

Building a national Trade Facilitation Strategy: The Greek Trade Facilitation Roadmap 2013 - 2015. GREECE

Introduction

The Greek Case Story is an example of strategic policymaking embedding trade facilitation in economic policies. In 2012, the Government developed a national trade facilitation strategy to support economic recovery by simplifying export procedures and reducing export time and cost. The strategy is an interministerial effort encompassing a variety of reforms to be carried out in three years.

Context

The Greek economic crisis led to a severe contraction of the internal market and exporting was considered a key condition for economic recovery.

However, Greek exporters faced widespread administrative barriers to trade. Simplifying customs and other trade procedures become a key objective of the Greek Government. The Government developed a National Strategy for exports for the three-year period 2013 to 2015 comprising three components, namely export promotion, trade facilitation and broadening the export base. This Case Story focuses on the Trade Facilitation component.

How the trade facilitation strategy was developed

The trigger for developing the Greek Trade Facilitation Strategy was the economic adjustment programme the Greek authorities agreed to as a condition for and following the bailout funding received from international lenders since May 2010. Jointly with its international partners, the Government designed and put in place a series of reform initiatives. In 2011, the EU Commission set up the Task Force for Greece (TFGR) to provide technical assistance to the Greek authorities. The simplification of customs and pre-customs procedures was flagged as a priority area of intervention.

Work on the development of the strategy began in early 2012 under the TFGR, which brought in expertise from the United Na-

tions Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and European Union national Governments. A series of workshops, assessments and consultations were organised by UNECE and the TFGR in 2012 with all key stakeholders including key Ministries and business organizations. This work highlighted impediments in five areas:

- > time to export,
- > cost to export,
- > legal issues,
- > information issues and
- > implementation issues

This work culminated in the development and adoption of the Greek Trade Facilitation Strategy and Roadmap in November 2012 through the collaborative efforts of a cross-agency team from four ministries with support from UNECE and the TFGR. The Greek Trade Facilitation Roadmap lists 25 actions under five headings, namely:

- > simplification of export procedures,
- > reorganization of customs,
- > automation of procedures and implementation of paperless trade,
- > steering of the reform/operational project management,
- > and communication and training.

The Roadmap was a joint document of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Development, Competitiveness, Infrastructure, Transport and Networks, Ministry of Rural Development and Food, with cooperation from other Ministries.

The overall objective of the roadmap is to reduce, by 2015, the



time and cost for exports by 50% and 20% respectively, with potential impacts on the economy of an additional 80.000 jobs and an increase of 1,7% in GDP.

The implementation of the full trade facilitation roadmap involves a broad suite of actions, requiring extensive funding. The estimated costs for the overall trade facilitation roadmap are 14,5M euros.

Key components of the strategy

Vision and objectives

The strategy builds on the vision to “transform the inward-looking Greek economy to an outward-looking one and make trading across borders one of Greece’s competitive advantages.”¹ In line with this vision the strategy focuses on “assisting companies to easily trade across borders via streamlined, quick and digital procedures”.

The objectives to achieve by 2015 are:

- > To reduce the number of days needed to export by 50%
- > To reduce the cost to export by 20%
- > To establish a national single window for exports.

Key performance indicators measure the time and costs to export using the data from the World Bank’s Trading Across Borders survey, the percentage of physical and documentary controls, the number of companies approved for simplified procedures by Customs, and the number of traders registered with customs as Authorized Economic Operators. Performance targets to be achieved by 2015 are set for each of these indicators.

Implementation of the Roadmap

Clearly, this is a very ambitious agenda requiring major structural reform of trade processes and regulations as well as successful change and project management coupled with cross-ministerial coordination. It involves a deep change of customs and pre-customs processes and the support of proven ICT support systems.

Given the scale and complexity of the challenge, the Greek authorities requested the TFGR / European Commission and UN-

¹ Extract from the Roadmap. The strategy is not the only pillar on which this vision rests. The national export strategy and national logistics strategy are additional pillars

ECE to support them in implementing and managing this major reform, ensuring that they were equipped to carry out the necessary changes.

In January 2013, the Government of Greece, the European Commission and UNECE established a technical cooperation project entitled: “Support to the Implementation of the National Trade Facilitation Strategy for Greece”.

UNECE technical cooperation project

About the project

The technical cooperation project aimed to:

- > assist Greek authorities in steering and managing the overall Roadmap
- > provide managerial support for the implementation of different topics included
- > provide specialist expertise in implementing the trade facilitation reforms included in the Roadmap

The European Commission provided EUR 1.100.000 in 2013-2014. The project is implemented jointly by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the European Union Task Force for Greece (TFGR).

Outputs

The project had several deliverables. Some of the project results are:

- > **A Operational Steering Committee and six Working Groups** to manage the different reform programmes were established
- > **Substantive reform of Customs procedures initiated**, support to the automation of the customs procedures (ICISNet rollout) and implementation of an automated risk assessment system
- > **Authorized economic operator scheme** rolled out
- > More than **15 workshops and capacity building events** organised
- > **Business Processes Analysis** and simplification undertaken using UNNEXT Business Process Analysis Method



- > **Authorized Traders Scheme** established with over 40 exporters registered (accounting for 40% of the total exporting activity in fresh fruits and vegetables)
- > Proposal for a **competitive agriculture export strategy (Greek Smarter Food) developed** pilot project for the implementation of a **Single Window launched**.

Impact

Even if it is too soon to determine the long term impact of the trade facilitation reforms undertaken in Greece, once is sure: in a very short time Greece has made important progress in the implementation of trade facilitation. And this has already had an impact in Greece trade performance. For instance, in less than two years, Greece has significantly improved its international ranking in trade facilitation and trade competitiveness.

The actions already implemented by the Greek administrations as well as the private sector stakeholders bring tangible benefits to the Greek traders and businesses, as evidenced by international studies and reports that were published until the third quarter of 2014.

- > Since 2012, Greece has improved its ranking in the World Bank Doing Business study by 39 positions from position 100 to 61*.
- > The competitive position of Greece in the Logistic Performance Index has improved by 25 positions. The concrete results for Customs are overwhelming with an improvement by 52 positions, from 94 to 42.

- > The time to export and import has been reduced by 25% and 44% respectively.
- > The cost to export and import has gone down by approximately 10%.

The following tables show the positive results over the past years in the rankings of the Doing Business and the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) of the World Bank:

Doing Business	2012	2013	2014	2015
Doing business*	100	78	72	61
Trading across borders*	84	62	52	48
Time to export (days)	20	19	16	15
Cost to export (US\$ per container)	1153	1115	1040	1040
Time to import (days)	25	15	15	14
Cost to import (US\$ per container)	1265	1135	1135	1135

Source: UNECE with data from World Bank Doing Business Report www.doingbusiness.org

WB Logistics Performance Indicators (LPI)	2012	2014
LPI*	69	44
Customs*	94	42
Logistics*	73	40

Source: UNECE with data from World Bank Logistics Performance Index <http://lpi.worldbank.org/>

* International Ranking (smaller is better)

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