



USE AND FUNCTIONING OF WTO REFERENCE CENTRES

A. Objective of the WTO Reference Centre Programme (RC Programme)

The general objective of the WTO Reference Centres Programme is to enable government officials, private sector and academic communities in beneficiary countries to utilize trade-related information and resources available from the WTO internet website, as well as trade-related publications donated by the WTO, in order to gain and promote understanding on trade policy and WTO-related matters among national stakeholders.

Reference Centres shall be a physical location open to government officials, business representatives, university professors and students, and the general public. Whenever possible, the location of the Reference Centre should be amenable for public use. WTO Reference Centres also function as training and activities centres by organizing and hosting trade-related events, training activities, and technical meetings.

While the WTO works closely with the WTO Reference Centres, they are independently administered by the host institution and are not part of the WTO.

B. Implementation Modalities

The WTO

1. In the context of the 2016-2017 WTO Technical Assistance and Training Plan, the WTO Secretariat will aim at establishing or upgrading 10 reference centres per year. Least-developed countries (LDCs) constitute the priority group of beneficiary countries, and for these countries WTO support may include the provision of material equipment. Subject to the availability of resources, Developing Countries can also benefit from the RC Programme in the form of training missions and seminars.
2. During RC missions, training will be provided by WTO staff on the use of IT information resources from the WTO Website, which includes the WTO Documents Online facility, and WTO trade-related databases (TAO, I-TIP, text-based research resources and statistics).
3. The WTO will seek to organize periodical activities for RCs through IT means (e.g. Skype) with a view to promoting the understanding of trade matters of interest, and exchanges and interaction among Reference Centres, so as facilitate the sharing of experiences and best practices. The WTO will transmit electronically to Reference Centres a Daily News bulletin with a view to providing updated trade-related news.
4. The WTO will monitor the functioning of the Reference Centres and the results of the RC programme, on the basis established indicators and other relevant criteria (see table below). This requires Reference Centres to operate and maintain records in order to be able to report on the indicators of the programme shown below. They are¹:

¹ Source: WTO BIENNIAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND TRAINING PLAN 2016 – 2017 (WT/COMTD/W/211).



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	Results	Indicators	Assumptions
Outcome	Members are accessing and using WTO-related data to better enforce their rights and obligations	Members' satisfaction with data availability	Members' willingness to use available WTO data sources Committed RCs managers
Output 1	WTO RCs network is operational in targeted countries	Rate of operational RCs	Commitment of the institution hosting the RC
Output 2	RCs are used by stakeholders to access WTO-related data or online courses	Requests or visits to the RCs during the year by category of stakeholders and type of needs	Commitment of the institution hosting the RC

The Beneficiary Institution

5. Institutional support by the host institution is cardinal for the success operation of reference centres and the functioning of the RC Programme. Host institutions thus agree to support, within their means and as relevant, activities and initiatives undertaken by these, including by:
 - a. Providing appropriate office space and infrastructure for the physical location of the Reference Centre, including book shelves, electrical connections, a dedicated telephone line and internet connection;
 - b. Ensuring access to and use of the Reference Centre by the general public;
 - c. Appointing a Reference Centre Coordinator(s) and sufficient staff to ensure the provision of services and advise on trade matters to users and visitors;
 - d. Ensuring that the RC equipment provided by the WTO (library, computers, printers, photocopier, etc.) are maintained in working conditions in accordance with the relevant warranties of the equipment as provided for by the Technical Requirements;
 - e. Supporting the reference centre in the organization of seminars, training activities, and technical and outreach events;
 - f. Reporting to the WTO on the functioning and activities undertaken by the reference centres, and on the results achieved, on the basis of the questionnaire prepared to such effect by the WTO Secretariat;
 - g. Updating the WTO on any changes occurring in the coordination of the reference centre, and establishing a NON-PERSONAL email address for all communications with the WTO related to the reference centre, making use of the nomenclature provided by the WTO for such purposes;



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- h. Providing users of the reference centre with access to information about the WTO and their country's multilateral trade commitments relating from the Reference Centre;
- i. Ensuring access to the internet for the Reference Centre and assuming responsibility of the related costs, and;
- j. Facilitating, as pertinent, the registration of national government officials in the WTO eLearning courses.

C. Access to WTO restricted databases

- 6. Only WTO Members may request access to restricted databases. The WTO Secretariat cannot provide passwords and user identification. Authorization to access restricted WTO databases must be requested to the Geneva-based mission by the beneficiary institution in charge of the RCs. In practical terms, passwords and user identification for the Integrated Data Base and Documents-on-line should be requested by the Geneva-based mission from the following WTO Divisions before a Reference Centre mission takes place:
 - a. Integrated Data Base: Statistics Section, Economic Research and Statistics Division, E-mail: ldb@wto.org;
 - b. Documents on line (restricted area) Official Documents and Record Section, Language Services and Documentation Division, Phone: +41 (0)22 739 5048 or +41 (0)22 739 5113, E-mail: docsonline@wto.org.

D. Dissemination of WTO official documentation

- 7. The dissemination of WTO official documentation remains the Reference Centre's responsibility. The Reference Centre shall not disseminate any restricted or non-published WTO documentation to any of its users. Restricted information shall not be posted on any public website and shall not be disseminated outside the hosted institution. The WTO accepts no responsibility should this rule be infringed and is not responsible for any misuse of documentation provided to the Reference Centre.

NOTE: The IT equipment provided by the WTO for use by the Reference Centres (hardware, software) should only be used to access information from WTO or other international organizations. Experience so far has shown that access to non-secured databases induces inefficient functioning, for which the WTO cannot be held responsible.

The WTO Reference Centre is a part of the host institution and shall not be considered for any purposes whatsoever, as having a legal status connected with or dependent upon the WTO. The personnel of a WTO Reference Centre shall not be considered as being employees or agents of the WTO. The WTO shall not be held responsible for the actions of the Reference Centre or its personnel and the WTO reserves the right to withdraw its support if necessary. The WTO Reference Centre shall refrain from any action which may adversely affect the WTO or its interests. Use of the WTO name, logo and WTO Reference Centre emblem are permitted solely for administration of the WTO Reference Centre. No other purpose under this document is permitted. Nothing in or relating



WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DU COMMERCE
ORGANIZACIÓN MUNDIAL DEL COMERCIO



Reference Centres
Centres de référence
Centros de referencia

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to the support set out in this document shall be deemed a waiver of any of the WTO's privileges and immunities.

For any inquiries, please contact the Regional Trade Policy Courses and Technical Cooperation Outreach Unit (RTPCTCO) of the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC) of the WTO at: WTOReferenceCenters@wto.org

The [institution] of [country] has taken note of the above-mentioned elements and agrees to comply with them. The non-respect of these modalities would cancel any future upgrading of the Reference Centre.

Date:

Signature: