



# ADVANCE CARGO INFORMATION (ACI)

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## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

World Customs Organization

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# ADVANCE CARGO INFORMATION (ACI) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Advance Cargo Information

In accordance with the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards to Secure and Facilitate Global Trade (hereafter referred to as the WCO SAFE), electronic Advance Cargo Information (ACI) are data sets<sup>2</sup> of information to identify high-risk cargo prior to loading and/or arrival by WCO Members. In this regard the WCO SAFE harmonizes the ACI information requirements for inbound, outbound and transit shipments.

The global data sets laid down for ACI in the WCO SAFE are the result of extensive discussions between the WCO, Customs administrations and Business and are subject to periodic review, to take account of new or emerging threats, in order to ensure that the data sets remain fit for purpose and relevant.

WCO Members that have signed a letter of intent to implement the WCO SAFE standards should consider implementing ACI programmes to contribute to strengthening supply chain security and mitigate potential security threats.

Implementing ACI, combined with processing through appropriate Customs risk management systems, allows Customs administrations to protect their territory and supply chains from security threats. ACI also allows WCO Members additional time to scrutinise consignments prior to their arrival in a territory and take appropriate steps.

*NOTE: These guidelines do not seek to directly support Pre-arrival Processing of import Customs declarations as foreseen in the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement and the WCO Revised Kyoto Convention though some of the principles could be applied.*

## 2. Benefits of implementing a successful Advance Cargo Information programme

Setting up ACI programmes is, undoubtedly, a costly process for Customs, border agencies, Businesses and other stakeholders; however, there are associated benefits for governments and businesses. ACI allows Customs administrations to mitigate security risks prior to loading, or prior to arrival (dependent on the mode and procedure applied) of cargo into a territory. Through the appropriate application of risk management on ACI, Customs is able to separate cargo shipments into different categories and match resources to those minority shipments that require the maximum intervention, whilst facilitating the clearance of low risk consignments. This should lead, in time, to more informed decisions on interdiction of goods at the borders, resulting in more efficient and secure supply chains as well as enhanced trade facilitation and, over time, economic growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Advance Cargo Information is a generic term covering the provision of pre-loading or pre-arrival electronic information as set down in the WCO SAFE Framework

<sup>2</sup> The data sets can be found in Annex II - [http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/safe2015\\_e\\_final.pdf?la=en](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/safe2015_e_final.pdf?la=en)

A harmonized and standardized approach is a win-win for all parties and support smarter border controls resulting in reductions in redundant inspections, storage and time delay related costs.

Critical to any savings is the ability to provide quality data from Business entities to Customs. In this regard all stakeholders in the supply chain must take this responsibility seriously in order to enhance data quality that would minimize unnecessary interdictions or delays by Customs at borders.

In addition, trading partner countries implementing ACI may strengthen trust between themselves, benefitting the trade.

### **3. Enablers to successfully introduce ACI programme:**

- a. Political will
- b. Compliance with the SAFE Framework of Standards including the application of the data elements/sets foreseen in Annex III
- c. Legislation in place to support the provision of ACI
- d. Adequate funding and resources
- e. Communication and coordination with all stakeholders
- f. Consideration of lessons learned from other WCO Members
- g. Messaging standards aligned with the WCO Data Model
- h. ACI requirements are transparent and widely published
- i. Reasonable timeline for implementation accommodating all stakeholders
- j. Ability to process ACI through a risk management system

### **4. Process to implement Advance Cargo Information**

Following a State's decision to implement ACI the following steps are recommended:

#### **I. Ensure that there is political will and resources for the development of an ACI programme**

This requires the Customs administration to convince the decision makers, including obtaining the support and cooperation of appropriate government agencies, of the need to introduce ACI by creating a business case setting down the background and compiling reasons why ACI should be introduced. This includes improvements in the targeting of high risk consignments and the facilitation of cargo and mail deemed to be low risk. Critical to this discussion will be how the introduction of ACI will allow better market access and support economic growth.

