importance to them:

- Facilitating trade and transit through the use of international standards;
- Introduction to the WCO Data Model and tools and applications of data mining;
- Customs tools and standards for C2C information exchange: ICT tools in TIR/eTIR pilot;
- ICT-based transport facilitation tools and various exchange platforms presented (C2C, B2C);

- Case studies: specific country experiences in C2C electronic data exchange (e.g. Customs Data Exchange: UNCTAD ASYCUDA Experience);
- C2C platform as a tool to support risk assessment for transit operations and, ultimately, facilitate transportation and legitimate trade, reduce informal trade, and increase government revenues;
- Revision (based on the analysis conducted) of legal and technical prerequisites for the implementation of an electronic exchange with other customs administrations;
- Aspects of developing different types of protocols used in data exchange;
- Regulatory frameworks governing transit, transport and data exchange.

Meanwhile, participants expressed their interest in continuing other relevant topics (listed below) that had never been discussed during the workshops and seminars:

- Mutual recognition of economic operators as a tool of facilitating and accelerating customs clearance process;
- The ratification of the ATA Convention[68] and the computerization of the ATA Carnet to simplify the customs clearance process;
- The possibility of unifying the customs declaration globally;
- Experiences of data exchange between customs administrations and e.g. the European Union;
- C2C and B2C electronic information exchange for multimodal transport;
- C2C law-enforcement information exchange;
- Three possible ways of solving the problem of recognition of the legitimacy of electronic documents across countries.

1) According to stakeholders' feedback, the C2C platform developed within the project framework meets all of the requirements stipulated under the terms of reference. The only divergence from the initially agreed requirements was related to database architecture[69] in that a comprehensive database was not developed while the WCO model was only partially realized. This was caused mainly by incomplete datasets[70] (the C2C platform is a pilot part of a full-scale eTIR system) and an inability to establish a clear relationship between datasets as is required by a full-scale WCO model. However, once the dataset is complete the database can be easily transformed and the WCO model will be completely realized.

2) By the time of the evaluation platform was not fully tested in an operational environment because of some technical (connectivity) issues between Georgia and Turkey. The test will help to identify and address any problems associated and to launch the platform in a full-scale production setting.

In the course of the project implementation, the following other challenges were encountered:

- An initial budget allocated for consultancy services in 2013 was insufficient to conduct gap analyses. The funds were allocated for the next fiscal year (2014), although, this issue delayed the launch of gap analyses phase.
- The First Expert Group Meeting was postponed and took place in 2014 instead of 2013. This delay allowed RCs to progress with the preparation of the necessary material (gaps analyses) for the meeting. The final versions of the gaps analyses were supposed to be completed earlier and presented at the First Inter-regional Expert Group Meeting. In fact, the final versions of the gaps analyses in some regions were available after this meeting, although the core elements of the analysis were presented during the meeting and contributed to the launch of core activities of the project;

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[68] ATA Carnet/Convention is an international customs document that permits the duty-free and tax-free temporary export and import of goods for up to one year. The Initials "ATA" are an acronym of the French and English words "Admission Temporaire/Temporary Admission".

[69] The database architecture is a set of specifications, rules, and processes that dictate how data is stored and accessed in a database.

[70] The Advance Cargo Declaration is not available in the system in its original form; The TIR operations are still processed using paper documents and stand-alone interfaces, provided by IRU.

- The deployment of UMOJA[71] (November 2015) slowed down the pace of the project. One of the reasons for this deceleration was the UMOJA related trainings attended by UN staff. The representatives of RGs also mentioned facing certain difficulties while trying to access the budgeting module of the system;
- External factors (country context) affected the project in a way that either caused delays in getting political support or created an unfavorable milieu for participation (e.g. the situation in Libya did not allow customs authorities to take part in project activities);
- During the early stages of the project, the project team was ready to provide technical assistance to Tunisia in terms of assisting its customs authorities to connect and exchange data with the customs authorities of one of the other three members of the Agadir Agreement. In the course of the project, the scope of the assistance was adjusted to suit the existing context: the infrastructure was available but needed to be upgraded, modernized and enhanced. Thus, the project was refocused on identifying and responding to needs.
- At the outset, the project considered providing technical assistance to Morocco through allowing a TIR data exchange between Morocco[72] and a selected country or, possibly, developing a road map. Staff changes (the focal point at state entity and the director of the IT department) at the Moroccan customs administration and the process of changing the existing platform delayed the confirmation of these activities. The project refocused towards supporting the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), in initiating the C2C electronic data exchange between the AMU customs administrations.

3.   **To What Extent the Planned Activities Contributed to Achieving the Objective and the Expected Accomplishments?**

FINDING 10: Diverse workshops and seminars organized in the course of the project greatly increased technical capacities of participating authorities on securing electronic C2C transit information.

During technical workshops, each participating party was given an opportunity to share its experience of utilizing C2C electronic communications for TIR implementation with other countries of the region.

The First Inter-Regional Expert Group Meeting took place in Geneva on 8 December 2014. The session was attended by experts and representatives of customs administrations from Argentina, Croatia, Costa Rica, Georgia, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tunisia and Turkey and officials from the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the International Road Transport Union (IRU).

The Expert Group considered and discussed informal documents pertaining to the gap analysis of the legal and technical framework for electronic C2C exchange of transit information. During the meeting, each independent expert hired to conduct a gap analysis for a specific region, presented the results of their assessments along with recommendations for the relevant pilot country on the basis of technological readiness of customs authorities and existing legal frameworks, both of which enable the electronic exchange of customs related data. The Expert Group considered the results of the gap analysis and readiness of neighboring countries to undertake the C2C pilot project (e.g. Turkey) and selected five pilot countries for the project: Costa-Rica (UNECLAC), Georgia (UNECE), Kyrgyz Republic (UNESCAP), Morocco (UNECA) and Tunisia (UNECA).

The linkage between major national and regional computerized systems was assessed within the context of gap analyses conducted by independent experts. The methodology of gap analyses explored the existing legal, policy, institutional and technical frameworks as well as the needs to be met to allow the electronic exchange of C2C transit information with potential trade partners and neighboring countries. The structure, completeness and validity of information were assessed through the analysis of procedural and technical documentation, in-depth interviews with staff, as

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[71] A massive business transformation project of the United Nations.

[72] In case of having confirmed readiness and political will of Morocco.

well as through gathering statistical and pivot information from customs databases. More specifically, the assessments reviewed:

- National laws and secondary legislation on exchange of electronic data (including legal acts on protection of personal data, rules for protecting and disclosing commercial information of legal entities, and legal acts on electronic signature and electronic documents);
- Bilateral and multilateral agreements that would have an impact on the C2C electronic exchange of transit information;
- Organizational and regulatory environment of customs operation;
- Technical support schemes for customs operations provided by national offices or ICT centers;
- Existing schemes (paper-based vs. digital) of processing of all types of customs declarations and transit operations;
- Existing frameworks of managing customs' operational risks and tariff (import and export operation), non-traffic and transit risks;
- Technical infrastructure and processes;
- Information systems and digital platforms (data exchange web services), used to automate customs and TIR operations;
- Data structure and allocation of data between systems;
- System integration issues and data exchange practices between selected countries; and
- Human resource capacity.

