

“Customs Capacity Building through Partnership in Customs Academic Research and Development (PICARD): Achievements and Future Directions.”

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Hello PICARD, this is Helsinki calling!

Pleasure to join the 15th PICARD conference, first, and hopefully last time online only...

Agenda today:

How the World Customs Organization (WCO) has been cooperating with the academic community in the context of the WCO Partnership in Customs Academic Research and Development (PICARD) Programme, in order to enhance the capabilities and professionalism of customs administrations and customs experts through higher education and to better inform strategic customs decision-making through applied academic research.

Key PICARD initiatives and achievements and seeks to determine whether the PICARD Programme has met its objectives and fulfilled stakeholders' expectations.

Programme's future directions and considers how it can continue to keep pace with the rapid changes affecting Customs, and how it can be further developed and enhanced for the benefit of all stakeholders.

PICARD set-up and objectives

- The WCO PICARD Programme was introduced in January 2006 and officially launched at the 1st PICARD Conference in March 2006.
- Research and professionalism have been the two pillars of the PICARD Programme since the beginning
- Below are few examples on the original PICARD objectives:
 - to raise the academic profile of the customs profession;
 - to raise the professional knowledge and standing of customs practitioners;
 - to provide a framework for cooperation between Customs and academia;
 - to encourage more academic research in the customs field;
 - to encourage national adoption of integrated education, training and development scheme by education authorities; and
 - to support the future activities related to this collaboration.

Overview and key achievements with PICARD instruments 1/2 (approximate chronological order)



1. INCU Network
2. PICARD Conference
3. World Customs Journal
4. PICARD Advisory Group

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1) Established in 2005, the INCU has grown into a dynamic non-governmental international organisation representing the collective interests of institutions and individuals who are active in the field of customs research and education, and this year the INCU celebrates its 15th anniversary.

In its 15 years of existence, the INCU has been able to build its reputation and achieved international recognition as an organisation that can provide valuable academic input in the areas of Customs, border management and international trade.

The efforts of the INCU have been recognised not only

by the WCO, but also other prominent international organisations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Today the INCU represents some 340 members from more than 80 countries, which include academic institutions, customs administrations, private sector companies and individuals

2) The PICARD Conference has become one of the major annual WCO conferences that serves as a regular exchange, discussion and networking platform for researchers, educators and practitioners in the customs context, and it provides a great opportunity for all PICARD stakeholders to get together, to share experiences and debate ideas, and to identify how this unique Customs-academia partnership can be better utilised for the benefit of all stakeholders

The inaugural PICARD Conference was held in March 2006 at the WCO headquarters in Brussels

To date, fourteen PICARD conferences have been held, and soon the 15th one is completed, each conference building on the success of the previous ones.

Despite the seemingly broad variation in the research themes across the conferences, a few topics appear to be repeating time-to-time, including data analytics, digital customs, security, climate change impact, customs performance management, illicit trade, e-commerce and taxation matters.

One item to consider is whether a ‘more proactive, multi-year research theme planning’, would make sense in the future.

These could include rapidly evolving themes such as e-commerce and extraordinarily complex themes such as data analytics.

We saw a nice example of the latter, in Belgian customs presentation on EU H2020 project PROFILE, two days ago.

3) Responding to the identified need to improve the quality of information available to customs managers on the basis of which important strategic and operational decisions could be made, the *World Customs Journal* (WCJ), initiated by academic institutions through the INCU, was officially launched at the second PICARD Conference in March 2007.

The benefits of the WCJ are twofold. First, it provides a platform through which research results are reported and disseminated;

and second, it serves as a valuable reference resource for customs practitioners, academics, students, other researchers as well as for the broader international community.

The WCJ contributors represent a broad range of professionals including academics, students, researchers, and officials from customs administrations, the WCO, other government agencies, as well as practitioners from

the private sector.

The practitioner contributions that are published in the WCJ usually provide some excellent insights into the way in which customs administrations are seeking to address current and future challenges.

The journal continues to be published twice a year and 27 editions of the WCJ have been published to date.

4) The next instrument introduced under the PICARD Programme was the creation of the PICARD Advisory Group (PAG) in March 2008, comprising of WCO officials and representatives of academic institutions selected on the basis of their active participation and contribution to the development of the PICARD Programme.