## **II. Sufficient funding exists to support the programme**

The implementation of ACI, like any new Customs procedure, will come at a cost to both Customs and the Business sector. In this regard Customs and the Business stakeholders should work together to conduct a cost analysis of implementation using such tools as impact assessments, business surveys and dialogue with similar WCO Members whom have already introduced such a programme.

## **III. Ensure that capacity and training needs are met and steps taken to meet identified gaps**

This is a critical component to the successful creation of an ACI programme. Early consideration should be given to assessing whether existing physical infrastructure and IT needs are sufficient to support the introduction of ACI. Likewise, ensuring that adequate training needs are met by both Customs and the Business sector will save time, delays and additional costs in the early stages of the ACI programme. Once more calling on the experience of other WCO Members could be useful.

## **IV. Ensure that a project team is put in place with the right mix of skills and knowledge**

Due to the complexity of ACI programmes, it is important to have in place a project team that has a mixture of skills including expertise in the WCO SAFE, the SAFE package, national regulations, IT, operational procedures and international trade. In this regard requesting participation or regular dialogue with the business sector is strongly recommended. This includes personnel with competent skills (e.g. IT, statistics, mathematical, analytical, risk management) are in place, either within the Customs administration and industry or through other entities to support ACI implementation and ongoing management.

## **V. Working groups for different aspects of ACI**

To support the project team, different topic specific working groups should be established with defined objectives and deliverables linked to a roadmap and work programmes mentioned in "VI" hereafter.

## **VI. A phased implementation for ACI should be foreseen**

A roadmap and work programmes with clear benchmarks should be established allowing for adequate initial, consultation, testing, informed compliance and implementation stages.

## **VII. Commence cooperation and coordination for consultation and implementation with all impacted as well as other interested parties**

Early discussions should take place between Customs and the Business sector during the initial consideration phase.

## **VIII. Workshops and conferences**

To organize workshops and conference so that all stakeholders are aware that an ACI programme is being created and what the likely requirements will be. Customs should invite comments from Business partners to ensure the programme is realistic, workable and efficient. This approach will create the right environment to support the co-creation of the ACI programmes. This way forward should be maintained for the duration of the programme establishment and beyond in order to ensure it continues to meet its objectives.

## **IX. Customs and Business exploit trade forums to inform trade sectors of impending ACI programmes and inform these sectors of their likely responsibilities**

This activity should be a collective responsibility between Customs and the Business sector. A clear plan should be established to maximise opportunities to reach out to all the stakeholders that are foreseen to have ACI responsibilities.

## **X. Bulletins are created and distributed on a regular basis to inform stakeholders of ACI regime progress**

Bulletins should be considered as an additional strategy to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the ACI programme developments and impending benchmarks and deadlines.

## **XI. Stakeholder groups are established for consultation processes**

From other ACI programme initiatives it is clear that different business and other stakeholders have individual challenges and requirements. Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholder groups are formed at the earliest opportunities to consider issues of importance and provide solutions to overcome obstacles.

## **XII. Customs should establish a working group of all interested entities from both the public and private sector to manage implementation**

The above (XI) mentioned stakeholder groups should report into an overarching working group or steering committee that will provide advice, guidance, and strategic direction to the stakeholder groups and drive ACI implementation with an appropriate timeframe.

## **XIII. Set a reasonable deadline for implementation**

To provide sufficient time for the timely communication of systems specifications, including message implementing guidelines, pilots, testing and informed compliance. These requirements should be set down in a roadmap or work programmes after consultation between Customs and Business stakeholders. The following key stages should be foreseen:

- i. Customs/Business consultation phase
- ii. Call for Business volunteers to test ACI
- iii. Commencement of testing phase (an adequate testing period - minimum of 6 months is recommended)
- iv. Review of testing phase
- v. Implementation of lessons learnt
- vi. Final testing phase to ensure the ACI system is robust and fit for purpose
- vii. Entry into force of ACI regulations
- viii. Period of informed compliance (leniency period - minimum of 6 months is recommended)

## **XIV. Customs and Business should use the ACI provisions, standards and data sets set down in the WCO SAFE to formulate their programme**

Customs and Business should utilise the ACI standards, procedures and guidance as set down in the WCO SAFE to ensure the provision of required security data for Customs and predictability for Business stakeholders.

