

Mercator Programme

A Navigational Map
for Trade Facilitation



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION



Launch of the WCO Mercator Programme

The Ninth World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference, held in Bali (Indonesia) from 3 to 7 December 2013, under the framework of the Doha Development Agenda, concluded the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), as embodied in the Bali Package's Ministerial Decision.

The WCO Policy Commission which met in Dublin (Ireland) from 9 to 11 December 2013 subsequently issued the Dublin Resolution welcoming the conclusion of the WTO TFA, emphasizing the WCO's commitment to the efficient implementation of the TFA, and establishing the WCO TFA Working Group for the purposes of taking up the practical aspects of meeting the expectations arising out of the TFA.

In June 2014, in the presence of WTO Director-General Azevêdo, the WCO Council launched a strategic initiative to support trade facilitation, namely the WCO Mercator Programme. The Programme better positions the WCO to consolidate and promote its efforts in the area of trade facilitation support under a specific new branding.

This support is aimed at assisting WCO Members worldwide to implement trade facilitation measures by using core WCO instruments and tools, such as the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC), at the national, regional and global level, thereby also supporting various regional integration efforts.

The WCO's capacity building approach – from diagnostic support to strategic planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation – and its standards and tools, such as its Economic Competitiveness Package, have been developed over many years and already cover a great deal of the tailor-made support that the Mercator Programme aims to provide.

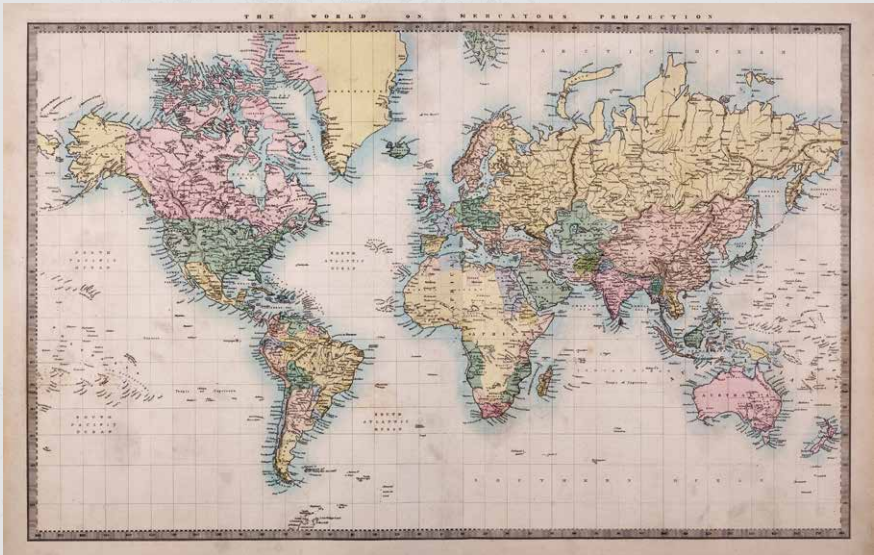
In addition, it is also globally recognized that WCO Member Customs administrations widely benefit from the WCO's global network of Regional Offices for Capacity Building and Regional Training Centres, including the pool of accredited experts from its Members, in many trade facilitation-related areas.

WCO and WTO

The WCO and the WTO have a long-standing history of cooperation. In particular, the WCO manages the Technical Committees of two important WTO Agreements dealing with Customs valuation and rules of origin.

With respect to trade facilitation, the WCO is an Annex D Organization at the WTO, having, from the outset, actively supported the conclusion of the TFA. Various trade facilitation measures have been negotiated at the WTO and the WCO offers support in implementing these measures. The WCO's instruments, tools and network of national Customs experts and private sector partners are indispensable for implementing the trade facilitation measures.

Mercator projection



The Mercator projection is a cylindrical map projection developed in 1569 by the Flemish geographer and cartographer Gerardus Mercator.

This navigational tool enabled mariners to plot straight courses and take correct compass readings that supported trade and became fundamental to understanding the world, leading ultimately to increased interconnectivity.

What are the key objectives?

Harmonized implementation based on WCO global standards

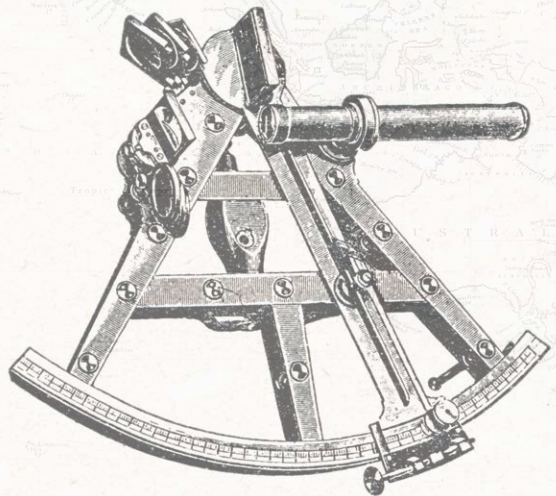
The Mercator Programme is aimed at assisting governments worldwide to implement trade facilitation measures expeditiously and in a harmonized manner by using core WCO instruments and tools, such as the RKC, while ensuring connectivity at borders and along international trade supply chains, thereby providing a consolidated platform for advancing the smooth flow of goods being traded around the world.

Tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building

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

Effective coordination among all stakeholders

Based on a long-standing history of cooperation with the WTO, other international organizations and the private sector, the Mercator Programme acts as an important vehicle for coordinating the needs and priorities of all concerned stakeholders.



What are the benefits?

Benefits for developing and least developed countries

Developing and least developed countries (LDCs) may request and receive tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building, according to their own identified needs, to support the implementation of trade facilitation measures. The Mercator Programme also provides these countries with assistance in assessing their needs, using the WCO's expertise.

Benefits for donor institutions

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

Benefits for all government agencies

All government agencies, including Customs administrations, will become better acquainted with existing WCO tools and WCO Members' practices and experiences concerning various trade facilitation measures. The Mercator Programme reduces the risk of a non-standardized approach which could lead to divergent implementation practices.

Benefits for the private sector

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

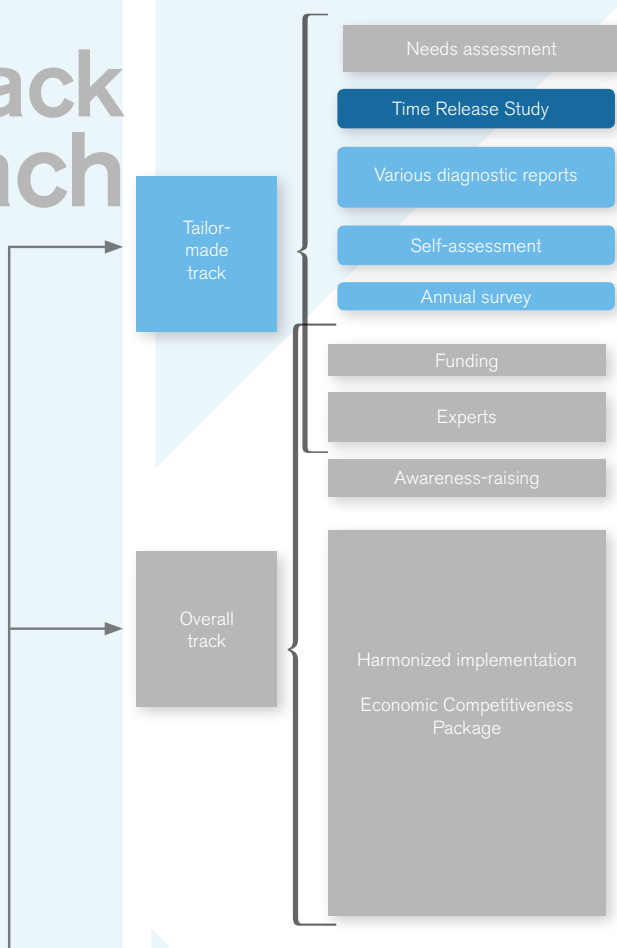
WCO TFA Working Group

The Working Group on the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFAWG) serves as the Mercator Programme's support and monitoring vehicle, in addition to providing a link with the relevant WTO Committees.

It also acts as a venue for the WCO's 180 Members to share experiences on the implementation of trade facilitation measures, enabling them to dialogue with the donor community and engage with other international organizations and bodies, as well as with the private sector.



