



**World Customs
Organization**

WCO Time Release Study (TRS): TRS Methodology Overview

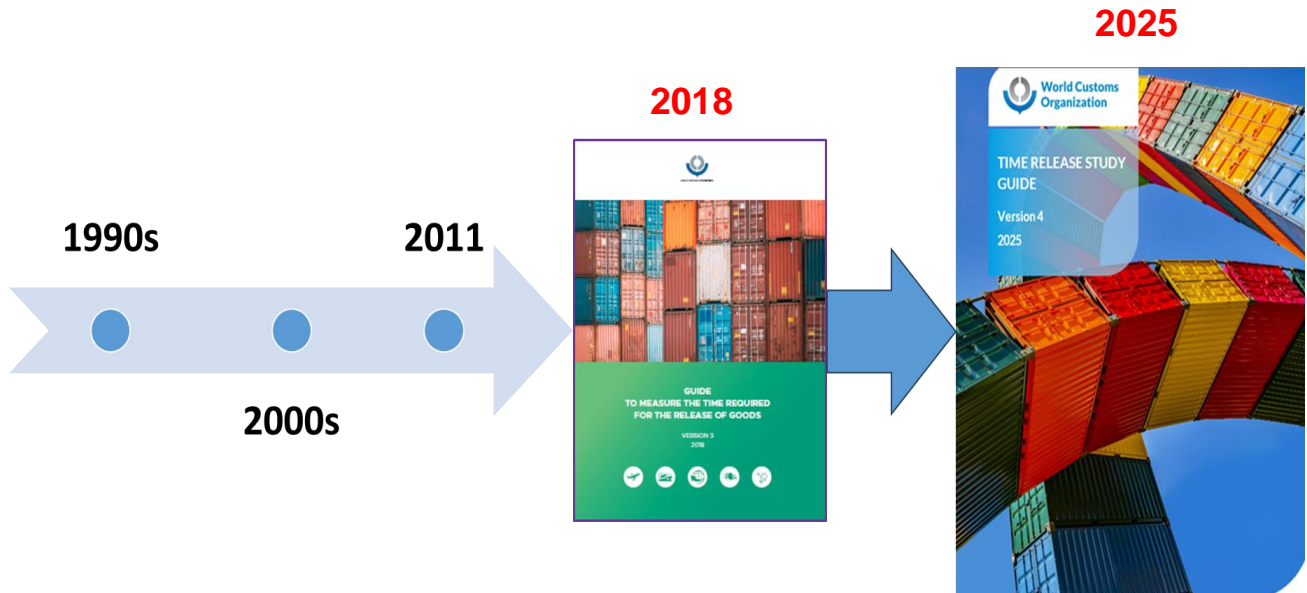
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**WTO Trade Facilitation Committee
TRS Side Event**

04 June 2025, Geneva

Evolution of the TRS Guide



What is the Time Release Study?



Measure

The actual time required for the release and/or clearance of goods, from the time of arrival until the physical release of cargo.

Finding

Finding bottlenecks in the trade flow process and taking the corresponding necessary measures.

Improve

Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of border procedures.

TYPES of TRS



National TRS (Simplified/comprehensive TRS).

- simultaneous or consecutive TRS

Joint TRS at a bilateral level.

- Two countries
- Joint MoU might be necessary

Joint TRS at a multilateral/Regional level

- More than two countries
- Joint MoU might be necessary

TRS METHODOLOGY



Preparation of the study

1

- Establishment of WG
- Scope and Design
- BP & Questionnaire

Collection & Recording of data

2

- Manual data collection
- Data collection from a system

Analysis of data & conclusion

3

- Data verification
- Data Analysis
- Final report
- Press release/Exit conference/forum