## **XV. Framework Data Element Maintenance Request (FDMR)**

If a case is established to support additional ACI data elements outside of those set down in the SAFE Framework of Standards or modification of existing data elements, a “Framework Data Element Maintenance Request” under the SAFE Data Element Maintenance Mechanism will be transmitted to the WCO and considered for adoption in the SAFE Working Group.

## **XVI. WCO Data Model compliant messages (e.g. XML, EDIFACT) should be developed and utilised in coordination with Business partners<sup>3</sup>**

Both Customs and Business stakeholders should seek to ensure that electronic messages required to transmit ACI data sets are formulated and compliant with the WCO SAFE. This will ensure that Customs needs are met and international trade costs are minimised by the use of global harmonised data requirements.

## **XVII. ACI messages should take into consideration normal business rules pertaining to different transport modes and business models**

ACI message requirements should be in accordance with the WCO SAFE including the mode specific timeframes as set down.

## **XVIII. Multiple data filing options**

Entities should be foreseen (e.g. carriers, freight forwarders, importers, exporters, brokers, postal operators) to file ACI based on their responsibility and ability to submit data. Time limits for ACI comply with the WCO SAFE, noting that the time limits vary dependent upon transport modes.

## **XIX. Amendments to ACI messages**

The ACI systems should accommodate amendments to ACI messages (including data) in certain circumstances.

## **XX. Live pilot testing with a limited number of volunteer Business partners should take place. This pilot should then be expanded, over a reasonable period of time, to include all identified parties**

Evidence from other ACI programmes has confirmed that a live testing stage is critical in order to permit sufficient time for ACI transmitting entities to adapt their systems to meet new ACI requirements. Furthermore this stage ensures that electronic interchange of ACI messages is stable, data quality is sufficiently robust and data volumes are manageable.

## **XXI. This live pilot testing and entry into force of the requirements is then followed by an informed compliance (leniency) period to allow for corrections in both the Customs and businesses’ systems before the requirements become enforceable**

## **XXII. A period of informed compliance allows both Customs and Business stakeholders to adjust to new ACI requirements and correct any administrative, operational or technical shortfalls. By undertaking this step all stakeholders are best placed to support a stable and fit for purpose ACI system.**

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<sup>3</sup> The WCO Data Model Derived Information Package (DIP) for Advance Electronic Information (AEI) is the Information Package that should be used as the basis to develop ACI messages. The DIP is available on the WCO Members’ website ([http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/wco-dm-v3\\_6\\_0-dip-aei.pdf?la=en](http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/instruments-and-tools/tools/safe-package/wco-dm-v3_6_0-dip-aei.pdf?la=en))

**XXIII. Regular Customs/Business review cycles should be established to ensure the stability, sustainability, and efficiency (effective performance) of the programme**

Review cycles with all stakeholders should be put in place to measure the performance and impact of the ACI programme (e.g., Time Release Study).

**XXIV. The impact of research and development initiatives should be considered in the context of ACI programmes**

As initiatives such as interoperable single windows, data pipelines, and data warehouses become more common place, opportunities should be exploited to share ACI data between Customs administrations and other border agencies in conformance with applicable data privacy and protection legislation.

**5. Elements for the evaluation of an ACI Programme**

When evaluating the impact and effectiveness of ACI programmes, it is recommended that Customs, other government agencies and their business partners consider the following:

For Customs and other government agencies:

- I. Does Customs receive reliable and good quality data in a timely manner?
- II. Has ACI improved the risk assessment process in allowing Customs to concentrate on high risk security shipments and faster clearance for low risk shipments?
- III. Is ACI assisting in the mitigation of security risks prior to arrival (and/or loading in the air and sea modes) of a means of transport?
- IV. Has ACI resulted in an increase in number of positive interventions?
- V. Has ACI resulted in a reduction in unsuccessful interventions?
- VI. Has there been a reduction of resource costs on anti-smuggling activities?
- VII. Has data been appropriately protected?

