AIDE-MEMOIRE
of the Webinar on the Import Control System 2 (ICS2) in the EU
(March 12, 2025)

Upon receiving a message from the European Commission on important changes in the procedure of entry of goods by rail and road into the EU (Ref.Ares(2025)463038 – 21/01/2025), the PS IGC TRACECA informed accordingly the MLA member countries (letter of the PS IGC TRACECA No. 02/25/029 – 03/02/2025) and kindly suggested to the Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union of the European Commission (DG TAXUD) to organize a webinar on the Import Control System 2 (ICS2) in the EU (hereinafter referred to as the Webinar) for interested operators as well as Customs authorities from the TRACECA countries (our letter 02/25/0 30 – 03/02/2025).

The Webinar was conducted on 12 March 2025 by representatives of the DG TAXUD ICS2 Project Team in cooperation with the PS IGC TRACECA (via Zoom platform and professional English/Russian translation). About 150 participants, representatives of Customs authorities, ministries of transport, transport agencies, associations of road transport carriers, railway operators, ports, and other stakeholders from 8 MLA countries (Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Romania, Tajikistan, and Ukraine), have joined online to participate in this event (indicative list of participants is given in Annex 1 of this document).

The Webinar was opened and moderated by Mr. Goran Andreev, PS IGC TRACECA Border Crossing Expert, who welcomed the participants and noted the importance of the topic and expectations from the webinar for the stakeholders on the TRACECA transport corridor.

The main objective of the webinar was to present changes in the procedure of entry of goods by rail and road into the EU that take effect on 1 April 2025, with the rolling out of the ICS2 Customs pre-arrival safety and security system. The webinar provided an opportunity to learn more about the ICS2 system and avoid unnecessary disruptions at EU Customs due to new requirements for rail and road carriers to provide data on goods sent to the EU prior to their arrival.

The expert from the TAXUD-ICS2-Project team, Ms. Renata Pauliukaityte, elaborated on the ICS2 requirements for road and rail. Obligations for filing an Entry Summary Declaration (ENS) prior to arrival on EU borders have been presented. Information was provided on Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number that uniquely identifies economic operators and other persons in Customs clearance procedures in the EU. While the concepts of ENS and EORI are not new, the novelties introduced include additional ENS data and a mandatory requirement to have an EORI number for several parties in the ENS (e.g. for carriers).

The ICS2 IT system was presented with details on how to prepare to connect and use the system. It was noted that it is possible to request a deployment window and postpone implementation from 1 April 2025 until 1 September 2025. However, such a request should be submitted by individual economic operators that are already registered with an EORI number by the Customs authorities of the EU Member States. Different options to connect to the ICS2 have been elaborated.

Information on the ICS2 resources available online was provided, such as the ICS2 website (https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs-4/customs-security/ics2_en), various factsheets for different modes of transport, technical factsheets, e-learning courses, operational guidance, functional and technical specifications, etc.

Presentation from the Webinar is given in Annex 2 of this document.

During discussion at the Webinar, several issues on new requirements introduced with the ICS2 have been clarified by the representative of the TAXUD-ICS2-Project team. Several participants provided information on the status in preparation for the use of the ICS2 system and expressed some concerns regarding the level of preparedness for implementation.

Following **specific clarifications** have been provided:

- Requirement for a carrier to submit an ENS is not new; however, there is a new system (ICS2) where the ENS has to be submitted. There are some additional new data elements of the ENS that have to be provided (e.g. info on buyer/seller, 6-digit commodity code, …);
- Connecting to ICS2 can be done by carriers themselves in several manners (own IT system, IT Service Provider, Shared Trade Portal) or they can use the services of a representative - Customs brokers (provided that those Customs brokers are prepared to connect to ICS2)
- The carriers need to have an EORI number (mandatory even if the ENS is submitted by another declarant, Customs broker);
- In the case of Customs transit (NCTS phase 5 or TIR) separate filing of ENS has to be done in ICS2. With employment of the NCTS phase 6, the filing of ENS could be done together with the transit declaration (no need for separate ENS filing in ICS2 system);
- Deployment window provides an opportunity to request, and Customs authority of EU MS to grant, an official permission to delay connecting to ICS2 after the 1st of April 2025 (by the 1st September 2025). To request a such deployment window, the carrier needs to have an EORI number. The request for a deployment window has to be submitted before the 1st April 2025. If the deployment window is granted, the carrier can continue operating under previous rules (e.g. by NCTS or old ICS) until the date stated (e.g. by 1st September 2025).