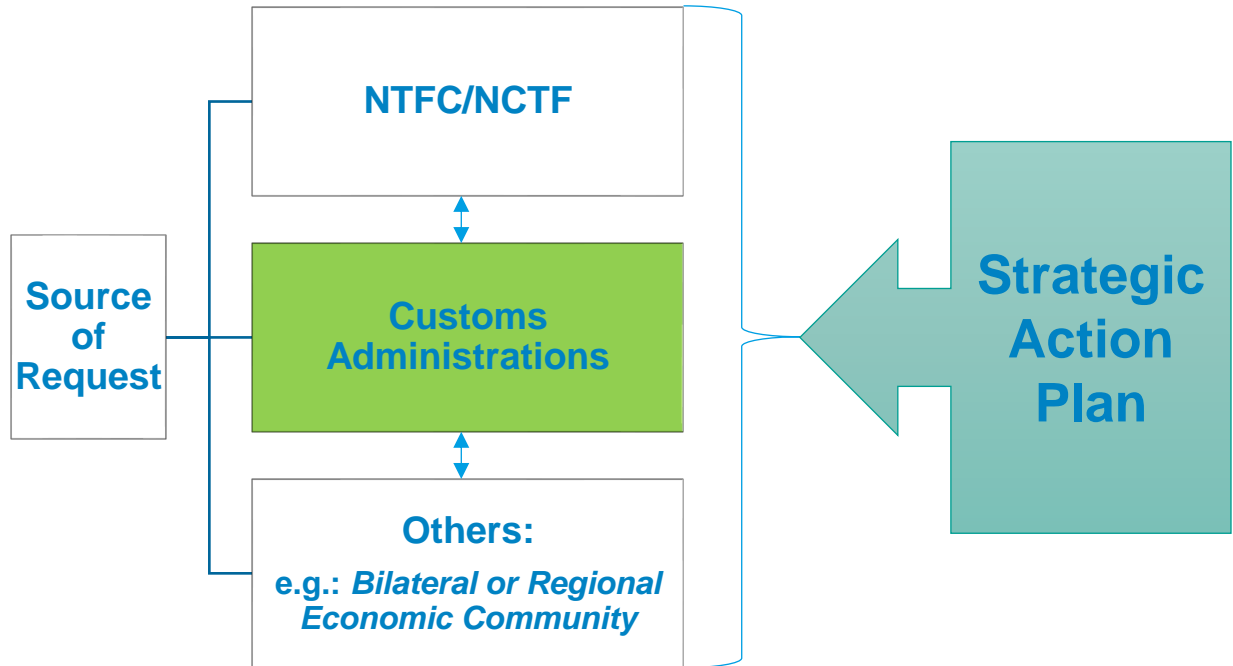
Monitoring & Evaluation

4

- Lvl 1; national & regional
- Lvl 2; WCO assessment of TRS report



PRE-PHASE I SCENARIO & WCO's APPROACH!



PRE-PHASE I SCENARIO & WCO's APPROACH!



Request for TRS Assistance from the WCO

Annual Need Survey
(WCO Members)

Formal Letter
(Direct/Ad-Hoc)

WCO's Internal-Donor
Programmes/Projects
Assistance



Preliminary Assessment & Consultation → Basis of Request?

1st TRS /
Limited
Technical
Capacity

Assistance
needed for
specific trade
type/mode

Assistance needed for
specific technical
phases
(e.g., data analysis)

Implemented
sometime ago &
seeking support
for a repeat study

Advanced stage:
support needed
for strategic
reasons



WCO's Preparation & Planning for the Mission

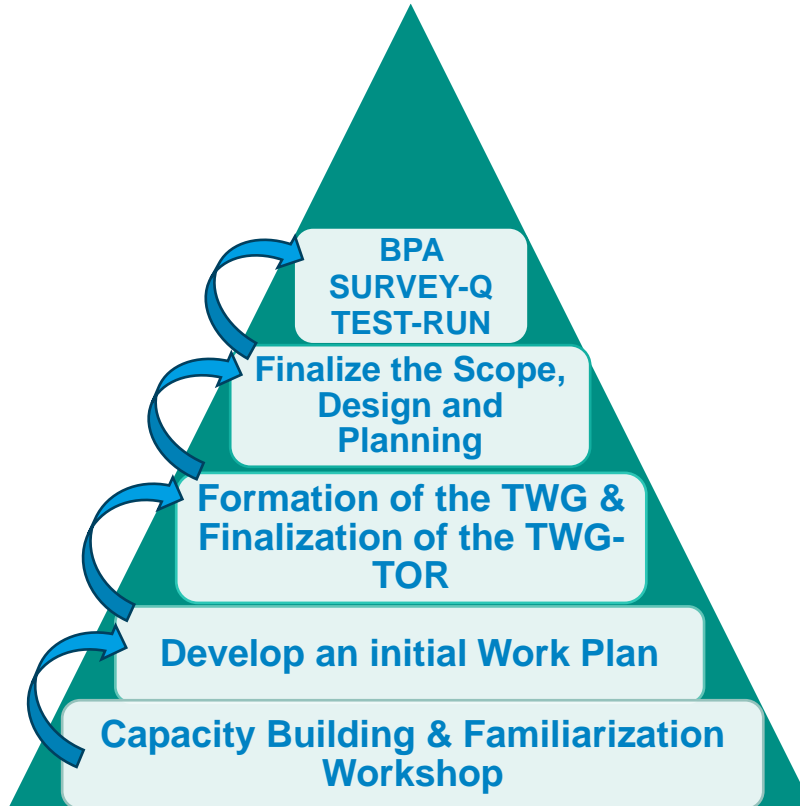
Initial scoping, expectations, objectives
& planning:
(e.g.: awareness-raising workshop,...??)