For Business:

- I. Has there been a measurable improvement in clearance times?
- II. Has ACI contributed to improved predictability of delivery times and dates?
- III. Has there been a reduction of delays and costs due to unsuccessful interventions?
- IV. Has ACI resulted in overall net benefits through the achievement of points I to III above?

Annexes:

- I. Checklist for ACI Introduction
- II. ACI diagrams

## Annex I

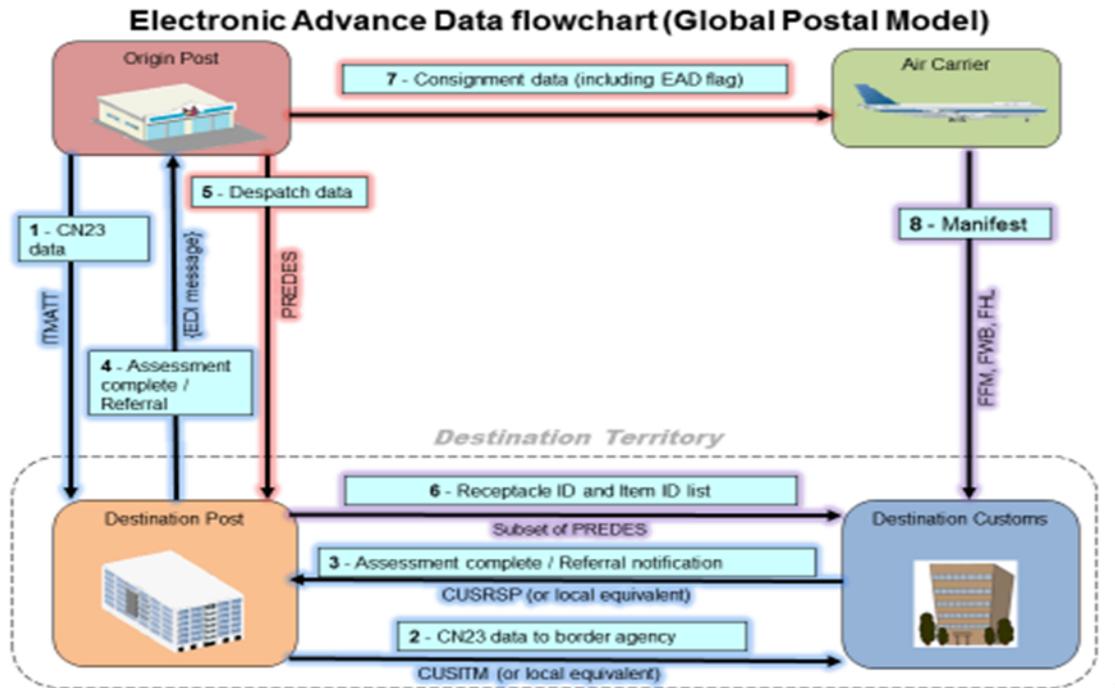
### I. Checklist for ACI Introduction

Activity	Progress	Remarks	Outstanding issues	Status
I. Ensure that there is political will for the development of an ACI programme, including financial support				
II. Sufficient funding exists to support the programme				
III. Capacity & training needs are met and steps taken to meet gaps				
IV. Ensure that a project team is put in place with the right mix of skills and knowledge				
V. Working groups for different aspects of ACI				
VI. A phased implementation for ACI should be foreseen by using of roadmap and work regime				
VII. Commence cooperation and coordination for consultation and implementation with all impacted parties				
VIII. Workshops and conferences take place so that all stakeholders are aware that an ACI programme is being created and what the likely requirements will be. Customs should invite comments from Business partners to ensure the programme is realistic, workable and efficient.				