Within the project framework, the contracting party of the project developed a *pilot C2C electronic exchange platform.* Even though the scope of the platform was limited to two partnering countries (Georgia and Turkey), the platform was developed in a way that it could be easily adjusted for other participating countries of the TIR convention. New users need to gain the permission and security certificate from the UNECE to connect to the platform. The platform makes it possible to configure validation rules for incoming messages for any specific national customs systems and can support any number of system agents of national customs authorities wishing to utilize the platform. Moreover, it permits language customization on the level of external information systems that process and provide data in the required format. More specifically, it included the following: information gathering on the existing ICT environment and comparing the eTIR message requirements with data available in the ICT system of Georgia; preparing functional and technical requirements/specifications; and building the capacity of ICT staff to use and maintain the software.

Within the project framework, the following *technical assistance* was provided:

- The Georgian Revenue Service was consulted about connecting their ICT system to the C2C exchange platform to link the National Customs IT to C2C Exchange Platform. In this regard, the project team also organized the Georgia – Turkey coordination workshop which took place in Tbilisi (Georgia) in November 2015. The workshop helped to reveal operational issues hampering cross-country electronic data exchange. During the workshop, the working group discussed several scenarios and came up with a joint decision on the aforementioned issue.
- The National Technical Workshop on Electronic Exchange of Data on International Transport between Customs Authorities was organized in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) in May 2016.
- Comparative analysis of conditions and proposed roadmap for electronic data exchange between the customs authorities of Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic carried out in 2015-2016.
- Technical assistance on the development of the new module of software to exchange electronic data between customs authorities of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic was requested by the Kyrgyz customs administration in December 2015.
- In the case of Costa Rica, the project provided assistance to implement electronic import invoicing and recommended the application of the United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) standards for Costa Rica's Custom Information System (TICA system). The standards were advised for the customs authorities of neighboring countries at the workshop organized in Costa Rica in June 2015.
- Identification of the needs of the Customs administration of Tunisia and providing the required upgrade and enhancement to enable a better connectivity and functionality of existing software.

Within the project framework, _four (instead of five) technical workshops_ were conducted for regional stakeholders:

- Business Intelligence applied to customs' risks and valuation and the WCO Data Model (Costa Rica, June 2015);
- C2C Data Exchange Workshop (Georgia, June 2015);
- Workshop on Customs-to-Customs Electronic Data Exchange (Kyrgyz Republic, September 2015);
- Workshop on Customs-to-Customs in the Arab Region (Morocco, December 2015);

These workshops served as a platform for sharing best practices, capacity building and the dissemination of the project's results.

- The Workshop on _Business Intelligence Applied to Customs' Risks and Valuation and the WCO Data Model_ was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), jointly with the Secretariat for Central American Integration (SIECA) in Costa Rica in June 2015. The workshop was attended by state authorities from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The goal of the workshop was to introduce the application of big data in customs procedures and the implementation of the WCO Data Model. In addition to two core sessions, the participants benefitted from the presentation on trade facilitation and regional integration matters delivered by the representatives from SIECA, the IADB and the ITU. The workshop participants became familiar with the Business Intelligence concept and the WCO Data Model and how it can deepen regional market integration, promote trade facilitation policies and programs, and bolster regional and international trade.
- The Workshop on _Customs-to-Customs Data Exchange_ addressed a variety of topics such as: transit principles and transit regime, regional perspectives of the connectivity in the South Caucasus, examples and rationale of TIR transport, best practices and information sharing on systems in neighboring countries/regions (Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey).
- The Workshop on _Customs-to-Customs Electronic Data Exchange_ covered, inter alia, the legal and technical conditions for electronic exchange of transit information between customs authorities in Central Asia and ICT-based technological solutions for the facilitation of the operation of international road transport. The Workshop took place in the Kyrgyz Republic in September 2015, and was attended by the representatives of state authorities of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. The participants were informed of the eTIR project, the TIR computerization and of the UNECE-IRU pilot project on the introduction of eTIR (Iran, Turkey). The Workshop prompted a request for technical assistance to establish a C2C data exchange between the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan and recommendation to establish a platform to discuss the issues of C2C electronic data exchange in Central Asia.
- The Workshop on _Customs-to-Customs in the Arab Region_ took place in Morocco in December 2015. The Workshop was jointly organized by the UNECA and UNESCWA and aimed to strengthen trade facilitation in the Maghreb region through the harmonization of customs procedures and propose a plan that would facilitate electronic data exchange in the Maghreb region. The Workshop was attended by 17 representatives of state and non-state entities of the Arab Maghreb Union and from the Arab region, including the World Customs Organization and the League of Arab States. As a result of the Workshop, participants confirmed the importance of facilitating the usage and penetration of new technologies in the customs operational domain.

The 2nd Inter-regional Expert Group meeting took place in Geneva (Switzerland) on 22 June 2016. The goal of the meeting was to present and evaluate the results achieved in the five pilot countries. The participants were updated on the activities implemented while outlines of gap analyses and technical workshops conducted in pilot counties were also given. The participants were also informed on the status of the Georgia-Turkey eTIR pilot sub-project, electronic data exchange practices in the Kyrgyz Republic, outputs delivered for Tajikistan and the workshop follow-up activities.

The _Seminar for the Promotion of Electronic Exchange of Customs Information and the Adoption of Standard Electronic Messages_ was attended by 70 participants and took place in Geneva

(Switzerland) on 20-21 June 2016. The seminar covered, inter alia, the issues of: facilitating trade and transit through the use of international standards, customs tools and standards for C2C information exchange, country experiences in C2C electronic data exchange, etc.

4.   How Did the Project Address Gender Balance Issue?

> **FINDING 13: All RCs confirmed that, in total, financial and human resources allocated to the project were sufficient to achieve the results.**

The gender inclusive strategic framework of the UNECE was clearly defined in Gender Action Plan (GAP) for 2012-2013 and GAP for 2014-2015 which stipulate efforts to be taken with regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. Apparently, there was a limited number of women partaking in capacity building activities of the project which were directed toward subject-matter experts/offices and policy decision makers from participating countries. Male participants of workshops and seminars always outnumbered female participants. For example, at the "Seminar for the Promotion of Electronic Exchange of Customs Information and the Adoption of Standard Electronic Messages", only 20 per cent of state sector participants were female. Although female participation is low in the project activities, it should be highlighted that the participants were nominated by the relevant state entities from a sub-sector in which women are underrepresented.