The purpose of the PAG was to assist WCO with the delivery and management of the Programme and to promote cooperation and open dialogue.

Today, the PAG is the central link for cooperation between the WCO and academia in the context of PICARD and it has served and continues to serve as a main mechanism for coordination of PICARD-related matters and activities.

As the name suggest, the PAG has an advisory role, but over the years it has been instrumental in guiding the WCO PICARD agenda.

Overview and key achievements with PICARD instruments 2/2 (approximate chronological order)



5. Professional Standards
6. Recognition of University Curricula
7. WCO-INCU Memorandum of Understanding
8. PICARD Strategic Document
9. PICARD Scientific Board

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5) The WCO Professional Standards have become the cornerstone initiative of the PICARD Programme. The Standards have been instrumental in recognising Customs as a profession, which has never been done before at an international level, and recognised Customs as a legitimate area of academic pursuit. The creation of the Professional Standards has enabled academic institutions to introduce internationally agreed standards into their customs curricula. For the first time there was a clearly defined pathway to education in customs matters at Bachelor and Master's levels.

The Professional Standards have also been used as a basis or a reference resource to support other WCO capacity building programs and activities such as the Leadership and Management Development Programme (LMDP), People Development and the Framework of Principles and Practices on Customs Professionalism

6) The first academic programs were formally recognised by the WCO on 26 January 2010 at a ceremony at the WCO headquarters in Brussels.

Since then, a number of academic institutions have applied for and attained WCO recognition of their educational programs.

As of 10 August 2020, 25 university programs, offered by 14 institutions in Australia, China, Costa Rica, Germany, Kazakhstan, Latvia, the Netherlands, Russia, Tanzania, Uruguay, 10 countries in total, have been formally recognised by the WCO as meeting the Professional Standards.

7) The WCO and INCU have established a very open and productive working relationship since the start of PICARD, helping to support the objectives and members of both organisations.

The activities mentioned in the MOU such as permitting reference to the professional association between each other in public documents and providing observer status at each other's annual meetings, are now well established

and the MOU has formalised the relationship between WCO and INCU as a long-term strategic alliance

8) PICARD Strategic Document outlines the vision, strategy and key elements necessary to enhance the PICARD Programme.

Recognising that the world economic context and the global environment in which customs administrations operate has changed significantly since the commencement of PICARD in 2006, and that the Programme needs a strategic direction in order to remain agile and responsive, in late 2011 WCO commenced preparation of the PICARD 2020 Strategic Document, which was adopted by the WCO in 2013.

Subsequently, in late 2019, a revised version the PICARD strategy was developed and the PICARD 2030 Strategic Document, was endorsed by the WCO Capacity Building Committee in March 2020.

In order to successfully implement the strategies outlined the PICARD Strategic Document, strong cooperation between all PICARD stakeholders is a key and this has been occurring.

9) The PSB commenced its operation in 2015 and since then has played an active role in the review and selection of papers and presentations for PICARD conferences. Typically, each PSB member has received a subset of the submitted documents, process coordinated by the WCO Research Unit.

Based on the votes casted by PSB members, WCO has

made the final selections of the papers and presentations. Next to ensuring the quality and relevance of the accepted papers, the PSB has provided, to some extent, assistance with chairing conference panels and leading the discussions during the conference.

PICARD future directions

- General observations
- Meaningful research themes and topics
- Balancing research and professionalism pillars

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The PICARD Programme has seen a rapid expansion, especially in the early years since its introduction and had evolved over time to respond to the changing environment facing Customs in the 21st Century.

We believe that a sound and productive partnership exists between WCO and academic institutions, creating a cooperative framework, where customs administrations, customs practitioners and academic partners can work together and contribute to advance customs professionalism and customs-related research.

The 9 PICARD instruments explained in the past two

slides, have progressed well; of course with rich set of opportunities to improve the actions and outcomes in the future.

MEANINGFUL RESEARCH THEMES AND TOPICS

All in all, PICARD can provide a unique platform for identifying high priority customs research topics; enabling access to research data; publishing and disseminating the research outcomes; and even reporting back whether administrations have benefitted from the results, in a ‘feedback-loop and continuous improvement’ style

Specifically, PICARD provides good opportunities for match-making between customs administrations (i.e. research demand) and academia (i.e. research supply).

