

# CAREC Advanced Transit System and Information Common Exchange (CATS/ICE) Implementation Roadmap

## A. 2026 Workplan by Quarter

	Activity	Quarter	Event Type	Key Output	Progress
<b>A. Regulatory Framework:</b> Establishment of the regional legal framework for CATS/ICE live operations					
A.1	CATS/ICE MCFA legal review	Q1	Desk review	MCFA draft version	<b>Completed.</b> Circulated 10 Mar 2026
A.2	Brief pilot countries on MCFA legal review; kick off domestic reviews	Q1	Virtual meeting	Domestic MCFA reviews initiated	<b>Completed.</b> 27 February 2026
A.3	Support domestic reviews by pilot countries; finalize MCFA text	Q1–Q3	Onsite Legal WG sessions	Agreed final MCFA version	<b>In progress.</b> TWG on 19-20 May 2026.
A.4	Signing of the CATS/ICE MCFA by pilot countries	Q4	Ministerial Conference	Signed MCFA	
A.5	Ratification of the MCFA by pilot countries	Q4+	Domestic legislative process	Ratification in progress	
<b>B. Technology:</b> Enhancement of CATS/ICE software based on updated user requirements					
B.1	Finalize Version 3 software scope (all change requests to date)	Q1	Virtual IT WG meeting	Final V3 scope; initial V4 scope	<b>Completed.</b> 9 February 2026
B.2	Finalize Version 3 software specifications	Q1–Q2	Onsite IT WG session	Final V3 specifications	<b>In progress.</b> TWG on 19-20 May 2026.
B.3	Finalize Version 3 CATS/ICE software	Q1–Q2	Software development	Final Version 3 CATS/ICE software	
B.4	Combined conformity and parallel testing of V3 with customs and private sector stakeholders	Q2–Q3	Virtual software testing (5–10 days)	V3 tested; feedback collected	
B.5	Finalize Version 4 software scope (all change requests to date)	Q2–Q3	Onsite IT WG session	Final V4 software scope	
B.6	Finalize Version 4 software specifications	Q3	Virtual IT WG meeting (1 day)	Final V4 specifications	
B.7	Finalize Version 4 CATS/ICE software	Q3–Q4	Software development	Version 4 software (in progress)	
B.8	Reorganize CATS/ICE specifications into Common Specifications and Application Specifications	Ongoing	Internal working group	Restructured specification documents	<b>In progress.</b>
<b>C. Training &amp; Capacity Building:</b> Manuals, guidelines, training material, and training for new countries					
C.1	Prepare Accession Guideline for new participating countries	Q1–Q2	Document preparation	Accession Guideline	<b>Completed.</b>
C.2	Develop CATS Procedural Manuals (Customs officials,	Q1–Q3	Document preparation	Full set of CATS Procedural Manuals	<b>In progress.</b>

	Activity	Quarter	Event Type	Key Output	Progress
	Economic Operators, Guarantors)				
C.3	Prepare / update training material (project management, legal framework, CATS procedures, software)	Q1–Q3	Document / material preparation	Updated training material package	<b>In progress.</b> Online briefing on 15 May 2026
C.4	Training for customs officials of new countries: Kyrgyz Republic and Pakistan.	Q2–Q3	Virtual training (1 day)	Briefing on accession process and CATS/ICE	<b>In progress.</b> Online briefing on 15 May 2026
C.5	Training for customs officials and private sector on V3 software; kick off testing	Q3	Virtual training / meeting (1 day)	V3 training completed; testing initiated	
<b>D. Stakeholder Consultation: Engage with customs and private sector stakeholders</b>					
D.1	Private sector stakeholder consultation: insurers / guarantors partnership building	Q3	Onsite/online event	Meeting, training, and event report	
D.2	CATS/ICE Technical Working Group: review progress, address implementation issues	Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4		TWG meeting reports	
D.3	Report CATS/ICE progress to CCC Meeting	Q2	Onsite / Virtual	CCC progress report	
D.4	Report CATS/ICE progress to Ministerial Meeting; MCFA signing ceremony	Q4	Onsite	Ministerial presentation; signed MCFA	
D.5	Networking with NCTS, ACTS, and other transit systems	Q2	Onsite	Conference proceedings	CAREC session at APTFF x PTW (10 June)

Notes: CATS/ICE = CAREC Advanced Transit System and Information Common Exchange, MCFA = Multicountry Framework Agreement, TWG = Technical Working Group

