

The Single Port Window

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Abstract

International trade remains truly the engine of the world economy. Its growth follows the trends of economic indicators. Trade facilitation is now more important than ever for the development and trade competitiveness of developing countries. Given the needs of global supply chains and international logistics networks, it is essential that border crossings take place quickly and in a predictable manner.

The single port window aims to guarantee high reliability in import and export procedures, while reducing the time it takes for goods to pass through the port. It manages the physical, administrative, commercial and customs follow-up of the goods, allowing the dematerialized accomplishment of customs and fiscal administrative formalities related to port operations.

The concept of Single Window for Foreign Trade finds all its importance in the search for optimization of logistics and formalities of Foreign Trade. It is not insignificant that the development of this modality is today the main concern of economies which are banking on the exponential growth of their foreign trade.

Keywords: international trade, single port window, import, export, economy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The port is the point of arrival and departure for maritime transport; equipped and organised to ensure the transshipment of passengers and goods and then to fulfil the resulting commercial functions. Thus, a port square is a geographical and economic entity bearing a specific name, situated by the sea, a river or a lake, hosting ships and where the transfer of goods and passengers takes place, from the water mode to a land mode (UNCTAD, 2015).

Port congestion has been an extreme problem in recent years. It demonstrates the inability of some ports to meet the needs of domestic trade. The seriousness of the consequences has proven the fundamental importance of ports to a country's economy. The advantage of efficient operation and development of ports is all the more appreciated today, and it is likely that port needs will receive a higher priority in national plans (UNCTAD, 1976).

Many trade facilitation measures at the international level are undertaken on both sides of the world. The aim of their implementation is to enable developing countries to take full advantage of trade. The World Trade Organization (WTO) defines "trade facilitation" as a set of simplification and harmonization of international trade procedures. In different contexts, trade facilitation refers to a broad sphere, including all measures aimed at reducing barriers (tariff, non-tariff, etc.), that could harm international trade (UNCTAD, 2014).

The autonomous port operates in a competitive environment. Indeed, the more a port lacks performance, the more importers will turn to other ports of the sub-region or other means of transport, if the difference in the cost of transport and disposal of the goods is less significant. In other words, because the company wants to maximize its profit, it will opt for other means of transport or other ports of entry allowing it to quickly take possession of its goods at a reduced cost. In the face of this problem of low competitiveness, improving the quality of port services is often cited as a priority area for action in port development plans. The main reason is to bring the port closer to its customers, who are the importers and exporters, in order to retain them and thus prevent them from turning to competing ports.

Facilitating international maritime traffic is important because, if implemented smoothly, shipments are made faster, easier and more efficiently. On the other hand, if its implementation leaves something to be desired, delays, failures and additional costs are inevitable. Effective trade facilitation can help reduce transportation costs and, as a result, contribute to sustainable development (UNCTAD, 2019).

Single window is something that will obviously facilitate trade. It shall enable the economic operator or carrier to submit all the data necessary for the determination of the admissibility of the goods in standardised form, in a single step, to the authorities responsible for border controls and to a single portal. Under the single window principle, these authorities are responsible for managing the single window and ensuring that the

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participating authorities or services have access to the information or that it is provided by the managing authority. It eliminates the need for the economic operator or the carrier to submit the same data to several different authorities or departments responsible for border controls.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review makes it possible, within the framework of any research, to ensure beforehand the state of knowledge acquired on the problems identified.

This study is of interest to us in that it raises a concern for the authorities, port actors at different levels and economic operators who are still waiting.

The concern to contribute to the resolution of the problems related to the port actors, motivated the choice of the topic entitled "The Single Port Window" questioned.

On the one hand, it makes it possible to identify and analyze the real problems which threaten and hinder the good management of the SPW for a rapid removal of goods at the port. On the other hand, it helps to make suggestions for corrective measures in the implementation of the next reforms, to the extent possible. Moreover, it can provoke reactions at the level of the State and of development partners.

Transport constitutes an element of prime importance which concretizes the hold of man and of economic and political systems over space (Ritter, 1971).

