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Global Customs Innovation Award (GCIA-2021) on Data Quality – with two submission tracks

Submission deadline: 31 October 2021

***How to participate? As the first step, send an “GCIA-2021 - Expression of Interest” email to pen-cp-arttic@eurtd.com and to pen-cp@cross-border.org
Detailed instructions on the submission protocol will be sent to you soon.***



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Global Customs Innovation Awards on Data Quality

PEN-CP invites Customs Administrations from all over the world to share their innovations for tackling problems linked to data quality. The most impressive solutions and most promising ideas will win the trophy Global Customs Innovation Award (GCIA-2021).

- GCIA-2021 Track #1 — Best proven solution in customs & data quality
- GCIA-2021 Track #2 — Best solution idea in customs & data quality

Background and context

Data is not only the number one currency of the information age, but also the main commodity of digital customs. To take advantage of digitalization, modern customs administrations have transformed into data-driven organizations that rely on timely and accurate information on cross-border traffic: goods, economic operators, modes of transport, trade lanes, and so forth. In the process, data quality has become a critical success factor of customs operations worldwide. Even so, customs experts sometimes suffer from the low quality of data which cannot be fully utilized at present for the purpose of risk management or other customs operations. Common problems relate for example to input mistakes by declarants, vague descriptions, incorrect HS codes, missing sender information, and the overall reliability of the data.

The PEN-CP Global Customs Innovation Award (GCIA-2021) invites customs from around the world to share the outcomes of their innovation projects and initiatives that have resulted in improved quality of data used by customs. The projects shall showcase new principles, techniques, tools, and cooperative arrangements that improve data quality across one or more dimensions:

- **Accuracy** — Is data correct and how well does it represent reality?
- **Completeness** — Does a dataset include all critical data elements?
- **Granularity** — Does data provide detailed enough information?
- **Timeliness** — Is data available when it is needed?
- **Standardization** — Is data in a standardized format?
- **Comparability** — Can data be used with other information to support decision-making?
- **Variety** — How many distinct sources are available?

The contest for the Global Customs Innovation Award welcomes actions and ideas from customs that demonstrate innovative approaches to data quality. The contest has two tracks: one for tested solutions and other for novel ideas. Both tracks focus on data quality innovation: implementation of a new technology, cost-efficient capture of high-quality data, connectivity to (additional) high-quality data sources, and methods for reliable cross-validation across datasets, to name a few examples. The innovations can be linked to any type of traffic (import, export, transit), mode of transport, or origin of data (for example declaration data or data external to customs).

The plan is that the winning submissions will be followed up by one or more other PEN-CP Innovation Instruments, like hackathons, challenge competitions, prototype grants, etc. We also aim to offer large-scale visibility to the winning submissions, via social media posts, web-conferences, journal articles etc.

GCIA-2021 Track #1 — Best proven solution in customs & data quality

The first track is about past actions and projects that customs have already completed. Competition entries shall describe what data quality issue was addressed, what improvements were made, and what results and benefits were achieved in the end.

For example, a past action could demonstrate how customs has implemented a blockchain technology to increase the accountability of data. As another example, a solution could be a piece of software that scrapes information from e-commerce websites for valuation and goods identification purposes (for instance, data on prices, weights, or countries-of-origin of specific products).

GCIA-2021 Track #2 — Best solution idea in customs & data quality

The second track focuses on original ideas for improving data quality in the future. In this track, the competition entries do not need to be technically detailed, as the novelty and expected impacts of the ideas matter most. Future-oriented, ambitious out-of-the-box ideas are welcome here!

A solution idea can be, for example, a new way of ranking data sources by the quality of data they feed to customs. Alternatively, a solution idea could be about incentives for encouraging traders to supply data to customs in a standardized and comparable format.

Examples of topical data quality themes of customs interest

Here are some examples of topical data quality themes:

- **Monitoring of data quality.** Customs can prevent deterioration of data feeds through systematic quality control. What customs can do is to cross-validate data that can be found in multiple sources and to conduct physical checks to spot inconsistencies between goods and the associated data. Data suppliers could be rated by the quality of data they provide.
- **Adoption of recognized standards.** Internationally recognized standards offer a common basis for data management in the customs domain. The more customs follow standards like the WCO Data Model and EU Customs Data Model, the easier it is for data suppliers to provide services that meet the needs of many customs administrations. Common rules for data formats also tackle the problems of data validity and comparability.
- **Cooperation with data suppliers.** Customs will find that many data suppliers are keen to improve the quality of their data assets together with customs. In a typical setting, customs would experiment with a dataset and then give feedback to the supplier how the datasets could be made more suitable for customs purposes.
- **Increased accountability.** Companies and individuals are more inclined to provide quality data if they are held responsible for it. To increase accountability of data suppliers, customs can carry out compliance checks and impose contractual penalties on those who supply poor data. A key for accountability is the understanding of how different data elements are generated and where they come from.

Specific objectives and motivation for the GCIA-2021 action

In the frame of PEN-CP being ‘a Novel Customs Innovation Boosting Network and On-line Platform, offering Valuable Innovation Intermediary Services’, the GCIA-2021 has the following four objectives:

- To identify, share and learn from promising innovations and solution ideas in the broad context of data quality in customs.
- To create new types of ‘innovation pipelines’ or ‘upscaling of innovations’, where raw ideas born with Innovation Award submissions are taken further with other types of instruments (e.g. challenge competitions), in a step-by-step manner, towards fully operational solutions and services.
- To introduce and promote new thinking and novel approaches for increasingly innovative Customs administrations in the future.
- And, during this process, to have a bit of fun, too.

