EU Customs Union - Facts and figures

EU Customs Union – unique in the world

Customs see what you don’t…and protect you

Customs are business friendly

Customs duties mean revenue

Customs cooperates

28 EU Member States

- Full 'Facts and figures' section
- 50 years of the EU Customs Union
- 'EU customs union' brochure (Part of 'The EU explained' series)
EU Customs Union – unique in the world

In 2018 the EU Customs Union celebrated the 50th anniversary. It is a unique example of an area where a number of countries apply a uniform system for handling the import, export and transit of goods and implement a common set of rules called the Union Customs Code (UCC).

A common tariff of customs duties is being used on imports from outside the EU and there are no customs duties levied at the borders between EU countries. Duty on goods from outside the EU is generally paid when they first enter the EU. From then on, there are no more customs duties to pay and no more customs checks will apply - all goods circulate freely within the EU Customs Union.

The EU Customs Union is essential for the proper functioning of the single market. In practice, National customs services in all 28 EU countries work together as one to manage the day-to-day operations of the Customs Union. The European Commission proposes the EU customs legislation and monitors its implementation.

The EU is the largest trading bloc in the world

The EU is the largest trading block in the world, accounting for 15% of the world trade, alongside the United States and China.

In 2018, the value of the EU trade with other countries amounted to EUR 3.9 trillion.1

Half of EU external trade was mainly with five main partners: the United States, China, Switzerland, Russia and Turkey.

Source: Eurostat

---

1 trillion = 1 x 10^{12}
Managing this volume of international trade in 2018, almost 343 million customs declarations (including transit movements) were handled by more than 2,000 EU customs offices, working 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. The amount of customs duties collected in 2018 reached € 25.3 billion.

Various means of carrying freight are used in the EU trade

The most frequently used form of transport in the EU trade is maritime transport, followed by air and road transport.
**Customs see what you don’t…and protect you**

Customs authorities are in the front line in the fight against fraud, terrorism and organised crime, cooperating effectively with administrations and agencies responsible for other relevant policies with border and internal security implications.

Over 89,700 officials work around the clock at airports, border crossings, sea ports, inland customs offices or customs laboratories to manage the day-to-day operations of the Customs Union and to prevent illegal and/or dangerous goods from entering the EU.

When human senses are not enough to detect certain types of illegal goods, customs officers team up with sniffer dogs that specialise in detecting illegal drugs, suspicious food, explosives or even large amounts of cash.

### THE CUSTOMS UNION PROTECTS...

#### ...against the international trafficking of **drugs** and helps to stop criminal organizations which make money of selling drugs.

In 2018, the total amount of drugs seized by Customs in the EU amounted to 472 tonnes.

#### ...against the smuggling of **tobacco and cigarettes** - to stop dangerous and/or counterfeited tobacco products from being sold in the EU.

In 2018, Customs seized almost 4.1 billion illegal cigarettes in the EU.

#### ...against the international trafficking of **weapons**, helping to dismantle criminal organizations and to combat terrorism.

In 2018, EU customs seized more than 2,600 firearms, over 3.6 million pieces of **ammunition** and more than 476,000 pieces of **explosives** in the EU.

#### ...the health and safety of citizens by tackling **counterfeit goods and piracy** as well as the jobs of those who work for legitimate manufacturers.

- On around 70,000 occasions, products suspected of violating intellectual property rights were intercepted by the Customs in the EU.
- In 2018, more than 27 million articles were detained with an estimated value of nearly EUR 740 million.

#### ...the **environment, our health and safety** by enforcing the respective rules (e.g. stopping illegal import of protected wood, refusing entry of contaminated food or potentially dangerous electrical appliances).
In 2018, Customs in the EU detected around 24,000 cases of goods presenting a risk for consumers in terms of health (sanitary, phyto-sanitary and veterinary technical standards). Almost 40 million items were identified as unsafe or uncompliant in terms of product safety.

…endangered species by detecting illegal trade in ivory, protected animals, birds and plants and European cultural heritage by checking for smuggled art treasures.

- 4,553 infringements of CITES regulations were detected.
- 117 cases were detected which did not respect the rules on exports of cultural goods.

…the society by fighting against money laundering and the financing of terrorism by also controlling cash flows in the EU.