"Transport is a fundamental activity for the survival of individuals and States because it allows the movement of people and the transport of goods" (Wolkowitsch, 1982).

Always being competitive means dedicating yourself to what you do best, figuring out how to be one of the best. It is up to executives to find out exactly which products or services are most valuable to customers and which ones they can provide to them as well or better than the best companies in the world. This knowledge is likely to revolutionize everything in a company. It can be the starting point for recovery and accelerated growth. When we compare African countries to other developing countries in Latin America and Asia, we see that many factors limit the competitiveness of African economies on the international market and that the transport sector is certainly one of the major problems. during the transport of goods (Whitley and Hessian, 1997).

Different authors have addressed the subject relating to quality of service. The most generally cited are (Tixier, Marthe and Colin, 1996). They approach it as a factor of competitiveness. They assert that the notion of "service offered to the consumer" appears in certain cases as the element which really structures logistics policy. The option of seeking a very high level of performance, or even the highest possible level in defining the offer, may represent the very objective of the logistics strategy.

Indeed, satisfaction has increasing returns on a company's market share and therefore a source of sustainable growth for companies. Moreover, lack of quality scares customers away and contributes to the loss of market share.

In detail, the trade facilitation:

- aims to reduce the costs and delays relating to the execution of commercial transactions and related logistical operations;
- is expressed through recommendations to the Authorities and Operators;
- is the subject of universal consultation within the United Nations.

The methods recommended by the facilitation are essentially based on:

- rationalization of procedures and practices;
- harmonization of facilities;
- standardization of the processing and exchange of information (Stoven, 2004).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

In this paper we have adopted an empirical approach that makes it possible to respond to the problem of interactions between companies during a commercial transaction at the international level.

The objective of this research work is to:

- Search for port performance, in particular by encouraging innovation;
- Promote logistics performance;
- Put in place incentive rules and procedures for investment and facilitate it.

4. DEFINITION OF SINGLE PORT WINDOW

The Single Port Window is a computerized tool that allows each of the actors of the port and the person in charge to manage the entire administrative process of the passage without moving, from the announcement of the ship to the exit of the goods from the port. The payment of fees, including customs duties, is also managed in the Single Window and is done in a single step, at the counter of a designated bank.

It offers automation and optimization of electronic procedures for ship traffic management, freight management and intermodal transport management 24/7 and 7/7. The concession agreement includes project management, stakeholder training, change management and a national communication plan.

The term “Single Port Window” has been particularly prevalent in the trade facilitation community, as presented in the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation.

The “Single Port Window” is a governance paradigm that shifts traditional government structures towards new agreements that better meet the needs of citizens and businesses.

The single window business processes are a set of structured and linked activities aimed at obtaining a one-time presentation from commercial operators and carriers.

These processes also include feedback flows from government bodies to commercial operators and carriers, but this concept implies that the transboundary flow regulators return a harmonized and coordinated response to the issuer of the regulatory declaration. Avoiding duplication of information flows from transborder regulators to commercial operators and carriers, and viceversa, would allow for the full potential of a single window environment.

5. ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES OF THE SINGLE PORT WINDOW

The shipping companies, shipping agents and stevedores first supply the system with detailed data of ship calls, manifests and unloading, usually through an automated interface from their own system.

Once the customs declaration has been made by the user (forwarder), the various Authorities and official structures concerned take note in the Single Window of all the elements concerning them and transmit directly to the system the amount of invoices related to the goods, or validate simply an amount pre- calculated by the tool.

The user is then automatically notified by e-mail and connects to the Single Window from his computer connected to the Internet in order to learn about the amounts due, including customs duties and import taxes payable immediately.

Once the payment is made in one go at a dedicated bank counter (BOA or ECOBANK), the authorizations allowing exit from the port are automatically transmitted via the system to the person responsible for the goods. This system is completely secure: to allow each actor concerned to connect to the protected website of the Single Window (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 - Elements of the Single Port Window



Source: Driving Singapore’s External Economy (2014). “Port Community System-Singapore-Experience”. Peru

In particular, the principals characteristics are:

- ✓ Transparency of regulations;
- ✓ Predictability in decision-making;
- ✓ Cooperation between border agencies;
- ✓ Simplification of documentation;
- ✓ Freedom of transit;
- ✓ Transparency of sanctions regimes and penalties.

