

Country: Netherlands

Background:

Official name: Platform for Customs-business and interagency cooperation

Year of establishment: In December 2015, the customs-business consultation forum was officially designated the National Trade Facilitation Committee following the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. It was established based on a pre-existing Customs-business and interagency cooperation platform. Structural consultation between border agencies and business through the platform has been taking place since the 1990s, but have only been formalised since 2010.

Motivation for its establishment: The body was set up as a platform for broad customs-business and interagency consultation.

Other national bodies dealing with WTO issues and/or with Trade Facilitation: Yes, for example, there is dedicated consultation between businesses and Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Authorities. There is also a biannual meeting between the involved ministries to discuss policy issues.

Former multi-agency group/committee: Yes, it was established based on a pre-existing Customs-business and interagency cooperation platform. Structural consultation between border agencies and business through the platform has been taking place since the 1990s, but have been formalised only since 2010.

Current status of the working group (running, pilot phase, not functioning, etc): Running

Institutional Framework:

Degree of institutionalisation: Ministry of Finance, Directorate General Tax Administration

Type of organisation (ad hoc group, legal entity/organisation, etc): The Trade Facilitation body was set up as part of a wider Customs-business and interagency consultation

Coordinating agency: Ministry of Finance, Directorate General Tax Administration

Scope/mandate: Issues that are discussed in the remit of the Trade Facilitation body are:

- service level of Customs
- general questions on execution of law
- planning the implementation of new legislation
- exchange of best and bad practices
- exchange of views on implementation of new legislation
- planning of changes in automated systems and software
- enforcement level and strategy
- where needed: explanation on the reason for control levels

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The committee has taken decisions and actions related to cross-border e-commerce. E-commerce is addressed at meetings of NCTF and of the Food Authority with the business and customs.

Furthermore is amongst others a projectgroup customs-business e-commerce customs-system formed and is e-commerce a topic at meetings customs with other authorities.

Terms of reference: Yes, terms of reference were recently updated.

Working structure of the group: The Trade Facilitation body is chaired by the Director General of the Netherlands Customs Administration.

Plenary group – strategic topics

Subgroups for expertise:

Legal & enforcement

Jointly pre-defined mid-term topics

Information management

Permanent technical secretariat: Yes, the permanent secretariat is with custom. This is being financed by Domestic resources. The secretariat is composed of 6 people.

Funding:

Budget: Yes there is a budget available for the NTFC.

Sources of funding: Domestic resources; Financing by members for their own activities and the secretariat within the current budget of the Tax authorities/Customs. Currently, there is no technical or financial support received from donors or development partners.

Items covered by the budget: Major items covered by the budget are: Office rental and equipment Software tools Reproduction and publications services Telephones and internet Translation services Meeting venues and catering Public information sessions and media outreach Training sessions Salaries of permanent secretariat employee

Objectives / Focus:

Objectives:

Strive to maximize transparency

Customs is a partner for business

Trade facilitation

Improvement of supervision

Decrease interference in the supply chain

Decrease administrative and procedural burdens

For business and border agencies to learn more about each other

Working plan: There is a work plan. The work plan has a long term scope and consists of a Strategic Development plan with regard to the following 4 main topics: Information Technology,



Service and Knowledge, Trade Facilitation and Enforcement, Coordinated Border Management. The progress is monitored quarterly.

Working plan: Yes, there is an annual work plan

Monitoring and evaluation: Around 99% the NTFC fulfils its role of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. Consultations with stakeholders The NTFC applies the constant consultation with NCTF members and when necessary on an ad-hoc basis with other stakeholders and the various NCTF meetings as a tool for monitoring. The constant consultation with stakeholders or when necessary an ad-hoc basis and the various NCTF meetings are used as a tool for continuous evaluation.

Reporting form and supervisory authority: Trade Facilitation body is reporting annually to external stakeholders and once per month to members.

Membership / Composition:

Public or quasi-public agencies: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Infrastructure and Water, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Customs Administration, Food Safety Consumer Authority (NVWA), Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (IL&T).

Private associations or entities: Business associations; there is coverage of all partners in the customs related supply chain, i.e.

- shippers,
- importers,
- exporters,
- airlines,
- handling companies,
- shipping lines,
- shipping agents,
- stevedores,
- logistic service providers,
- customs brokers,

Level of seniority of participants: 100% of Participants hold senior positions. Participation of the business community is arranged through associations.

