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Customs 2020 Programme Progress Report 2019

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1. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following acronyms are used in this document:

Abbreviation	Meaning
AEO	Authorised Economic Operator
AES	Automated Export System
AFF	Action Follow-up Form
ART	Activity Reporting Tool
AWP	Annual Work Programme
BTI	Binding Tariff Information
CCN/CSI	Common Communications Network - Common Systems Interface
CCI	Centralised Clearance for Import
CDCO	Centrally Developed / Centrally Operated
CELBET	Customs Eastern Land Border Expert Team
CLET	Customs Laboratories Expert Team
COPIS	Anti-Counterfeiting and Anti-Piracy System
CRC	Common Risk Criteria
CRMS	Customs Risk Management System
C2020	Customs 2020 Programme
DG SANTE	European Commission Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety
DG TAXUD	European Commission Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union
DG TRADE	European Commission Directorate-General for Trade
EAF	Event Assessment Form
EBTI	European Binding Tariff Information
ECCG	Electronic Customs Coordination Group
ECS	Export Control System
EIS	European Information System
ET	Expert Team
GUM	Guarantee Management
ICS	Import Control System
ILIADe	Inter Laboratory Inventory of Analytical Determination
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
JA	Joint Action
MASP	Multi-Annual Strategic Plan
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
N/A	Not available
NCTS	New Computerised Transit System
PICS	Programmes Information and Collaboration Space
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
PoUS	Proof of Union Status
REX	Registered Exporters
Samancta	Sampling Manual for Customs and Tax Authorities
SPEED	Single Portal for Entry or Exit of Data
UCC	Union Customs Code
WCO	World Customs Organisation

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customs 2020 aims to support and improve the proper functioning and modernisation of the Customs Union. It focuses on supporting customs authorities in protecting the financial and economic interests of the Union and of the Member States, including the fight against fraud and the protection of intellectual property rights, increasing safety and security, protecting citizens and the environment, improving the administrative capacity of the customs authorities, and strengthening the competitiveness of European businesses. The vast majority of programme funding goes into the operation of European Information Systems, followed by the organisation of the joint actions (the cooperation and collaboration side) and the human competency building activities.

2019 was the sixth year of activities under the Customs 2020 programme and represented a continuity to 2018. The numbers of European Information Systems (and their availability), actions, events, training activities and participants remained at high levels, testifying to a strong demand from national administrations and business owners for programme activities. Such strong demand has been also confirmed by the conclusions of the mid-term evaluation of the programme¹.

The key observations that can be deduced from the analysis of the Performance Measurement Framework indicators in 2019, supported by some of the conclusions of the mid-term evaluation of the programme, are as follows:

- Continued **strong demand** for programme support.
- The **European Information Systems portfolio was expanded**. Two IT projects were completed in 2019: the EU Customs Trader Portal and the UCC Standardised Exchange of Information for Special Procedures (INF SP) system.
- Existing IT systems are **continuously operated** and are resistant to **increased volume of data traffic**.
- A major effort ensured to have the Customs IT systems ready for the **UK withdrawal** from the EU.
- Very positive assessment of the **achieved results** of the joint actions, their **usefulness** and **met expectations** by national customs officials who participated in them.
- Increase in the degree of **networking** among programme participants.
- **Low awareness rate**, as shown by the results of the programme polls and by the conclusions of the mid-term evaluation.
- **Remarkable increase in the number of officials trained by using EU common training material** (130%)
- In the context of the programmes, the European Commission **awarded for the first time seven universities for their high quality academic customs study programmes** (MA/BA level).

1. IT systems²

¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6862eee3-2db7-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>

² It should be noticed that the information contained in this report regarding the implementation of the EIS provides an overall description of the main achievements in 2019 and the IT performance indicators established in the PMF of the Customs 2020 programme. This information is complemented by the 2019 e-Customs progress report, which provides a complete picture with detailed information on the progress made by the Commission and the Member States in the development and implementation of all IT systems related to customs. It is prepared by DG TAXUD taking into account national reports and covers the IT systems/components funded by the Customs 2020 programme (Union components) and those managed and funded by Member States (national components). The e-Customs progress reports are produced pursuant to Article 12 of the Decision No 70/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on a paperless environment for customs and trade. These reports are published on the Europa website: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/general-information-customs/electronic-customs_en

A paper-less customs environment improves both the trade facilitation and the effective enforcement of rules for protection of EU financial, safety and security interests. Mainly, the **European Information Systems (EIS)** supported by Customs 2020 play a vital role in interconnecting customs authorities. The functioning of these IT systems is enabled by the closed and secure **Common Communication Network/Common Systems Interface (CCN/CSI)** infrastructure, which since the launch of the programme has performed with high availability and reliability. The CCN/CSI network registered over 6 902 million messages exchanged during 2019, which represents a 19.2% growth since the previous year. In terms of traffic, the CCN Network registered around 32.23 Terabyte during 2019 (an increase of 10.8% since 2018). The high volume of information channelled during the year via CCN/CSI and the EIS supported by the network, shows that the programme is a solid and robust enabler for the paper-less environment and information exchange amongst customs and tax authorities.

Since the launch of the programme, IT developments and adaptations of the IT environment to the Union Customs Code³ (UCC) have been carried out, bringing the total number of EIS in operations to 54 at the end of 2019. These developments were essential for a well-functioning and modern Customs Union. During 2019, the Customs 2020 programme continued to finance the development of new EIS projects, in close cooperation with national customs authorities and in line with the deadlines agreed with the Member States and trade stakeholders. DG TAXUD progressed in 2019 in the development of the **Import Control System 2 (ICS2)** and of the reshaped **Customs Risk Management System (CRMS2)**. The two systems are core Union customs instruments aimed at protecting the external borders of the EU internal market from risks linked to the international movement of goods, including those associated to terrorism and crime. In addition, ICS2 is a large-scale system and underpins customs pre-arrival safety and security programme. It will provide a new platform for collection of advance electronic data on all goods and shipments prior to their arrival to the Union customs territory and from different trade sources.

The **EU Customs Trader Portal**, an electronic single point-of-access to a number of EU customs systems was launched in October 2019. In a first stage, the portal is being used for the exchange of information pertaining to applications and decisions related to Binding Tariff Information (eBTI) and to Authorised Economic Operator status (eAEO), which since the October 2019 have to be submitted and received electronically through the Trader Portal and can no longer be on paper. The portal serves as a single point of contact for all correspondence and exchange of information. This includes the applications by the economic operators, additional information requests by the customs authority and replies from economic operators, and the subsequent management of the applications and decisions.

During the year, the programme continued to ensure the running and maintenance of the existing EIS. The correct calculation of tariffs and the fight against fraud are crucial to the protection of EU's financial interests. In this sense, TAXUD continued to ensure during 2019 the daily update of the **TARIC system** (Integrated Tariff of the EU), which provides the required data for the customs clearance systems of the Member States and gives economic operators a comprehensive view of all the measures applicable when importing or exporting goods into/from the EU. Other EIS such as **NCTS (New Computerised Transit System)** allows to monitor the movement of goods within the territory of the EU and of the common transit countries, respectively, and to identify cases of fraud or non-payment of customs duties. NCTS has created traceable records for each transit transaction. The **Import Control (ICS) and the Export Control (ECS) systems** are two of the main systems that contribute to increased interconnectivity among Member States and with economic operators. In 2019, these three systems (NCTS, ICS and ECS) have maintained the highest availability rate over the last 3 years (99.45%).

2. Joint actions

In 2019, customs officials continued to exchange views and best practices in the **joint actions** organised under the programme. As in previous years, more than 98% of the responding participants in these joint actions assessed positively the usefulness of the activities from a professional point of view.

³ Regulation (EU) 2019/632 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 amending Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 to prolong the transitional use of means other than the electronic data-processing techniques provided for in the Union Customs Code (OJ L 111, 25.4.2019, p. 54–58).

Working practices, administrative procedures and guidelines were developed and shared among the national administrations following the joint actions. These outcomes assist countries to increase the performance, effectiveness and efficiency of the customs administration. Guidelines and recommendations were also produced to support the implementation of Union law in the national administrations. They identify and address outstanding technical issues and constitute background information for Union law preparation and review. Since the launch of the programme, over 3000 guidelines and recommendations have been issued further to participation in the programme's joint actions.

A key achievement in 2019 was the foresight project **The Future of Customs in the EU 2040** ([#FutureofCustoms](#)). The overall aim of the project is to better understand trends and drivers impacting the EU customs ecosystem and possible paths for how this system could develop by 2040.

Expert teams represent an increasingly used tool from the programme toolbox supporting enhanced operational collaboration, either on a regional or on a thematic basis. The expert team approach allows customs experts of Member States to have in depth cooperation on operational issues which go beyond the traditional means of cooperation to realise the pre-identified objectives of a common long term project (expert teams are active between 12 and 36 months). This approach gives the chance to involve more the participants and make their administration further committed to the projects. During the year 2019, all four existing customs expert teams, i.e. **EU Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border 2 (CELBET 2⁴)**, **Customs Laboratories (CLET)**, **Binding Tariff Information (BTI)** and **the Customs IT Collaboration (ETCIT)** continued their work, and three of them started the next phase: CLET 2, ETCIT 2 and BTI 2. In general, all the existing expert teams show an increase involvement of participating countries, both regarding the number of the participants and the committed Member States.

3. Training and human competency

The Customs 2020 programme finances also the development of **eLearning courses** on topics of common interest in collaboration with customs administrations and representatives of trade. Such courses support the implementation of EU legislation and ensure the dissemination of good customs practices throughout the European Union. As in the previous year, in 2019 TAXUD continued to support in particular the implementation of the UCC, by supporting its related IT systems for public and private customs users with eLearning modules, namely through producing further language versions or updating the UCC eLearning Programme modules, developing eLearning on the new EU Trader Portal on EBTI and on eAEO (for private sector/economic operators), or updating operational courses for customs officers as Samancta, Container Examination or Drug Precursor control. In total, by end 2019 the EU eLearning portfolio contained more than 30 eLearning courses in the customs area, all of which support customs professionals from both public and private sector with the application of the UCC and related common customs legal, operational and technical requirements.

Furthermore, Customs 2020 continued to support national customs administrations with the national implementation and/or introduction of competency-based staff development and training, based on the **EU Customs Competency Framework (CustComp^{EU})**, through a series of common and/or country-specific implementation training events. Furthermore, in 2019 the European Commission awarded for the first time seven Universities for their high quality academic customs study programmes (MA/BA level), acknowledging their leading role in raising customs performance and professionalism. Started in 2019, this exercise will take place annually. As in the previous years, cross-country expertise sharing/-building was provided throughout 2019, e.g. in form of CLEP events (Common Learning Events Programme) with a total of 14 events. Similarly, innovative common knowledge building and/or – sharing formats were further explored throughout 2019, such as EU Training webinars, eBooks, nano-learnings⁵ and similar. These build the foundation for further enhanced structured EU customs training cooperation in the years to come. Specific EU training support was provided in 2019 in the context of the preparation for BREXIT, such as through the development of fast-track upskilling and on-boarding customs training programmes for direct national administrations' use, available in 23 languages.

⁴ CELBET is an initiative of 11 EU Member States: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.

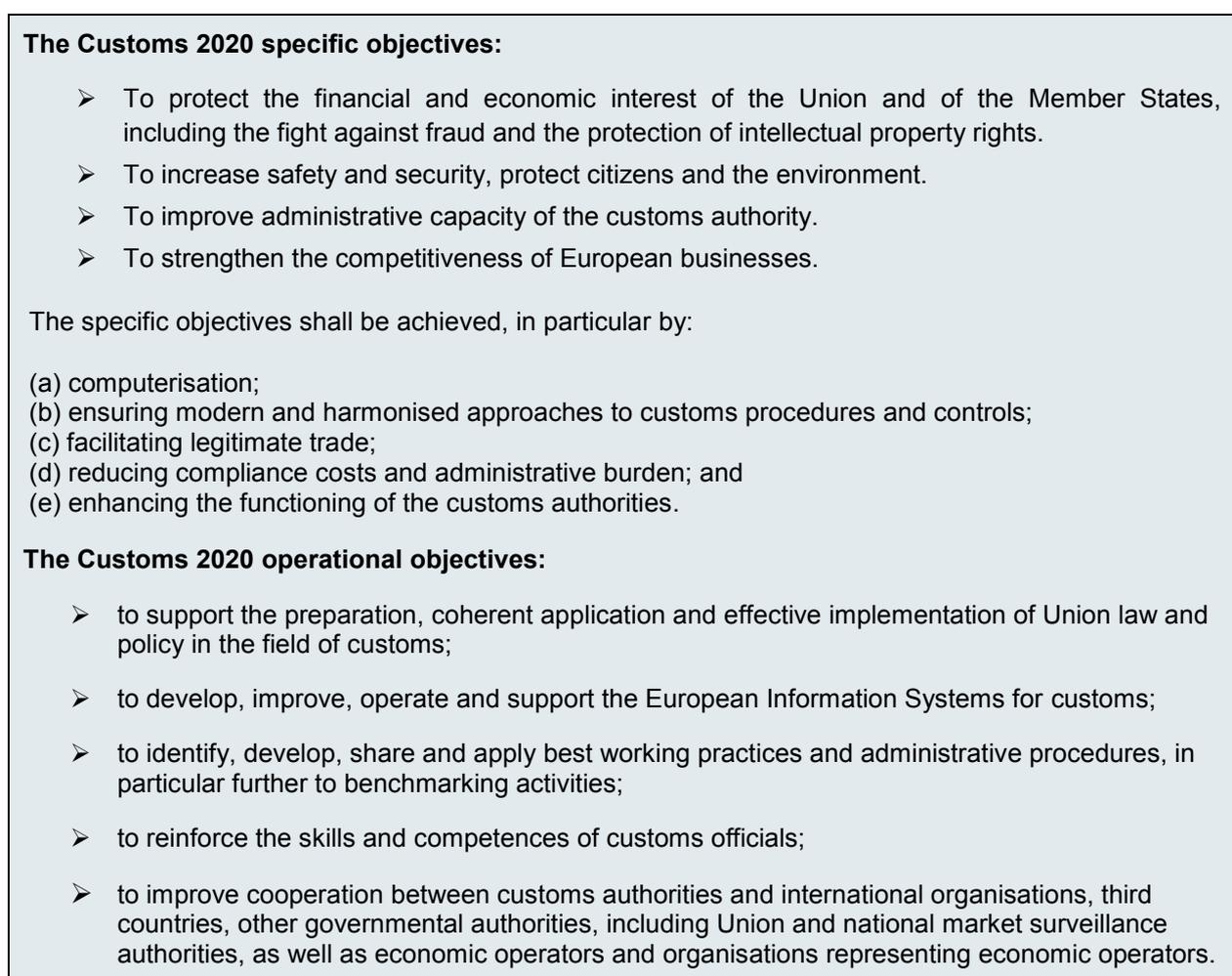
⁵ Nano-learnings permit participants to learn a subject in a very short time frame.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Customs 2020 in a nutshell

Regulation 1294/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing an action programme for customs in the European Union for the period 2014-2020 (Customs 2020) (the Customs 2020 regulation) established the multiannual action programme Customs 2020 for the period 2014-2020 with the aim to support the functioning and modernisation of the Customs Union in order to strengthen the internal market. Total budget foreseen for this programme period is EUR 522.9 million. The programme represents a continuation of the earlier generations of programmes Customs 2007⁶ and Customs 2013⁷, which have significantly contributed to facilitating and enhancing cooperation between customs authorities within the Union.

