

NTO Tax & Covid-19 Peer-learning:

Rethinking communication strategies and relations between tax authorities and taxpayers

Thursday 29 April 2021 / 13:30-16:00 h (UTC)



Concept and programme

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented spending pressure on the fiscus of most governments, as countries face the challenge of safeguarding revenue to finance measures in addressing the Covid-19 crisis. It is in this context that a peer-learning session on tackling challenges faced by tax administrations during and after the Covid-19 pandemic will be held. With special focus on rethinking communication strategies and relations between tax authorities and taxpayers.

To limit the spread of the virus while still pursuing revenue mobilisation targets, it is generally recommended that revenue authorities look to minimise personal contact between taxpayers and staff at tax administrations and maintain communication with taxpayers. This includes the strengthening of contactless procedures and promoting contactless taxpayer services (such as e-registration, e-filing and e-payment). Additionally, communication with taxpayers needs to be enhanced through bolstering electronic, online, and other remote platforms (such as websites, virtual assistance, specific mobile applications and call-centres). This also has the added benefit of increasing the convenience and reducing the cost of paying taxes for taxpayers, beyond the Covid-19 crisis.

As countries take on tax policy and administrative measures to address the Covid-19 crisis and its economic consequences, the adjusting of processes and the enhancing of communication strategies and tools, to ensure that taxpayers are well informed have become even more relevant than before.

Due to the nature of the long-term challenges brought on by the pandemic, the use of digital tools and enhanced communication strategies are identified as effective solutions in the response to the Covid-19 crisis. As a result, tax administrations benefit in the sharing of experiences and lessons learnt during this period.

Objective

The NTO aims to facilitate knowledge exchange and to promote peer-learning with the main purpose:

1. to enable engagement among tax administrations on best practices on the implementation of innovative tools, solutions and approaches which enhance or safeguard revenue mobilisation and
2. to hedge against the continuing and long-lasting impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

This particular peer-learning session will focus on the theme of:

- Re-thinking communication strategies and relations between tax authorities and taxpayers. Changing or improving the way tax administrations communicate effectively with taxpayers; tools or solutions that are used for revenue mobilisation and taxpayer education:

There will be a total of three presentations, with contributions from the tax authorities of Canada, Mali and the United Kingdom respectively. As well as question and answer sessions.

Programme

Thursday 29 April 2021 / 13:30-16:00 h (UTC)

- **13:30 – 13:50h** Opening and welcome
**Simultaneous translation will be provided throughout for both French and English*
Moderator:
Mr. Ismalia Diallo (Exchange and Research Centre for Leaders of Tax Administrations, CREDAF, Deputy Secretary General)
Mr. Marcio Ferreira Verdi Head of NTO Council

- **13:50 – 14.10h** Presentation
Mr. Mark Quinlan, Assistant Commissioner for Quebec, Canada Revenue Agency
“Les stratégies de communication de l’Agence du revenu du Canada en temps de pandémie Covid-19”
“The Canada Revenue Agency’s Pandemic Communications Strategies in Covid-19”.

- **14:10 – 14:30h** Presentation
Mr. Alidji Sidi Toure, Head of the Public Relations and Communications Unit, the General Directorate of Taxes of Mali
“La communication, un outil pour bâtir une administration fiscale performante, au service du citoyen en temps de COVID-19”
“Communication, a tool to build an efficient tax administration, at the citizen’s service in times of COVID-19”

- **14:30 – 14:45h** Question and answer session
Guided by the moderator

- **14:45 – 15:00h** Break

- **15:05 – 15:25h** Presentation
Ms. Rachel Forster, Deputy Director of Communications, HM Revenue & Customs, UK
“An audience-led approach to communicating Covid-19 support schemes in the UK”
“Une approche “guidée par le public” pour communiquer sur les programmes de soutien Covid-19 au Royaume-Uni”

- **15:25 – 15:45h** Final question and answer session
Guided by the moderator

- **15:45h** Closing remarks
Moderator

Presentation summaries

“The Canada Revenue Agency’s Pandemic Communications Strategies in Covid-19”/ “Les stratégies de communication de l’Agence du revenu du Canada en temps de pandémie Covid-19”, by Mr. Mark Quinlan, Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

The CRA will share their experiences of regular and sustained communication in times of crisis and for the purposes of reputation management.

Communication at the CRA both internally and externally was regular and sustained from the beginning of the crisis. Communication strategies have included transparency, consistency, and accuracy. The presentation will focus on strategies and relations between tax authorities and taxpayers, communications channels ranging from internal communications, to web pages and social media. The Agency’s proactive management against events that could damage its reputation and CRA’s approach to respond to them effectively will be discussed. CRA also took this opportunity to strengthen and establish new relationships with entities with which it has not traditionally had relationships including other government agencies, tax professionals and local jurisdictions to create new ways of doing business.

“Communication, a tool to build an efficient tax administration, at the citizen’s service in times of COVID-19”/ “La communication, un outil pour bâtir une administration fiscale performante, au service du citoyen en temps de COVID-19”, by Mr. Alidji Sidi Toure, Direction Generale des Impots du Mali.

The DGI in Mali has successfully executed its revenue collection plan, which was achieved thanks to their communication plan that has bolstered awareness raising.

Communication, as a management tool, must be adapted to the context in which it is used. The pandemic has changed all our habits, the traditional channels of communication in each environment has been adapted, for instance physical meetings between people have been replaced by video conferences and webinars, which has been as well the case for DGI in Mali. Those modern communication tools are more efficient, less costly for the administration and more accessible.

The DGI has enhanced both its external and internal communication channels. On the communication with public increased interactivity of social networks, internet and telephone. On the internal side, the intranet has been a working tool for the staff. It’s also a motivational tool and it has developed the feeling of ownership in the organization.

“An audience-led approach to communicating Covid-19 support schemes in the UK”/ “Une approche “guidée par le public” pour communiquer sur les programmes de soutien Covid-19 au Royaume-Uni”, by Rachel Forster, HM Revenue and Customs (UK)

HMRC communications needed to maximise awareness and applications for the support schemes to safeguard millions of jobs, while minimising demand on phone lines as customer service levels were impacted by the pandemic.

The approach was to offer audiences online journey of awareness, understanding, preparation and action, working closely with stakeholders to amplify messages and support

Communications also aimed to redefine the role of HMRC, increasing their levels of public trust and recognition of competency as the government balanced crucial support paid out to business with bringing in the money for essential public services.

To build this awareness and action across schemes, in addition to increasing trust and perception of competency, HMRC's objectives were linked with the cross-government campaign to best meet government priorities:

1. Audiences are aware of the schemes;
2. Audiences know how to apply online;
3. Seen as competent and able to deliver.

Organisation

The webinar is organised by the NTO, supported by the International Tax Compact implementing the NTO Secretariat, and Exchange and Research Centre for Leaders of Tax Administrations, CREDAF.

Please note that this webinar will be recorded and later shared with participating tax administrations and by joining it you are giving consent in regard to privacy policy.

This webinar will be broadcast live on VoiceBoxer, moderated in French, with presentations in both French and English. There will be simultaneous translation in both French and English throughout the webinar.

For further information, please contact secretariat@taxcompact.net.