

**DECISION OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN FREE
TRADE AGREEMENT**

No. 6 /2014

Establishment of the Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information

Adopted on 21 November 2014

The Joint Committee,

Having regard to the Agreement on Amendment of and Accession to the Central European Free Trade Agreement, CEFTA 2006, (hereinafter the "Agreement") done in Bucharest on 19 December 2006.

Hereby establishes, pursuant to Article 41.5 to the Agreement, the following Working Group:

- Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information

The Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information is attached to this Decision as Annex 1 and shall form an integral part of it.

This decision was adopted by all CEFTA Parties in the presence of their representatives, except by Bosnia and Herzegovina which made a reservation regarding (completion of) its internal procedure.

This decision enters into force on the date following the date of the receipt of the written communication (notice) with which Bosnia and Herzegovina confirms to the Chair in Office, that internal procedures for the adoption of this decision have been fulfilled.

Adopted in Skopje on 21 November 2014

Annex 1 to the Decision No.4/2014

Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information

1. TASK

The task of the Working Group on Electronic Exchange of Information (hereinafter referred to as: "Working Group") is to develop and broaden cooperation among CEFTA Parties, according to Article 14 of the CEFTA Agreement, particularly to address the issues which are related to the functioning and sustainability of the existing or new IT capacities and tools to be created between the CEFTA Parties in the framework of CEFTA Agreement, and proposing solutions for the CEFTA Region with an aim to facilitate the regional trade while improving the overall quality and deterrence of customs, security and safety controls and inspections.

2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1.** Members of the Working Group are government officials in charge of information technology and electronic data exchange, and from other relevant units of the Customs Authorities of the CEFTA Parties.
- 2.2.** The representative from each Party shall actively participate in performing the tasks and functions of this Working Group.
- 2.3.** Experts from other public authorities of the CEFTA Parties or from other countries or international organisations/ institutions may be invited to attend the meetings at the request of the Chair of the Working Group to provide advice or introduce the best practice where needed. They have no rights in decision making and can be asked to leave the meeting at any time by the Chair.
- 2.4.** In the issues requiring specific technical IT knowledge, in particular for the functioning of the existing IT tools for the electronic data exchange, the Working Group may decide to benefit from technical consultancy which can be contracted by the CEFTA Secretariat.
- 2.5.** Recommendations for future actions will be made by consensus of all Working Group members. If the member is absent from the Working Group meeting, he/she shall communicate its position in writing within the period not longer than 20 working days from the date of the receipt of a request. If position is not communicated within the above mentioned period, it shall be deemed there were no objections by the member concerned.
- 2.6.** The member of the Working Group will cease to be a member:

- If he/she fails to attend 2 consecutive meetings without securing appropriate replacement,
- upon the request of the Party

In cases referred to above, the CEFTA Party concerned shall nominate new member within one month and notify the Chair.

3. CHAIRMANSHIP

The Party chairing of the Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin shall chair the Working Group.

The responsibilities of Chair include:

- Scheduling meetings and notifying the members
- Inviting guest experts to attend the meetings when required by members
- Guiding the meetings and other activities during chairing
- Ensuring all discussion items end with a decision, action or definite outcome

4. MINUTES TAKING

Person appointed by the Chair and representative of the CEFTA Secretariat take notes and prepare draft minutes of the Working Group meetings.

5. MEETINGS

The Working Group shall meet as necessary but at least once per year, preferably before the meeting of Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin.

6. FUNCTION

The specific functions of the Working Group are:

- (i) Cooperation in the field of electronic exchange of information
 - To exchange information on the existing or any amendment adopted in the national rules and regulations on electronic exchange of information between customs authorities, and its implementation,
 - To share best practices in electronic exchange of information, particularly with regard to its implementation, training of staff, administrative organisation and decision making processes, inter-agency/institution and intra-agency/institution cooperation and coordination, and cross-border cooperation.
 - To cooperate, and assist each other and exchange views and experiences on legal and procedural alignment to be adopted by the CEFTA Parties in the context of relevant EU integration process, in particularly with the interoperability between national IT systems and EU Databases
 - To discuss the implementation of regional projects in the field of electronic exchange of information, with an aim to develop common understandings

to address the functioning and sustainability related issues to increase the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the projects concerned.

(ii) Explore possibilities for extending the scope of electronic exchange of information in all types of clearance stages

- To propose legal, and procedural possibilities in the framework of CEFTA Agreement in order to ensure sustainability of data exchange, and extend the scope of data exchanged electronically, and to include other governmental agencies and institutions than the Customs Authorities in electronic exchange of information, and
- to propose the most feasible IT related solutions to serve the overall objective of trade facilitation and deterrent security, and safety related controls,
- In this task, priority to be given to include the pre-arrival electronic exchange of information between Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Authorities and between SPS Authorities and Customs Authorities into the existing or new IT tools for the electronic exchange of data with a view to facilitate the regional trade through simplification of customs procedures and reduce the formalities imposed on trade,

7. ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING

The agreed minutes of the working meetings will be submitted to the Chair of the Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin and are to be integrated into the meetings of the Subcommittee.

The Chair of the Working Group will report on discussion and outcomes in the plenary session of the regular session of the Subcommittee.

The Working Group will prepare the annual report on cooperation in the field of electronic exchange of information, and potentials for extending the scope of electronic exchange of information, based on inputs from the CEFTA Parties. This Report will be submitted to the Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin and will be an integral part of the Annual Report of the Subcommittee on Customs and Rules of Origin, which is to be presented at the Joint Committee meeting.