Figure 1: Customs 2020 programme objectives



There are three types of activities that are organised under the programme:

- **European Information Systems (EIS)** - DG TAXUD's IT capacity supports the Customs Union by operating the common infrastructure (CCN, CCN2, SPEED2), two TAXUD Data Centres and developing, maintaining and operating the Union components of more than 50 Customs Trans-

⁶ OJ L 36, 12.2.2003, p. 1

⁷ OJ L 154/25, 14.6.2007, p.25

European Systems. These systems allow seamless, automated information exchange on import/export/transit movements with Member States and third countries⁸ and other actors of the supply chain at international level facilitating trade and enabling the functioning of the EU single market.

- **Joint actions (JA)** - bringing together officials from the participating countries - these are most commonly project groups, working visits, workshops and seminars (see full list below). The programme covers the cost of organisation and participation to these activities.

Types of joint actions:

1. seminars and workshops;
 2. project groups, generally composed of a limited number of countries, operational during a limited period of time to pursue a predefined objective with a precisely defined outcome, including coordination or benchmarking;
 3. working visits organised by the participating countries or another country to enable officials to acquire or increase their expertise or knowledge in customs matters; for working visits organised within third countries only travel and subsistence (accommodation and daily allowance) costs are eligible under the Programme;
 4. monitoring activities carried out by joint teams made up of Commission officials and officials of the participating countries to analyse customs practices, identify any difficulties in implementing rules and, where appropriate, make suggestions for the adaptation of Union rules and working methods;
 5. expert teams, namely structured forms of cooperation, with a non-permanent or permanent character, pooling expertise to perform tasks in specific domains or carry out operational activities, possibly with the support of online collaboration services, administrative assistance and infrastructure and equipment facilities;
 6. customs administration capacity building and supporting actions;
 7. studies;
 8. jointly developed communication actions;
 9. any other activity in support of the general, specific and operational objectives
- **Human competency building (HCB)** - a customs staff competency framework, common training materials and electronic learning modules play a vital part in developing the human competency component of the Customs Union. Hence, the Customs 2020 programme finances conceptual HCB initiatives as well as the development of eLearning courses on topics of common interest in collaboration with customs administrations and representatives of trade. Such courses support the implementation of EU legislation and ensure the dissemination of good customs practices throughout the European Union.

The Commission and the participating countries (EU Member States and countries recognised as candidates or potential candidates for EU membership having concluded international agreements for their participation in the Customs 2020 programme⁹) establish jointly the annual priorities and objectives of the programme by adopting each year **the Annual Work Programme**. The implementation of the programme is under direct management by the Commission meaning that it is centrally managed by DG TAXUD. It is implemented financially on the basis of grant agreements with the participating countries (joint actions), and procurements (mostly for European Information Systems and human competency building).

⁸ Customs international information systems other than the NCTS include the EU Implementation of the UNECE Customs Convention on the international transport of goods under cover of TIR Carnets, eATA Carnet Project, Smart and Secure Trade Lanes (SSTL) and the EU-CH EXS data exchange for indirect exports from Switzerland.

⁹ 34 participating countries: 28 Member States, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rep. North Macedonia, Montenegro, Rep. Serbia and Turkey.

3.2 The Performance Measurement Framework

The Customs 2020 Regulation stipulates in Article 17 that the Commission shall monitor the implementation of the Programme and actions under it on the basis of indicators and make the outcome of such monitoring public. The final evaluation of the Customs 2013 programme¹⁰ equally made a recommendation to "develop a comprehensive monitoring framework to track performance and to identify issues of concern in a timely manner".

In order to achieve this purpose, the Commission established in 2014 a Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) to be implemented with the start of the new programme. The PMF is based on the intervention logic (see Figure 3), which describes the logical step-by-step link between the wider problems and needs addressed by the programme and the programme's objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, results and impacts. The PMF relies both on the quantitative (indicators) and qualitative (reporting and interpretation) data for assessing the progress achieved.

The indicators can be divided into two categories:

Output and Results indicators – these are first and second order effects that can be directly attributed to the programme. Outputs refer to those effects (most often tangible products) achieved immediately after implementing an activity, while the results look at the mid-term effects or the difference made on the ground thanks to the outputs. Both types of indicators are collected annually, reflected in the Progress Report and are linked to the operational objectives of the programme.

Impact indicators – they indicate the long-term effects of the programme by measuring its contribution to the broader policy areas, where programme activities are only one of the contributing factors. They mostly rely on the use of existing external indicators (not collected by PMF surveys) and are mainly assessed as part of evaluations. They are linked to the higher-level specific objectives of the programme and the policies it supports.

The PMF uses both its own data collection tools and the data gathered externally. The external data is collected either by other organisations at a global level or inside DG TAXUD. The PMF's own data collection tools gather feedback from programme stakeholders and are summarised in the table below.

Figure 2: PMF data collection tools

Tool	When is the data submitted?	Who submits the data?
Action Reporting Tool - Proposal form	At the beginning of each activity	Action managers
Action Follow up Form	In February, one form per action or one form each year for multi-annual actions	Action managers
Action Follow up Form for working visits		Participants to the working visit
Event Assessment Form (EAF)	60 days after the end of an event or yearly in case of project groups or similar activities longer than 1 year	Participants to an event or members of a project group or similar activities
Programme Poll	Every 18 months – to be launched in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-2015, • beginning 2017, • mid-2018, • end 2019 	The Programme Poll is addressed to all customs officials in the participating countries

The PMF follows the annual reporting cycle. It takes into consideration a calendar year of activities initiated or organised under the programme. The drafting of the Annual Progress Report starts in the following year once the data collection process is finalised. Following data analysis and consultation with stakeholders, it is published during the following year. The Annual Progress Reports represent a summary of the main output and result indicators and gives an assessment of the overall progress achieved during the year.

The mid-term evaluation (in 2018) and the final evaluation (in 2021) of the programme make full use of the available Annual Progress Reports and report on the impacts of the programme's intervention.

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/sites/taxation/files/docs/body/customs_2013_final_evaluation_report.pdf

3.3 Mid-term evaluation of the programme

In accordance with Article 18 of the Customs 2020 Regulation, DG TAXUD conducted a **mid-term evaluation of the programme**¹¹, supported by an **external study**. The main objective of this evaluation was to assess the programme's performance since the launch of the programme in 2014 until 2017, including strengths and weaknesses of activities, the continued relevance of problems and needs and the programme's efficiency and value for money.

The study was finalised at the end of 2018 and is available in the Publication Office of the EU¹². This study supported the **Commission Report** on the mid-term evaluation of Customs 2020 addressed to the European Parliament and the Council¹³, adopted on 7 February 2019.

DG TAXUD, together with national customs authorities, adopted in 2019 an **action plan** to address the recommendations. The implementation of the recommendations will be regularly monitored (first follow-up exercise will be done in Q4 of 2020). The final assessment of the follow-up of recommendations will be provided at the time of the final evaluations of Customs and Fiscalis 2020 programmes.

Following one of the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation, DG TAXUD launched in 2019 an external study to review the PMF. The study's aim is to reassess the current set of indicators, simplify them and fit the monitoring results better to decision-making needs. The study also addressed the European Court of Auditors recommendation to set appropriate reporting arrangements and indicators both on the overall level of implementation and on individual IT projects. The study has been finalised in December 2020¹⁴.

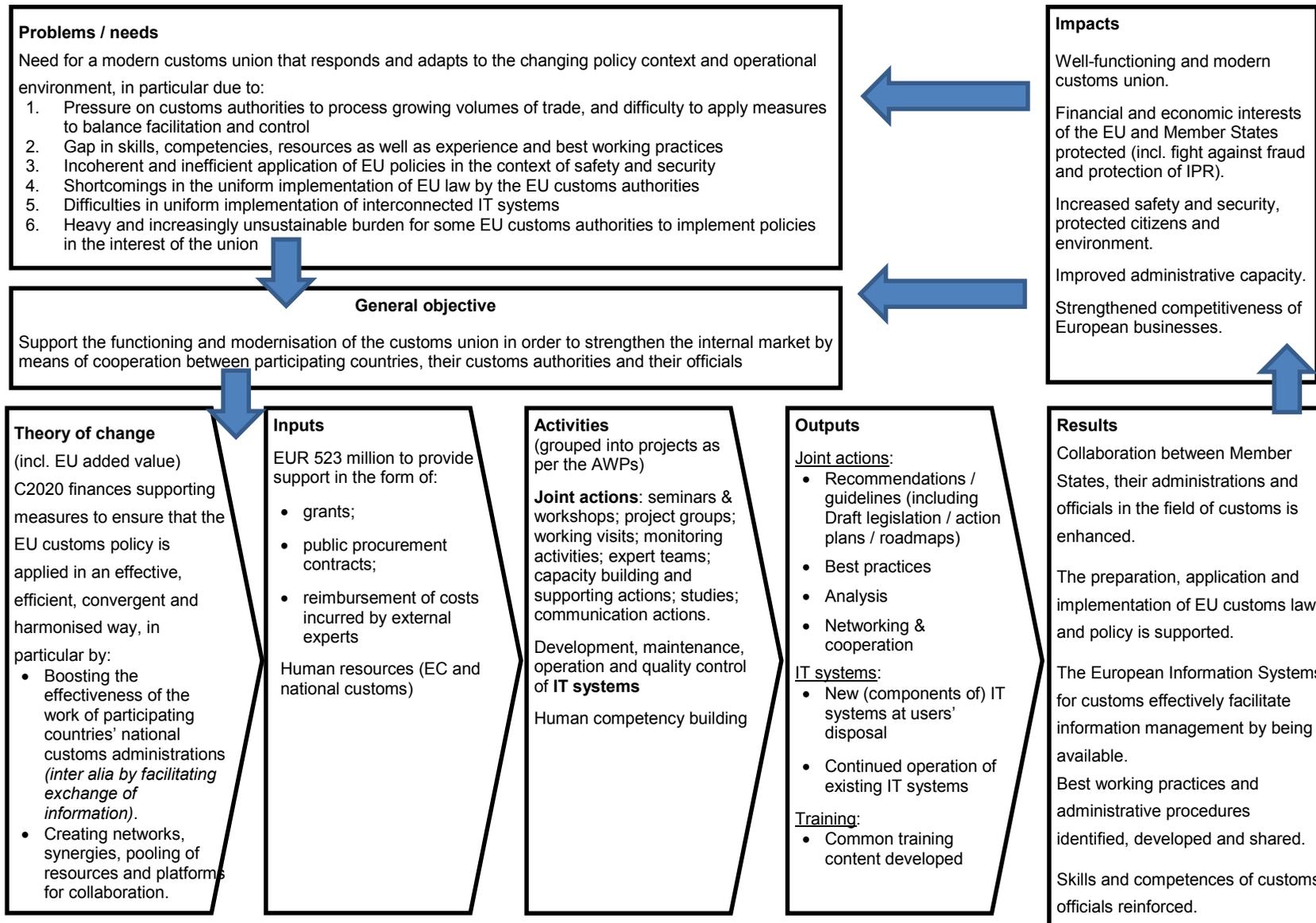
¹¹ Commission Staff Working Document SWD(2019)14 final

¹² <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6862eee3-2db7-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-87696278>

¹³ REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the mid-term evaluation of the Customs 2020 programme [COM/2019/57](#)

¹⁴ The results of the study will be included in the 2020 annual progress report.

Figure 3: Intervention logic of the Customs 2020 programme



4. PROGRAMME YEAR 2019 – BASIC PARAMETERS (on budget and joint actions)

4.1 Budget

The overview in Figure 4 below summarises the programme funding according to the main activity types. In order to make the table more meaningful, budgetary information from the previous years has been added.

Figure 4: Committed expenses per budgetary year and main action categories under the programme, in euros¹⁵

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
European Information Systems	57 333 696	61 167 253	59 897 436	81 931 173	68 230 970	67 822 380
Joint actions (other than expert teams and studies)	6 323 000	5 500 000	5 580 000	5 815 000	5 560 000	6 264 000
Joint actions -expert teams	-	-	1 867 365	-	1 726 971	1 450 667
Training	1 350 000	995 000	2 646 000	-	1 800 000	1 836 000
Studies and communication	1 083 116	846 359	1 682 024	1 087 965	1 694 366	812 953
External experts	200 000	200 000	120 000	170 000	250 000	100 000
TOTAL¹⁶	66 289 812	68 708 612	71 732 825	89 004 138	79 262 307	78 286 000
AWP	66 293 000	68 801 000	71 733 000	81 895 000	80 071 000	78 286 000
EU Annual Budget	66 293 000	68 801 000	71 733 000	81 895 000	80 071 000	78 286 000
Amount MFF ¹⁷	66 293 000	68 801 000	71 733 000	81 895 000	80 071 000	78 286 000

As is standard for the programme, and in accordance with the funds allocation principles included in the programme's legal basis¹⁸, the vast majority of funding in 2019 went into the development and operation of European Information Systems (86,6%), followed by the organisation of the joint actions (11,1%), and the training activities (2,3%).

We can notice that in 2017, there was an increase of the expenditure dedicated to IT systems. This increase integrates the IT frontloading requested for 2017, it is consistent with the increase set in the MFF and relates to the multiple new IT developments needed for the implementation of the UCC. During 2018 and 2019 the IT expenditure has remained overall stable.

In the last year, the committed expenses on joint actions (organised under grant agreements) have increased slightly, in line with the increase in the number of participants. It is worth recalling that the expenses for joint actions are difficult to forecast in advance, given that the actions and events are triggered by constantly evolving business needs. For this reason, the planned expenses that appear in the Annual Work Programme can differ to a smaller or larger percentage from actual commitments in a given year on joint actions.

¹⁵ The table compares committed amounts since the launch of the programme, as the actual expenses are not finalised for all the previous years. Budgetary year X covers from 01/04/X to 31/03/X+1

¹⁶ It is to be noted that the total amount of appropriations may be higher when using foreseen financial contributions from candidate and potential candidate countries participating in Customs 2020 programme.

¹⁷ Figures as from 2017 reflect the frontloading for IT expenditure.

¹⁸ Annex III of Regulation 1294/2013

Expert teams were launched for the first time in 2016 and that there was no budgetary allocation during 2017 as expert teams created in 2016 continued to work during 2017 under the funds committed in the previous year. Oscillations amongst different years are normal for this type of actions, given its multiannual nature (expert teams created in a given year continue to work in subsequent year(s) without requiring additional budgetary commitments).