## B. Key Outputs: 2026 Workplan

Regulatory	Technology	Training & Capacity	Stakeholder Consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalized MCFA draft version</li> <li>Domestic review comments consolidated</li> <li>Signed MCFA (Ministerial Conference)</li> <li>Ratification in progress (pilot countries)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>V3 software finalized &amp; tested</li> <li>V4 scope &amp; specifications approved</li> <li>CATS/ICE common specs restructured</li> <li>Testing reports (V3 conformity + parallel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accession Guideline published</li> <li>Procedural manuals (Customs, operators, guarantors)</li> <li>V3 training materials delivered</li> <li>2 new countries trained (KGZ, PAK)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TWG meeting reports</li> <li>CCC progress report</li> <li>APTFF conference contribution</li> </ul>

### C. Proposed Full-scale Implementation Roadmap (2026–2029+)

#	Phase	Timeframe	Objective & Key Activities
1	<b>Political &amp; Strategic Endorsement</b>	Q1–Q4 2025 (✓ completed)	Secure ministerial-level political commitment from CAREC member states. Integrate CATS/ICE into national trade facilitation strategies and reaffirm role under CITA 2030.
2	<b>Legal &amp; Institutional Foundations</b>	Q1 2025 – Q4 2026	Finalize and ratify the Multi-country Framework Agreement (MCFA). Align national legislation on customs transit, electronic data exchange, digital signatures, mutual recognition, and guarantee mechanisms. Establish National CATS Project Management Teams.
3	<b>Regional Management Structure</b>	Q1 2027 – Q3 2027	Establish a dedicated regional CATS/ICE management institution to oversee central IT development, maintain common reference data, operate ICE platform, provide helpdesk, and coordinate transition to decentralised ownership model.
4	<b>Accession Process — All Countries</b>	Q4 2026 – Q4 2027	Countries joining CATS/ICE follow the standardized Accession Handbook / Guideline covering readiness assessments, legal adjustments, technical integration, capacity building, and conformance testing. Flexible timelines accommodate different national capacities.
5	<b>Technical Development &amp; Common Specs</b>	Q3 2023 – Q2 2027	Split CATS/ICE specifications into Common System Specifications and Application Specifications. Develop V3 for live trials (2026) and V4 for subsequent phase. Maintain ICE platform centrally. Prepare for national system development and hosting.
6	<b>Conformance &amp; Parallel Testing</b>	Q1 2024 – ongoing	Before joining live operations, each national system passes Conformance Testing against Common System Specifications. Parallel Testing with live data verifies real-world data flows without disrupting existing operations. Acts as quality assurance gateway.
7	<b>Live Operational Trials</b>	Q3–Q4 2026 (pre-req: signed MCFA)	Launch initial live operational trials on selected pilot corridors with participating countries using actual cargo movements under CATS/ICE rules, chain-guarantee mechanism, and mutual recognition of customs controls. Real-time monitoring and feedback collection.
8	<b>Capacity Building &amp; Communication</b>	Q4 2025 – ongoing	Deliver modular training programmes for customs officials, IT staff, and private sector operators. Develop communication strategy for outreach to private sector, manage stakeholder expectations, and ensure continuous capacity upkeep as system evolves.
9	<b>Gradual Expansion &amp; National Transition</b>	Q1 2026 – Q4 2028	Expand CATS/ICE to more corridors and countries following successful pilot operations. Countries progressively develop and host their own national CATS applications compliant with Common System Specifications. Regional institution oversees conformance certification.
10	<b>Full CAREC Rollout &amp; Inter-regional Links</b>	Q1–Q4 2029	CAREC countries operational on CATS/ICE with interconnected national systems communicating through the ICE platform. Prepare for potential interoperability with external systems including EU's NCTS and ASEAN's ACTS for inter-regional trade facilitation.
11	<b>Continuous Improvement</b>	Q1 2027 – ongoing	Continuously monitor CATS/ICE operations; performance data drives technical and procedural enhancements. Periodically update legal frameworks, system specifications, and operational guidelines to reflect evolving trade patterns, technology, and security requirements.

## D. Critical Dependencies and Prerequisites

High Priority	Medium Priority	Structural Pre-requisites
<p><b>MCFA signed &amp; ratified</b> Legal pre-requisite for live operational trials to proceed in Q3–Q4 2026.</p> <p><b>V3 conformity testing passed</b> Technical gate for live operations; private sector must be involved in testing.</p>	<p><b>Chain-guarantee mechanism finalized</b> Insurance / guarantor fronting arrangements must be in place before live trial.</p> <p><b>Political commitment maintained</b> Ministerial-level endorsement is needed to unblock legal and resource bottlenecks.</p>	<p><b>Regional governance bodies established</b> Pre-requisite for decentralized national ownership transition (Phase 3, Q3 2026+).</p> <p><b>Common System Specifications</b> Specification restructuring enables countries to develop and host their own national CATS applications.</p>