C.   Efficiency

1.   Were the Resources Sufficient for Achieving the Results? Were the Results Commensurate with the Resources?

> **FINDING 12: The project did not demonstrate any gender sensitive approach and balance in the course of its implementation.**

In terms of funds allocation breakdown, the project design considered allocating over 56 percent of the total budget to the UNECE account to administer the project. Other RCs were expected to utilize an equal share of 10.9 percent of the project budget. About 34 percent of the budget was planned to be allocated to cover capacity building[73] fees (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Budget Allocation Scheme
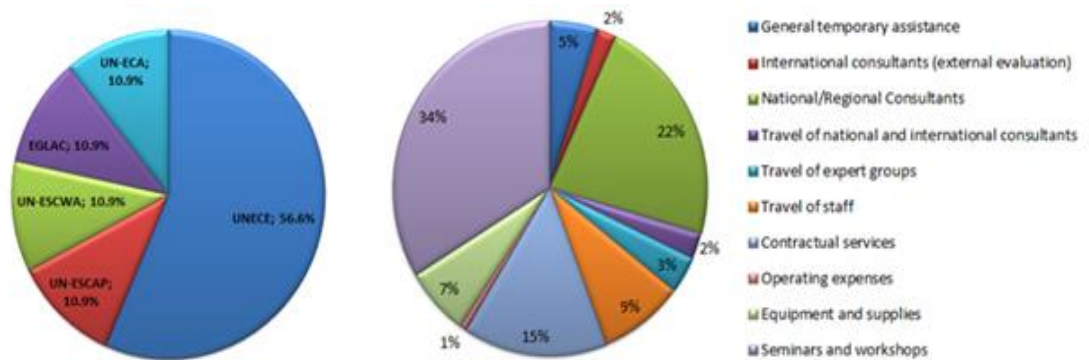
Source: Development Account 8- UNECE Transport

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[73] Workshops and seminars.

It is worth noting that due to financial limitations associated with specific activities of the project and to ensure the sufficiency of funds, the project management made certain budgetary adjustments and reallocations (Annex 6)[74].

2. **Were All Activities Organized Efficiently and on Time? Were the Activities and Results Achieved on Time?**

> **FINDING 14: The project faced certain delays in launching its activities and delivering achievements.**

Slow start affected other components/activities of the project and shifted its completion date from 2015 to 2016 (Table 3). At the outset, the A1.1 component (incorporating two sub-activities such as gaps analyses and delivery of the First Inter-regional Expert Group Meeting) of the project was planned to be completed in 2013. However, the First Inter-Regional Expert Group Meeting was carried out in December 2014.

Table 3: Project Activity Timeline (Planned vs. Actual)

#	Activity	Planned [75]	Progress	Actually Completed
A1.1	Delivering a First Inter-regional Expert Group Meeting	2013	Started in April 2013 with the preparation of ToR for the gaps analyses	December 2014
	Gap analyses	2013		2014-2015
A1.2	Development and deployment of a secure C2C versatile electronic exchange platform.	2013-2014	Postponed to 2014-2015	May 2015
	Provision of technical assistance to national experts in at least five pilot countries	2013-2014	Postponed to 2014-2015	May 2016
A1.4.	Delivery of five technical workshops	2014-2015		2015
A2.1	Delivery a second Inter-regional Expert Group Meeting	2015		June 2016
A2.2	Delivery a one-day seminar to promote the electronic exchange of customs information	2015		June 2016

Source: Project Documents and Project Progress Reports, the UNECE, 2016

In the meantime, the project reports the commencement of three gaps analyses (for Morocco, Tunisia and Georgia) in 2013[76] which were completed in 2014. Gaps analyses for the Kyrgyz Republic and Costa Rica were completed in 2015 (Table 4).

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[74]

http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/themes/UNDAC2C/UNECE_BCF_C2C_Electronic_exchange_project__FINAL.pdf
[75] According to the Result Based Project Plan,
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/themes/UNDAC2C/UNECE_BCF_C2C_Electronic_exchange_project__FINAL.pdf
[76] Consultants to conduct the gap analysis were hired by the UNECE, UNECA and UNESCWA in November and December 2013.

Table 4: Gaps Analyses Completion Timeline

#	Title	Region/country	Completion date
1	A Gap Analysis for Customs to Customs Electronic Data Exchange in Costa Rica	Costa Rica	February 2015
2	Analyse des Gaps techniques et juridiques relatifs aux échanges électroniques entre les douanes de deux pays (C2C Transit)	Tunisia and Morocco	June 2014
3	Gap Analysis of Current Legal and Technical Framework for Electronic C2C Exchange of Transit Information between Georgia and Neighboring Countries	Georgia and Neighboring Countries	July 2014
4	Gap Analysis of Current Legal and Technical Framework for Electronic Customs-to-Customs Exchange of Transit Information between Kyrgyz Republic and Neighboring Countries	Kyrgyz Republic & Neighboring Countries	September 2015

Source: Project Progress Reports, the UNECE, 2016

Initially, the development and deployment of a secure C2C versatile electronic platform was scheduled for 2013-2014. The actual start date of this activity was April 2015. The C2C software was completed and became fully operational by February 2016.

According to stakeholders' feedback, the project activities were delayed due to several external factors:

- Budget limitations in 2013 did not allow the UNESCAP to hire a consultant and conduct gaps analyses within the planned timeframe[77];
- The UN-ECLAC encountered problems in identifying interested candidate countries for the project;
- Candidate countries' late response to questionnaires delayed the gaps analyses phase of the project;
- All RGs needed additional time to engage with stakeholders and gain political support. This delay contributed to the late start of the project activities.

As for factors mentioned by the stakeholders, prolonged procurement (it took almost a year from the project's inception to actual signature of the contract) was noted. Additional delays were caused by a massive business transformation project[78] (UMOJA project[79]) at the United Nations. The project aimed to integrate administrative and support functions in five areas: finance, supply chain and procurement, human resources, central support services, and program and project management. Regional Commissions reported facing difficulties while trying to access the budgeting module of the ERP system which resulted in delays and jeopardized timely implementation of project activities.

3.   **To What Extent the Resources Were Used Economically? How Could the Use of Resources Been Improved?**

> **FINDING 15:** **Apart from a budget initially allocated for gap analysis, the resources were allocated and used sparingly.**

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[77] To make it happen the budget was reallocated in 2014.

[78] Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software

[79] On 25 June 2010, the United Nations and SAP Public Services, the German-based and world-leading provider of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software[79], signed a contract for the provision of the core software for UMOJA.

The project's financial reports indicate a 4.8 percent implementation rate[80] in 2013. A budget allocated for gap analysis was considered to be insufficient and a budget reallocation was scheduled for 2014. In 2014 and 2015, the financial implementation rate (of the initial total budget) was reported to be 45.8 percent and 68.7 percent respectively[81] (Table 5).

According to stakeholders' feedback, some flexibility and redeployment of resources would be useful in ensuring their economical usage. For instance, funds allocated under the section of "General Temporary Assistance" were strictly intended for covering administrative costs of seminars and workshops. In addition, the UNECE also provided access to a virtual working space (known as the Confluence dashboard) for the partnering parties of the project. According to the stakeholders' feedback, the dashboard was extremely useful for the team when sharing project related information. It served as:

1) A single point of access to all documentation, including reports, specifications and technical documentation (users' guides, developers' guides);

2) Enabling a telecommunications environment that helped to facilitate remote discussion and decision-making, and creating logs to keep track of the discussions and decisions.