Regarding training activities, there were not commitments in 2017 as the contracts signed in previous years were of a multiannual nature and the activities carried out in 2017 were funded from these contracts. The amount committed in 2019 remained at a similar level to that of 2018.

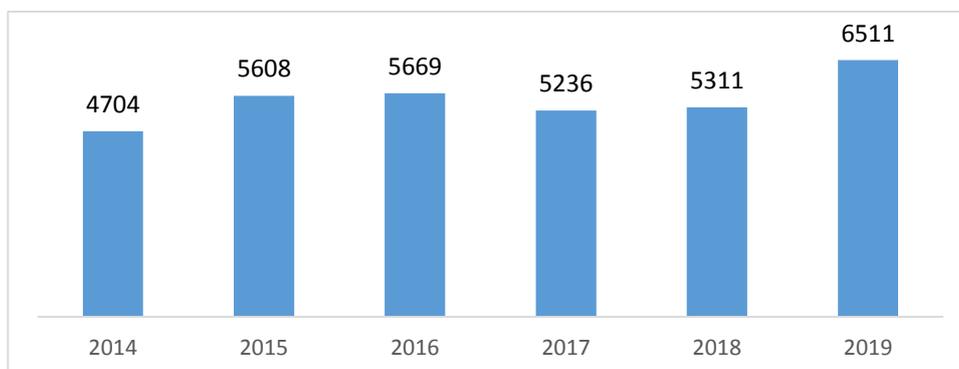
The programme also finances the conduct of studies, data collection and comparative analyses in customs issues. Some of the initiatives finalised in 2019 related to:

- Study to provide scientific and technical assistance in the field of scientific customs, in particular expertise in pharmaceutical science and botany. The study analysed scientific literature, databases and regulations, on plants and the alike (parts and extracts of plants, vitamins, minerals, traditional medicine and pharmaceuticals) in order to support the work of DG TAXUD and the Customs Code Committee when facing difficulties in the classification or naming of these products.
- Contraffice-RISK- pilot project: the study focused on Action 6.2 of the EU Strategy and Action Plan for customs risk management: "CMS (container status messages) collected and exploited for risk management purposes". CSM are routinely exchanged between the commercial partners. The risk management purposes refers primarily to the operational pre-arrival risk analysis carried out on Entry Summary Declarations under the Union Customs Code.

4.2 Participants in joint actions (excluding expert teams)

The number of total participants has increased considerably during 2019, reaching 6 511, with 1 200 more participants than in 2018 representing an increase of 22.6%.

Figure 5: Evolution in the number of participants¹⁹ in joint actions under Customs 2020



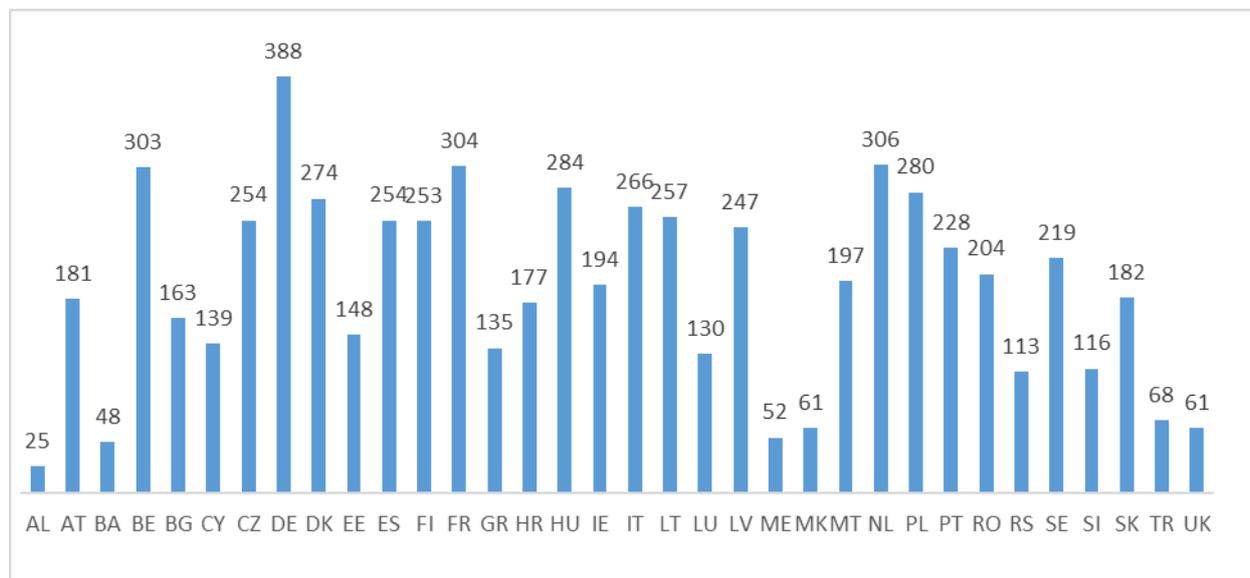
It is important to stress that participation to programme activities is voluntary and is influenced by a number of factors, such as: the business need for organising activities, the trend of moving away from physical meetings and toward online collaboration, as well as the individual national administrations' capacity and interest for participation.

If we look at the distribution of participants by country, we can see that all the countries make use of the programme, but that there are countries that do so to a greater extent than others. This is in line with the voluntary nature of participation in the programme activities, where the number of participants from a given

¹⁹ This is the number of total participants (which measures all instances of participation in activities and allows for the same people to have taken part in multiple activities).

country depends partly on the level of interest and activity shown by the country's administration in utilizing the potential of the programme. In absolute terms, the countries that had a higher number of participants during 2019 were Germany (388), The Netherlands (306) and France (304). In comparative terms to the previous year, we noticed in 2019 a big increase in the participation of Denmark (66%) and Spain (59%); together with a decrease in the participation of Turkey (44%) and UK (35%).²⁰

Figure 6: Overview of participants per country in 2019^{21,22}



4.3 Joint actions (other than expert teams): proposals and actions

In order for an activity to be organised under the programme, one of the programme teams (participating country or the EC) has to submit a proposal for this activity, with information on the background, objective, expected results, participants and financial cost involved. This proposal is then evaluated by DG TAXUD and, if confirmed, becomes usually a single joint action. Each activity (action) is approved for a certain period during which the associated work, including the meetings, take place. This period is only restricted by the programme's overall timeframe and is detached from calendar or budgetary years.

In 2019, the total number of **operational joint actions** (i.e. the ones that were launched in previous years and continued their activities in 2019, together with the newly launched actions) remained broadly stable, with a slight decrease from 354 in 2018 to 347. It should be noticed that during the last year actions were to a greater extent organised in broader projects covering themes rather than specific interventions, which may lead to a decrease in the number of activities.

We can see from the two figures below that the trends on activity types and number of participants remain quite stable when compared with previous years. As in 2018, the most popular action type was working visits, followed by project groups and workshops as distant third. It is worth mentioning that the new type of working visits (“host initiated working visits”) appears for the first time in the 2019 overview, showing 3 operational activities during the year. The situation with regard to the number of participants is somewhat reversed with the project groups being the largest activity type in terms of participation, followed by seminars. This is explained by the fact that project groups are long-term / multiannual activities, under

²⁰ 34 countries participate: 28 Member States and Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rep. North Macedonia, Montenegro, Rep. Serbia and Turkey.

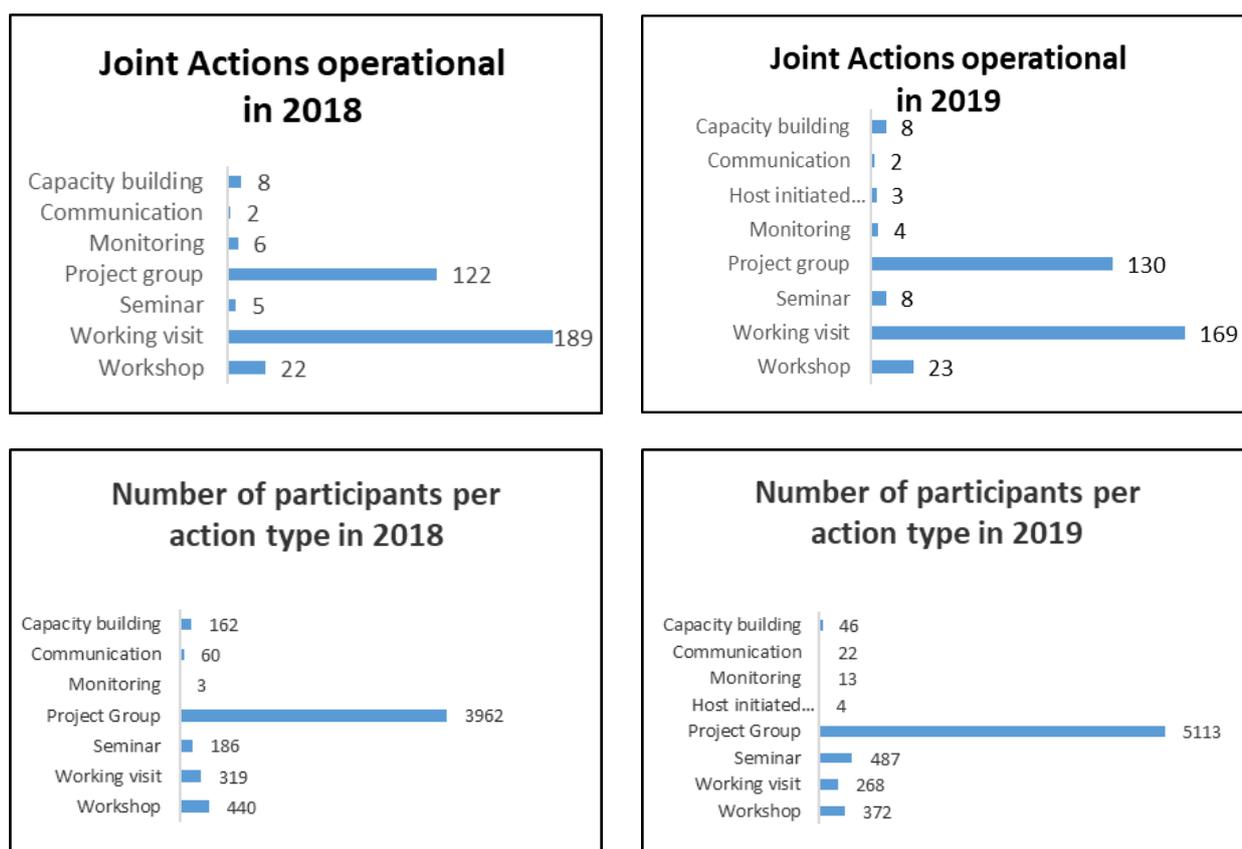
²¹ The participants marked as EU represent external experts who come outside national administrations and who may be invited to contribute to selected activities organised under the programme wherever this is essential for the achievement of the programme objectives. Candidate and potential candidate countries abbreviations: AL (Albania), BA (Bosnia-Herzegovina), ME (Montenegro), MK (Republic of North Macedonia), RS (Serbia), TR (Turkey).

²² The 2019 number of participants for AL not available at the time of drafting this report. The figure from 2018 has been used instead.

which several events are organised every year normally involving a high number of participants. On the contrary, working visits have a more limited participation (less than two participants on average).

In comparative terms, we can notice in 2019 a very high increase in the number of participants in project groups (from 3 962 to 5 113, i.e. 22.5% more) and seminars (from 186 to 487, i.e. 61.8% more). On the contrary, there was a decrease in the number of participants in capacity building activities (from 162 to 46, i.e. 71% less) and working visits (from 319 to 268, i.e. 15% less).

Figure 7: overview of activity types and number of participants²³ per activity type

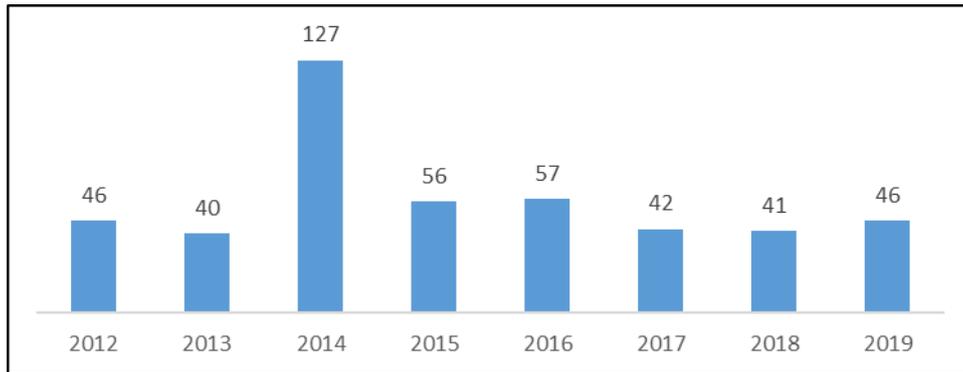


If we want to look at the evolution of **new proposals** over time (Figure 8), we first need to exclude the working visits, in order to get a comparative number²⁴. 2014 as the year of transition to the new programme meant that all proposals for ongoing activities had to be re-launched, which led to the great increase in the number of proposals treated in the year. In the 2015-2016 period, we can observe a stable number of new proposals launched every year, and a decrease in 2017 and in 2018 (from 57 to 41 proposals), which anyway was higher than the average under the Customs 2013 programme. When analysing these figures we should take into account that in the last years many actions were to a greater extent organised in broader projects covering themes rather than specific interventions. Content-wise, the projects are usually multi-annual rather than annual, as the actions and processes they stretch over more than one year. This may lead to less new initiatives and in a decrease in the total number of proposals and actions for a specific year. During 2019, we notice an overall stability in the number of proposals, moving from 41 in 2018 to 46 in 2019.

²³ The graph on number of participants per action type does not cover participants not registered in ART.

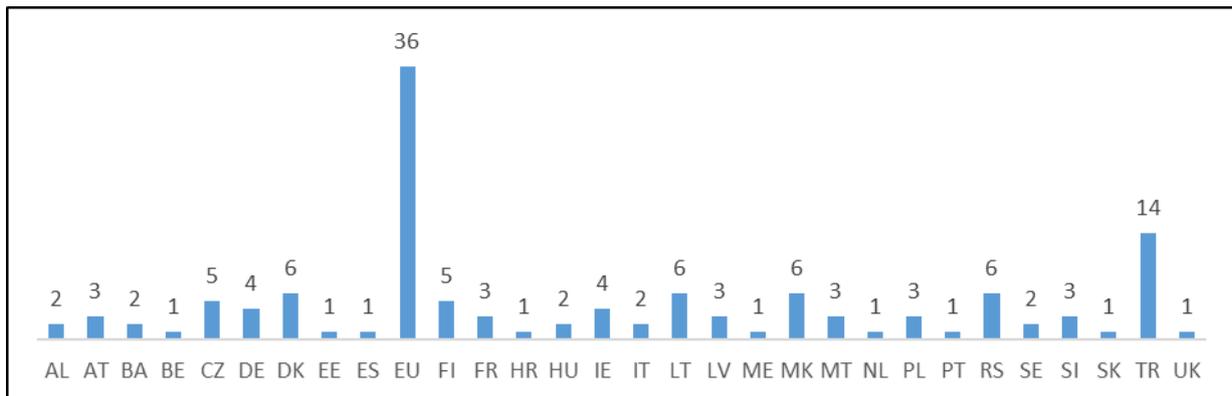
²⁴ This is because before 2014 all the working visits were covered by a single proposal, while under the Customs 2020 each business case for a working visit is treated as a separate proposal (thus increasing the number of proposals significantly).