For several years, International Trade operators complained more and more strongly about the volume and complexity of procedures and documentation related to the movement of goods. It is now accepted that inadequate procedures contribute to port congestion. Admittedly, port authorities are rarely directly responsible for the proliferation of documents and formalities, but the ports are obligatory points of convergence where these formalities are completed on the occasion of the physical transfer of goods from one mode of transport to another and the transfer of responsibility from one operator to another.

This transfer is necessarily complex because of the number and diversity of interests that revolve around the moving commodity.

Outside the port, other stakeholders also have a direct interest, albeit delayed in time, in the movement of goods.

The physical movement of goods must therefore be accompanied by a parallel movement of information relating to these goods and the ships carrying them.

Finding solutions to all these problems is the scope of facilitation, which aims to:

- facilitating and promoting foreign trade;
- simplify administrative, commercial and customs procedures and formalities;
- reduce the costs and delays of goods crossing borders;
- accelerate the processing of the files and the transit time of the goods in the multimodal logistic areas;
- provide real-time trade flow statistics and electronic certification services to actors involved in foreign trade;
- securing the revenues of actors involved in foreign trade (public – private).

In particular the general objectives are:

- ✓ Timely Release and Clearance of Goods;
- ✓ Accelerated movement of goods in export, import and transit;
- ✓ Lower costs for international trade operators through reduction of procedural barriers;
- ✓ Cooperation and collaboration between border agencies within government and between governments;
- ✓ Technical assistance in the field of capacity building.

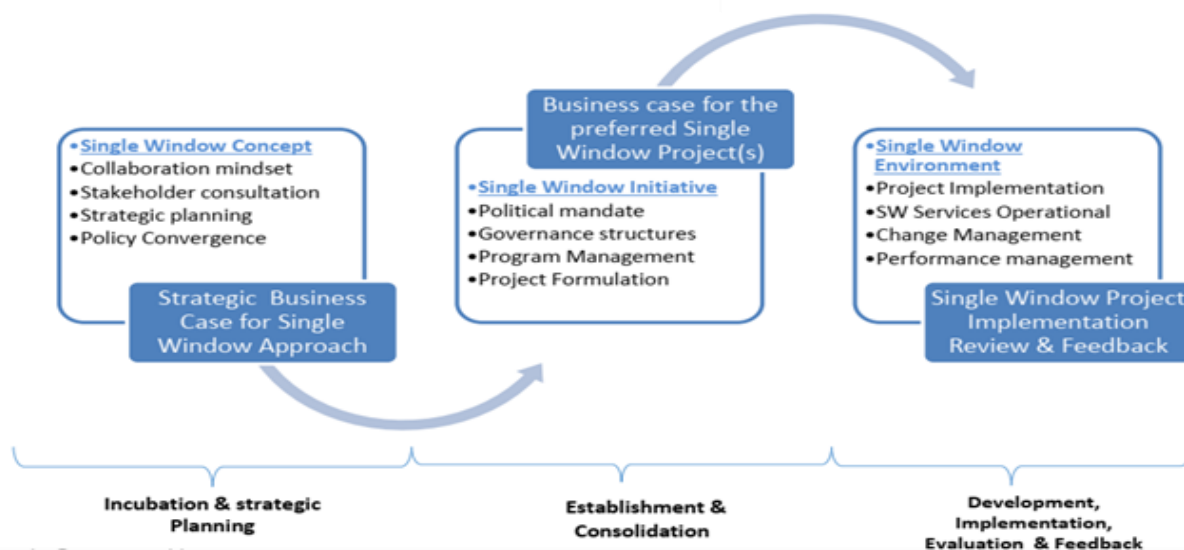
6. SINGLE PORT WINDOW – ENVIRONMENT

The WTO (World Trade Organization) Trade Facilitation Agreement commits countries to the development and implementation of Single Windows (World Custom Organization, 2017).

