



Customs Union: New Action Plan to further support EU customs in their vital role of protecting EU revenues, prosperity and security

Brussels, 28 September 2020

The European Commission has today launched a new Customs Union Action Plan setting out a series of measures to make EU customs smarter, more innovative and more efficient over the next four years. The announced measures will strengthen the Customs Union as a cornerstone of the Single Market. They also confirm its major role in protecting EU revenues and the security, health and prosperity of EU citizens and businesses.

In her political guidelines, President **von der Leyen** announced that the Customs Union needed to be taken to the next level, in particular, by ensuring an integrated European approach to customs risk management, which supports effective controls by EU Member States. Today's Action Plan does just that.

Paolo **Gentiloni**, Commissioner for Economy, said: *"The EU Customs Union was one of the first concrete achievements of European integration and for more than five decades it has helped to protect Europeans and keep trade flowing across our borders – which are only as strong as their weakest link. Today, new challenges mean that we need to make our customs rules smarter and ensure they work better for Member States, citizens and legitimate businesses. This calls for improved use of data, better tools and equipment, and more cooperation within the EU and with customs authorities of partner countries. It also requires better foresight, so that EU customs can face the future with confidence. Today, we set out how we will take our Customs Union to the next level."*

Today's Action Plan includes a number of initiatives in areas such as risk management, managing e-commerce, the promotion of compliance and customs authorities acting as one:

- **Risk management:** the Action Plan focuses in particular on ensuring greater availability and use of data and data analysis for customs purposes. It calls for intelligent, risk-based supervision of supply chains and for establishing a new analytics hub within the Commission for collecting, analysing and sharing customs data that can inform critical decisions, help customs authorities identify weak points at the EU's external borders and manage future crises.
- **Managing e-commerce:** in this regard, and in order to tackle the new challenges of e-commerce, obligations on payment service providers and online sales platforms will be strengthened to help fight customs duty and tax fraud in e-commerce.
- **Promotion of compliance:** the upcoming 'Single Window' initiative will make it easier for legitimate businesses to complete their border formalities in one single portal. It will allow for more collaborative processing, sharing and exchange of information and better risk assessment for customs authorities.
- **Customs authorities acting as one:** the Action Plan details the roll-out of modern and reliable customs equipment under the next EU budget. A new reflection group formed of Member States and business representatives will be set up to help prepare for future crises and challenges such as unanticipated global developments and future business models.

The EU Customs Union

The EU Customs Union – which in 2018 celebrated its 50th anniversary – forms a single territory for customs purposes, where a common set of rules are applied. Within the EU Customs Union, EU Member States' customs authorities are responsible for performing a wide and increasing range of controls.

Therefore, EU customs have an important role to play in supporting the EU's economy and future growth. Customs need to facilitate increasing amounts of legitimate trade as quickly and seamlessly as possible. At the same time, authorities are continuously engaged in fighting growing levels of fraud and smuggling of illicit or unsafe goods. Customs are also playing a vital role in our recovery

from an unprecedented health crisis. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, EU customs authorities and officials have been at the heart of essential tasks such as facilitating imports of protective equipment, while weeding out counterfeit products like fake masks and counterfeit medicines at the EU's external borders.

It has become apparent in recent years that Member States' customs authorities are struggling with the challenges of performing their various roles. Major challenges such as the current public health emergency, the consequences of the UK's departure from the EU's Single Market and Customs Union, and the rise of digitalisation and e-commerce will continue and may even increase. To make their full contribution to the wellbeing of all EU citizens and trade facilitation, our customs authorities must be equipped with cutting-edge technical equipment and analytical capacities that allow customs to better predict risky imports and exports. Enhanced customs cooperation with major international trade partners such as China will support our efforts to facilitate trade and, at the same time, ensure effective controls.

Background

The EU's Customs Union has developed into a cornerstone of our Single Market, keeping EU borders safe, protecting our citizens from prohibited and dangerous goods such as weapons, drugs and environmentally harmful products, while facilitating EU trade with the rest of the world. It also provides revenues for the EU budget. But recently it has become clear that smarter ways of working are needed to allow customs authorities to manage their long and growing list of responsibilities.

The Action Plan benefited from an innovative foresight project on "The Future of Customs in the EU 2040" that worked to create a shared and strategic understanding among key stakeholders of ways to deal with current and future challenges for customs and to generate a vision for how EU customs should look in 2040.

For more information

For more information, see our [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#).

[Commission's Customs Union Action Plan](#)

[Customs Action Plan Website](#)

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