IX. Customs and Business should use the ACI provisions and standards set down in WCO SAFE Framework to formulate their programme				
X. WCO data model compliant messages (e.g. XML, EDIFACT) should be developed and utilised in coordination with Business partners				
XI. ACI messages should take into consideration normal business rules pertaining to different transport modes and business models				
XII. Live pilot testing with a limited number of volunteer Business partners should take place. This pilot should then be expanded, over a reasonable period of time, to include all identified parties and to inform the pertaining regulations				
XIII. This pilot testing and subsequent implementation of regulations is then followed by an informed compliance (leniency) period to allow for corrections in both the Customs and business's systems before the requirements become enforceable				
XIV. Regular Customs/Business review cycles should be established to ensure the stability, sustainability, and efficiency (effective performance) of the programme				
XV. The impact of research and development initiatives should be considered in the context of ACI programmes				

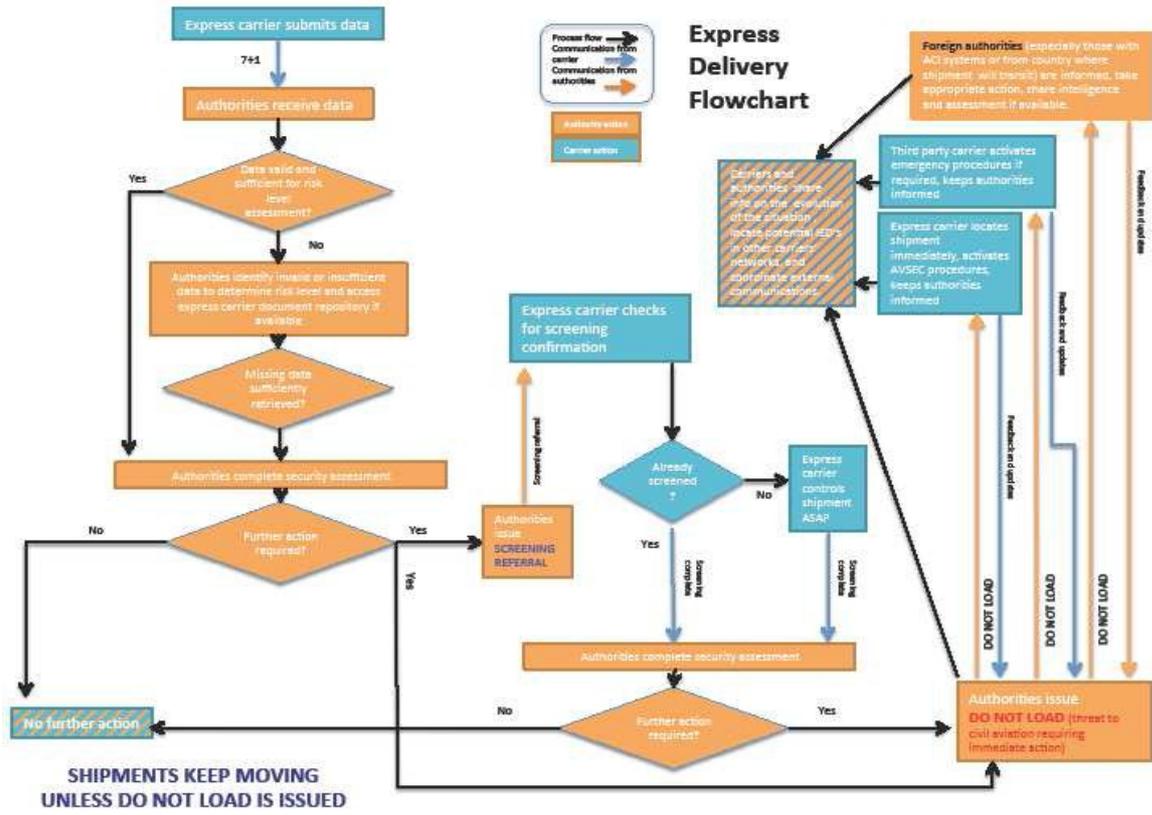
## Annex II

### II. ACI Diagrams

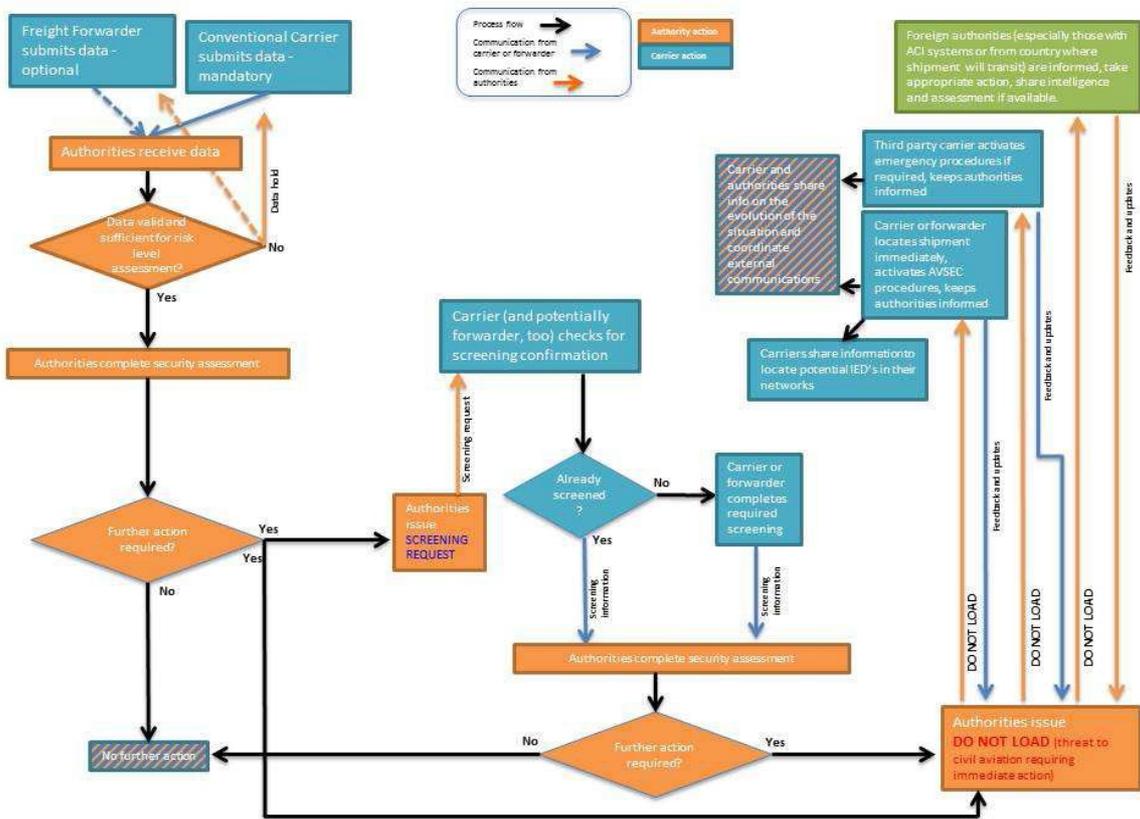


Note: Steps 1 through 4 constitute the pre-loading (actually pre-handover) ACI model. Steps 5 bis through 7 constitute the pre-arrival phase, to allow authorities to locate a consignment in case of intelligence received after the initial risk assessment was completed, and conduct other customs risks assessment. Steps 5 and 6 are current processes, although additional elements need be added in the message for step 6.

### Express cargo flow chart



### General air cargo flow chart



**MARITIME SECTOR – ADVANCE CARGO INFORMATION - HIGH LEVEL PROCESSES FOR DEEP SEA CONTAINERIZED SHIPMENTS**

