



PEN-CP

Pan-European Network
of Customs Practitioners

MAGAZINE

September 2022, Issue 14



**PEN-CP & 13 European Customs Partners:
from Innovation Observers to Innovation Drivers
– Part 3**

Editorial

Dear Readers

After the summer break, PEN-CP activities are running full speed ahead again. This fourteenth issue of the PEN-CP Magazine concludes the “PEN-CP & 13 European Customs Partners: from Innovation Observers to Innovation Drivers -story” with the part 3, which focuses on key PEN-CP ambitions and activities from fall 2022 onwards.

Naturally, PEN-CP continues to carry out the Customs knowledge and innovation boosting activities as described in the Horizon 2020 grant agreement and work plan – prioritizing activities where our Customs partners see the biggest potential use and benefit for them. We will remain true to our key innovation boosting principles, namely the following: (i) User needs-driven; (ii) Seeking solutions to fill the gaps; (iii) Innovation up-scaling focused; and, (iv) following the ‘PEN-CP 5 C-principles’: Collaborative, Complementary, Connecting, Curious, and Creative.

Please enjoy this closing episode of the PEN-CP trilogy. And hope to see many of you at the Priday-September online meeting on Monday 12 September as well as at the PEN-CP PET-team & Customs Innovation seminar in Maastricht, the Netherlands, on Monday 17 October 2022; in the MECC conference centre where the WCO and Dutch Customs organize the Technology Conference and Exhibition during the same week.

Juha Hintsa



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement n° 786748.

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The PEN-CP Magazine:

The official magazine of the PEN-CP, the Pan-European Network of Customs Practitioners - EU Horizon 2020 funded Customs security practitioner project

Available at <https://issuu.com/pencpmagazine>

Can be downloaded at <https://www.pen-cp.net/download-pen-cp-magazine>

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Advanced innovation instruments in a nutshell

PEN-CP has multiple advanced innovation instruments in hand, specifically the four listed below. It is common for all the four instruments that an exhaustive process of preparatory work is required, even before the calls for participation can be launched – one could even think that 2/3 of success of each action depends on the high-quality preparation of the announcements and call texts, including well-formulated scopes and objectives; detailed and clear rules for the participation; expected outcomes which are realistic to achieve; and so forth.

• **Technology grant:** Co-developing and field-testing promising technologies with Customs practitioners; two grant topics to be drafted and agreed by each PET-team (Data & risks; Detection technologies; Laboratory equipment); can be for example tailoring a laboratory device to try out in border conditions; or using a technical outcome of a previous EU project, and upgrading it to become suitable for Customs (trial) use; 60.000 EUR per grant, covering material, work and travel costs; 8-10 months total lead time per grant project.

• **Challenge competition:** Submitting a blueprint to solve a specific Customs problem; here we are currently seeking for inspiration from relevant past challenge competitions, including the US Opioid Challenge (held couple of years ago); the PEN-CP PET teams will soon work on candidate topics, driven by our high priority PUNIs (PEN-CP User Need Ideas), as usual; the winner will

receive seed funding towards making their proposed solution a reality (exact prize amount decided later); 5-7 months total lead-time.

• **PEN-Hackathon:** An intensive session to design and pilot software tools/ algorithms/ data management techniques, for the brighter future of digital customs; one option is to focus on data linking challenges; 3-5 months complete lead-time, where the actual hackathon event is likely to last between 24-48 hours; small prize money may be awarded to the best teams.

• **PEN-Tournament:** Demonstrating skills in head-to-head friendly competitions against other experts from the Customs community; one option is to focus on threat recognition in X-ray images; 12-18 months complete lead time, including collection of existing threat images, and sharing them with the tournament teams; the winning team will be awarded with glory and fame.

Our vision is that the final scope with several of these advanced innovation instruments is actually based on work done during 'simpler PEN-CP actions' – for example outcomes of an Expert Report may feed into a Technology Grant Call; or, past Customs Innovation Award submissions may influence the scope and objectives for a Challenge Competition call. And, in a special case, we could form a chain of 3-4 different PEN-CP innovation instruments, step-by-step feeding findings and gaps knowledge, to-be tackled by the next instrument.