Facts and guidance

- **Who can participate?** Customs administrations and customs officers across the globe. You are free to choose if the submissions are in the name of an individual officer, team/ unit, or full administration; just please comply with the rules of your administration, thanks.
- **Schedule:** GCIA-2021 submissions can be made between 1 February and 31 October 2021.
- **How to participate?** As the first step, send an “GCIA-2021 - Expression of Interest” email to pen-cp-arttic@eurtd.com and to pen-cp@cross-border.org (please include both email addresses). Detailed instructions on the submission protocol, including URL-link to the “PEN-CP online-platform for submissions”, will follow soon after you send the first email to us.
- **Format for describing the solutions (track-1) and the ideas (track-2):** Aim for maximum one-page summary (in word file); technical details, illustrative diagrams etc. can be added as annexes (no page limit on annexes)
- **Languages:** English or French
- **Evaluation process:** The submissions will be evaluated and ranked by three experts from the PEN-CP consortium and two experts from the WCO (= a five-person expert team).
- **Scoring criteria:** Originality and realized or expected impacts.
- **Award:** Recognition, global publicity and invitation to influence the follow-up innovation upscaling activities.
- **Additional prizes:** The winners of both tracks will receive five units of PEN-CP coffee break kits; plus, PEN-CP will make a small financial donation to a national or local charity of winner’s choice (in full compliance with the national regulations, of course).
- **Disclaimer:** *PEN-CP project and its customs innovation activities are owned and administered by the PEN-CP consortium. The project has obtained administrative cooperation by the WCO for the specific purpose of improving the GCIA-2021 evaluation process.*

In Thun, Switzerland, on 1 February 2021

The 1st Global Customs Innovation Award Action is Launched by PEN-CP, the European Customs Innovation Network

Data is the number one commodity of digital customs and a critical success factor of customs risk management and other operations worldwide. Today's customs administrations are data-driven organizations exploiting information and data to target and control cross-border traffic, thus, access to high-quality data to support selective, risk-based controls that enable customs to sort out high-risk movements out of the legitimate traffic, is of critical importance.

The Pan-European Network of Customs Practitioners, PEN-CP, EU Horizon 2020 funded customs security practitioner and innovator network, has decided to address the pressing issue of data quality. The new initiative — the Global Customs Innovation Award 2021, GCIA-2021— invites Customs administrations from all over the world to share the outcomes on both innovation projects and initiatives that have resulted in improved quality of data used by customs, as well as on novel ideas which could be implemented by administrations to improve data quality in the future.

“The Global Customs Innovation Award welcomes actions and ideas that demonstrate innovative approaches to improving data quality for the customs benefit, in the broad context of data accuracy, comparability, completeness, granularity and timeliness”, Dr Juha Hintsa, the PEN-CP project coordinator, from Swiss-based Cross-border Research Association, highlights. “Participants are invited to showcase new principles, techniques, tools, and cooperative arrangements that improve data quality for customs, including cooperation with data suppliers and adoption of standards for data management”, he continues.

Professor Ari-Pekka Hameri from University of Lausanne, Switzerland – one of the 17 PEN-CP consortium partners - explains further: “The GCIA-2021 initiative is yet another sign of how the 21st century customs innovation culture is rapidly evolving. The traditional perception of customs being mostly a conservative sector is replaced by a new culture of proactive, cooperative, and bottom-up approach to innovation”. “And, at the end of the day, it is the global trade, end-to-end supply chains and cross-border logistics which benefit from the outcomes of the GCIA-2021 action, as well as from all other PEN-CP driven customs innovation instruments and activities”, Professor Hameri concludes.

Every Customs administration and all Customs officers worldwide are warmly welcome to join the action! The full GCIA-2021 Call for Submissions text can be downloaded here: www.pen-cp.net/announcements . For more details, please contact Dr. Hintsa at pen-cp@cross-border.org , or, tel. +41765890967.

About: The Pan-European Network of Customs Practitioners, PEN-CP (www.pen-cp.net), is a 5-year long EU Horizon 2020 funded security practitioner network (Grant Agreement No 786773) -project, with 13 European customs administrations, both EU and non-EU, as beneficiaries and active partners. In short, PEN-CP can be described as 'a Novel Customs Innovation Boosting Network and On-line Platform, offering Valuable Innovation Intermediary Services'. PEN-CP's endeavor is to establish a customs practitioner network which facilitates translating customs security research and innovation ideas and requirements into scalable, viable solutions, technologies, and process improvements that would help the Customs community to overcome the challenges of the contemporary customs and border management security. The project started in September 2018 and will finish in January 2024.

Full PEN-CP consortium partnership:

- DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CUSTOMS OF ALBANIA (ALB), Albania
- BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR FINANZEN (AUT), Austria
- SERVICE PUBLIC FEDERAL FINANCES (BEL), Belgium
- MAKSU- JA TOLLIAMET (EST), Estonia
- NEMZETI ADO- ES VAMHIVATAL (HUN), Hungary
- THE REVENUE COMMISSIONERS (IRL), Ireland
- VALSTS IENEMUMU DIENESTS (LVA), Latvia
- MUITINES DEPARTAMENTAS PRIE LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS FINANSU MINISTERIJOS (LTU), Lithuania
- CARINSKA UPRAVA NA REPUBLIKA MAKEDONIJA (MKD), North Macedonia
- MINISTERIE VAN FINANCIEN (NLD), the Netherlands
- TOLLREGION OSLO OG AKERSHUS (NOR), Norway
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- CROSS-BORDER RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (CBRA), Switzerland (PEN-CP Coordinator)

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