Figure 8: Number of new proposals approved during 2019 (without working visits)



Most of the proposals for joint actions, as expected, were initiated by DG TAXUD units (marked EU in Figure 9). The national programme teams mostly submitted proposals for working visits, and here too we can observe in Figure 9 the difference among the administrations in pro-active they are in using the programme. By comparison with the figures of 2018, we notice a considerable increase in the involvement of Turkey (from 3 proposals in 2018 to 14 proposals in 2019), the Rep. of North Macedonia and Malta (both with an increase of 3 proposals).

Figure 9: Overview of proposals per initiating country in 2019 (including working visits)



5. PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

5.1 Cross-cut indicators: collaboration robustness between programme stakeholders

The first section of the Performance Measurement Framework contains a number of programme-wide indicators measuring the achievement of results by the joint actions, awareness, networking and the use of outputs.

Firstly, in this section we take a general look at the **achievement of results as reported by the action managers of joint actions** in the Action Follow-up Form. In the case of most project groups, the action managers are DG TAXUD policy experts, while for the working visits these are national customs officials. For the other types of actions, the actions managers are indistinctly coming from the Commission or national administrations. The level of achievement of results is evaluated against the anticipated results on a scale from 0 (not achieved) to 4 (fully achieved) at the end of the action. When analysing the figures, we should bear in mind that the level of achievement is impacted both by internal factors (e.g. if an activity lasts for several years, the results cannot be fully achieved immediately) and by external factors (such as political, business or technological developments). When we compare the obtained indicators for 2019 against the targets and the values in the preceding years, we can see an increase in the overall appreciation of results for joint actions (from 3.12 in 2018 to 3.28 in 2019), reaching the higher level of achievement of results since the launch of the programme. The feedback provided by action managers specifically for working visits (which follow an independent survey) shows a rating for the achievement of results even better than for the rest of joint actions (3.67, same than 2018), indicating that those who organised working visits are highly satisfied with the business value obtained (regardless of minor fluctuations between the years, the indicators has always been above target and baseline).

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target ²⁵	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Extent to which JA (that sought to enhance collaboration between participating countries, their administrations and officials in the field of customs) have achieved their intended result(s), as reported by action managers: average score on the scale of 0 (not achieved) to 4 (fully achieved)	AFF	2.91 (2014)	>= 3	2.91	3.12	3.00	3.00	3.12	3.28
	AFF Working Visits	3.55 (2014)	>= 3	3.55	3.59	3.64	3.72	3.67	3.67

Raising awareness about the programme and its potential among the target audience is an important precondition to fulfilling the programme's objectives. The awareness is measured through the Programme Poll, which is distributed to customs and tax administrations of the participating countries every 18 months. The Poll is distributed among both participants and non-participants to the programme's activities, since its goal is to measure awareness among the whole of the target audience.

The fourth Programme Poll took place at the end of 2019, gathering replies from 3 791 officials working in 31 participating countries. We can observe that approx. 48% of all customs officials in Europe are aware of the Customs 2020 programme, which represents a decrease of 9 percentage points compared to the poll

²⁵ Taking into account the different factors impacting the level of achievement, it is advisable to set realistic targets for the achievement of results. In the case of most joint actions, such a target could be set at 3 or higher (3 corresponding to "results achieved to a large extent").

results for 2018. All the results measured since the launch of the programme have been below the target (75%) and the baseline (65.7%). In order to raise awareness, in 2016 DG TAXUD defined a new communication strategy for the Customs 2020 programme. It included the use of new communication tools and channels, as well as common efforts between the EU and national programme teams in the distribution of programme information to the potential beneficiaries. In line with the annual action plan, several communication actions took place in 2019:

- A meeting for newcomers in the programme management community aiming to familiarise them with programme basics and to integrate them into the network of national programme coordinators
- A network meeting for national programme coordinators where they had the occasion to strengthen contacts with their counterparts in other administrations, get an update on programme management and implementation of the current and the new programmes
- A network meeting for national working visit coordinators with the objectives to strengthen the network and to involve coordinators in the reflection on a smooth transition towards the new programmes.
- Several newsletters summarising programme highlights were published.
- A member of the CPMT gave a presentation on the programmes in the meeting of the European Communication Network for Customs and Taxation.
- A pilot project was launched to introduce knowledge sharing within the Customs 2020 and Fiscalis 2020 programmes to increase the awareness of all national officials and not only those participating in programme events.

Indicator	Source	Baseline (2011 Poll)	Target	Mid 2015	End 2016	Mid 2018	End 2019
Extent to which the target audience is aware of the programme	Prog. Poll	65.7%	>75%	51%	55%	57%	48%

The **collaboration** between customs officials is key for implementing customs policy in Europe. It creates **networking** that improves the understanding and the implementation of customs law, as meeting fellow officials from other countries and maintaining professional contacts with them facilitates the exchange of best practices and ultimately support the better functioning of the Customs Union overall.

The feed-back from participants in joint actions collected under the Performance Measurement Framework shows that the collaboration robustness between programme stakeholders (customs administrations and their officials) is progressing in the desired direction. In 2019, 96.3% of the responding participants declared that the programme provided a good opportunity for them to expand their network of officials abroad (network opportunity); similar outcome was achieved in previous years, always above the target and the baseline. Additionally, in the same period, the number of respondents who declared that they have been in contact for work purposes with the officials they met during programme activities (lasting networking effect) averaged at around 73% during 2014-2018, with a decrease of 4 percentage points in 2018. This decrease in the long lasting network effect rate might have be result of an unclear understanding of the different possibilities to “be in contact”, which more often includes collaborative tools beyond the traditional contacts (such as physical meetings or direct phone calls). Additional explanations were included in the EAF for the survey in 2019. The results of 2019 shows a slight improvement in this indicator, with an increase of 1.1 percentage points by comparison with 2018.

Indicator: Degree of networking generated by programme activities	Source	Baseline (2013)	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q 1: Did the activity provide you a good opportunity to expand your network of and contacts with officials abroad? (percentage agreeing)	EAF ²⁶	94%	>90%	96.5%	95.5%	96.0%	96.3%	96.1%	96.3%
Q 2: Have you been in contact for work purposes with the officials you met during this activity since the activity ended? (percentage agreeing)	EAF	84%	>80%	71.5%	73.2%	70.0%	77.7%	73.5%	74.6% ²⁷

The levels of **sharing the programme outputs** (such as recommendations, guidelines, studies, etc.), as reported by action managers through the Action Follow-up Form, returned in 2016 to their baseline level, following a drop in 2015. Since then, the rate oscillated around 81% for three years and in 2019 had a decrease of 3 percentage points, resulting in a measurement below target. This means that action managers reported that the outputs of their actions were less shared in the national administrations than in previous years. This decrease does not seem to affect the levels of sharing reported by the participants through the Event Assessment Forms. As in the last four years, more than 95% of the participants shared what they learned at the programme activities with their national colleagues. It should be highlighted that this is a high value, well above the set target of 90%.

Indicator: Extent to which programme outputs (e.g. guidelines or training material) are shared within national administrations	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Q 1 (AFF): Were the outputs of the action shared in national administrations? (percentage agreeing)	AFF	81% (2014)	>80%	81.0%	71.0%	81.0%	81.5%	80.7%	77.1%
Q 2 (EAF): Further to your participation in this activity, did you share with colleagues what you learned? (percentage agreeing)	EAF	94% (2013)	>90%	96.0%	93.5%	95.3%	96.0%	96.0%	95.6%

N.B. Sections 5.2 to 5.6 below provide an analysis of the performance under the different operational objectives. It should be taken into account that, when referring to the number of joint actions, the figure includes the actions launched in previous years and

²⁶ Data source changed from Programme Poll to EAF in order to improve data availability for years without poll.

²⁷ The lasting networking measurement in this report for 2019 (74.6%) differs in 4.6 percentage points to the measurement on the 2019 Annual Activity Report of DG TAXUD (70.0%). This is due to the fact that the measurement for the Annual Activity Report is preliminary (it takes place in February, when data is still not complete; data collection ends in March).

continued their activities in 2018, together with the newly launched ones. When counting the number of actions that are operational in a year under a specific objective, it should also be taken into account that the indicator only counts the actions for which the objective in question was chosen as primary objective; this is done so to avoid counting twice the same action under different objectives.

5.2 Objective 1: support the preparation, coherent application and effective implementation of Union law and policy in the field of customs

Joint actions linked to this primary objective represented the biggest number of joint actions under the programme in 2019: there were 132 joint actions ongoing in 2019 having the preparation, coherent application and effective implementation of Union law as their main objective. This represents 14 actions more than in 2018. The activities were mostly project groups (66) and working visits (37), followed by seminars (8). They covered an extensive variety of subjects, like the UK withdrawal of the EU, the Single Window environment, the foresight for EU customs or the centralised clearance, amongst others.

In relation to the **United Kingdom withdrawal of the European Union**, a series of technical seminars took place between January and September 2019 covering different aspects:

- Technical expert seminar on customs related matters of the UK withdrawal – IT impact: this seminar was the follow-up an earlier seminar (April 2018). The main objectives of the meeting were to present the impact on IT customs systems of the no-deal scenario and the accession to the Common Transit Convention scenario and to discuss the state of play of Member States' preparations.
- Technical seminar on customs related matters of the UK withdrawal - legal aspects: the seminar allowed for a discussion of the application of the customs legal provisions in case of a no-deal situation. In particular, the participants assessed the practical impacts of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union on the functioning of the EU Customs Union and on customs processes and practical customs issues.
- Technical seminar on preferential origin issues related to the UK's withdrawal: this seminar focused on the application of the provisions on origin and EU related customs legislation of the EU preferential arrangements both in case of a no-deal situation and in case of a withdrawal agreement.
- Technical seminar on customs related matters of the UK withdrawal: the seminar checked on the preparedness activities by the EU27 Member States in the customs area in view of the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union.

The project group "**Think Tank Foresight for EU Customs**", was created in 2019 resulting from the meeting of the Customs Policy expert group (CPG) of customs Directors-General in December 2018, which endorsed the proposal to run a full-fledged foresight of EU Customs 2030+. The project group organised three meetings in February, May and November 2019, co-chaired and run by the Joint Research Centre and DG TAXUD. In addition, a High Level Seminar on Strategic Foresight took place in October 2019 (Helsinki). For further details, please see the case study on Customs Foresight (section 6.4).

The EU Romanian Presidency hosted a two-day high-level seminar in Bucharest on 16-17 May 2019 on the establishment of an **EU Single Window environment for customs**. It was jointly organised by DG TAXUD, with the participation of senior management officials from national customs administrations, candidate countries, representatives of trade associations and keynote speakers from the US Customs and Border Protection, UNECE and the World Bank. The event was a further step in the consultations endeavour to create the necessary legal basis for electronic exchange of information between customs and

non-customs regulatory authorities which are involved in the customs clearance process. The seminar assessed the progress made in addressing the ongoing work dedicated to this initiative and provided precious input to help set the level of ambition before the next stages. A series of workshops, moderated by several Member States with the participation of partner DGs, addressed the relevance of the policy options in the government-to-government (G2G) and business-to-government (B2G) context.

One of the projects groups created in 2019 under this objective was dedicated to the functional specification of the **centralised clearance for import**. In accordance with Art. 179 of the Union Customs Code, centralised clearance allows a holder to lodge at the customs office where he is established, a customs declaration for goods which are presented at another customs office within the customs territory of the Union. This new concept allows the economic operators to centralise and integrate accounting, logistics and distribution. Centralised clearance will require the interface of today's independent national import applications and the establishment of a Trans-European System in the import domain for this import functionality. The project group set up in 2019 focused on the phase 2 of this IT system, aiming at incorporating additional import declaration types, goods and processes. Phase 2 gave the possibility to gather all procedures in one central customs handling organisation, as well the full completion of the automation of all possible scenarios and processes to gain the maximum benefit from the concept of centralised clearance at European level. The Project Group carried out its activities through meetings (3 meetings held during 2019), webinars and IT collaboration tools.

Another project group created during 2019 and that had a high level of activity was the **cash controls expert group**. The group, started the preparation of the Implementing acts and worked on the elaboration and implementation of harmonised approaches and exchange of best practices amongst Member States in the control of cash entering or leaving the EU. During 2019, the project group organised 7 meetings involving all participating countries in the programme.

In the context of the Security Risk Rules Project Group, the Subgroup on the evaluation of the current Common Risk Criteria (CRC) conducted in 2019 a detailed analysis for the CRC at entry for year 2018, aiming to identify problems that hinder their implementation, problems arising from their implementation and after a detailed statistical analysis to make suggestions on their improvement.

The Project Group on Financial Risk Management, in its set up as Subgroup on Financial Risk Criteria, drafted in 2019 the Guidance on the implementation of the Financial Risk Criteria Implementing Decision, which was endorsed by the Member States in December 2019.

The Project Group on Post-Clearance Audit finalised in 2019 the revision of the Customs Audit Guide, which is now aligned to the UCC and which provides further guidance to the Member States on the selection for post-release audits and controls of economic operators carrying out transactions in Member States different from where they are headquartered.

The Project Group on Low Value Consignments drafted a report in 2019 including some recommendations for legal amendments to facilitate the implementation of the VAT e-commerce rules as of 1 July 2021. Several of these recommendations were taken forward by the Customs Expert Group and resulted in amendments to the UCC Delegated²⁸ and Implementing Regulations²⁹ in the course of 2020.

The Project Group on Special Procedures other than Transit prepared in 2019 the adaptation of the Guidance on Special Procedures to the amendments of the UCC Delegated and Implementing Regulations that were discussed by the Customs Expert Group during 2019/2020 and finally adopted in mid-2020. This

²⁸ COMMISSION DELEGATED REGULATION (EU) 2020/877 of 3 April 2020 amending and correcting Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/2446 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 952/2013, and amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/341 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 952/2013, laying down the Union Customs Code

²⁹ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/893 of 29 June 2020 amending Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/2447 laying down detailed rules for implementing certain provisions of Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down the Union Customs Code

Project Group also included in the Guidance on Special Procedures³⁰ several clarifications to the EU customs law applicable to special procedures that were requested by the Member States or by other stakeholders, e.g. the private sector.