Outreach to research and innovator communities



Proactive outreach towards various research and innovator communities is gaining increasing priority and momentum in PEN-CP work, for the coming months and years. One of our intentions is to increase the awareness and knowledge of external innovators about Customs business, concrete challenges, and practical constraints; this all, in order to stimulate their interest to research, develop and supply innovative technologies and solutions for Customs use in the future. During this process, we could also run a few ‘Crowdsourcing ideas’ exercises: collecting out-of-the-box ideas from forward-thinking scientists and innovators. Then, we intend to take multiple steps to achieve our long-term goal of ‘PEN-CP supporting Customs officers across Europe to form contacts and stay in touch with research and academic communities’. Examples of concrete activities we plan to execute in the future include the following:

- **Bringing innovative start-up and scale-up communities closer to the ‘Customs world’:** Here, we naturally use the outcomes of Expert Report 1 - Mapping of European start-up/scale-up landscape – as a key reference database, when starting to inform innovators for example about our upcoming innovation instrument and event calls. We are also working on a plan for a series of “Innovator & PEN-CP Customs breakfast meetings”, where in combined physical & virtual setting, hopefully covering most of the PEN-CP countries, we would have dialogues on innovator research and development roadmaps versus Customs challenges and user needs – with the aim of ending up in some concrete follow-up

actions, with minimum 1 innovator per breakfast meeting set-up.

- **Scouting for ideas on innovative technologies and solutions from specific industry sectors:** This is a very recent idea by the PEN-CP Management Team, to systematically approach engineering, manufacturing and/or quality control departments in sectors such as mining, agriculture, food production, medical devices, pharmaceuticals, and aerospace & defence. Our objective is to discover technologies and solutions used in their operations, with potential for some sort of Custom use in the future. Of course - just like with most of any innovation boosting activities – no results are guaranteed to materialize - but maybe something useful will be discovered and can be pushed later for example to Horizon Europe financing track, enabling further development and tailoring towards Customs operational use.

- **“Customs as an exciting scientific and engineering discipline”:** Here our objective is to make University Professors (in physics, chemistry, logistics, security etc.), PhD-candidates and national funding agencies aware on the scientific and engineering challenges Customs are facing, both from daily operation and from strategic perspectives. The goal is to increase drastically the number of Customs-relevant PhD-theses in Europe, results to materialize during the next 5-10 years. One PEN-CP product will be a ‘Customs-science-and-engineering’ promotional video, with sub-titles provided in all 12 PEN-CP Customs languages.

Promoting information sharing among PEN-CP partners

“**Sharing is caring**” lies in the heart of PEN-CP philosophies, no question on that. Sharing information about Customs challenges and user needs (PUNIs); about solutions available in the markets (PSIMs); about promising innovations already in use by customs (Customs Innovation Awards); and many more topics and items has become the business-as-usual for PEN-CP, during the past 3-4 years. At the same time, systematic sharing of certain types of Customs knowledge and wisdom still remains to be initiated; and, based on the outcomes of the PEN-CP Exploitation plan survey (in 2021), moving forward we are opting to invest efforts in sharing & caring across the following areas:

• **Sharing technical test sheets/ test data:**

This can cover technology and device testing results both from procurement phase – ‘does the device really work according to the specifications or what brochures promise’ – as well as from real use and maintenance phase – ‘testing to ensure that the device performance stays over the years on the agreed level’. In case there are any kind of technical standards and norms in place, then of course the testing can be done against the commonly recognized standards – which, unfortunately, is not that common today in Customs world.

• **Sharing information on actual user experiences:**

The POP-platform, in PSIM-section,

has a template ready for provision of a bit more qualitative user experience information, including facts and opinions on technical performance, reliability, maintenance commitment, total value to Customs business, and required operator skill level. Although this is always somewhat subjective data, it can still be quite valuable to those Customs experts who are considering procurement decisions for example between two fairly equal solutions.

• **Sharing solution ideas:** The PUNI-section of the POP-platform invites Customs experts to punch in instant ideas on how to best solve a Customs user need/ challenge, i.e. a PUNI. We welcome the members of the PET-teams to visit the PUNI-section, regularly e.g. every six months, with the missions to enter couple of solution ideas, in particular with those PUNIs where no innovation instrument or upscaling action has not yet taken place!