Travelers entering or leaving the EU are obliged to declare amounts of cash valued at EUR 10,000 or more (or its equivalent in other currencies or bearer negotiable instruments) to customs authorities. Concerning 2018:

- Almost 93,000 cash declarations were submitted to Customs, amounting to more than EUR 51 billion.
- More than 12,000 cases of non-declared cash or incorrectly completed cash declarations were recorded, amounting to almost EUR 330 million.

…the financial interests of the European Union by ensuring correct and efficient collection of duties, detection, investigation into and prosecution of fraud:

- In 2018, national customs authorities detected an amount of 584 million EUR of unpaid duties to be returned to the EU budget.

… the society by ensuring that exports of sensitive technology which could be used to make nuclear or chemical weapons are legitimate and have the appropriate export licenses.

…the society by helping police and immigration services in the fight against human trafficking, drugs, pornography and firearms – and other factors of organized crime and terrorism.
Customs are business friendly

The Union Customs Code aims to maintain a proper balance between customs controls and facilitation of legitimate trade, so as to enable the EU to prosper and develop competitive businesses.

Business operators

To be able to carry out commercial activities related to importing and exporting goods (in the role of a consignee, declarant or representative), business operators have to register in the Economic Operators Identification and Registration system (EORI).

At the end of 2018 there were 6.1 million entities registered in the EORI system.

Authorised Economic Operators (AEO)

An important instrument for trade facilitation is the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) regime. AEO status provides for a more favorable treatment in the areas of customs simplification and facilitation. At the end of 2018, there were almost 17,200 valid AEO authorisations in the EU. AEOs are playing an increasingly important role in the supply chain in terms of the number of goods declared.

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union

Paperless environment

The electronic customs systems are crucial for the operation of the Customs Union. The replacement of paper based customs procedures with EU wide electronic procedures creates a more efficient and modern customs environment.

In 2018, EU traders submitted more than 99% of customs declarations electronically. They will be able to use customs electronic systems for other elements of their business operations soon, in line with ongoing implementation of the Union Customs Code electronic system.

The speed of the customs clearance process is very high. The vast majority of import declarations under standard procedure is cleared within 1 hour.

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union
Simplifications

Simplifications enable business operators to perform customs procedures faster and more efficiently. This reduces the administrative burden and costs.

At the end of 2018, almost 36,000 valid authorisations for the use of simplified procedures at import and export apply. The majority of imports and exports were declared by using simplified procedures in 2018.

![Graph showing customs declaration procedures](image)

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union

Furthermore, at the end of 2018, there were:

- Almost 25,000 authorised consignors and consignees for transit;
- Almost 1,300 single authorisations for all economic customs regimes;
- Nearly 12,000 authorisations for the use of customs warehouses.
Customs duties mean revenue

Customs duties are one of the sources of income for the budget of the EU and its Member States.

Duties collected in 2018 went down marginally compared to the year before, reaching € 25.396 billion despite the continuous rise in the value of goods import. The share of customs duties in the total EU revenue has dropped to 13% in 2018. The picture below shows the structure of EU revenue in 2018.

* GNI- Gross National Income

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union and Eurostat

Source: DG Budget
# Customs cooperate

Wider international cooperation is crucial in protecting the interests of EU citizens and business worldwide. The EU has signed more than 50 international agreements providing for customs cooperation and mutual administrative assistance with 80 countries outside the EU to support controls and enforcement and to simplify and harmonise customs procedures, which in turn reduces the administrative burden and costs for European companies.

The majority of EU trade 78.4%, is with countries that have customs cooperation agreements with the EU which ensures for administrative assistance between EU and third country customs authorities in regards to the correct application of preferential rules of origin.

## Technical assistance

The mutual exchange of knowledge and experience with non-EU customs administrations helps to increase their quality of service.

During 2018, the number of man-days spent on technical assistance to non EU-countries was almost 12,000. The technical assistance covered training, capacity building, sniffer dog training, etc.

![Graph showing technical assistance man-days by region](image)

- **Europe, non-EU**: 70%
- **Asia**: 21%
- **Africa**: 5%
- **Other (<5%)**: 2%

Source: DG Taxation and Customs Union
International cooperation and trade

The EU trade volume with non-EU countries, with which the EU has a binding agreement on customs cooperation, represents a major proportion of EU external trade.

Source: Eurostat
28 EU Member States – links to national customs websites