Table 5: Financial Disbursements in 2013-2015 (in USD)

Description		Budget/ Allotment	Total Expenditure in 2013	Total Expenditure in 2014	Total Expenditure in 2015
General Temporary Assistance		37,000	0	0	29,734
Consultants and Expert Groups	0111-Int. consult.:	14,700	5,000	0	181,377
	0140-Nat./reg. consult.:	168,500	20,000	116,504	
	2601-Consult. travel:	19,000	0	11,200	
	2602-Expert Group (travel):	27,000	0	10,914	
	Sub total				
Travel expenses of staff		64,800	10,800	41,050	49,188
Contractual services		111,000	0	12,000	101,788
Operating expenses		5,500	400	3,596	3,162
Supplies, materials etc.		50,000	0	0	0
Fellowships, grants and contributions (Workshops & Study Tours)		252,500	0	112,006	149,984
Total		750,000	36,200	343,469	515,233

Source: Project Progress Reports for 2013-2015, UNECE

In terms of human resources, the project's implementing partner cooperated with Georgian counterparts in developing a C2C electronic data exchange platform. Both functional (risk management, operations, TIR operations) and technical (IT) staff were actively involved in the project, thus ensuring smooth implementation and knowledge transfer. The IT staff, who are expected to ensure the maintenance of the system, are fully capable of enabling maintenance and future enhancement of the provided software.

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[80] Implementation rate refers to a ratio of total expenditures to total budget allocated
[81] Project progress reports for 2013-2015.

4.   **Where there any alternatives to achieve the same results? Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? How do the costs and use of resources compare with other similar projects[82] ?**

> **FINDING 16: Budget allocation structure demonstrated certain discrepancy the project currently being evaluated and other similar projects implemented by the UNECE.**

A comparative analysis of the budget allocation structure of similar projects revealed that the budget allocation scheme between two budgets of the project (one initially planned, and another adjusted/allotted) and the average indicators of budget share calculated for the programs proposed for the period 2012-2013 demonstrate a higher discrepancy between planned shares and average indicators (Annex 7). Following the allotment and budget revision in 2016, the budget discrepancy became less steep for many cost units except for the following: Expert group meetings, consultants and operating expenses.

Following on from stakeholders' feedback, it was suggested that more resources be allocated to pilot countries to develop their technological capacities and to select more participants from the pool of subject-matter (specialized) customs officials. In addition, it was mentioned that gaining consent from potential partners in advance to participate would make the overall process more resource-efficient[83].

5.   **How Was the Difference Between Planned and Actual Expenditure Justified (if any)?**

> **FINDING 17: Stakeholders and implementing agencies agreed that the budget allocated for gap analysis consultancies was insufficient.**

The initial project budget presented in the concept note was subject to further changes and adjustments (Table 6):

- US$10,000 was added for organizing the Expert Groups and seminars under the section of General Temporary Assistance;
- The amount for A 1.1 under the section of National/Regional Consultants increased from US$18,500 to US$25,000 (from US$3,700 to US$5,000 for each RC) to allow regional consultants to undertake the study for the candidate countries;
- The same budget line for A 1.3 was reduced from US$150,000 to US$143,500 (from US$30,000 to US$28,700 USD to each RC);
- The translation and interpretation budget was reduced from US$6,000 to US$3,000 per event;
- In the concept note, travel costs were underestimated, thus, requested/adjusted costs per participant were increased to US$1,400 per workshop and US$2,500 per seminar;
- The number of technical assistance missions and the number of staff partaking in workshops both increased;
- In 2016, "Fellowships, grants and contributions (workshops & study tours)" was increased by USD 50,000.

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[82] Within UNECE or by other UN agencies.
[83] Here cases of Customs offices partaking in meetings and revoking to participate later (after a long delay) being uncomfortable to expose internal gaps to external groups.

Table 6: Project Budget (Planned vs. Actual, in USD)

Object Class	Description		Planned budget (per concept note)	Budget/ Allotment	Revisions to allotments[84]
602	General temporary assistance		27,000	37,000	37,000
604	Consultants and Expert Groups	0111-Int. consult.:	14,700	14,700	14,700
		0140-Nat./reg. consult.:	48,000	168,500	168,500
		2601-Consult. travel:	96,000	19,000	19,000
		2602-Expert group (travel):	30,000	27,000	27,000
		Sub total	188,700	229,200	229,200
608	Travel of staff		39,000	64,800	64,800
612	Contractual services		150,000	111,000	111,000
616	Operating expenses		17,300	5,500	5,500
618	Supplies, Materials etc.		85,000	50,000	0
621	Fellowships, grants and contributions (workshops & study tours)		243,000	252,500	302,500
Total			750,000	750,000	750,000

Source: Project Concept note and Project Progress Reports for 2013-2015, the UNECE

D.   Sustainability

1.   Could the Results Be Further Sustained?

> **FINDING 18: The sustainability of project achievements had been envisioned through a fee–for-service arrangement to be in force in the long run for the usage of the C2C data (TIR related data) exchange platform.**

Apparently, there is no clear action plan in place to sustain the project results. It is important to mention that the C2C platform can be easily configured to connect system agents of national customs authorities. At the moment, the platform is maintained by the TIR secretariat. It is a pilot version of a large scale system which will enable full computerization of TIR procedures if is developed further.

The stakeholders outlined the following issues affecting the sustainability of the project's achievements:

- The absence of international agreements could discourage some countries from exchanging electronic data.
- Financial resources allocated locally to support the adoption of a new business model associated with electronic data exchange processes.
- Human resource issues at local or regional levels affect sector awareness, political will, and capacity to utilize the C2C data exchange platform. HR related issues incorporate: staff turnover, insufficient human resources to develop and implement ICT related projects, and inadequate staffing of the customs offices.

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[84] Revisions to allotment took place in 2016.

- Continuous interest and awareness of national authorities of potential benefits of using the C2C electronic data exchange platform.
- The risk of the platform becoming technologically obsolete in the long run and costs associated with upgrading the platform.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

The evaluation resulted in the following conclusions:

- The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) took the lead in the design (technical and budget) of the project, addressing the needs and priorities of participating countries and Regional Commissions (RGs). Although, an initial budget allocation scheme, which did not reflect existing market realities, delayed the commencement of the project activities.
- The UNECE established a good collaboration with RGs and the relevant state agencies of participating countries, which ensured accomplishment of expected results and guaranteed that the objectives of the project had remained relevant throughout its implementation.
- The project made a solid contribution to strengthening national capacities with regard to TIR and eTIR agendas. It provided a solid basis upon which to frame the cooperation and dialogue on facilitating trade and transit through the use of international standards.
- The project's risk assessment never considered certain internal and external risk factors such as: political and country context, unavailability of complete and consistent data sets, the introduction of a new UN ERP system[85]. As a result, no relevant risk mitigation mechanism had been developed and applied.
- The project design paid scant attention to gender mainstreaming and equality matters. The project reports do not demonstrate either development or use of gender –sensitive indicators. The only gender-related reference was made while presenting the list of participants partaking in capacity building activities.
- The platform can be easily replicated in the countries which demonstrate relevant readiness in technological, infrastructure, human resource and legal frameworks domains. In the long run, the C2C electronic data exchange platform could be the best solution for diverse groups of transit related stakeholders (customs authorities, holders and guarantee chains) to secure cross-country exchange of data in accordance with the provision of the TIR Convention. Currently, the C2C electronic data exchange platform is operated in pilot mode and requires testing and further enhancement.
- Sustainability of the project achievements heavily depends on follow-up interventions aimed at raising the awareness of practical benefits of the C2C electronic data exchange platform and providing technical assistance (legal, human resources, hardware/ infrastructure, software and data security protection) to those countries interested in becoming connected to the platform.