• **Resource pooling:** This is an original key component from the PEN-CP proposal times, focusing on sharing existing customs resources – databases, tools, devices, manuals etc. – among two or more PEN-CP Customs administrations. We are still waiting for the first concrete resource pooling action to take place in PEN-CP; following a handful of promising leads we have already identified, during the past 2-3 years.





Stepping up collaboration with key stakeholders

Revisiting two of the '5 C principles' PEN-CP is committed to follow – 'Collaborative and Complementary' – we share next a few views on our plans to '**scale-up the tangible collaboration with multiple key stakeholders**', naturally aiming towards 'two-way benefits' between the other parties and PEN-CP:

- **EC DG TAXUD** is our key stakeholder already from the times before PEN-CP proposal was submitted and accepted. We are very grateful for the continuous communications and support with TAXUD officers. Moving to the future, additional collaboration opportunities may emerge particularly in the frame of the CCEI implementation (Customs Control Equipment Instrument).

- Regarding **EU Customs expert groups and networks**, PEN-CP welcomes collaborative activities particularly with CELBET (Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Group) and CLEN (Customs Laboratories European Network): co-defining objectives and scopes for example for Technology Grant and Challenge Competition calls could become one productive way of working together.

- De facto birthplace and home for the European security practitioner networks, **EC DG HOME**,

with the Community for European Research and Innovation for Security, **CERIS**, has been and will be our closest partner across a variety of current and future Customs, border management and supply chain security research and innovation activities in Europe – including identifying and iterating high priority Customs topics for new Horizon Europe calls.

- Since the last 1-2 years, PEN-CP has had the pleasure to interact also with **EC DG REFORM** – and, we keep welcoming opportunities that the Technical Support Instrument managed by DG REFORM would provide to best advance with the Customs innovation agendas across Europe.

PEN-CP also looks forward to further knowledge creation and innovation boosting activities with **the World Customs Organization, WCO**, for example in the form of Annual Study chapters and future Customs Innovation Awards and Prizes calls. From the PEN-CP coordinator side, we would also like to take the opportunity to thank WCO for the 20 years of Customs research and capacity building collaboration: in April 2002 our first meeting about the WCO Customs Data Model study took place at WCO premises in Brussels.

PEN-CP Advisory Board continues to support the project

Last but not least, when moving to the future months and years of PEN-CP, we are fortunate to have a **very experienced and knowledgeable Advisory Board** in place, consisting currently of six well-known experts: (i) three with multi-decade-long experience in European and global customs matters – including past head of unit in DG TAXUD; former status as national Customs Director General; national representative in WCO circles – (ii) two top experts with in-depth knowledge in open innovation activities, and in European start-up & scale-up communities; and (iii) one experienced security RDI scientist.

The Advisory Board, next to on-going ad hoc participation in various PEN-CP meetings and initiatives, has following two main roles regarding the rest of our project: (i) Helping to set up a couple of tangible Open Innovation actions, combined with reaching out to external innovators of many kinds, including start-ups, scale-ups, large companies, research institutes, Universities, and individual experts; and (ii) Generating and refining options towards PEN-CP sustainability plan, including long-term scoping and prioritizing of activities, financing options, collaboration agreements, legal arrangements, and more.



“PEN-CP & 13 European Customs Partners: from Innovation Observers to Innovation Drivers” - Closing notes

The set-up and operationalization of PEN-CP as an innovation intermediary is well aligned with the classic M.Lin & J.Weil (2018) definition: “Innovation intermediaries are organizations that facilitate innovation by providing the bridging, brokering, and knowledge transfer necessary to bring together the range of different organizations and knowledge needed to create successful innovation”.