The development of a Single Window typically involves multiple stages – it begins as a Single Window concept, it matures as a formal initiative and, through project formulation and implementation, a Single Window environment emerges.

The diagram below describes the three phases in the development of a Single Window environment (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 - Phases in the development of a Single Window environment



Source: Mikuriya, K. (2017). "Building a single window environment. Vol 1. Part 1". Brussels, Belgium

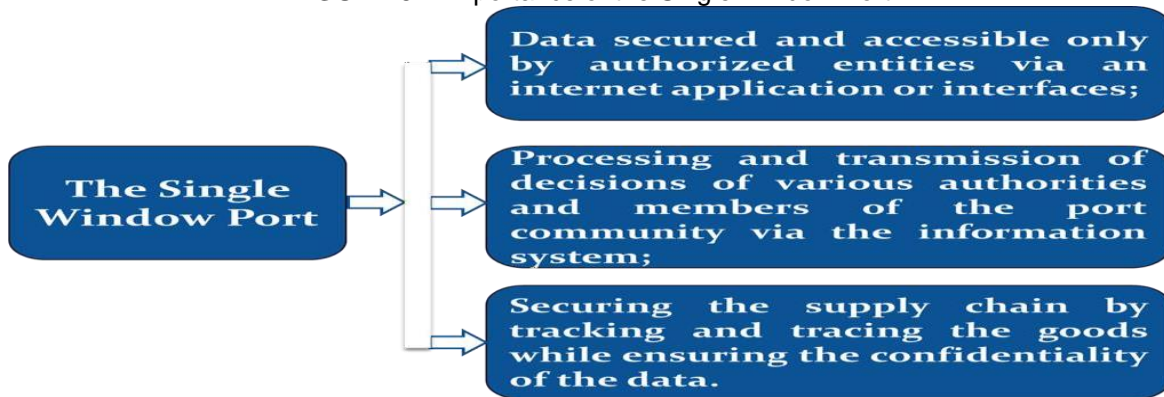
In discussing the Single Window, a careful distinction must be made between the different terms used. During the exploration phase, the term „Single Window concept“ or „Single Window approach“ is preferred. When the idea is formally accepted, this leads to a „Single Window initiative“. Efforts find expression in a political mandate, governance structures are established, and one or more Single Window projects come into being. The execution of these projects gradually builds the „Single Window environment“, serving the purpose of trade and regulatory agencies (UNCTAD, 2017).

7. IMPORTANCE, ROLE AND KEY BENEFITS OF THE SINGLE PORT WINDOW

Single Port Windows are mainly implemented to facilitate the borders procedures. The single port window will facilitate the dematerialization of documents exchanged and the automation of administrative, logistical and customs procedures in the context of import, export, transshipment and transit operations. These electronic document exchanges will be possible thanks to the interoperability between the Port Single Window and the information systems of public and private organizations.

Finally, the single port window facilitates the compliance of the port area with international standards in terms of facilitation and securing of international trade (Figure 3).