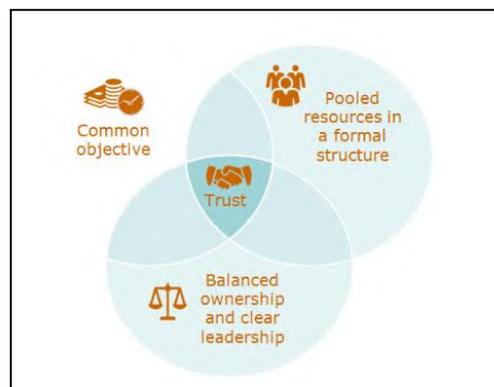
In 2019, the Project Group on Guarantees updated and refined the existing the guidance document on the implementation of the UCC provisions concerning guarantees in line with the experience gained since 1 May 2016. The updated guidance document was published on the EUROPA website for the benefit of administrations and traders. In addition to the identification and sharing of best practices in the field of guarantees, the group also supported the drafting process of the business case regarding the GUM IT project (guarantee management system, as provided for in Art. 16 UCC). The Project Group drafted a list of proposals for legal amendments to be further discussed and submitted for approval to the Customs Expert Group. As regards the monitoring activities, a questionnaire aimed to take stock and align the different national practices concerning the implementation of the legal provisions on guarantees was drafted with the contribution of the Project Group and distributed to the Member States.³¹

In 2019, the Project Group on Repayment/Remission of Customs Debt held two meetings in Nicosia and Tallinn, aimed at discussing their views on the application of the UCC provisions in relation to customs debt and remission and repayment. Following the publication of the comprehensive guidance document developed by DG TAXUD in cooperation with Member States (published on the EUROPA website) for ensuring a harmonised approach among Member States as to how remission and repayment files should be dealt with, the goal of the Project group in 2019 was to share their implementing experience and to identify areas where more can be done in order to streamline UCC's application.

Also under objective 1, **monitoring activities** were organised during 2019 to check the implementation of preferential trade arrangements, in order to ensure the protection of EU's financial interests and ensure fair trade between the EU and the third countries that are benefitting from preferential trade arrangements. During 2019, a monitoring visit took place in Mozambique. Monitoring activities also took place in Member States (Bulgaria and Italy) regarding the implementation of non-preferential rules of origin and Binding Origin Information decisions (BOI).

A series of monitoring visits was also launched in 2019 concerning the implementation of customs simplifications and the re-assessment of authorisations related to simplifications in accordance with the obligation set out in the UCC package to reassess the authorisations granted before 1 May 2016. This activity covers a selection of 10 Member States, two of which were visited in 2019.

Other initiatives under this objective took the form of **expert teams**. Expert teams represent an increasingly used tool from the programme toolbox supporting enhanced operational collaboration, either on a regional or on a thematic basis. The expert team approach allows customs experts of Member States to have in depth cooperation on operational issues which go beyond the traditional means of cooperation to realise the pre-identified objectives of a common long term project (expert teams are active between 12 and 36 months). To achieve its objectives, expert teams use innovative working methods based on real operational coordination, deeper sharing of information and pooling of human resources, thus contributing to the implementation of common customs legislation and policy.



During 2019, all four existing customs expert teams, i.e. EU Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border 2 (CELBET 2), Customs Laboratories (CLET), Binding Tariff Information (BTI) and the Customs IT

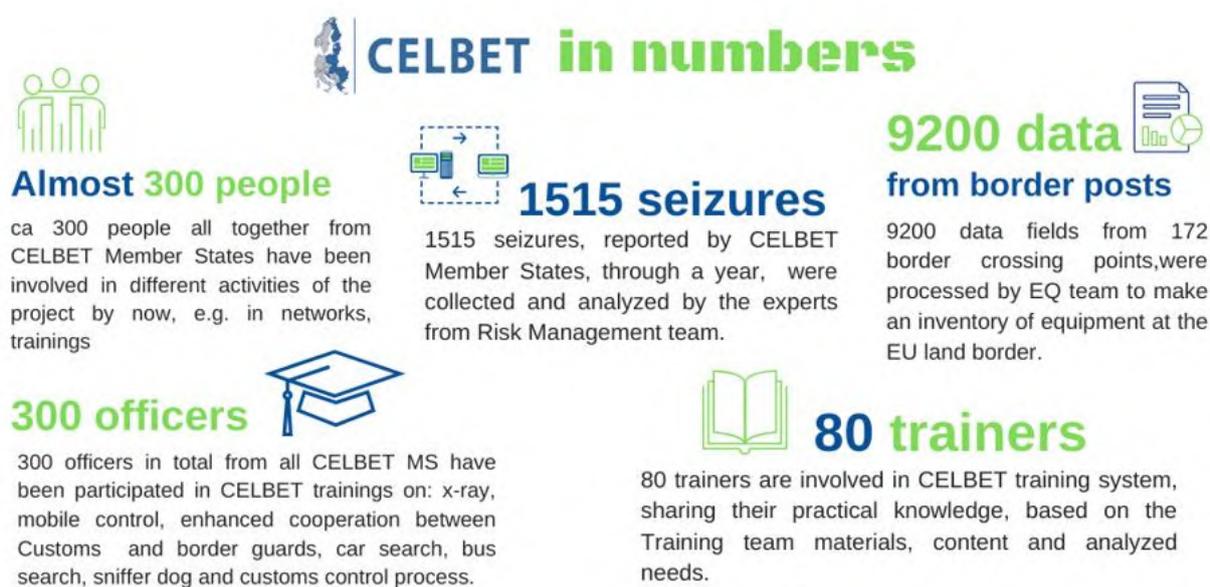
³⁰ SPECIAL PROCEDURES – Title VII UCC/ "Guidance for MSs and Trade"

³¹ Guarantees for potential or existing customs debts –Title III UCC (Rev.2-EN) Annex 3: Questions and answers

Collaboration (ETCIT) continued their work, and three of them started their next phase: CLET 2, ETCIT 2 and BTI 2. In general, all the existing expert teams show an increase involvement of participating countries, both regarding the number of the participants and the committed Member States.

CELBET 2: this expert team provides expertise and makes proposals based on practical experience of operational co-ordination and results achieved for further improvement of the operational management of EU Eastern and South-Eastern land border. More specifically, CELBET 2 provides solutions for better targeting of risks, uniform performance measurement standards, flexible use and sharing of resources, training of customs officers, interaction and coordination with relevant border services (including those of third, neighbouring countries) and last, but not least, addressing funding challenges related with control infrastructure and equipment.

CELBET 2 helps to improve the control of external border and preventing the entry of dangerous goods that could be harmful to people or to our environment or to the EU's, the Member States' and citizens' financial interest. The improved controls also contribute to smoother and faster border crossing.



CLET 2: the Customs Laboratories expert team started their second expert team in spring 2019 and targeted a higher number of analysis by continuing to pool expertise and equipment in a network (meta-laboratory) to analyse samples and share analytical results (for further details on the Customs Laboratories expert team, see case study in section 6.3).

BTI 2: this expert team also renewed their activities in late 2019. It aims at addressing specific problems in the functioning of the European Union's Customs Union, namely the uniform tariff classification of products being imported into or exported from the Union. Under the Union customs law, the customs authorities of the European Union Member States issue Binding Tariff Information (BTI), at the request of economic operators. A BTI provides the economic operator who requested it with legal certainty about the tariff classification of the goods he intends to import or export. The objective of the expert team is to analyse in a structured manner complex cases of divergent tariff classification that occurred at European Union level, and to propose an expert opinion for these cases, by pooling a core team of experts in their specific domains. The expert opinion proposed may subsequently be assessed by the Customs Code Committee. A structured collaboration and exchange of specific knowledge between experts of the domain – building on the results of the BTI expert team – allows proposing to the Customs Code Committee viable solutions to complex classification cases.

ETCIT 2: the expert team on **IT Collaboration** started a new phase in autumn 2019 to continue exploring and identifying new approaches for customs IT systems development and operation, including the

realisation of a pilot project among Member States (more information on this expert team can be found on section 5.3.VIII)

When we look at the performance indicators under this objective, the **Union Law and Policy Application and Implementation Index** provides a comprehensive overview of the performance of the joint actions organised under the programme's auspices:

Indicator	Source	Base-line	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Extent to which JA (that sought to support/ facilitate the preparation, application and/or implementation of a specific piece of new (or revised) customs law or policy) have achieved their intended result(s), as reported by action managers: average score on the scale of 0 (not achieved) to 4 (fully achieved)	AFF	3,17 (2014)	>3	3.17	2.88	3.02	3.02	3.38	3.41
Participants' views on the extent to which a JA (that sought to support/ facilitate the preparation, application and/or implementation of a specific piece of new (or revised) customs law or policy) (has) achieved its intended results (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	94% (2014)	>80%	94.0%	95.0%	96.0%	95.0%	94.5%	95.8%
Participants' views on the extent to which an event met their expectations (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	91% (2014)	>80%	91.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	93.2%	94.3%
Participants' views on the usefulness of an event (percentage of those who replied 'very useful' or 'useful')	EAF	98% (2014)	>80%	98.0%	98.0%	99.0%	99.0%	98.7%	99.0%
Number of actions (JA) that have supported or facilitated the implementation, preparation or application of (a specific piece of new or revised) customs law	ART	67 (2014)	Grow or stable	67	65	123	122	114	132
Number of recommendations (R) / guidelines (G) / other outputs (O) issued further to a JA	AFF	2014: 266 (R) 9 (G) 385 (O)	On average at least one output per action	266 (R) 9 (G) 385 (O)	237 (R) 10 (G) 74 (O)	114 (R) 111 (G) 234 (O)	152 (R) 115 (G) 434 (O)	106 (R) 27 (G) 680 (O)	114 (R) 49 (G) 236 (O)

The main indicator relates to the level of achievement of expected results. The obtained value of 3.41 in 2019 represents the highest value since the launch of the programme, confirming a positive trend since 2016. Such value indicates that the action managers are very satisfied with the progress obtained within their groups. The feedback obtained through the dedicated AFF for working visits shows a lower value (2.75) on the achievement of results regarding activities aimed at the preparation/implementation of EU law. The overall positive evaluation by action managers is also confirmed by the participants to joint actions: 95.8% of them declared that the joint activity in which they participated had achieved its intended result and 94.3% declared that the event met their expectations. Participants also expressed very high levels of satisfaction regarding the usefulness of the event since the beginning of the programme, and in particular in 2019 (99%).

The two output indicators included in this group provide further insights into the **number of actions** organised and the **recommendations and guidelines produced** under the programme. It is worth clarifying that the number of recommendations and guidelines is defined as the number of individual guidelines, recommendations included in a given document (rather than the number of documents produced in which these outputs could be included). Under 'other outputs', we count studies, reports, measures, presentations and other reported types of outputs. There has been a significant fluctuation in the level of this indicator over the years. These fluctuations, however, need to be interpreted carefully, as not every recommendation or guideline is equally important. Furthermore, the number of outputs depends largely on the different nature of some working practices / business needs. The approach taken, as in previous years, has been to set a minimum target of at least one output per action in a given year. Such a target would demonstrate that on average all programme activities produce outputs. For 2019, with almost 400 different types of outputs produced, we can see that this target has been achieved.

It should also be noticed that, for the time being, the data available on the number of recommendations and guidelines are included in replies to the AFF, and therefore dependent on the number of replies.

5.3 Objective 2: implement, improve, operate and support the European Information Systems for customs

The great majority of the programme funding (approx. 85%) is spent on the **European Information Systems (EIS)**, which are of critical importance for the well-functioning of the Customs Union. The list of the existing EIS is included in the Annex II of the Customs 2020 Regulation, while those planned for development are included in the Electronic Customs **Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (MASP)**³², a document drawn up by the European Commission in partnership with Member States in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Decision 70/2008/EC³³ on a Paperless environment for customs and trade, also known as the e-Customs Decision.

The Union Customs Code (UCC) adoption and application as of 1 May 2016 completed the shift by customs to a paperless and fully electronic and interoperable environment with core values of simplicity, service and speed. The IT systems required to implement the UCC have been also included in the MASP. The Customs 2020 programme provides funds for the Union components of the IT systems included in the MASP. These are assets (such as hardware, software, network connections) and services to support IT systems that are common to the Commission and the Member States. National components are expected to be developed and operated by Member States, who bear the associated costs.

Throughout the 2014-2019 period, work on the implementation of the MASP progressed under the programme, notably to ensure that all EIS are deployed in accordance with UCC legal deadlines. It should be highlighted that during 2019 the Commission amended³⁴ the UCC to allow a longer period for the

³² https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/sites/taxation/files/2019_masp_strategic_plan_en.pdf

³³ Decision No 70/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on a paperless customs environment for customs and trade, OJ 2008, N° L23, p. 21.

³⁴ Regulation (EU) 2019/632 amending Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 to prolong the transitional use of means other than the electronic data-processing techniques provided for in the Union Customs Code.

deployment of 9 out of 17 IT systems that the UCC provides for the completion of customs formalities. It became clear that it would not be possible to deploy all the systems smoothly by the original deadline of end 2020 given the work involved and the interdependencies between the systems. The amendment maintains the original deadline of 2020 for 8 of the 17 systems. At the same time, it allows customs authorities and economic operators to continue using transitional arrangements (i.e. existing IT systems or paper-based arrangements) beyond 2020 for the completion of customs formalities to be managed by 9 systems that now have longer deployment deadlines. The 9 systems in question are 3 national systems that must be upgraded by Member States by end 2022, and 6 trans-European systems that must be upgraded or developed by the Commission by end 2025.

Sections I to VIII below provide information on the key performance indicators for EIS, together with detailed technical information on different IT aspects, such as continuity, deployment and development. In addition, Annex 1 of this report provides specific information on the status of the IT projects of the UCC work programme, including the completion rate (actual completion plotted against the planned in MASP), which provides a view into the milestones that were successfully delivered by TAXUD in 2019.

It should be highlighted that the information contained in this report regarding the implementation of the EIS is complemented by the **2019 e-Customs progress report**³⁵, which covers both the EU components (funded by the Customs 2020 programme) and the national components of the EIS.

I – Overview of customs IT systems in 2019

In 2019, DG TAXUD continued operating an important portfolio of IT systems (54 systems in total), supporting Member States and third countries in their exchanges of customs related information, and supporting traders. The operational exchanges included around 11.6 million transit movements, 15.2 million indirect export movements and 48 million entry summary declarations.