B. Recommendations

Based on the evaluation findings, it is highly recommended to continue running the project into the second phase. Therefore, all recommendations listed below are relevant and applicable to the second phase of the project:

- The project team should consider developing a strategic/sustainability business plan that will serve as a roadmap of turning the pilot C2C data exchange platform into a full-scale functioning system with a self-sustained funding praxis.
- Conduct a risk assessment and propose risk mitigation measures at the early stage (design) of the project. The team should consider developing alternative assumptions to be applied if risks and uncertainties appear in the course of the project.

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[85] UMOJA project

- Strengthen the gender-sensitive aspects of the project through developing relevant indicators at the early stage of the project design, encouraging governments to send gender balanced group of participants and monitoring the progress on regular basis.
- Utilize a coherent and cost saving approach through strengthened collaboration with the specialized agencies to determine whether project activities can be incorporated into other donor projects.
- Continue engagement with national stakeholders, and potential users of the platform, to identify their needs and provide technical support (legal, advisory, etc.) to streamline processes and precondition required for accessing the platform.

Annex 1   Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Project 1213AA

Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration

I. Background

Despite a number of international agreements, border crossing remains a major obstacle to the transport of goods. Developing countries and countries with economies in transition could benefit from increased and more secure international inland transport. The lack of effective and efficient risk assessment methods remains one of the key factors leading to long waiting times at border crossings and the use of customs escorts.

Currently, the supply chain is largely computerized but customs mostly rely on paper documents to obtain the information required for the assessment of risks. Often countries still reply on regulations, procedures, as well as data and technical requirements which are not internationally harmonized.

To respond to these challenges, UNECE, - in cooperation with ESCAP, ESCWA, ECA and ECLAC, - developed the project Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration with the aim to improve legitimate border crossing by facilitating the exchange of information between customs administrations and by means of secure information and communication technologies.

This United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project includes six activities consisting of, *inter alia*, a number of inter-regional and national workshops, expert groups and seminars, technical assistance to national experts, and the development and deployment of an IT exchange platform, which allows the secure exchange of electronic transit-related data between customs administrations.

The pilot countries, i.e. Georgia, Morocco (and other Arab Maghreb Union – UMA – countries), Tunisia (and other parties to the Agadir Agreement), Kyrgyzstan and Costa Rica, were selected in consultation with other regional commissions on the basis of gap analyses prepared by independent consultants. The project started at the beginning of 2013 and is expected to be finalized by 30 June 2016.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to review the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the project Strengthening the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to facilitate legitimate border crossing, regional cooperation and integration, with a particular focus on the development and tailoring of methods and technology for information exchange between national customs offices in the pilot countries selected under this project. The results of the evaluation will be used for similar projects in the future.

III. Scope

The evaluation will focus on results obtained in the pilot countries and the neighbouring countries which took part in the capacity building activities. It will also consider the impact on other countries that benefited from the project, including by having access to the project results and by taking part in the project workshops and Seminar for the Promotion of Electronic Exchange of Customs Information and the Adoption of Standard Electronic Messages.

The evaluation will cover the full project implementation period, from January 2013 until its expected finalization in June 2016.

The scope of the review shall be limited to the activities described in the project document of the project, as approved by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The evaluation will assess activities covering the following thematic areas addressed by UNECE: customs transit procedures, trade and transport facilitation as well as C2C electronic data exchange.

Gender and human rights aspects will be also covered by the evaluation, taking into account guidance provided by the United Nations Evaluation Group on the matter (available at http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980 and http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1452).

IV. Issues

The evaluation will seek to report on the *effectiveness* of the project in achieving its objectives and its *sustainability*; the *efficiency* of the project, in particular to evaluate how the inputs and resources were utilized in achieving the outputs, and the *relevance* of the project to the priorities and needs of its recipients and the consistency with the attainment of its overall objective. Key questions that the evaluation seeks to answer include:

Effectiveness

1. To what extent the objective of the project was achieved?

1.1. How did the project contribute to the facilitation of legitimate trade and transport from and to developing countries with economies in transition?

1.2. How did the project increase cooperation between Customs authorities and C2C electronic information exchange?

2. To what extent the expected accomplishments of the project were achieved? In particular:

2.1. To what extent did the project increase the capacity of the five pilot countries to exchange secure electronic C2C transit information with trade partners?

2.2. To what extent did the project increase the capacity of the five pilot countries and their neighbouring countries in utilizing international standard electronic messages in the field of transit procedures, in particular B2C information?

3. To what extent the planned activities contributed to achieving the objective and the expected accomplishments?

3.1. How did the first inter-regional Expert Group meeting contributed to the assessment of the legal and technical needs of candidate developing countries and countries with economies in transition to extend the exchange of electronic information with other countries?

3.2. In what way were the linkages with major existing national and regional computerized systems assessed and explored?

3.3. To what extent did the project develop and deploy a secure C2C versatile electronic exchange platform as planned?

3.4. To what extent the technical assistance to national experts in at least five pilot countries contributed to link national or regional Customs IT systems to the C2C exchange platform or helped to develop Action Plans to set out the steps needed to introduce a new C2C platform to exchange information and ensure its sustainability over time?

3.5. How did the five technical workshops help to build capacity of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to maximize the benefits offered by the C2C exchange platform, to increase the exchange of electronic information with neighbouring countries and to adopt international standards for electronic messages?

3.6. To what extent did the second inter-regional expert Group Meeting succeeded in evaluating the results achieved in the five pilot countries?

3.7. How and to what extent did the seminar help to promote the C2C electronic exchange of transit data and the adoption of standard electronic messages?

4. What were the challenges/obstacles to achieving the expected results?

5. What has prevented to achieve the desired results?

Sustainability

6. Could the results be further sustained?

6.1. In particular, to what extent will the benefits of the project continue after completion and without overburdening recipient countries and stakeholders?

6.2. How is the stakeholders' engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated or institutionalized after funding ceases? In case, how will the capacity built to ensure that institutions will take over and sustain the benefits?

6.3. To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries 'own' the outcomes of the work?

6.4. How has the project built in resilience to future risks?

6.5. What were the major factors which influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project?

6.6. How will the established electronic exchange platform be easily maintained at the end of the project by means of a minimal fee-per-use? How will the project

bring more countries to exchange transit data electronically on the basis of international standards?

6.7. How will the project pave the way for the full computerization of international transit procedures such as the TIR procedure?

Efficiency

7. Were the resources sufficient for achieving the results? Were the results commensurate with the resources?

8. Were the results achieved on time?

9. Were all activities organized efficiently and on time?

10. To what extent the resources were used economically? How could the use of resources been improved?

11. Where there any alternatives to achieve the same results? If yes, which ones?

12. Was the project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? In particular, how do the costs and use of resources compare with other similar projects (within UNECE or by other UN agencies)?

13. How was the difference between planned and actual expenditure justified (if any)?

Relevance

14. To what extent did the project respond to the priorities and needs of the beneficiary countries? How relevant was it to the target groups' needs and priorities?

15. To what extent is the project aligned with the policies and strategies of the recipient pilot countries?

16. How relevant was the project for the regions' needs and priorities?

17. What is the relevance of the project for the work of 5 Regional Commissions?

18. To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid? How can the project be replicated in other contexts?

19. To what extent are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with and relevant to the overall objective and expected accomplishments?