And, having on board all PEN-CP partners, PEN-CP Expert Teams, Key Stakeholders and Advisory Board Members, **the journey to upgrade the status of Customs administrations from innovation observers to innovation drivers has definitely started; and, will continue, hopefully far to the future!**

Agenda: PEN-CP monthly online meeting - Priday-September (12 September 2022 at 1.15-4.15pm)

13.15-13.45 RDI projects: Horizon Europe PARSEC - Parcel and Letter Security for Postal and Express Courier Flows (Oct2022 - Sep2025) - by PARSEC coordinator Frank Janssens (CBRA Services Belgium) and Toni Männistö (CBRA-CH)

13.45-14.15 Innovation instruments: A scoping document and discussions on the 1st PEN-Hackathon - by PET-1 leader Jonathan Migeotte (Belgian Customs) & Toni Männistö

14.15-14.35 Additional events-1: The WCO Technology Conference and Exhibition in Maastricht, 18-20 October (<https://na.eventscloud.com/website/35016/>). PEN-CP internal event (PET teams & innovation event) takes place one day earlier, on 17 October - by Ron Roelofs (Dutch Customs) & Mike Ellis (CBRA)

14.35 -14.50 Additional events-2: Reporting back from the Symposium on European Civil Security Research, Brussels, 30-31 August 2022 (<https://www.bayern.de/staatskanzlei/bayern-in-bruessel/bavaria-in-brussels/>) - by Toni Männistö

15.00-15.15 New Horizon proposals: Discussion on interests and opportunities, by all partners

15.15-15.30 Administrative updates

15.30-15.45 Work plan-1 (deliverables): PEN-CP Exploitation plan v2.0 - inputs needed from all partners - by Valentina Scioneri (CBRA) & Toni Männistö

15.45-16.00 Work plan-2 (deliverables): Annual study on Relevant past RDI projects for customs - latest updates - by Valentina Scioneri & Toni Männistö

16.00-16.15 Questions, suggestions and discussions, by all partners



Agenda: PEN-CP PET-team & Customs Innovation event, in MECC-center, Maastricht, the Netherlands (17 October 2022 at 9am–5.45pm)

Purpose & objectives:

- Technical PEN-CP workshop with strong focus on design and implementation plan for the advanced innovation instruments (scope & practical arrangements)
- Re-starting the systematic work & regular meetings across the three PET teams
- Opportunity to learn about Customs innovation organizations & practical work from peers, including from the Australian Border Force
- Plus, opportunity to combine the trip with a visit at the Technology Conference & Exhibition of the World Customs Organisation, which is hosted by the Customs administration of the Netherlands, organized in Maastricht, the Netherlands, from 18 to 20 October 2022 - <https://na.eventscloud.com/website/35016/>*

SESSIONS during 9-14.45: PEN-CP experts and guests only

9-10.30 PEN-CP PET-teams meeting, part 1

- Final brainstorming and discussions on PEN-Hackathon scoping and arrangements
- Final brainstorming and discussions on PEN-Tournament scoping and arrangements
- Brainstorming and discussions on “chained / linked innovation instruments in PEN-CP”: Case future e-seals (innovation instrument scheme for example: expert report > crowdsourcing ideas > challenge competition > technology grant)

10.45-12.15 PEN-CP PET-teams meeting, part 2

- Brainstorming and discussions on Technology grant topics, 2 topics per PET-theme

12.15-13.15 Lunch break

13.15-14.45 PEN-CP PET-teams meeting, part 3

- Discussions on tangible work plan and priorities for the three PET-teams, during the next 6 months (until Year-4 Annual event, around March 2023, where we meet again in person)

14.45-15 Coffee break

OPEN SESSION starts: non-PEN-CP Customs officers are most welcome to join for the rest of the day

15-15.15 Global Customs Innovation Award GCIA-2021 ceremony

- Prizes are handed to the two GCIA-2021 winners: Australian and UK Border Forces

15.15-17.45 Customs Innovation Seminar

- Customs Innovation functions, organizations, innovation management tools etc.
- Presentations and panel discussions by Australian Border Force, UK Border Force and Dutch Customs
- Questions & comments by all participants

WCO Technology Conference & Exhibition

Maastricht, the Netherlands

18-20 October 2022

“Driving customs performance with data and technology in the changing landscape of global trade”

Register now at the event website!

<https://na.eventscloud.com/website/35016>



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<https://youtu.be/OXwQPHHS5Ls>
<https://www.researchgate.net/project/PEN-CP-EU-H2020>

All open calls (Experts Reports, Open Innovation instruments etc.) by PEN-CP:
<https://cmt.sym.place/groups/profile/302707/pen-cp-innovation-instruments-and-innovation-events>

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