Following **specific issues and concerns** have been raised:

- Representative from the Ukrainian Association of Road Transport Carriers noted that non-EU carriers (from Ukraine and probably other non-EU countries) have restricted possibilities to connect to the ICS2 system (e.g. only a few large transport operators have their own IT systems that could be connected to ICS2, there is a lack of IT service providers in non-EU countries, and the use of the Shared Trade Portal is restricted due to the requirement for a digital signature that is acceptable in the EU. So, in reality, it seems that non-EU carriers have only one option, which is to use the services of EU brokers. Using brokers at the border (which presently is not needed with NCTS phase 5 and TIR customs transit procedures) increases the costs and represents a serious issue for many transport companies. The representative for DG TAXUD noted that the NCTS phase 6 may provide a solution, though at the moment, several countries have not opted-in to NCTS phase 6.
- Representative from Ukraine Customs Authorities noted that most of the existing NCTS declarations from Ukraine already contain safety and security data; therefore, the shifting of the filing of the ENS data from the NCTS phase 5 to a separate ICS2 system will represent a burden to the carriers and increase complexities. While Ukraine is an opt-in country for NCTS phase 6, there are concerns since many of the neighboring countries are opt-out countries for the time being. She noted that the issue of not aligned deadlines for

the employment of ICS2 and NCTS phase 6 creates disruptions. Various solutions could be discussed and considered (e.g. to align deadlines for employment of ICS2 and NCTS phase 6; in the absence of an IT service provider, to allow the Customs authority to provide a software solution for carriers to connect to ICS2 and act as an IT service provider…)

- There are concerns that there will be many requests for deployment window (in thousands) in very little time until the start of the ICS2 system, which may cause delays in the process for granting permissions. Therefore, it could be considered to simplify the process for requesting and granting deployment window. While it was suggested to consider granting deployment window by default, the DG TAXUD representative clarified that it is not possible to grant deployment window by default since each company has to be registered.
- The requirements and procedure for lodging a Presentation Notification to additional systems of the EU MS Customs (not to the ICS2 system) could be considered as a new requirement, which is not clear (it could differ in different EU MS Customs) and it can cause implementing issues and delays.

Separate national meetings with DG TAXUD have been requested to discuss the issues raised (e.g. by Ukraine).

Representative of the PS IGC TRACECA raised the question of existing activities in the digitalization of transport documents (e.g. eCMR, eCIM/SMGS CN, eFTI) in the EU, TRACECA countries, and wider region; and potential to link those initiatives with the requirements of Customs authorities for the submission of pre-arrival safety and security data (e.g. ENS via ICS2 in the EU). He noted that many data elements are the same or similar; therefore, it could be beneficial to study the level of alignment (e.g. regarding content, type of data, standards used) and consider the potential for reuse of the data elements of digital transport documents for Customs purposes (e.g. with interfaces of transport and Customs IT systems). The PS IGC TRACECA is interested in cooperation in potential studies for the mapping of electronic transport documents and Customs pre-arrival data sets as well as pilot projects for the re-use of data from electronic transport documents for Customs purposes.

Based on the presentations and discussion, **the following conclusions and recommendations** could be noted regarding the implementation of the ICS2 systems in the EU:

- Carriers should start the procedure to get an EORI number (if they do not have an EORI number and wish to operate in the EU);
- Carriers (with an EORI number) should request a deployment window as soon as possible (before 1st April 2025) to be able to use old systems and prepare to connect / use ICS2 by 1st September 2025;
- DG TAXUD should consider national consultations with interested countries and endeavor to address the issues noted, e.g.:
  - restricted possibilities for non-EU carriers (e.g. from Ukraine and other countries) to connect to the ICS2 and suggest measures that could decrease the burden of non-EU carriers (e.g. support/facilitate connectivity to the ICS2 system for non-EU carriers;
  - complexities due to differences in deadlines for the employment of ICS2 and NCTS phase 6; support more NCTS countries to advance the dates to opt-in to NCTS phase 6;
  - potential delays in the processing of large volumes of requests for an ICS2 deployment window before the deadline;

- lack of clarity regarding the procedure for lodging a Presentation Notification to additional systems of the EU MS Customs.

The PS IGC TRACECA works on a regular basis in the field of harmonization and simplification of customs procedures and formalities along the TRACECA corridor by providing a platform to exchange experiences, discuss ideas, and enhance cooperation with various partnering organizations in this field. The support and valuable inputs of the experts from DG TAXUD in TRACECA Customs events are very much appreciated with hope for further fruitful cooperation.

The Customs authorities of the TRACECA countries are kindly invited to express their interest in the topics to be discussed at the next workshops on customs issues along the TRACECA corridor in 2025.