20. To what extent are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with and relevant to the intended impacts and effects?

V. Methodology

The evaluation will be carried out based on an extensive review of relevant literature on the problem addressed as well as the project documentation as well as on questionnaires and interviews targeting project beneficiaries, project focal points in regional commissions, consultants and focal points in pilot countries.

Desk review of the following project documents:

- Project documents;
- Progress reports;

- Project output (e.g. gap analyses of the candidate countries, events agendas/programs, presentations, documents as well as conclusions and recommendations, evaluations report of the events, Action Plans, pilot projects documentation, etc.).
- Review of similar projects

Questionnaires and interviews

Tailored questionnaires and interviews will be used to collect information from the following stakeholders:

- Project focal points/Customs administrations in pilot countries;
- Consultants which have been involved in the preparation and deliver of the project activities;
- Project focal points in all Regional Commissions;
- Participants in events (including when possible representatives of member states and international and non-governmental organizations) .

The questionnaire will use a combination of closed and open questions and will be distributed in English. For the analysis, both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used accordingly.

A series of interviews with the involved stakeholder will be conducted to further explore responses for the questionnaire. The interviews will take place by phone or Skype.

Information about the project administration can be obtained from the project manager or other relevant UNECE transport division staff.

VI. Evaluation Schedule

Task	Information	Time/Deadline	Results	Responsibility
Preparation of the evaluation	Project document	Nov. 2015-Apr. 2016	Terms of Reference for the Evaluation	Project manager
Hiring of the Consultant	ToR	31 May 2016	Selection of the Consultant; Consultancy contract signed.	Project manager
Preliminary research	Documents available on project website	30 June 2016	Desk study	Consultant
Data Collection	Interviews and questionnaires; ToR	15 July 2016	Questionnaires completed; transcription/summary of interviews	Consultant
Data Analysis and Draft Report	Desk Studies, completed questionnaires, summary of interviews	15 August 2016	Draft evaluation report	Consultant
Comments on draft report	Draft evaluation report; ToR	15 August 2016	Commented draft evaluation report	Project manager
Final Report	Draft evaluation report with comments from the project manager	15 September 2016	Final evaluation report	Consultant

VII. Resources

The evaluation will be completed by an external independent consultant in line with the schedule detailed under chapter VI (maximum budget for the evaluation: USD 14,700). The project manager will prepare, manage and comment the evaluation. Project focal points (in pilot countries and in other RC) will respond to questionnaires and (when necessary) take part in interviews.

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

The evaluation will be used to ensure that this project will provide maximum benefits to the pilot countries and other relevant stakeholders, to organize follow-up activities and to improve the preparation, planning and implementations of future similar projects. The evaluation report will be posted on the UNECE website.

IX. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant disciplines, with specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis.

Good knowledge of and experience in inland transport, possibly with knowledge of border crossing related issues

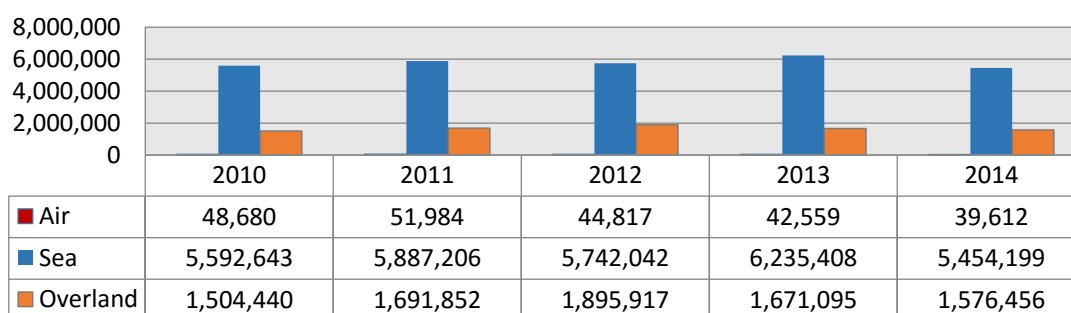Relevant professional experience in design and management of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management.

Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations.

Working languages (written and spoken proficiency): English and French.

Annex 2: Trade & Freight Turnover Data by Mode of Transportation

Costa Rica: Trade Data (Export) by Mode of Transportation (tons mln. ton/km)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
■ Air	48,680	51,984	44,817	42,559	39,612
■ Sea	5,592,643	5,887,206	5,742,042	6,235,408	5,454,199
■ Overland	1,504,440	1,691,852	1,895,917	1,671,095	1,576,456

Source: A Gap Analysis for Customs to Customs Electronic Data Exchange in Costa Rica, ECLAC, 2015

Morocco: Freight Turnover by Transportation Modes (thousands of tons)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	97'204	99'481	86'144	104'961	106'159	108'230
Rail Transport	31'703	25'000	35'669	37'000	37'011	36'200
Maritime Transport	67'715	61'085	69'236	69'104	71'167	67'861
Air Transport	63	59	56	55	52	53

Source: Economic and Financial Statistics, The Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Kingdom of Morocco, 2016

Georgia: Freight Turnover by Types of Transport (mln. ton/km)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total	6848.1	6690.0	6616.8	6172.4	5643.6
Overland transport					
Railroad	6227.5	6054.8	5976.6	5525.9	4987.6
Motor vehicles	619.7	628.4	637.3	646.1	655.1
Sea	-	5.3	2.4	-	-
Air	0.9	1.5	0.5	0.4	0.9

Source: Statistical YearBook of Georgia, the National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2015[86]

Kyrgyz Republic: Freight Turnover by Types of Transport (mln. ton/km)

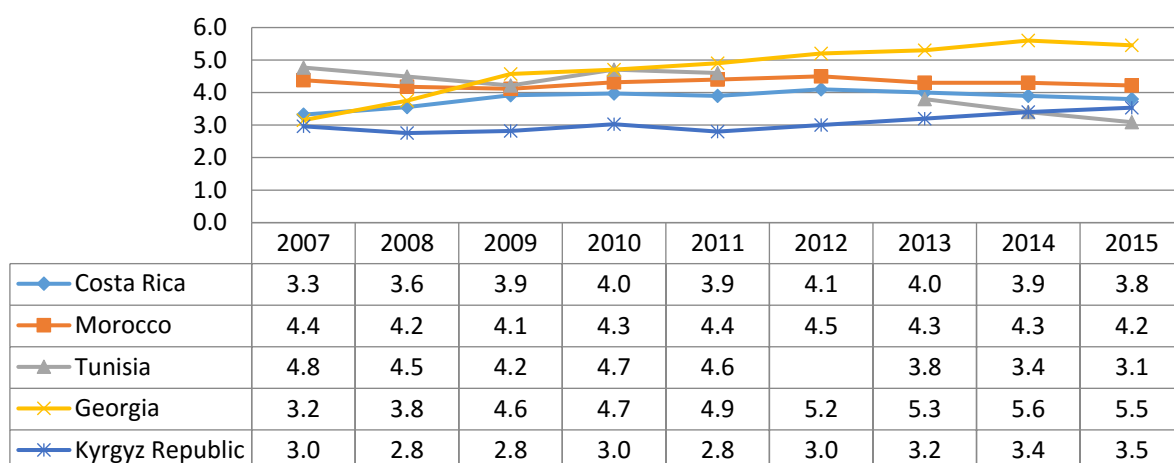|	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total	2178.1	2360.4	2604.4	2662.3	2497.1	2525.1
Overland transport	2019.2	2101.1	2294.2	2393.7	2274.7	2319.5
Railroad	737.7	798.3	922.7	1001.7	1010.0	917.8
Motor vehicles	1281.5	1302.8	1371.5	1392.0	1264.7	1401.7
Pipelined transport	91.5	146.3	208.8	156.7	136.2	145.9
Water transport	3.0	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.8	2.3
Air transport	64.4	111.0	99.2	109.9	83.4	57.4

