

The customs of the future

Customs authorities are faced with a rapidly-changing environment, due to the evolution of modes of production and consumption, the intensification of international trade and the emergence of new global threats (organised crime, terrorism and climatic change).

In this context, European customs authorities are playing an essential role by maintaining a permanent balance between the protection of society and the facilitation of trade.

Facilitating and modernising customs clearance

The “Electronic Customs” or “E-customs” project has been adopted in order to simplify import and export customs formalities and reduce the customs clearance periods for goods.

The electronic customs project is designed to create a paperless commercial and customs environment. The interconnection of the information and communications systems used by the customs administrations throughout the Member States will benefit both customs authorities and international trade operators.

Furthermore, customs authorities are forging new relationships based on trust with international trading operators, thanks to the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) status granted by the Community.

This AEO status, which is granted at the national level, is recognised throughout the European Union and helps to modulate customs controls and facilitations according to the reliability of operators, as determined by audits.

Finally, by establishing a “one-stop shop”, the administration is hoping to speed up and simplify the completion of formalities relating to the importation and exportation of goods by concentrating the implementation of regulations enforced by different administrations (Customs, Fraud Squad and Veterinary Services) at a single point of entry.

At the same time, customs authorities are adapting their organisational structure and procedures in response to the increased security requirements of our fellow citizens.

Increasing the security of international trading exchanges

In order to combat the constantly evolving manifestations of fraud, the French Customs are now equipped with state-of-the-art technologies such as Sycoscan equipment and mobile scanner lorries. These tools allow for the rapid identification of fraudulent goods.

The fight against different forms of trafficking will only be effective if operations associated with a high risk of fraud are properly targeted.

Furthermore, the only way to guarantee a high level of security and improve the fight against increasingly complex and diversified forms of fraud is to increase the level of cooperation between European customs authorities and with other public bodies and members of the business community.

Finally, the "Security Amendment" to the Community Customs Code mirrors the American measures which are designed to strengthen security controls for international exchanges. Therefore, as of 1 July 2009, operators will be required to submit information prior to customs clearance that will allow customs administrations to perform safety and security analyses, both on the importation and exportation of shipments.