In the context of modernising the customs IT systems and/or expanding the scope of customs exchanges with other partners, the 2019 key achievements in terms of system deployment and development have been:

a) UCC systems

- During 2019, the pilot project of the UCC **Standardised Exchange of Information for Special Procedures system (INF SP)** went in production on 16 January 2019. Based on the feedback, new releases were planned during 2019. The development and testing activities continue until the planned production phase to take place in 2020. The main objective of the INF SP System is to make all INF – standardised exchange of information - data available and to streamline the processes of INF data management. The former known INF paper forms (INF1, INF2, INF 5 and INF9) will no longer be applicable after the system will be in production.
- **UCC BTI (Binding Tariff Information)** Phase 2 project was successfully completed in 2019 and both the EBTI-STP (European Binding Tariff Information - Specific Trader Portal) and the new release of the EBTI-CS (Central System) have been in production since 1 October 2019.
- Since 1 October 2019, the European Commission has launched the **EU Customs Trader Portal**, an electronic single point-of-access to a number of EU customs systems. In a first stage (phase 1), the portal is used for applications for Binding Tariff Information (eBTI) and applications for eAEO status. As of 1 October 2019, these applications have to be made electronically through the Trader Portal and can no longer be introduced on paper.

The portal serves as a single point of contact for all correspondence and exchange of information. This includes the applications by the economic operators, additional information requests by the customs authority and replies from economic operators, and the subsequent management of the

³⁵ The e-Customs progress reports are produced pursuant to Article 12 of the e-Customs Decision (Decision No 70/2008/EC) and are published in the Europa website: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/general-information-customs/electronic-customs_en

applications and decisions. For further details on the eAEO Trader Portal, see case study in section 6.2.

- **SURV-RECAPP (Surveillance Reception Application)** evolution to support the VAT e-Commerce Phase 1: updates in productions were installed successfully in December 2019 as planned and on time. The aim of the evolution is to allow the information required by the VAT legislation to be captured from the customs import declarations in all Member States and subsequently be accessible in an automated manner to the relevant tax authorities.
- Release of **REX (system of Registered Exporters) for Overseas Countries and Territories**: according to the Overseas Association Decision, the OCTs have to apply the REX system as from 1 January 2020. The REX release 2.3, which adds support for OCT countries, has started operations on 16/12/2019. By the end of December 2019, traders from OCT countries have already been able to add REX registrations.
REX became operational at the beginning of 2017 with the objective to facilitate the certification of origin of goods applied in the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) of the European Union. The system is based on a principle of self-certification by economic operators that were registered in a database by their competent authorities.
- In the context of the EU Strategy and Action Plan for customs risk management, DG TAXUD progressed in 2019 with the development of two core customs instruments:
 - the **Import Control System 2 (ICS2)**. ICS2 is a large-scale system that underpins customs pre-arrival safety and security programme. It will provide a new platform for collection of advance electronic data on all goods and shipments prior to their arrival to the Union customs territory and from different trade sources. DG TAXUD nearly completed the construction of the two central components of ICS2 (shared trader interface and common repository) by the end of 2019. Development and testing work will continue with a view to rendering the first phase of the system into operation on 15 March 2021 as per the revised UCC Work Programme.
 - the reshaped **Customs Risk Management System (CRMS2)**. The CRMS2 redesigns the current CRMS created in 2005 to provide a comprehensive tool that reflects the evolving needs of risk management and increase the clarity of the different functions to be fulfilled. In 2019, the work on the business requirements and all the documents related to the elaboration phase of the project continued.

The two systems are core Union customs instruments aimed to protecting the external borders of the EU internal market from risks linked to the international movement of goods, including those associated to terrorism and crime.

b) Non-UCC systems

- The **CLASS system** entered into operations on 1 July 2019. CLASS provides a single platform where all classification information (regardless of its nature) is published in a way that ensures transparency. The system has been deployed with the identified issues being thoroughly analysed. As a result, incremental efforts have been made to resolve the technical issues of the SEARCH engine in the coming releases.
- The **EU Customs Single Window pilot (EU CSW- CERTEX)** interfacing the Member States national customs systems with EU e-Licensing solutions was expanded to new certificates: DG SANTE (CHED-A and CHED-P), DG CLIMA (F-Gases – transition to the re-engineered EU CSW-CERTEX) and DG TRADE (DuES). The EU CSW-CERTEX re-engineering process was finalised in 2019.

DG TAXUD continued reflecting on the policy options for the EU Single Window environment for customs. A **high-level seminar** took place in May 2019 in Bucharest, which allowed sharing information with the Heads of Customs Administrations on the draft legal proposal and provided the

opportunity to have a political discussion at an advanced stage of the processes but still ahead of the preparation of the final drafting of the impact assessment report and the legal proposal.

c) Other

Major work was also done during 2019 to have the customs IT systems ready for the **withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU**, both with or without a withdrawal agreement. Three series of testing campaigns took place to ensure that customs systems were ready at the different withdrawal dates (i.e. March, April and October 2019). At the end of 2019, TAXUD started the analysis of the new Withdrawal Agreement including the Protocol of Ireland/ Northern Ireland.

II – Key performance indicators for EIS

C2020 output indicators – New IT systems for customs	2017	2018	2019
Number of IT projects in the research phase (PP)	11	4	6 ³⁶
Number of IT projects in the development phase (P)	19	21	13 ³⁷
Number of new IT systems in operations (PROD)	8	3	6 ³⁸
Ratio of IT projects in status "Green" (refer to MASP-C 2017) (%) ³⁹	85.71%	68.00%	66.67% ⁴⁰
Ratio of IT projects in status "Green" (refer to MASP-C 2019) (%)			100%
C2020 output indicators – Existing IT systems for customs	2017	2018	2019
Number of European Information Systems in operations, as per Annex 1 of the Customs 2020 Regulation ⁴¹	49	52	54
Number of modifications on IT systems in operation following business requests	571	624	385
Number of modifications on IT systems in operation following corrections	1 024	853	857
Number of occurrences where the service desk is not reachable	None	Partial unavailability during 3 days	None
Percentage of services calls answered on time	99.45%	99.82%	98.22%
C2020 result indicators – European Information Systems for customs	2017	2018	2019

³⁶ MASP Rev 2019 V1.1: VAT e-Commerce, MRA Hong Kong, CUP-MIS, REX3, UCC PoUS, CS/MIS2. (Note that CS/MIS2 is not in MASP-C and there was no activities for MRA Canada).

³⁷ MASP Rev 2019 V1.1: Customs Decisions iteration2, UCC BTI P2, UCC eAEO, NCTS P5, UCC AES, UCC ICS2, CRMS2, UCC INF SP, UCC CCI P1, COPIS e-AFA, CUP-MIS, VAT e-Commerce Phase 1 (CP42/63) and Phase 2 (IOSS). SSTL is on hold.

³⁸ MASP Rev 2019 V1.1: EUCTP, CLASS, UCC BTI Phase 2, UCC eAEO Phase 1 and Phase 2, REX2, VAT eCommerce Phase 1: CP42/63 (live on 01/01/2020). Though UCC INF Pilot is deployed, it is not in operations.

³⁹ Projects that are progressing in line with the requirements, time and budget limitations set-up.

⁴⁰ With reference to MASP-C 2017: Customs Decisions iteration2, CRMS2, UCC CCI and UCC ICS 2.0 are in Amber.

⁴¹ EIS in operation: An annual increase in the number of existing European Information Systems would reflect that the programme is contributing effectively to the stated objective in particular by operating the necessary EIS. Refer to the IT projects in operation.

Availability of the Common Communication Network (CCN), Common Systems Interface (CSI) (%)	99.98%	99.98%	99.47%
Availability of centralised IT customs applications (%)	98.70%	99.68%	96.27%
Availability of New Computerised Transit System (NCTS), Export Control System (ECS), Import Control System (ICS) (%)	99.30%	99.26%	99.41%
Availability of the Single Portal for Entry or Exit of Data (SPEED2)	98.46%	99.24%	99.51%
Activity indicators (application data volumes and number of messages CCN Network)	22.89 TB volume 4 348 million messages	29.08 TB volume 5 789 million messages	32.23 TB volume 6 902 million messages

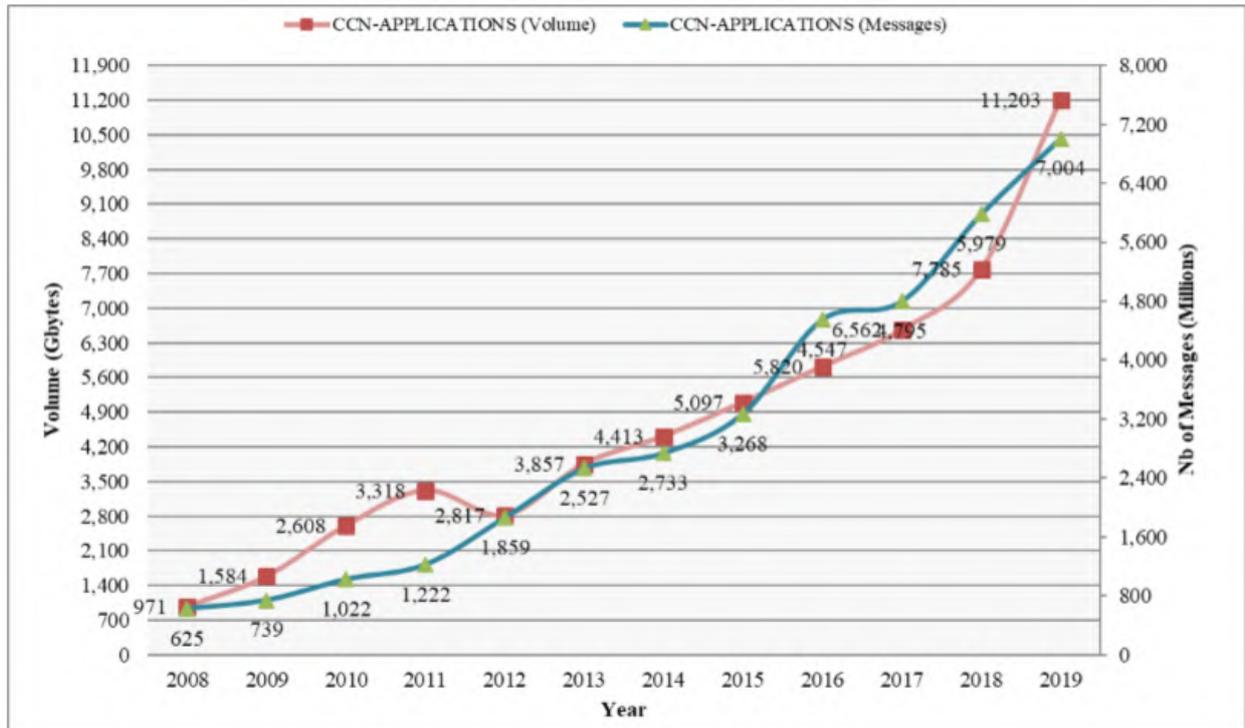
III – IT availability

Ensuring the business and IT systems' continuity is a major responsibility under the programme since disruptions in the operation of the European Information Systems would affect customs national administrations, citizens and businesses across the entire EU, and hamper the functioning of the internal market. The underlying infrastructure (Common Communications Network/Common Systems Interface CCN/CSI) – developed, managed and maintained by the Commission - was available during the period 2014-2019 more than 99% of the time during working hours. In particular during 2019, the availability of this platform was 99.47%, which represents 0.51 percentage points less than in 2018 and slightly below target (99.9%). The figure of 2019 availability rate reflects planned, agreed unavailabilities to deploy new CCN releases and new applications on the platform, as per the MASP-C Revision 2019, endorsed by the Customs Policy Group in December 2019. This was well communicated in advance to all stakeholders, including national customs authorities, which did not face any negative impact. All the centralised IT customs applications remained available 96.27 % of the time, which represents a decrease of 3.17 percentage points less than in 2018 and slightly below target (97%). The decreases in terms of availability were the due to disaster recovery activities (that were not present in 2018) and to increased number of application releases.

IV – Network traffic and business perspective of main applications

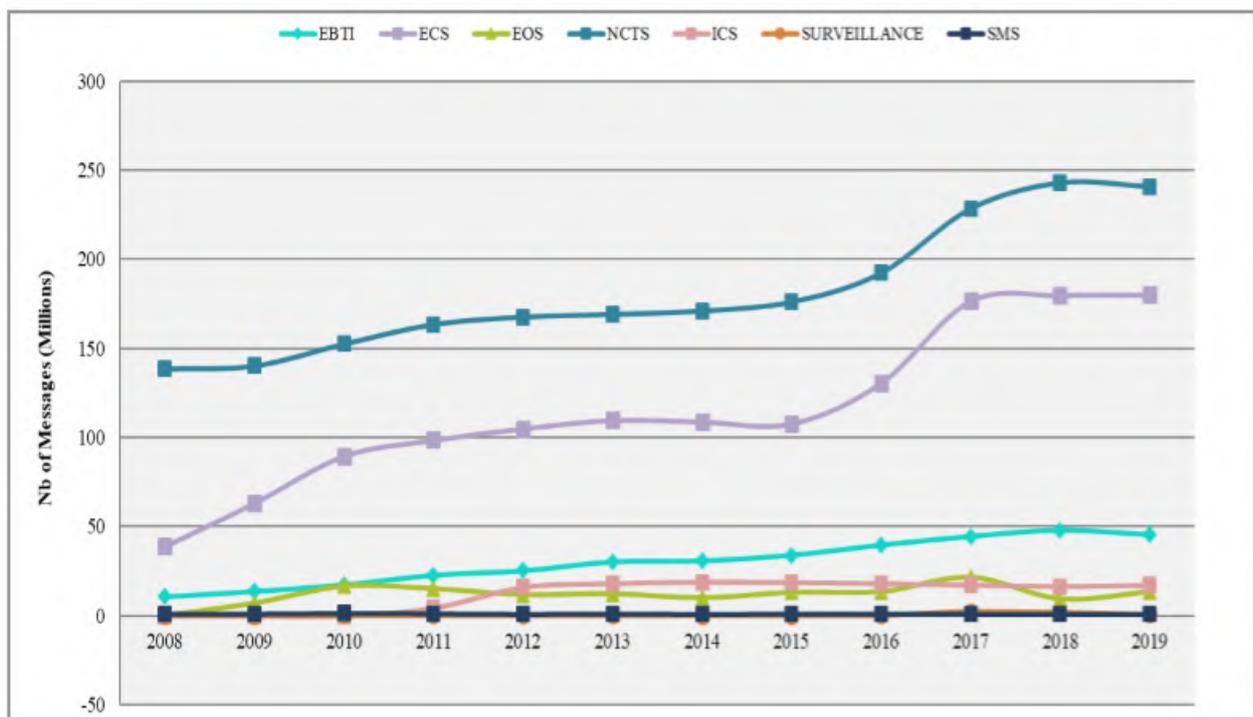
The CCN/CSI network registered around 6 902 million messages exchanged during the period January 2019 – December 2019, compared to 5 790 million messages exchanged in the previous year. This represents a 19.2% growth of the number of messages. In terms of traffic, the CCN Network registered around 32.23 TB during the period January 2019 – December 2019, compared to around 29.08 TB in 2018. This represents an increase of 10.8% of traffic volume. The high volume of information channelled during the year via CCN/CSI shows that the programme is a solid and robust enabler for the paper-less environment and information exchange amongst customs and tax authorities.

