

SINGLE WINDOWS IN THE NEW MODERNIZED EU CUSTOMS ENVIRONMENT

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This concept settles a Single Window to increase efficiency of information exchanges between traders and government. Its main purpose is to ease the realization of internal and international transactions through simplifying and harmonizing processes, procedures and information exchanges, all these to contribute to the increase of global trade. After the launch of the concept e-customs, this new Single Window concept represents another action to modernize the new customs environment in the EU. The SW concept refers to a facility, a service that permits both sides implicated in transport and trade to introduce information a single time. There are three basic models for the SW: a single authority which receives information, a single automated system for receiving and sending information, and an automated system of information and transaction.

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The Single Window (SW) concept

For implementing a SW are necessary steps which are complementary to the Recommendation number 33 and created to assist institutions and merchants in planning and introducing a type SW facility for the world import and export and for all operations related to these. This recommendation ensures models of documents to be prepared, part of the instruments, and valid rules and steps to be followed.

What does the SW concept represent?

As it is specified in the Recommendation number 33, the SW concepts presented in these guidelines refer to a facility, a service that permits both sides implied in transport and trade to introduce information a single time.

What are the most common models for the SW?

Although there are many approaches and forms possible in establishing a SW, three basic models have been identified and outlined from the study performed by the UN/CEFACT on numerous existing or in course of development systems. Still the before taking into consideration these models, it must be underlined the fact that:

- Although many business and trade practices are common to all countries each can't really will also have specific requirements and rules.
- The SW will have to represent a close cooperation between all implicated government institutions, agencies and merchants.
- The SW does not compulsory impose the implementation of a single technology and informing language although facilitating can be considerably increased if those implicated will adopt it.

The three SW basic models are:

- A single AUTHORITY which receives information, other on paper or electronic, stands, shares all the inflammation of all mainly involved authorities and coordinates controls to prevent misfit use in the logistic network. For example in the Swedish SW, at customs, there have to be fulfilled certain conditions required or imposed by certain organizations, authorities such as the National Tax Administration, the Statistics Institution (trade statistics), the Agency for Agriculture and National Trade (import license).

- A single automated system for receiving and sending information (either public or private), data referring to trade and disseminating data regarding external trade. For example USA has realized a program which allows merchants to introduce only once the standard data into the system, and it will process and distribute them to any interested agency for that transaction. There are many possibilities:
 - i. Integrated system: the data is processed in the system
 - ii. Decentralized system: to data is sent to agencies to be processed
 - iii. A combination of i. and ii.
- An automated system of information and transaction through which the merchants can present the electronic trade declarations to different authorities for processing and approaching all of them in one application. In the current approach, the approvals of authorities are electronically sent to the merchants' computer such a system functions in Singapore and Mauritius. More than that, in Singapore, the commissions, taxes are calculated and retained automatically from the merchants bank account. When such a system is realized, attention should be paid to the database where are specified the identity, data and characteristics priory introduced and validated, some time before, for all main types of transactions.

The main agency for a SW

The proper agency for conducting the introduction of an operation such as SW will vary from country to country according to the legal, political and organizational status. The main agency must be a powerful organization with a vision, legal, getting the political and financial and human resources support it needs and certainly in contact with other key organizations. In some cases, due to their derived role, the key position it has in obtaining information and contact at the border, the customs and harbor authorities can be the most appropriate agencies to lead the development and implementation of the SW. They can also be "entrance points" which receive and coordinates the information flux referring to fulfilling all trade related requirements.

Anyway, the main organization doesn't necessarily have to be a government organization; it can be a particular entity such as the Chamber of Commerce or a private organization such as the Commerce Committee. Still, particular organizations sometimes lack legal authority to solve and receive information and documents, as well as the power to strengthen the rules.

As such, in these conditions, it is preferable that private organizations ask for formal help from the government organizations that have the power and the means to use it.

What are the benefits of realizing a SW?

The SW can simplify and ease up to a considerable point the process of procuring and sharing information necessary to fulfill the trade related requirements, both for merchants and authorities. Using such a system can improve the efficiency of official controls and can reduce costs both for authorities and merchants, correspondent to a better use of resources.

Benefits for government institutions:

- Incomes from better productions (and usually high ones)
- Improving trade relations
- Increased security
- Increased integrity and transparency

Benefits for the trade

- Rapid elaboration and clarity
- Explaining and applying rules

- Efficient use of resources
- Increased transparency

Implementing the Single Windows system

Applying a SW is a significant activity implying many pretenders and requiring engagements from many players both government institutions and businesses. As a consequence is necessary that a system is adopted from the beginning. Anyway the implementation will be influenced enough by politics, cultural and social conditions, and traditions in a given country.

- Developing the initial concept for the Single Window
- Initial decision making of examining the feasibility of a Single Window
- The costs for analyzing the feasibility study
- Considerations following the statements of the feasibility study

Standards and instruments which help the implementation of the SW

For the implementation of the Single Window the government and trade are strongly encouraged to take into consideration using existing recommendations, standards and instruments which have been developed along the years by inter government agencies and international organizations such as UNECE, UNCTAD, WOO, IMG, ICAO and ICC.

Using standards and available instruments will help the developed system apply the Single Window to be more acceptable, compatible with similar developments in other countries, and could also help in exchanging information between facilities the Single Window type. More than that using existing instruments and the best practices could help reduce the total implementation cost.

Essential steps to be followed in the implementation of a SW

Successful introduction and implementation of a concept such as Single Window depends in a considerable measure on the preconditions and factors that vary from country to country and from project to project. This final part of Guidelines presents some successful factors picked out in situations of functioning and development of the SW invariant countries that use the UN CEFAC International Trade Procedures Working Group. The list of factors is not arranged in a specific order giving the situation in different countries and functioning forms that can vary a lot.

- Political will
- The main agency
- The association between the government and traders
- Founding the Clear Project Boundaries and Objectives
- Easy and accessible use
- Legal frame for implementation
- International standards and recommendations
- It is possible obstacles
- The financial model
- Payment possibilities
- Promotion and marketing

Promotion and marketing of some Single Windows is very important and should be carefully planned. The promotion campaign should involve representatives of all key governments and trade pretenders in the system, due to the fact that the systems can supply valuable information about the expectations of merchants and can serve directly to the promotion and marketing of messages. A clear implementation program should be realized and promoted in the earliest stage possible of a Single Window project, and thus participating to the marketing of the project and helping potential users to plan their related activities to the project and future investments according to

this program. Marketing should clearly specify the benefits and savings the system offers as well as the increased efficiency it brings.

Setting a corresponding mechanism for the permanent information of all pretenders about the purposes of the project, the objectives, the targets, the progress and difficulties met, generates trust and avoids the type of misunderstandings that can lead to the end of such projects. In this context is extremely important the way to deal with expectations of those involved in a correspondent manner, and is worth to be mentioned the business motto: "promise less and do more". It is also extremely important to remember the fact that pretenders usually don't expect miracles: solving simple, practical problems can generate the significant goodwill to sustain the project in difficult periods along the development.

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