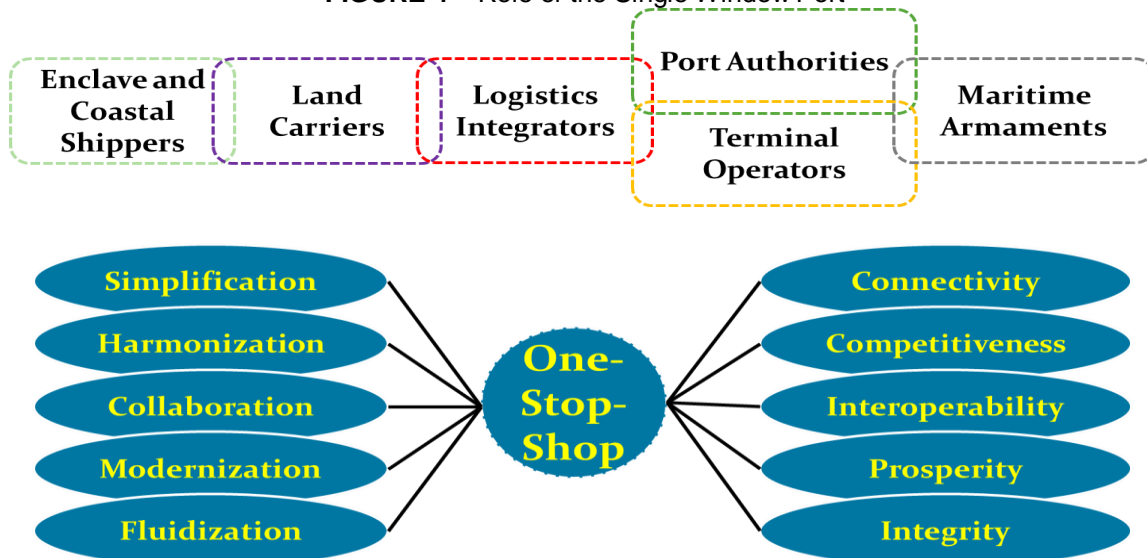
FIGURE 3 – Importance of the Single Window Port



Source: Personal Elaboration

Through a single entry point, a One-Stop-Shop optimizes, orchestrates and automates the dematerialized exchange on information related to the movement of a commodity in order to facilitate each break between all actors in the transport, service and value chains (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4 – Role of the Single Window Port