Figure 10: CCN applications – Evolution of volumes / messages



In relation to the evolution of the messages exchanged in the main customs IT applications, it can be seen from the figure below that, by comparison to 2018, there was an increase during 2019 for the Export Control System (0.11%), Economic Operators System (42.06%), Import Control System (3.88%) and Specimen Management System (8.21%), whereas the European Binding Tariff Information, New Computerised Transit System and Surveillance experienced a decrease (5.18%, 0.87%, and 43.88% respectively).

Figure 11: Evolution of messages exchanged by application.



V – Deployment and entry in operation

A number of projects were completed and entered into production in 2019:

- The **CLASS system** entered into operation on 1 July 2019.
- During 2019, the pilot project of the UCC **Standardised Exchange of Information for Special Procedures (INF SP) system** went in production on 16 January 2019.
- **UCC BTI (Binding Tariff Information)** Phase 2 project has successfully completed in 2019 and both the EBTI-STP (European Binding Tariff Information - Specific Trader Portal) and the new release of the EBTI-CS (Central System) have been in production since 1 October 2019.
- Since 1 October 2019, the European Commission has launched the **EU Customs Trader Portal**, an electronic single point-of-access to a number of EU customs systems.
- **SURV-RECAPP (Surveillance Reception Application)** evolution to support the VAT e-Commerce Phase 1: updates in productions were installed successfully in December 2019 as planned and on time.
- Release of **REX (system of Registered Exporters) for OCTs**: according to the Overseas Association Decision, the OCTs have to apply the REX system as from 1 January 2020. The REX release 2.3, which adds support for OCT countries, has started operations on 16 December 2019.

VI – System development

Projects under elaboration and construction phases during 2019 are as indicated below. All projects are on-time according to MASP-C 2019.

Elaboration and construction of:

- Customs Decisions iteration 2.
- Converter applications (ieCA) for New Computerised Transit System Phase 5 and Automated Export System
- UCC Information Sheet for special procedures.
- e-Commerce Phase 1 (customs procedure 42/63)
- UCC Binding Tariff Information Phase 2 (eBTI3 evolutions and eBTI-STP)
- EU Authorised Economic Operator EU Trader Access (eAEO-STP) and Economic Operators System (EOS) Phases 1 and 2
- Registered Exporters (REX) for OCT (REX2.3)

Elaboration of:

- UCC Centralised Clearance for Import Phase 1
- Anti-Counterfeiting and Anti-Piracy System (COPIS) implementation of electronic Application For Action
- New Computerised Transit System Phase 5
- Automated Export System

VII - Inception and pre-inception phase

Projects under inception and pre-inception phases during 2019:

- VAT e-Commerce business case.
- Revision of the Interface Control Document of Mutual Recognition Agreement with Hong Kong.
- The Vision document of Customs Union Performance – Management information System was produced and accepted by IT Steering Committee and Electronic Customs Coordination Group.
- Business Cases of Proof of Union Status and REX3.
- Register of Exporters - REX3 Vision document is produced and submitted for Electronic Customs Coordination Group review.
- Central Services - Management Information System 2 Vision document is produced and is under review.

VIII – Joint actions with national customs authorities in the area of IT

In addition to procure the EU component of the customs European Information Systems, the Customs 2020 programme also supports these systems by means of joint actions and human capacity building activities. The joint actions that were organised in 2019 in relation to the customs EIS were project groups (23), followed by working visits (6) and workshops (2). In addition, different trainings activities in the area of IT were organised (see Section 5.5 dedicated to the reinforced skills and competences of customs officials).

Work by **project groups** included the continuation of those launched in previous years, such as the IT Systems Development Group (ITSD), IT Technology & Infrastructure Group, Customs Business Group, Electronic Customs Coordination Group (ECCG), Customs Decisions collaboration project group or the project group on Centralised Clearance Import IT.

The **Electronic Customs Coordination Group (ECCG)** plays a vital role by validating the key outputs coming from different related groups (such as the Customs Business Expert Group, the Customs EIS Operations Group, the IT Systems Development Group and the IT technology & infrastructure group) against the plans, the policy and business objectives. It reports to these groups for the results achieved through a common understanding and agreement with the Member States on the project scope, design, requirements and architecture of the electronic systems, and where relevant, through consultation and taking the views of the economic operators into account, therefore reporting to the Trade Contact Group. The agreed results are the basis for the annual update of the UCC Working Plan and the annual revision of the MASP. The ECCG met 12 times during 2019.

The new project groups launched in 2019 focused on data exchange between customs authorities and market surveillance authorities via ICSMS; data protection compliance; UCC INF Special Procedures and on the Single Digital Gateway. The activities of these project groups will extend beyond 2019.

Throughout the year, progress was made on the drafting of the legal package and impact assessment of the EU Single Window environment for customs. As part of the stakeholders' consultation process, a **High-level seminar on the EU Single Window environment for customs** was organised jointly with the Romanian Presidency in May 2019. The seminar assessed the progress made in addressing the ongoing work dedicated to this initiative and provided precious input to help set the level of ambition before the next stages of the legislative process. A series of workshops, moderated by several Member States with the participation of partner Commission services, addressed the relevance of the policy options in the government-to-government (G2G) and business-to-government (B2G) context.

In addition to the above-mentioned activities, TAXUD organised in January 2019 the **Technical Expert Seminar on customs related matters of the UK withdrawal – IT impact**, as a follow-up of an earlier

seminar in 2018. The seminar allowed the presentation of the impact on IT customs systems of the no-deal scenario, the accession to the Common Transit Convention scenario and the discussion on the state of play of Member States preparations.

The first expert team dealing with customs IT systems - **ETCIT (Expert team on Customs IT Collaboration)** - was launched in 2018 and finalised in 2019. Its objective was to explore new approaches to develop and operate customs IT systems, based on the idea that, while the UCC lays down a single EU framework of customs formalities and controls, the development and maintenance of IT systems implementing those rules are largely decentralised at national level and fall under the responsibility of the Member States. The first ETCIT finalised its pioneer work in 2019 and started to deepen its work in collaboration amongst 17 EU Member States: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Netherland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden. **ETCIT 2** is led by a Swedish project manager, Portugal as grant agreement coordinator and four team leaders, supported by around 40 experts. The renewed expert team (ETCIT 2) concentrates on the work of the ETCIT and build on its results, in order to provide recommendations on how the development of customs IT Systems in future could be done. The expected results are providing the analysis on pros and cons of new approaches of developing and operating customs IT systems; list the suitable options for a pilot project and provide recommendations for the way forward; guidelines for improving legal and governance framework; recommendations on procurement options and for possible funding; and criteria for the cost benefit analysis. Activities started in October 2019 and will last for two years. The possibility of continuation of the activities with a new expert team (ETCIT 3) is currently considered by a new submitted business case.

The **stakeholders' assessment of the IT related joint actions** was in general terms very positive and above target levels:

Indicator	Source	Base-line	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Extent to which JAs (that sought to enhance the availability, reliability and/or quality of (specific) Union components of EIS) have achieved their intended result(s), as reported by action managers: average score on the scale of 0 (not achieved) to 4 (fully achieved)	AFF	3.16 (2014)	> 3	3.16	3.96	3.57	3.57	4.00	2.00
Participants' views on the extent to which a JA (that sought to enhance the availability, reliability and/or quality of (specific) Union components of EIS) (has) achieved its intended result(s) (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	93% (2014)	>80%	93.0%	96.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.7%	95.3%
Participants' views on the extent to which an event met their expectations (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	93% (2014)	>80%	93.0%	93.5%	93.0%	94.5%	94.7%	94.4%
Participants' views on the usefulness of an event (percentage of those who replied 'very useful' or 'useful')	EAF	99% (2014)	>80%	99.0%	99.0%	98.0%	98.6%	100.0%	99.1%

We notice an abnormal low value for the first indicator, relating to the achievement of result as reported by action managers. This value has to be read with caution, as the low number of replies to the AFF for activities relating to the EIS (only 2 replies provided) does not constitute a representative population. The value increases from 2 to 3 when we look at the results of the survey for working visits conducted under this objective (the feedback provided by action managers specifically for working visits follows an independent AFF survey). Participants' feedback on 'fulfilled results', 'met expectations' and 'usefulness' continues to be very positive for events organised under this objective, with rates similar to previous year and well above targets.

5.4 Objective 3: identify, develop, share and apply best working practices and administrative procedures

The development, sharing and application of best working practices and administrative procedures take place at several levels in the programme. It is done through joint actions, European Information Systems and the online collaboration platform, PICS.

121 joint actions were running under this operational objective in 2019, mainly working visits and project groups. 102 **working visits** took place in 2019, which represents a decrease of 25 working visits from previous year. As in previous years the range of topics covered by these visits was wide, e.g. improving the skills of customs officials, detection dogs, customs controls at different borders types (including control equipment), risk management or centralised clearance.

There were ten **project groups** that continued their activities from previous years in different areas, such as customs controls at the various types of border: RALFH (northern ports), ODYSSUD (southern ports), ICARUS (airports), and LFCG (land frontier contact group). These project groups bring together permanent contact points from the participating Member States and senior managers from customs offices at the border, with the aim to address any issues relevant for operational cooperation and co-ordination with regard to controls at the external frontier on all type of transport modes, including rail (with specific rail subgroups). These groups also provide the fora to exchange best practices with a view to make customs controls on movement of various means of transport more efficient. Some other project groups or subgroups aim is to improve and develop customs controls capability and performance standards related to scanning, rummage or detection dogs of customs at the external borders of the European Union.

In the area of customs detection technology and data mining, the work continued to maintain and strengthen the network of practitioners and the exchange of experience and good practices in data mining in the customs area, through interactive, practitioner-led exchanges and sharing of experience from the different perspectives (customs business, scientific/academic and data miners from beginner to advanced practice levels) and with the support of the Joint Research Centre of the Commission.

A new project group was launched in 2019 regarding cooperation of Visegrád countries ⁴² on product safety.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
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⁴² Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Extent to which JAs (that sought to extend working practices and/or administrative procedures/guidelines in a given area to other participating countries) have achieved their intended result(s), as reported by action managers: average score on the scale of 0 (not achieved) to 4 (fully achieved)	AFF	3.25 (2014)	>3	3.25	3.20	3.14	3.14	3,08	3,20
Participants' views on the extent to which a JA (that sought to extend working practices and/or administrative procedures/guidelines in a given area to other participating countries) (has) achieved its intended result(s) (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	95% (2014)	>80%	95.0%	97.0%	95.0%	95.7%	94.0%	94.6%
Participants' views on the extent to which an event met their expectations (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	95% (2014)	>80%	95.0%	95.0%	95.0%	95.3%	94.0%	94.1%
Participants' views on the usefulness of an event (percentage of those who replied 'very useful' or 'useful')	EAF	98% (2014)	>80%	98.0%	99.0%	99.0%	98.5%	98.8%	100.0%

In the table above, we can see that action managers of joint actions under this objective have reported an increased level of achievement of expected results (from 3.08 in 2018 to 3.20 in 2019), showing a high level of satisfaction with the results of the activities they managed. The feedback provided by action managers specifically for working visits (which follow an independent survey) supports this positive assessment, with a value of 3.75 regarding the achievement of results.

Participants' feedback on 'fulfilled results', 'met expectations' and 'usefulness' continues to be very positive, with a remarkable 100% rate on the usefulness of the events organised under this objective.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Percentage of participants that disseminated a working practice and/or administrative procedure/guideline developed/shared produced with the support of the programme in their national administration	EAF	94% (2014)	>90%	94.0%	94.0%	93.0%	95.0%	96.0%	95,8%
Percentage of participants which declare that an administrative procedure/working practice/guideline developed/shared under the	EAF	84% (2014)	>70%	84.0%	74.0%	74.0%	74.3%	88.0%	68.7%

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
programme led to a change in their national administration's working practices									
Number of actions under the programme organised in this area	ART	85 (2014)	Grow or stable compare to baseline	85	200	191	142	149	121 ⁴³
Number of working practices/administrative procedures (AP) developed/shared	AFF	1 (2014)	On average at least one output per action	1	2	19	74	74	163
Number of actions which had outputs used for a benchmarking activity as declared by the action managers	AFF	0 (2014)	Grow or stable	0	2	2	17	9	11

There is a high rate of dissemination of programme outputs by the participants, with approx. 96% of them declaring to have distributed the outputs nationally (similar level to previous year). The percentage of participants that declared that the activities outputs led to a change in their national administrations' working practices has however decreased in 2019 (68.7%), slightly below target.

If we look at the outputs produced by the joint actions under this objective, we can observe that in 2017 and 2018 there were 74 best working practices and administrative procedures developed (as reported by action managers), which represents a considerable increase from the previous years. In 2019, this figure has raised considerably to 163. Fluctuations in these indicators, however, need to be interpreted carefully, as not every working practices/administrative procedures is equally important. Furthermore, the number of outputs depends largely on the business need and the type of the subject matter addressed by the programme action.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of face to face meetings (total for the programme)	ART	443 (2013)	Grow or stable compared to baseline	265	551	552	448	473	570
Number of on-line collaboration groups (PICS) (total for the platform)	EC	110 (2013)	Grow	199	261	301	277	340	348

⁴³ It should be taken into account that, while earlier years had more actions in total, and more actions specifically addressing concrete issues, in the last years many actions were to a greater extent organised in broader projects covering themes rather than specific interventions. Content-wise, the projects are usually multi-annual rather than annual, as the actions and processes they cover stretch over more than one year. This may lead to less new initiatives and in a decrease in the total number of actions for a specific year.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of downloaded files from PICS (total for the platform)	EC	13 564 (2013)	Grow or stable compared to baseline	73 200	116 538	96 062	104 941	92 500	160 648
Number of uploaded files on PICS (total for the platform)	EC	3 445 (2013)	Grow or stable compared to baseline	5 521	11 177	7 807	7 184	7 887	9 455

In the area of **online collaboration**, we are looking at the use of the Programme Information and Collaboration Space (PICS). This platform is used by DG TAXUD and national customs officials to facilitate the running of joint actions, but also for other, non-programme related collaboration needs and knowledge sharing in communities of practice. We can see that the total number of online collaboration groups on the platform remained overall stable in 2019 (348 groups in total). In relation to the number of new users that signed up to PICS, there is a clear trend since 2014, with an annual increase of approx. 1 000 new users (in particular for 2019, there were 1 237 new users). In terms of file sharing, both the number of downloaded and uploaded files increased considerable during 2019: 73.6% more of downloaded files and 19.8% more of uploaded files.

In addition to online collaboration, Customs 2020 programme also funded 570 face-to-face meetings during the year (6% more than in 2018).

As in the previous years, cross-country expertise sharing/-building was provided throughout 2019, e.g. in form of **CLEP events (Common Learning Events Programme)** with a total of 14 events. Similarly, innovative common knowledge building and/or – sharing formats were further explored throughout 2019, such as EU Training webinars, eBooks, nano-learnings and similar. These build the foundation for further enhanced structured EU Customs Training cooperation in the years to come. Specific EU Training support was provided in 2019 in the context of the preparation for BREXIT, such as through the development of fast-track upskilling and on-boarding customs training programmes for direct national administrations' use.