Source: Data of the National Statistics Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2016[87]

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[86] http://www.geostat.ge/cms/site_images/_files/yearbook/Yearbook_2015.pdf
[87] http://www.stat.kg/en/statistics/transport-i-svyaz/

Annex 3: Burden of Customs Procedures and Logistics Performance Index in Pilot Countries

Burden of Customs Procedures in Pilot Countries (2007-2015)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Costa Rica	3.3	3.6	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.8
Morocco	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.3	4.2
Tunisia	4.8	4.5	4.2	4.7	4.6		3.8	3.4	3.1
Georgia	3.2	3.8	4.6	4.7	4.9	5.2	5.3	5.6	5.5
Kyrgyz Republic	3.0	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.4	3.5

Source: World Development Indicators, the World Bank Data, 2016

**Burden of Customs Procedures in Pilot Countries (2011 data versus Average for 2013-2015)**
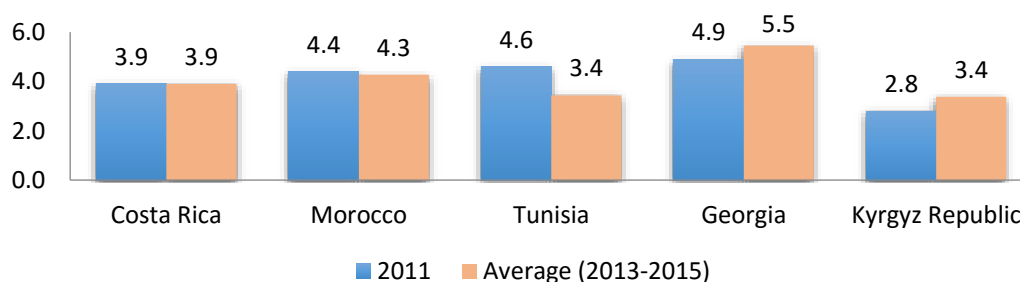
Source: World Development Indicators, the World Bank Data, 2016

Logistics Performance Index (2007-2014)

Country	2007	2010	2012	2014
Georgia	..	2.6	2.8	2.5
Morocco	2.38	..	3.0	..
Tunisia	2.76	2.8	3.2	2.6
Kyrgyz Republic	2.35	2.6	2.4	2.2
Costa Rica	2.55	2.9	2.8	2.7

Source: World Development Indicators, the World Bank Data, 2015

Annex 4: Project Activities and Expected Results
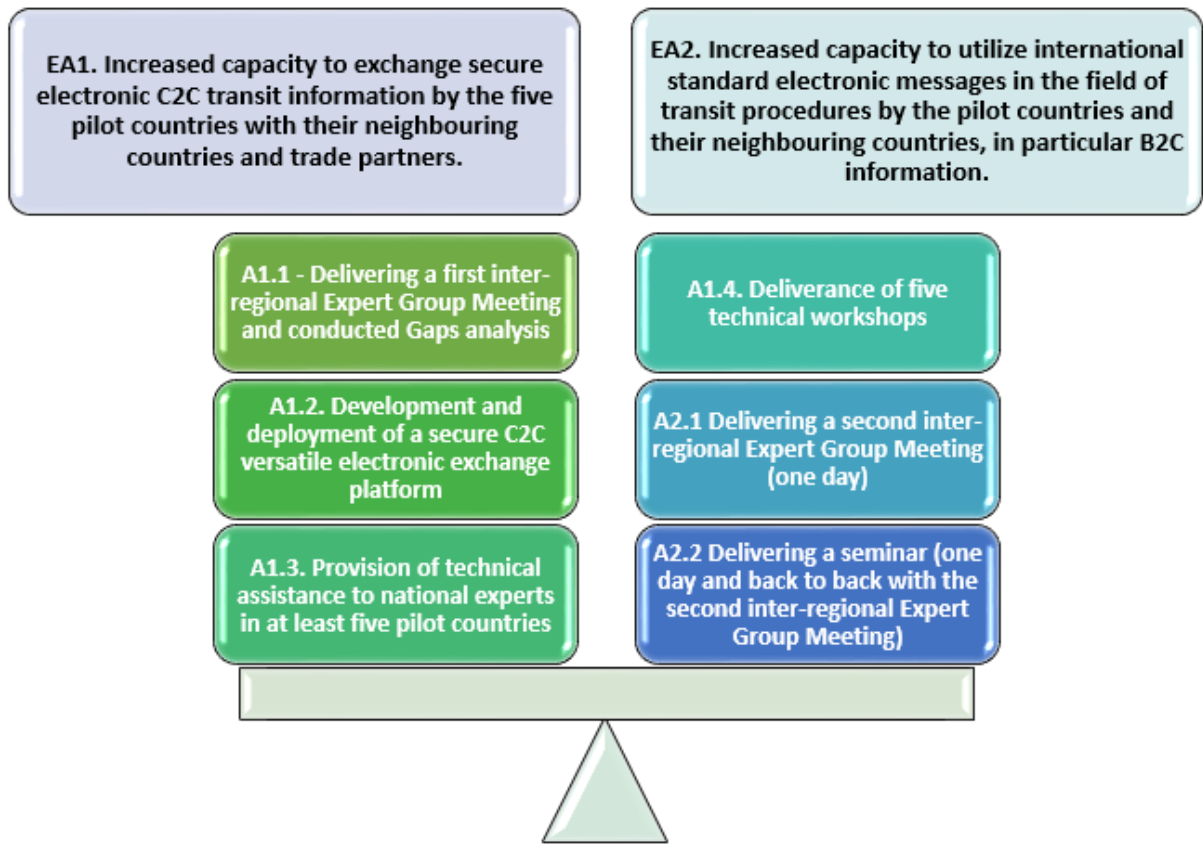
Source: Project Progress Reports for 2013-2015, UNECE, 2016

Annex 5: Overview of Project Activities

Activity	Title	Venue	Timeline	Status
A 1.1	First inter-regional Expert Group Meeting	Geneva, Switzerland	8 December 2014	Achieved
A 1.2	Development and deployment of a secure C2C versatile electronic exchange platform	Cross country	2015- 2016	Achieved
A 1.3	Technical assistance to national experts in five pilot countries	Cross country	2015-2016	Achieved
A 1.4	**Five** technical workshops:	Cross country	2015	Achieved (four technical workshops organized, Technical Workshop in Casablanca, Morocco, was a joint event implemented for participants from Morocco and Tunisia.)
	1) Business Intelligence applied to customs' risks and valuation and the WCO Data Model	San José, Costa Rica	16-17 June 2015	Achieved
	2) Customs-to-Customs data exchange Workshop	Tbilisi, Georgia	22-23 June 2015	Achieved
	3) Workshop on Customs-to-Customs Electronic Data Exchange	Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyz Republic	7-8 September 2015	Achieved
	4) Workshop on Customs-to-Customs in the Arab Region	Casablanca, Morocco[88]	2-4 December 2015	Achieved
A 2.1	Second inter-regional Expert Group Meeting	Geneva, Switzerland	22 June 2016	Achieved
A 2.2	One-day seminar to promote the electronic exchange of customs information	Geneva, Switzerland	20-21 June 2016	Achieved