Finalize the
schedule &
programme

Mobilization of
Funds
(as necessary)

Mobilization of the
WCO TRS
accredited experts

PHASE I – PREPARATION & PLANNING



PHASE I - Crucial decisions to be made

Example: Scope and Design of the Study

- Period for data collection
- Off-peak to avoid uncertainty

Period



- Detailed plan to complete all phases in TRS
- Sample strategy

Duration



- Relevant locations
- Transaction volume of the location

Geography



- Customs regime
- Duty regime
- Transport modes
- Simplified/ special/ regular

Procedure



PHASE II and III

Preparation of the study

1

- Establishment of WG
- Scope and Design
- BP & Questionnaire

Collection & Recording of data

2

- Manual data collection
- Data collection from a system

Analysis of data & conclusion

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- Data verification
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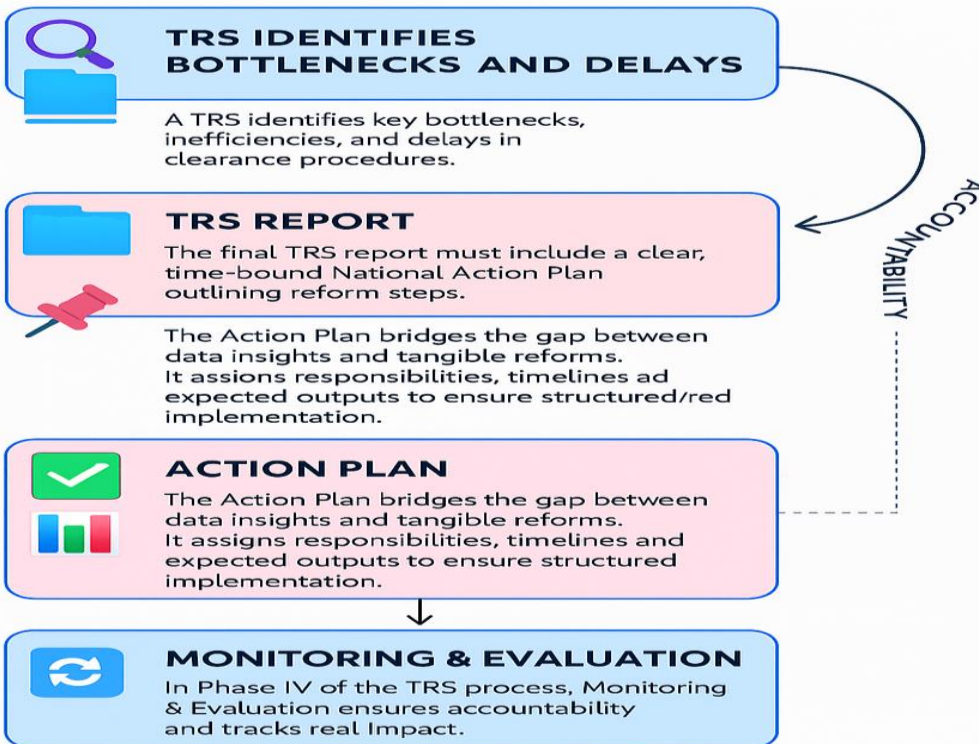
Monitoring & Evaluation

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IMPORTANCE OF AN ACTION PLAN



WITHOUT A SOLID ACTION PLAN, TRS RISKS BECOMING A DIAGNOSTIC EXERCISE WITH NO FOLLOW-THROUGH

Phase IV - Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)