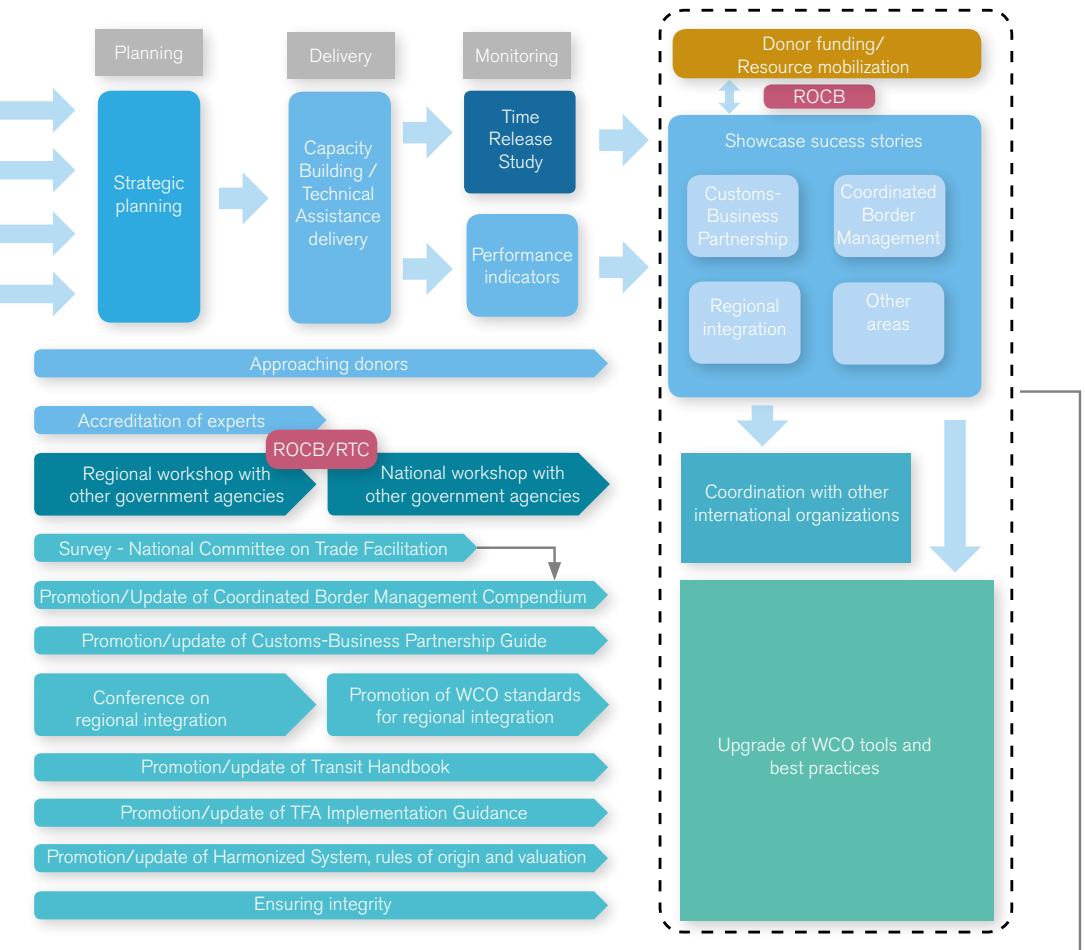
Dual-Track Approach



Overall track

Harmonized implementation: In addition to long-standing WCO instruments and tools, such as the RKC, which already provide for consistent interpretation, the WCO, under the framework of its Economic Competitiveness Package, has developed and will continue to maintain and update various complementary tools and guidelines. The Mercator Programme provides the ideal platform for these activities.

Awareness-raising: The Mercator Programme aims to achieve more effective cooperation amongst all stakeholders, especially in terms of raising the level of political will to take joint actions to progress the trade facilitation agenda, bringing together all relevant government agencies and encouraging, for instance, efficient coordinated border management, including meaningful trade partnerships.



Tailor-made track

The Mercator Programme matches the needs of recipient Members and interested donor institutions. Taking into consideration the results of WCO, WTO and/or other organizations' needs assessments, as well as the results of self-assessments and Time Release Studies (TRS), developing countries and LDCs may submit their requests for assistance to the WCO Capacity Building Directorate at any time. The WCO Regional Offices for Capacity Building (ROCBs) may assist Members in this respect.

The WCO will develop tailor-made technical assistance projects in cooperation with donor institutions and recipient Members, and will identify appropriate Customs-accredited experts from its Customs network. It will also ensure results-based management support activities in the area of TRS and Performance Measurement as part of the monitoring process.

TFA Implementation Guidance

The WCO has developed online/offline TFA Implementation Guidance. This web-based tool will help Members find the appropriate WCO tools and instruments, thereby ensuring harmonized implementation of various trade facilitation measures. It is accessible to all stakeholders, including the private sector, at the following web address:

www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/wco-implementing-the-wto-atf/atf.aspx

Implementation Guidance

The World Customs Organization (WCO), an intergovernmental organization specially mentioned in the Bail Ministerial Declarations, is highlighting its role in the implementation and administration of the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA). The WCO, the centre of excellence on Customs matters worldwide, is committed to the efficient implementation of the TFA.

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Requests and questions

Developing countries and LDCs may submit their requests for tailor-made technical assistance to the WCO Capacity Building Directorate at any time:

capacity.building@wcoomd.org

Interested development partners and donor institutions may contact the WCO External Relations Unit with regard to further cooperation, including the offer of financial support for technical assistance and capacity building projects:

external.relations@wcoomd.org

For more information on the Mercator Programme, including the TFAWG and TFA Implementation Guidance, please contact the WCO Procedures and Facilitation team:

facilitation@wcoomd.org



WTO Director-General Azevêdo congratulated the WCO on the creation of the new Working Group on the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the launch of the Mercator Programme during the 2014 WCO Council Sessions.



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