UNECE

Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window

To Enhance the Efficient Exchange of International Trade Information Between Trade and Government





United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business

Recommendation No.33 Recommendation and Guidelines on Establishing a Single Window

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Foreword

Facilitating trade contributes to the competitiveness of economies and companies while reducing trade costs by an average of 14.3 per cent and has the potential of boosting global trade by up to one trillion United States dollars per year according to the World Trade Organization's *World Trade Report* of 2015.

Within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the term trade facilitation has a threefold meaning: to simplify trade related procedures (remove redundancies and streamline), to standardize (creating a controlled reference vocabulary for example) and to harmonize them (with international standards). Facilitation can take many forms such as the acceptance of electronic copies, electronic messaging standards or coordinated border management. A national Single Window for international trade crystalizes nearly all aspects of trade facilitation in a single facility. Single Window implies a strong collaboration between government agencies, a transition towards a digital economy, streamlining processes at the border, consultation with private sector stakeholders. This all-encompassing approach is why the concept is so powerful while at the same time demonstrating a certain level of difficulty to implement, particularly for developing countries and for countries with economies in transition.

The international trading community continues to recognize the great potential of implementing a national Single Window as demonstrated in the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement. Member States shall endeavor to establish or maintain a Single Window (article 10.4). To date, though, it does remain one of the least implemented measures of this agreement reflecting the level of complexity in its implementation. This is intrinsically linked to the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its target 17.10; this Agenda recognizes trade as "an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction, [that] contributes to the promotion of sustainable development".

UN/CEFACT has long recognized the importance of Single Window since it was the first international body to develop this concept around twenty years ago. The first version of Recommendation 33 was published in 2005. Since then there have been many lessons learned. This second version integrates these lessons learned into an easy-to-use Recommendation. It develops new related principles such as Single Window in a regional context, key performance indicators and post implementation challenges. This version also clarifies the base terms linked to Single Window in order to ensure that all solutions comply with the intended definition of Single Window.

I am convinced that the establishment of a Single Window constitutes an important building block in the area of trade facilitation and I therefore invite all concerned actors, both public and private, to make an effective use of this Recommendation.

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Olga Algayerova Executive Secretary United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Note

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The examples which were presented in the original 2005 version of this Recommendation have been separated from the main text, creating a separate repository of case studies which can be more agilely updated and maintained.

These are available at: www.unece.org/cefact/single_window/welcome.html

The United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)

Simple, Transparent and Effective Processes for Global Commerce

UN/CEFACT's mission is to improve the ability of business, trade and administrative organizations, from developed, developing and transitional economies, to exchange products and relevant services effectively. Its principal focus is on facilitating national and international transactions, through the simplification and harmonization of processes, procedures and information flows, and so contribute to the growth of global commerce.

Participation in UN/CEFACT is open to experts from United Nations Member States, Intergovernmental Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations recognised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Through this participation of government and business representatives from around the world, UN/CEFACT has developed a range of trade facilitation and e-business standards, recommendations and tools that are approved within a broad intergovernmental process and implemented globally.

UN/CEFACT is committed to ensuring that the gender dimension is reflected in norms, roles, procedures, and access to resources. Government and trade are encouraged to promote equal opportunities for women and men within the scope of Trade Facilitation activities. UN/CEFACT specifically encourages the collection, analysis, and monitoring of gender disaggregated data in order to better understand and support women's engagement in international trade and transport facilitation.

This Recommendation encourages governments, business communities, development partners, international organizations, and other policymakers to follow UN/CEFACT's commitment to ensure inclusiveness for women.



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