Level 1 : NCTF and RECs

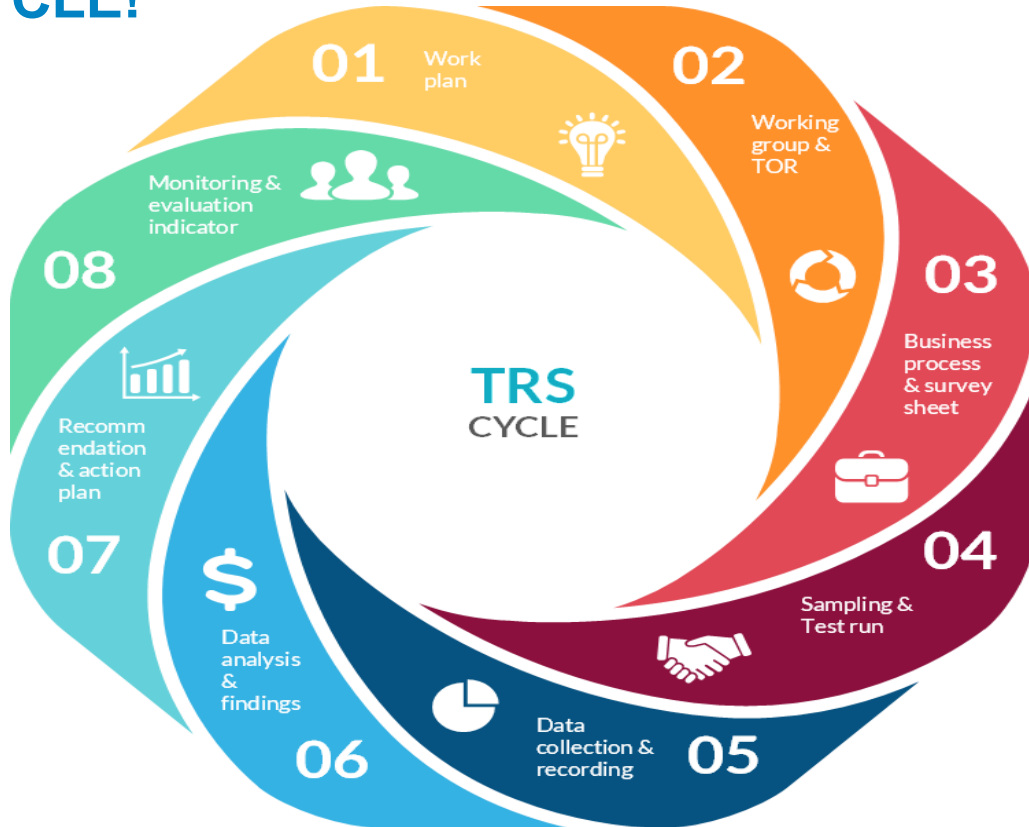
- Establish a continuous M&E mechanism → Action Plan
- National TRS
 - M&E conducted by the NCTF/ Customs administration
- Regional / Joint/ Multilateral TRS
 - Regional Economic Community or participating Customs administration

Level 2 : WCO

At the request of the Customs administration (Optional)

- Review of the TRS Final Report for feedback
- Comparative assessment of progress against past TRS reports
- Assessment of TRS methodology conformity with the TRS Guide

TRS AS A CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE!



TRS, Version 4, 2025: KEY ENHANCEMENTS



(New Version 4, 2025 will be published in July 2025)



- ✓ **Strategic Foundation:** Formal mandate, clear scope setting, structured action plans.
- ✓ **Improved Methodology:** Risk-based scoping, process mapping (e.g., swimlane diagrams).
- ✓ **Data Collection & Sampling:** Refined questionnaires; stratified sampling with statistical validity.
- ✓ **Preparation & Testing:** Expanded test run covering technical and procedural readiness.
- ✓ **Data Analysis Framework:** Structured verification, outlier handling, and trend analysis.
- ✓ **Implementation & Monitoring:** SMART objectives, RACI Matrix, maturity indicators, feedback loops.
- ✓ **Efficiency Focus:** Reduction of delays and redundancies in border clearance processes.



Target:

Provide technical assistance for enhancing compliance with WTO TFA Art. 7.6.