Participation:

Frequency of meetings: The NTFC meets regularly. The General NCTF meets 3 times per year. The 3 working groups (Information Technology, Current Issues, Medium-Term Issues) meet quarterly. Furthermore, meetings are being organized when requested or needed.

Level of participation: On average 80-90% of the members participate in the meetings.



Participation depends on the agenda. The number of participants per industry association is maximized to two.

Meetings format: The Trade Facilitation body has a number of subgroups, which meet in different constellations and compositions. The format is generally the same though. In the general section, more strategic issues are discussed, such as the implementation of legislation, implementation issues, the specific issues raised by members...

In the current affairs section, implementations issues are discussed that are relevant for the primary tasks of Customs and have to be solved in the short term. In the medium term section, (implementation) issues are discussed that need to be addressed on the medium term. For example, issues surrounding the new EU Customs legislation are discussed and more general developments in the cooperation with other border agencies in cross-border logistics. The IT section discusses specific IT-related topics. The section is also the steering group for the relationship between IT facilitation of the Customs authority and the (industry) software developers.

Gender:

Percentage of female in the committee: 15% are women

Committee did decide on gender mainstreaming TF in the past: No

If no, why not. (Example: It not considered a priority, not considered relevant at this stage, lack of awareness, etc): It was not considered relevant at this stage. The amount of members of female gender and the positions they have in the NCTF through the years makes it a sufficient female representation in NCTF. Therefore it's not considered to take any action on this point.

Promotion / Communication:

Communication channels to keep stakeholders informed of TF meetings: For stakeholders to be informed of NTFC meetings, new documents and upcoming events: Email, Administrative letters, Meetings website, Telephone, Via an App (iBabs). For information of general public on the country's trade facilitation initiatives: Publication of articles in the Press, Meetings Website of the Committee, Website of the organisations that are members of the NTFC, Social media

Interface with other working groups/committees on similar issues: The Trade Facilitation body has a number of subgroups. Other border agencies such as the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agency also have industry consultation mechanisms. The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agency is however represented in the Trade Facilitation body to guarantee that this feeds back to the Trade Facilitation body where necessary.

Benefits:

Impact:

Inter alia increased cooperation and dialogue.

An increase in the mutual understanding of the different partners in the logistic chain.

A joint partnership for the education and training of Customs and logistic personnel.

Benefits for the country's responsiveness to the WTO negotiation process: Close interdepartmental relations allowed an active participation of relevant departments in the negotiation process.

Concrete operational outcomes: Projects that are currently being undertaken include:

Integrity (FP7): visibility in the full supply chain for containers traffic

Cassandra (FP7): risk assessment by business in the supply chain

Extended Single Window (Dinalog, National University for Logistics): simplifying logistics and customs procedures for hinterland movements

Smartgate: main ports community government-business A'dam Airport

Smart ruled, good connected: harbour co-operation business-government

Topteam for logistics: Netherlands -Government strategic view on logistics

Negotiation of trade or trade facilitation agreements
Implementation of concrete trade facilitation measures
Improve transparency / dialogue
Developed an implementation plan for the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement
Improved coordination
Ratification / notifications of the Trade Facilitation Agreement sent to the WTO
Improve business environment for traders
Reduction of time and / or improvement of procedures at the border
Reduction of costs of import, export and / or transit
Raise awareness on the importance of trade facilitation
Mainstreaming trade facilitation into other national policies

Lessons learned:

Success factors: It is thought, to the extent of 98%, that the Committee will be sustainable in time.

The crucial factors to the sustainability of the Committee are: Cooperation among members / Common understanding and goals
Regularity of meetings / communications to NTFC members
Clear responsibility of participants
Commitment from members
Involvement of the private sector

Success factors:

Transparency vis-à-vis industry and other members,

Customs administration as central pillar in border management as head of the Trade Facilitation body,

commitment and buy-in of industry associations.

Greatest obstacles: Businesses perceive the government as one entity, while of course it is composed of several institutions and agencies. Vice versa, businesses are not homogeneous either. It is difficult to step away from individual concerns and interest to look at the collective/common

denominator. In the country, there are no obstacles to the sustainability of the NTFC.

Future plans:

Plans for further development: Regional integration has been considered within the work of the NTFC to some extent and the NTFC is already in contact with other NTFCs within the region

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