Researchers should explore options to exploit a variety of WCO groups, meetings and events for both collection of research data and dissemination of research outcomes.

In addition, PICARD could play a key role in scoping, publishing and organizing calls for open innovation activities, such as challenge competitions, hackathons or crowdsourcing ideas.

European Union Horizon 2020 project PEN-CP provides a practical example of a network where multiple customs administrations jointly identify needs and priorities for future innovations.

BALANCING RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONALISM PILLARS

In recent years the PICARD Conference has become almost exclusively focused on research.

Relatively little attention and time is devoted to

discussions and work relating to the Professionalism pillar of the PICARD Programme, and to the implementation of the PICARD Strategic Document relating to customs professionalism.

WCO could give consideration in achieving a more equal balance between promoting research and promoting professionalism.

In the future, WCO could play a more active role in facilitating and encouraging various cooperative arrangements between PICARD stakeholders.

While it is stated in the PICARD Strategic Document that customs administrations should enter into cooperative partnerships with their national academic institutions, the WCO could be more active in boosting and facilitating such collaborations among its members and local academic institutions and to try to encourage national governments to place more significance on partnerships between Customs and academia.

Conclusions

- Significant progress and a number of important achievements have been made for the benefit of both Customs and academia
- Strong backing of the WCO leadership has continued throughout the 15 years
- PICARD has remained a major dynamic capacity-building program of the WCO
- PICARD instruments should remain key tools of the Programme and should be further promoted and utilised by the all stakeholders.
- A good example for other international organisations that are developing cooperation and partnerships with academia.

Annex A. PICARD Full Timeline 2005-2020



Feb 2005	International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) established
Jan 2006	PICARD program introduced
Mar 2006	First PICARD conference held (Brussels, Belgium) and PICARD program launched
Mar 2007	2nd PICARD conference held (Brussels, Belgium) and World Customs Journal (WCJ) launched
Mar 2008	PICARD Advisory Group formed
May 2008	3rd PICARD conference held (Shanghai, China) and WCO Professional Standards published
Jun 2009	WCO adopts Professional Standards and Curricula Recognition Guidelines
Sep 2009	4th PICARD conference held (San Jose, Costa Rica) and WCO and INCU signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
Jan 2010	WCO accredits first academic programs under Professional Standards
Nov 2010	5th PICARD conference held (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates) and WCO announces 'knowledge' as its theme for 2011
Sep 2011	6th PICARD conference held (Geneva, Switzerland) and it was agreed to develop PICARD Strategy 2020
Sep 2012	7th PICARD conference held (Marrakech, Morocco) and WCO and INCU re-signed the MOU
Feb 2013	WCO adopts the PICARD 2020 Strategic Document
Sep 2013	8th PICARD conference held (Saint Petersburg, Russia) and PICARD Youth Forum launched
May 2014	Inaugural INCU Global Conference held and INCU Baku Resolution adopted
Sep 2014	9th PICARD conference held (Puebla, Mexico)

Feb 2015	INCU celebrates 10th anniversary
May 2015	WCO establishes the PICARD Scientific Board
Sep 2015	10th PICARD conference held (Baku, Azerbaijan) and INCU Baku Regional Office opened
Mar 2016	PICARD program's 10th anniversary
Sep 2016	11th PICARD conference held (Manila, the Philippines) and 10 years of WCJ was acknowledged
Sep 2017	12th PICARD conference held (Hammamet, Tunisia)
Oct 2018	13th PICARD conference held (Malatya, Turkey)
Apr 2019	WCO adopts revised Professional Standards and revised Curricula Recognition Guidelines
Oct 2019	14th PICARD conference held (Skopje, North Macedonia)
Feb 2020	INCU celebrates 15th anniversary
Mar 2020	WCO unveils the PICARD 2030 Strategic Document
Nov 2020	15th PICARD conference (upcoming, web-conference)
Jan 2021	PICARD program's 15th anniversary

Annex B. Follow H2020 PEN-CP, PROFILE and ARESIBO projects online



www.profile-project.eu

- <https://youtu.be/gJq4L9ueMrw>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8183667/>
- https://twitter.com/PROFILE_EU
- profile@cross-border.org

www.pen-cp.net

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nLzL3viQ80>
- <https://web.facebook.com/groups/pencp>
- https://twitter.com/PENCP_NET
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