Outputs:

Phase I (2018-2023):

- ✓ 5 TRS Implemented (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, and Uzbekistan)
- ✓ TRS Guide translated into Spanish and Russian
- ✓ TRS E-learning module available on CLiKC!
- ✓ Supported de accreditation of 2 new TRS Technical and Operational Advisors

Phase II (2024-2027):

- ✓ 3 TRS implemented in different border posts of Bolivia
- ✓ Capacity building assistance to Moldova and Uzbekistan to implement TRS next cycle
- ✓ Supported accreditation of 2 new TRS Technical and Operational Advisors

Outcomes:

- ✓ Increased TFA maturity and reduced clearance times
- ✓ Enhanced access to TRS methodology and guidelines

- ✓ Improved institutional capacity for implementing TRS
- ✓ Expanded availability of TRS Experts for Capacity-building

Growing importance of Middle Corridor / Trans-Caspian International Transport Route

COVID-19 and recent security situation have highlighted the importance of resilience of international supply chain.

“Customs Heads Meeting on Project for simplifying transit customs procedure along the Trans-Caspian International ‘East-West’ Middle Corridor

G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué (G7 Summit, May 2023) and G7 Transport Ministerial meeting, Italia, 11–13 April 2024

Programme Objectives and Goals

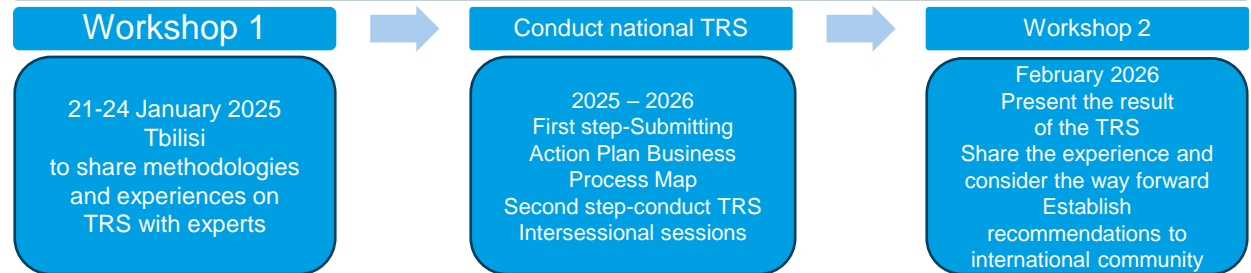
Learning on TRS	Use of WCO Software
Identifying non-Customs delays	For further improvement of the Middle Corridor / Trans Caspian Sea route
Conduct TRS	Recommendations

16 Participants from 8 WCO members in Central Asia and the Caucasus

1. Azerbaijan
2. Armenia
3. Georgia
4. Kazakhstan
5. Kyrgyzstan
6. Tajikistan
7. Turkmenistan
8. Uzbekistan

Train 2 participants from member countries and enable them to conduct a national TRS using the WCO guidelines and the WCO TRS software.

Key Programme Stage



Programme Overview

- **Duration: 2015 to 2026** across multi-year phases.
- **13 partner countries:** Eswatini, The Gambia, Guyana, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malaysia, The Maldives, Namibia, Nigeria, The Philippines, South Africa, Zambia

PROGRAMME'S EXPERIENCE IN TRS CAPACITY BUILDING KEY TAKE-AWAYS & SUCCESS FACTORS

- 1. Establish a TRS National Technical Working Group under NTFC**
 - Bring all relevant agencies and private sector together.
 - This is key to conduct TRS with regular intervals and ensure national capacity.
- 2. Secure High-level Support & Commitment by Various Principles**
- 3. Organize High-Level Public Kick-off Event**
 - It creates buy-in and public accountability, ensuring momentum will be kept
 - Without this, a draft report may start collecting dust on a shelf...
- 4. Ensure Strong National Ownership as a Prerequisite:**
 - Project Lead - accountable and with a clear mandate and conveying power
 - Working Group can serve as enumerators, keeping costs low.
 - Resources needed – including per diems for staff involved in the Study.
- 5. Adopt a Blended Capacity Building Approach**
 - Remote sessions: to define scope, ToR for the Working Group, and data availability
 - In-country support: conduct training, including test run and start data collection
- 6. Secure High-level Endorsement of Findings**
 - Convene Principals together to validate findings and ensure buy-in before publication
- 7. Public Launch & agreed upon Monitoring Mechanism**
 - Publish report with high-level visibility and ensure follow-up on implementation of findings



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