

Revision of Recommendation 14, Authentication of Trade Documents by Means other than Signature

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Project Identifier (PID)	Project Proposal	Project Status
p1003	Revision of Recommendation 14, Authentication of Trade Documents by Means other than Signature	Completed

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Project Deliverables

Deliverable	ODP1	ODP2	ODP3	ODP4	ODP5	ODP6	ODP7	Notes
Revision of Recommendation 14, Authentication of Trade Documents by Means other than Signature (Recommendation, Annexes, Checklist, Repository)								

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Project Leadership

Role	Member
Project Lead	Lance Thompson
Editor	Gordon Cragge

Projects Activities

Team Calendars

Heads of Delegation

TBD	TBD	TBD
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Executive Summary

Project purpose

The project's purpose is to revise Recommendation 14 Authentication of Trade Documents by means other than Signature. The recommendation was adopted in 1979 and has not been revised since then. After over 30 years, the Recommendation would benefit from an update to reflect the major changes in businesses processes, and government requirements and administrative procedures.

Currently, Recommendation 14 still covers an essential issue, since the number of signatures needed for a border crossing is strongly related to the cost and time involved. Many new technologies are available for authentication of trade documents and so the subject should be expanded to address the requirements for many economies around the globe as they are going toward dematerialisation

Project scope

Approved and published in March 1979 (TD/B/FAL/INF.63), Recommendation 14 seeks to encourage the use of electronic data transfer in domestic and cross border trade by recommending that Governments review national and international requirements for signatures on trade documentation and remove where possible. Further, Governments should seek to meet any such requirements through authentication methods or guarantees that can be electronically transmitted. The modern, dynamic trading environment and the rapid improvement of information and communication technologies now provide an opportunity for the objectives of the Recommendation to be increasingly and progressively realised.

Authentication by means other than a (manual) signature involves technology, functional and legal aspects. If these are addressed separately, there is a risk that different recommendations will offer incompatible solutions and it will not be possible to achieve global interoperability of authentication schemes.

Any revised Recommendation 14 should adopt the new structure of stating individual recommendations with Guidelines explaining the rationale and evidence for the suggestions. Much of the existing text could be used again with suitable editorial changes to reflect trade and technology advances since publication.

Parallel work that has been conducted within UN/CEFACT concerning the functional aspects of a specific type of authentication – electronic signatures – could be easily integrated, insofar as it reflects the reality of actual implementations, as it is closely related to the topic and the latest draft of the document (from December 2011) reads like a functional checklist. Likewise, it is important to try to identify, again through actual implementations, the requirements for the creation of a “trusted/secure environment” for these alternative solutions (alternative to a manual signature). To note that these are examples of implementations that replace (manual) signatures by other technological alternatives; others will most likely be identified. Finally, all of these technical solutions available could be included in a repository (separate from the Recommendation itself) which could be easily updated as it evolves.

The scope of a revised Recommendation 14 could, based on the present recommendation, include the following content:

Recommendations

- removal of the requirement for a signature except where essential for the function of the document
- introduction of other methods to authenticate documents
- creation of a legal framework that permits and gives equal status to authentication methods other than signature
- regular review of documentation used for domestic and cross border trade, possibly by a joint public and private sector effort

Project Overview