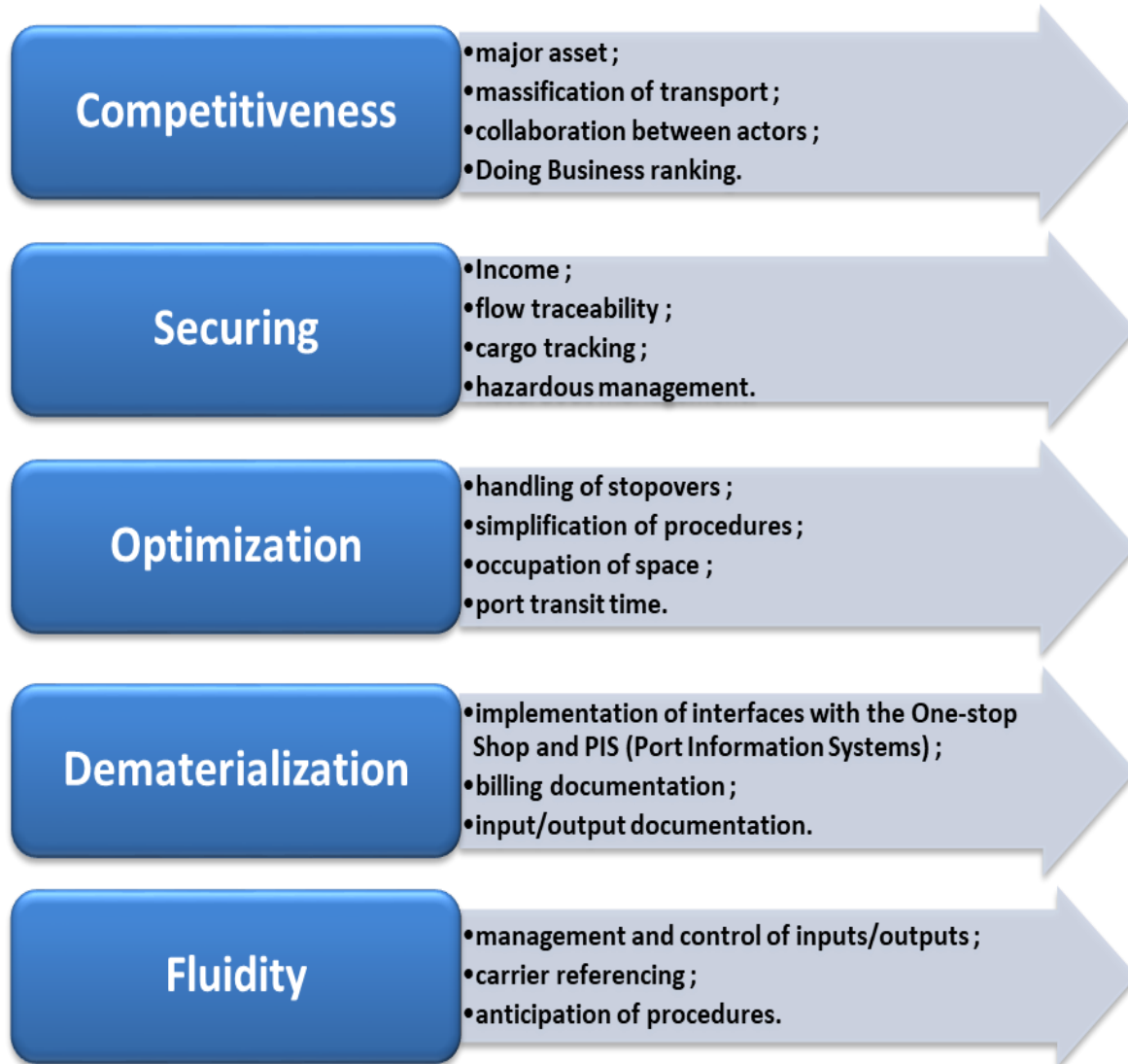


Source: Alix, Y. (2015). “13ème Table Ronde des Directeurs Généraux 37ème Conseil de l’AGPAOC”. Abidjan, Cote D’Ivoire

It turned out to be necessary to acquire a technological tool allowing the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism to coordinate, automate and control the formalities related to foreign trade operations, by integrating into a single system the actions of all officials involved in the process of sending customs documents, concepts, certificates and authorizations necessary to carry out import and export operations of goods.

The diagram below shows the key benefits of the single port window (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5 – The Key Benefits of the Single Port Window



Source: Personal Elaboration

8. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF GOODS PROCESSING SYSTEMS

On a daily basis, international traders have to prepare and submit increasing amounts of information to various governmental controlling authorities, with each authority often having its own specific (automated) systems and paper forms.

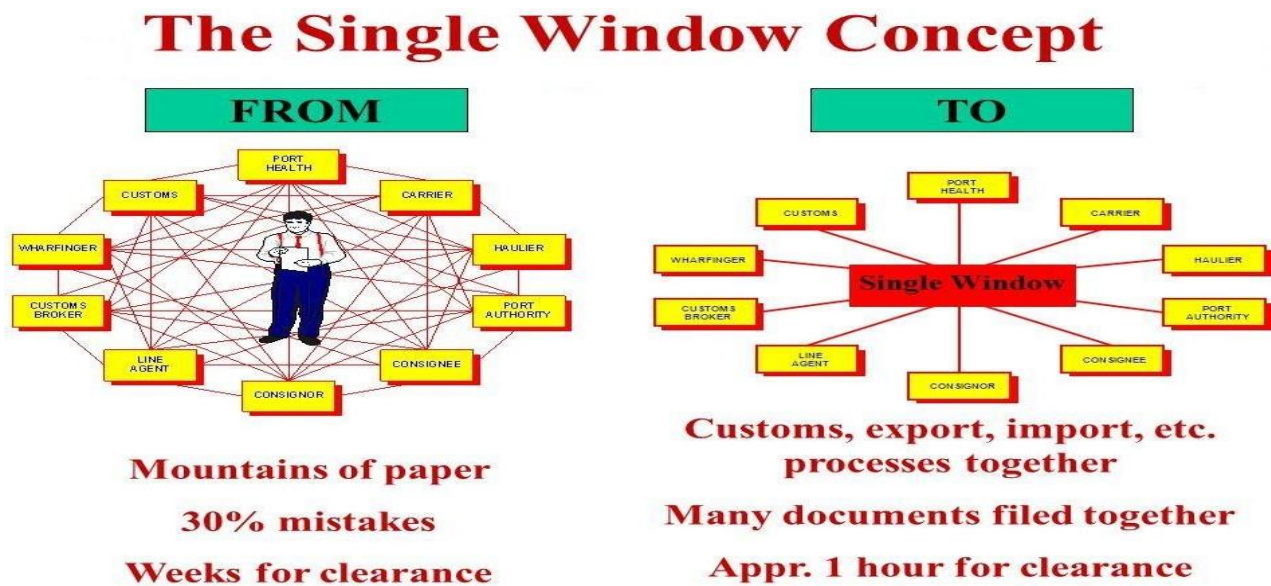
These extensive information requirements can become a significant obstacle to business and can hinder the development of international trade.