Source: Project Reports, UNECE, 2016

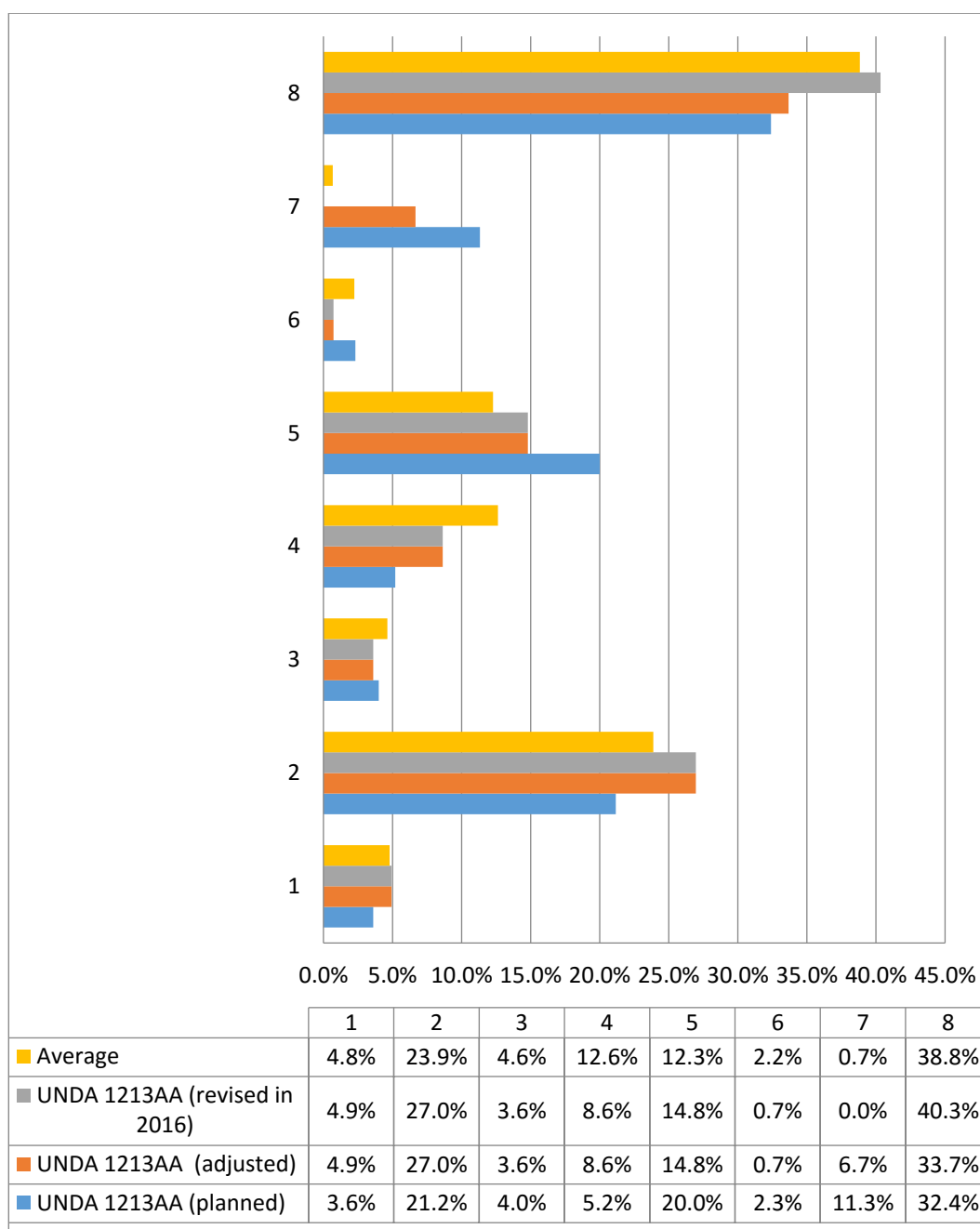[88] Jointly organized by the UNECA and UN-ESCWA

Annex 6: Allotment Request Summary Table

Object Class	Object code	Oject description	Allotment (USD)	Explanation of changes compared to the concept paper
602	0051-0059	General temporary assistance	37,000	10,000 USD have been added for the organization of the Expert Groups and Seminar (administration).
604	0111	International Consultants	14,700	The development costs of the exchange platform have been moved to 612.. This provision is for external evaluation fees by international consultant
604	0140	National/Regional Consultants	168,500	The amount for the study was increased to allow for 5 regional consultants to undertake the study for the candidate countries in their region. The use of national/regional consultants to assist for the development of the exchange platform was abandoned. Finally, the technical assistance contracts have been moved from 612 to this budget line.
604	2601	Travel of national and international consultants	19,000	All travel costs have been revised (differentiating international / regional travel and including DSA)
604	2602	Expert groups	27,000	All travel of experts groups
608	2302	Travel of staff	64,800	The estimate of the cost of mission to the interregional expert group meetings was increased to 3000USD. Moreover, the number of technical assistance mission was increased as well as the number of staff that can take part on the workshops.
612	3908	Contractual services	111,000	In the concept paper translation and interpretation was accounted under 621. Furthermore translation and interpretation was reduced from 6000 to 3000USD per event.
616	4707/8229	Operating expenses	5,500	The communication and supplies budget was reduced.
618	5041/5043/5512	Equipment and supplies	50,000	Considering the availability of open source software and cloud solutions the provision for equipment and supplies was reduced.
621	7202	Seminars and workshops	252,500	In the concept note travel cost had been underestimated and DSA not taken into account. Consequently, the number of paid participants to the workshops/seminar had to be decreased to 20/45 and the costs per participant was increased to 1400/2500USD.
Total			750,000	

Source:
http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/trans/doc/themes/UNDAC2C/UNECE_BCF_C2C_Electronic_exchange_project__FINAL.pdf

Annex 7: Budget Allocation Comparison

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
■ Average	4.8%	23.9%	4.6%	12.6%	12.3%	2.2%	0.7%	38.8%
■ UNDA 1213AA (revised in 2016)	4.9%	27.0%	3.6%	8.6%	14.8%	0.7%	0.0%	40.3%
■ UNDA 1213AA (adjusted)	4.9%	27.0%	3.6%	8.6%	14.8%	0.7%	6.7%	33.7%
■ UNDA 1213AA (planned)	3.6%	21.2%	4.0%	5.2%	20.0%	2.3%	11.3%	32.4%

Source: UNDA 1213AA Final Report and Supplementary Financial Information for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2012-2013, Development Account

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électronique C2C, ESCWA

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