INFORMATION SHEET ON I.T. PROJECTS

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PROJECT	
CCN/CSI (Common Communications Network / Common Systems Interface)	
SUMMARY	
Operation, maintenance, evolutive actions of a secure communication infrastructure of data between all National taxation and customs Administrations (EU27 + Norway & Switzerland), ensuring the integration of all national information systems in one single coherent unity.	
LEGAL BASIS	
General	- Decision No 2235/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 December 2002 adopting a Community programme to improve the operation of taxation systems in the internal market (Fiscalis programme 2003-2007); - Decision No 253/2003/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2003 adopting an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2007) - Decision No 2/99 of the EC/EFTA Joint Committee on common transit of 30 March 1999 amending Appendix I of the Convention of 20 May 1987 on a common transit procedure.
Mandatory use of I.T.	Article 39 of Council Regulation No 1798/2003/EC of 7 October 2003 on administrative co-operation in the field of value added tax and repealing Regulation (EEC) No 218/92;

DESCRIPTION

The Common Communications Network (CCN) and the Common Systems Interface (CSI) were initially developed by the European Commission Directorate-General for Taxation and the Customs Union (DG TAXUD) in the mid-nineties. CCN/CSI has been in production since 1999 and relies on:

-   The Common Communications Network (CCN), which is composed of a series of physical gateways located either in the National Administrations or on DG TAXUD's premises. These gateways are interconnected in a secure way through communications services and locally connected to the application platforms provided by the local site;
-   The Common Systems Interface (CSI), which is a set of protocol and application programming interfaces allowing the above-mentioned application platforms to exchange information through the CCN backbone. It ensures the interoperability between the relevant heterogeneous systems in the National Administration.

The main characteristic of CCN/CSI is that it provides a network which is:

> *Confidential and Secure*:
> CCN/CSI runs on a dedicated private hardware infrastructure,
> All data transmitted over the network are encrypted,
> Access to the network is controlled by strong user authentication and authorisation,
> User accesses are managed at national level by each Administration.

> *Accessible*:
> The network has access points (CCN gateways) in every Customs and Taxation administration,
> The CSI software ensures that heterogeneous computer systems can have access to the network and are able to exchange information.

> *Reliable:*
> Data exchanges over the network have guarantees of delivery (transactions),
> All hardware and software elements of the network are constantly monitored; level of services have been defined and are guaranteed,
> Organisation of the services relies on well-defined procedures.

STATUS

- The system has been operational since May 1999 and has supported the exploitation of the VIES (VAT Information Exchange System) since 8 May 1999, that of tariff applications since the beginning of 2000, of NCTS (Transit) since May 2000 and of the AFIS system from OLAF for anti-fraud since 2001.

- Enlargement activities were prepared in 2002 and started in 2003 with infrastructure deployment. In 2004, the acceding countries' application platforms were connected, to be ready in May 2004 for E-day.

- In 2003, the CCN architecture evolution plan was defined and new security devices and architecture were deployed in 2004.

- So today the CCN/CSI network interconnects national Customs and Taxation Administrations at 39 sites in 29 countries (all the members of the enlarged EU-27 plus Switzerland and Norway). It allows National Administrations to exchange data in a large number of Customs and Taxation domains from Tariff-related systems (TARIC, EBTI) through Quotas, Ceilings and Suspensions to the VAT Information Exchange System (VIES), and from the new Transit system (NCTS) to OLAF's anti-fraud information system (AFIS).
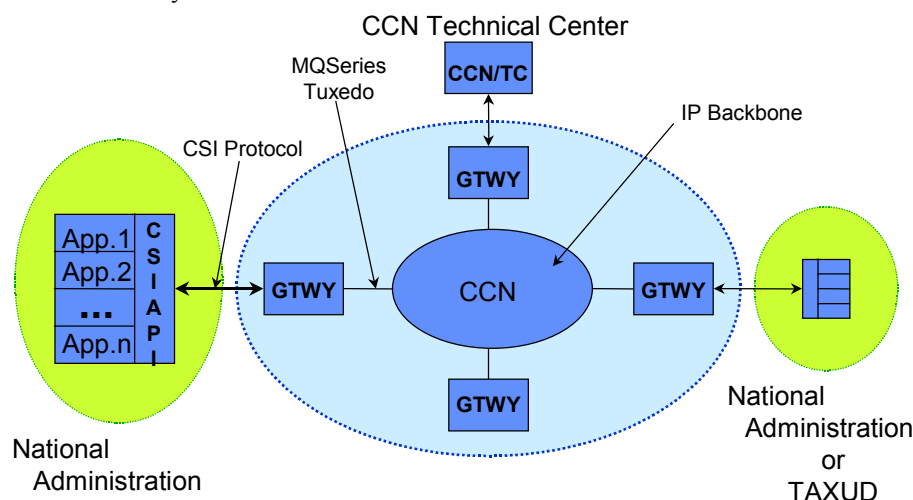
Figures for 2006 are as follows:
- *39* sites in 29 countries
- *105* CCN gateways deployed in the CCN network
- 18000 calls processed by the CCN/TC / year
- 357 Mio messages / year exchanged + 3,6 Mio e-mails exchanged + 386 GigaBytes transported by the network.
- Support of more than 30 application domains

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Improvement of CCN/CSI infrastructure and availability
- Integration of CCN mail II to the national E-mail systems, implementation of anti-virus
- Reinforcement of security services
- Take over activities following the contracts renewal

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The CCN/CSI system is illustrated below:

The main technical objectives of the CCN/CSI system can be summarised as follows:
- ➢ Ensure the interconnectivity between the CCN/CSI sites,
- ➢ Ensure the interoperability in a heterogeneous environment, and
- ➢ Ensure the continuity of the services.

In order to achieve these objectives, the CCN/CSI system must:
- continue to consolidate the solid organisation and to deliver continuous, efficient and reliable services to Customs and Taxation users by providing a harmonised and secure method to have access to and exchange information between the communities of users (National Administration and the Commission);

- cope with an increasing number of users, sites and new applications relying on the CCN/CSI system and guarantee a smooth implementation of new applications requirements;
- anticipate the expansion of the CCN/CSI to new Candidate Countries or third countries and the increase of the service demand;
- align the CCN/CSI with the evolution of the marketplace;
- undertake studies to design the new CCN/CSI architecture. CCN/CSI should offer new value-added and collaborative environment and services to the users;
- validate the CCN/CSI strategy, architecture trends and draft guidelines taking into account the existing applications;
- limit the financial impact of the expansion of the CCN infrastructure as a whole; and
- support extended protocols and standards.

The CCN Backbone

The CCN backbone is a Virtual Private Network (VPN) providing unified TCP/IP services between National Administration premises.

It is centrally managed by the IP Services Provider which is responsible for the end-to-end availability and performance between access points, i.e. customer premises routers, with backup links.

The CCN/Technical Centre (CCN/TC)

The CCN/TC has the duty of running the CCN/CSI network on a daily basis; it is managed by an external contractor which monitors all the gateways on the network and is responsible, via the terms of a Service Level Agreement with the European Commission, for maintaining a high-level of availability. The CCN/TC also runs the CCN Help Desk which is a central point of contact for all National Administration CCN sites. Finally, in close co-ordination with DG TAXUD, the CCN/TC is also responsible for the evolution of CCN/CSI, i.e. the development of new CCN and CSI software, of new value-added services, and of changes in the architecture of the network.