With the increasing interrogation of economies around the world, facilitating the smooth flow of information becomes a pressing requirement of Governments and business.

Efficient information systems and procedures can significantly increase the speed at which goods can move, reduce costs, improve business efficiency, and enhance the overall economic performance of a country (UNECE, 2003).

The idea of a “SINGLE PORT WINDOW” for international trade is opposed to traditional models of official control of the movement of goods and means of transport, because the clearance of goods at borders involves the intervention of multiple regulatory bodies (Figure 6).

FIGURE 6 – Old System Vs Port Single Window



Source: UNECE. (2003). “The Single Window Concept“. United Nations. Geneva, Switzerland

In practical terms a “Single Window” environment provides one “entrance”, either physical or electronic, for the submission and handling of all data, and documents related to the release and clearance of an international transaction. This “entrance” is managed by one agency, which informs the appropriate agencies, and/or directs combined controls (UNCTAD, 2005). On first reading the table below, one might think that the new system is the best suited and seems infallible, but it turns out that during operations, users are sometimes faced with security costs due to the delay in issuing UES (Unique Expense Slip) OK invoice. This situation therefore obliges them to negotiate with each structure, the rapid establishment of its bill to avoid the costs of additional guarding or demurrage; thus the corruption that one wanted to avoid resumes life within this system. It urges the government to take timely and appropriate action to correct this state of affairs (Table 1).

TABLE 1 – Comparative Table of New and Old Commodity Processing System

	OLD SYSTEM	NEW SYSTEM (One-Stop-Shop)
S T R E N G T H S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Employ a lot of staff ; -Control of the operation by users (freight forwarders) given the number of years of experience spent in this system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Simplifies the procedures and formalities for the entry, exit or transit of goods; -Establishes an environment favorable to the competitiveness of economic operators in port areas ; -Reduces costs and lead times for commercial and logistics operations ; -Improves the efficiency of the port logistics chain ; -Improves transparency in Business-Administration relations ; -Reduction of corruption at the PAC (Project Against Corruption) level.
W E A K N E S S E S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extension of the chain of brokers (corruption) ; -Too much hassle in the removal operation; -Long duration of removal operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Slowness in the preparation of invoices by the various authorities and official structures concerned; -The lack of control of the operation by the users ; -Lack of information and training ; -Reduction of staff (increase in unemployment rate).

Source: Personal Elaboration

9. CONCLUSIONS

Ports should not be the cash drawer of states. It is above all through their contribution to the development of foreign trade and consequently to the creation of businesses and jobs and to the development of the country's resources, that they constitute real wealth.

It should ultimately be noted that transport is nowadays the primary function and must therefore be of concern to public authorities. The State must give the port authority all the required strength and the means for its policy and ambitions.

With the globalization of international trade, the needs for logistics solutions have made decision-makers aware of the strategic issue of efficient logistics as a driver of competitiveness for the company. Port logistics have become an essential vector of economic development. As a result, the ports, symbols of intercontinental trade and places of load disruption, are essential sites in trade.

The competitiveness of a Port is a permanent quest. In this regard, all initiatives that can contribute to it will be welcome.

The one-stop-shop port project is one of the measures in the administrative simplification program. It is a condition for the simplification of customs procedures for import and export.

To build a Single Port Window, transborder regulators need to evolve from a situation where they all have their own concept of operations to a position involving process interdependencies and exchange of documents. The organizations involved must jointly define the interdependencies and business process models to be adopted.

The development of a maritime and port logistics base is inseparable from the development of a land logistics base across a whole road and rail network.

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