5.5 Objective 4: reinforce skills and competences of customs officials

Under this objective, we measure the use of the different types of EU common training and human competency building provided under the programme: the e-Learning courses, the commonly developed training materials and the IT training for European customs IT systems. There are also other types of activities with a learning dimension organised under the program, such as seminars and working visits. However, they are assessed in relation to their primary business objective and reported on in other chapters.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of produced EU eLearning modules ⁴⁴	EC	15 (2013)	Grow or stable	15	15	30	129 ⁴⁵	32 ⁴⁶	48 ⁴⁷

⁴⁴ This indicator counts the modules as English (master version) and further localised versions in EU languages as requested by participating countries, as the resources needed to develop each localised version request approx. 60% of the resources spend for the original English version.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of EU eLearning modules used by participating countries (combined number of all modules used in each country)	EC	174 (2014)	Grow	174	183	305	271	279	377
Number of customs officials trained by using EU common training material	EC	4 776 (2014)	Grow or stable	4 623	6 108	23 970	34 214	17 547	40 400
Average training quality score by customs officials (on a scale of 100)	EC	70.3 (2015)	>70	73.3 ⁴⁸	70.3	74.3	73.1	72.9	75.0

The Customs 2020 programme finances the development of eLearning courses on topics of common interest in collaboration with customs administrations and representatives of trade. Such courses support the implementation of EU legislation and ensure the dissemination of good customs practices throughout the European Union.

In order to support the implementation of the Union Customs Code (UCC), an extensive UCC EU eLearning programme was developed by DG TAXUD under the Customs 2020 programme, in collaboration with a pool of 70 customs experts from national authorities and the private sector.

The UCC eLearning programme consists of a series of 19 modules (in 2019) organised at three different learning levels and an interactive eBook based in EU guidelines.

During 2019, the work focused on:

1. developing two new eLearning modules in the programme and its consequent requested language versions and updating the existing UCC Level 3 modules to keep track of the IT systems' changes and new releases;
2. producing new language versions of existing courses, to make the programme available in a maximum number of EU languages and facilitate the use of them at national level;
3. updating all courses and respective language versions to make them BREXIT compliant (no UK references or examples and correction of the number of Member States and maps).
4. updating operational courses, such as Container Examination, Samancta or Drug Precursor Control and their respective language versions.

The updated programme counts currently with 48 eLearning courses in the customs area, all of which support customs professionals from both public and private sector. The number of officials trained by using common training material has highly increased in 2019, in terms of number of trainees for the full customs-specific EU eLearning course portfolio. The increase in the customs courses to more than 40 000 could be explained by the updates of operational courses, the new IT related courses developed and the need to

⁴⁵ The indication of '129 eLearning developments' in 2017 relates to 2 newly produced eLearning modules and the production of 127 national language versions of existing EU eLearning modules. During 2017 a specific focus was put in developing localised language versions of existing eLearning modules on specific request of participating countries.

⁴⁶ The number of 32 EU eLearning modules relates to 2 newly produced modules plus 9 and 21 languages versions of each module.

⁴⁷ The number of 48 EU eLearning modules relates to 2 newly produced modules plus the updated of other courses and their localisations.

⁴⁸ The new format of the satisfaction survey was only launched towards the end of 2014. Therefore the data collected in 2014 is insufficient to be representative and we should rather rely on the 2015 data as the baseline.

train new customs officials in the administrations (new recruitments to reinforce customs administrations as a result of BREXIT).

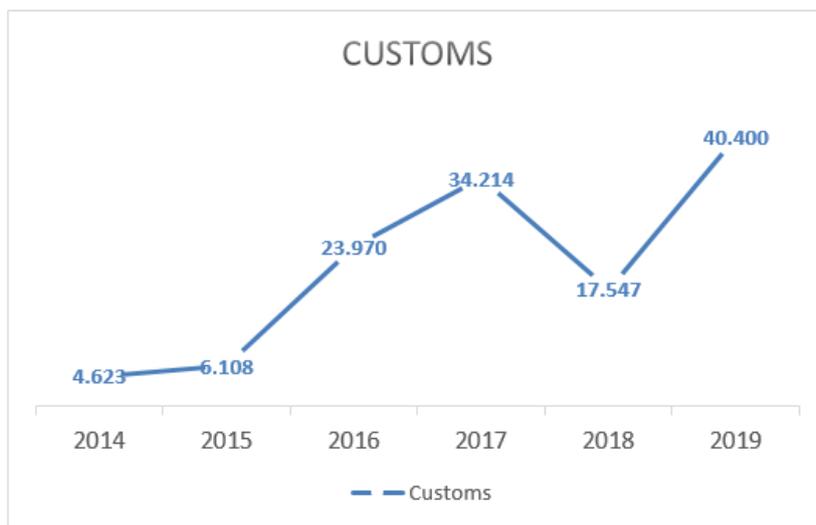


Figure 1 : Evolution of number of Customs trainees in national administrations

In parallel, some of the eLearning courses are also available on the EUROPA website, where they can be downloaded by economic operators and other interested stakeholders. The number of downloads is still significant (10 529 downloads in 2019), representing **75 405 private sector customs professionals trained** on EU Customs eLearning modules – see also section 5.6 for further information on the use of training outputs by economic operators.

The customs officials were asked to report back on the **quality of the training courses** using the internationally recognised Kirkpatrick training scale⁴⁹. The trainees were requested to score the relevance of the courses, the achievement of their learning objectives, the learning retention and the 'user-friendliness' of the courses. The average score in 2019 measured 75 points across all available EU Customs eLearning modules (with 75 = 'very good' and 50 = 'fairly') and indicates an overall positive assessment, the highest since the launch of the programme.

Furthermore, Customs 2020 continued to support national customs administrations with the national implementation and/or introduction of competency-based staff development and training, based on the **EU Customs Competency Framework (CustComp^{EU})**, through a series of common and/or country-specific implementation training events.

In 2019, TAXUD launched for the first time the Programme Customs 2020-supported initiative **EU Certificate of Recognition for academic customs study programmes (Bachelor's/Master's level)**, an initiative under the multiannual EU customs & tax training and performance building Action Plan (2017 – 2020)⁵⁰

The successful 2019 EU Recognition pilot cycle (7 academic institutions were awarded with the EU Recognition Certificate) represented a step forward toward systematic recognition of customs-specific Bachelor and Master's study programmes (and customs specific modules within wider BA/MA programmes) that has as objective to equip students with the optimal competencies to engage in – or further advance in – their Customs career, both in public and private sectors. EU recognised academic customs programmes will in consequence contribute to the rise of customs performance and professionalism across the EU.

⁴⁹ http://www.wa.gov/esd/training/toolbox/tg_kirkpatrick.htm

⁵⁰ SWD(2018) 34 final/2: Customs 2020_EU Customs & Tax Training Action Plan 2017 – 2020, Initiative 4 (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pics/filedepot/655?cid=6778&fid=36036>)

For further details on the Certificate of Recognition for Customs Bachelor's and Master's study programmes, see case study in section 6.5.

Specifically in the **area of IT**⁵¹, during 2019 there were 46 training sessions organised by DG TAXUD for national customs officials on how to use various European customs IT Systems, such as CCN CSI, CCN2, Customs Risk Management System, Customs Decisions or e-Authorised Economic Operators. This number represents an increase of 18% over the previous year. There was also a significant increase in the number of participants (43%). These IT training sessions received very positive feedback from the participants in terms of their usefulness and meeting the participants' expectations, very well above targets.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of IT training sessions organised for given systems / components	ART	22 (2014)	Grow or stable	22	45	58	40	39	46
Number of customs officials trained in IT training	ART	124 (2014)	Grow or stable	124	293	374	472	503	722
Percentage of customs officials that found that the IT training met their expectations (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	95% (2014)	>80%	95.0%	92.0%	87.0%	89.0%	92.1%	89.3%
Percentage of customs officials that found the IT training to be useful (percentage of those who replied 'very useful' or 'useful')	EAF	99% (2014)	>80%	99.0%	98.0%	97.0%	97.0%	100.0%	98.3%

5.6 Objective 5: improve cooperation between customs authorities and international organisations, third countries, other governmental authorities, including Union and national market surveillance authorities, as well as economic operators and organisations representing economic operators

Under this objective, we look at the joint actions that sought to support cooperation with third countries, the use of training outputs by economic operators and the use of European Information Systems for exchange of information with third countries.

In total, there were 24 **joint actions** running under this objective (same number that in 2018): 19 project groups and 5 working visits.

⁵¹ Training sessions in the area of IT are organised in the form of Project Groups.

The majority of **project groups** continued the work initiated in previous years, mainly in the following areas:

- cooperation with Eastern neighbours: project groups on exchanges of customs information; on customs dialogue with Belarus; on the implementation of the Strategic Framework for customs cooperation with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova.
- Authorised Economic Operator: projects groups on mutual recognition with Japan and with the US.
- relations with China: projects groups on IPR enforcement; on waste and on the China - HK pilot project on Smart and Secure Trade Lanes
- different aspects of competitiveness and trade facilitation, such as the common transit procedure in countries joining the Common Transit Convention or the interoperability of security and border management systems with customs systems.

There was a new project group launched in 2019, which focused on the comprehensive review of the WCO **Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC)**⁵². The project group met twice during 2019 (September and November) involving more than 50 participants to mainly conduct a gaps and needs analysis between the UCC and the RKC. The project group's findings are to be considered in future draft coordination documents. The project group allowed for a systematic interaction between the Commission and Member States prior to the meetings of the WCO working group that is conducting the RKC comprehensive review.

The above mentioned activities illustrates the support of the Customs 2020 programme to the EU's international customs cooperation. The participants' feedback on 'fulfilled results', 'met expectations' and 'usefulness' continues to be very positive, with slight fluctuations in some of the years, but always well above baseline levels. The action managers have however reported a low level of achievement of expected results (2,5), which represents a slight improvement from 2018 but still below target. In general terms, we should take into account that, since the launch of the programme, international activities have been reporting more moderate levels of achievement of results than other types of programme activities. As reported by action managers in the past, this is primarily due to political and organisational changes in the partner countries, which impact the success and progress of these activities.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Extent to which JAs (that sought to support cooperation between customs authorities and IOs, third countries, other governmental authorities, economic operators) have achieved their intended result(s), as reported by action managers: average score on the scale of 0 (not achieved) to 4 (fully achieved)	AFF	2.36 (2014)	>3	2.36	3.17	2.44	2.44	N/A ⁵³	2.50 ⁵⁴
Participants' views on the extent to which a JA (that sought to support cooperation between customs authorities and IOs, third countries,	EAF	95% (2014)	>80%	95.0%	91.0%	92.0%	93.0%	91.0%	87.4%

⁵² The WCO adopted in 1999, the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) as the blueprint for modern and efficient Customs procedures in the 21st Century, which entered into force in 2006. The EU is a Contracting Party to the RKC by means of Council Decision 2003/231/EC, which includes accession to the Body and General Annex and has been very much engaged in the RKC review process from its very beginning.

⁵³ Only one AFF reply for which operational objective 5 was selected. Data considered not representative for 2018.

⁵⁴ These results should be interpreted cautiously, as there were only two AFF replies for which operational objective 5 was selected.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
other governmental authorities, economic operators) (has) achieved its intended result(s) (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')									
Participants' views on the extent to which an event met their expectations (percentage of those who replied 'fully' or 'to large extent')	EAF	94% (2014)	>80%	94.0%	90.0%	91.0%	94.6%	91.0%	87.4%
Participants' views on the usefulness of an event (percentage of those who replied 'very useful' or 'useful')	EAF	99% (2014)	>80%	99.0%	96.0%	98.0%	99.0%	98.0%	98,8%
Number of programme actions supporting the operational objective relating to cooperation with third parties	ART	22 (2014)	Grow or stable compared to baseline	22	43	39	30	24	24

In the area of **exchange of information through IT systems** with third countries, the mutual recognition of authorised economic operators was extended to Norway in 2018. The EU currently exchanges information with 14 partner countries: Japan, USA, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Andorra, San Marino, Russia, Turkey, North Macedonia, China, Serbia and Norway. With some of these partner countries the information exchanged concerned transit movements (NCTS), while with others it concerned AEOs. New initiatives continue to be investigated in pre-inception mode, particularly in the area of NCTS collaboration with Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. There is equally an ongoing project concerning the future implementation of the mutual recognition on AEO with Canada and, in addition, the EU is providing technical assistance to a number of countries to prepare them to set up AEO programmes. The main benefits of the mutual recognition of AEO are fewer security and safety related controls; recognition of business partners during the application process; priority treatment at customs clearance and business continuity aspects.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of partner countries that the Customs Union exchanges information with via IT systems	EC	10 (2014)	Grow or stable	10	12	13	13	14	14

Economic operators also benefit from programmes activities, in particular regarding human capacity building. In particular, **eLearning courses** (as addressed under Objective 4) that do not contain control-related or otherwise confidential content, are also publicly available for download through the Europa website, where they are mostly used by economic operators for training of their staff involved with customs. During 2019, these courses were downloaded 10 529 times and reported 75 405 private sector customs professionals having been training on EU Customs eLearning modules. The number of total downloads has gone slightly up. The new courses launched during 2019 have been especially relevant to traders, like UCC – Level 3: 'eAEO Trader Portal' and 'eBTI Trader portal', and consequently they are available for download in the Europa website. The number of trainees over these years tends to align to the availability of the courses in their local language and the lifecycle of the course itself.

Economic operators also reported back on the quality of the eLearning course used, in line with the international Kirkpatrick training quality scale. Their replies summed up to an average score of 75 (with 75 = 'very good' and 50 = 'fairly') and indicates their overall positive assessment.

Indicator	Source	Baseline	Target	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of downloaded e-learning courses by economic operators and others via Europa.eu website	EC	3 219 (2014)	Grow or stable comp. to baseline	3 219	3 202	12 920	11 807	10 449	10 529
Average training quality score by other users (e.g. traders and individuals) (on a scale of 100)	EC	64 (2014)	>70	64.0	69.2	78.5	73.1	72.9	75.0

6. PROGRESS IN RELATION TO THE ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

6.1 Introduction

The Annual Work Programme (AWP) is a strategic budgetary frame for setting up the actions to be financed by the Customs 2020 programme. The Customs 2020 Committee provides its formal opinion on the AWP before its adoption by the Commission.

The AWP consists of three main parts:

- a. **Strategic framework:** It provides the priority policy objectives for the implementation of the programmes. As such, they give steering for programme activities and prioritization of financial efforts in 2018.
- b. **Financial framework:** This part is structured by type of financing instrument: grants, procurements and reimbursement of external experts. The information provided allows the AWP's to be equally the Financing Decision.
- c. **Policy projects to which the grant for joint actions may contribute:** It provides a high-level description of customs projects. The description contains the relevant policy objectives, the general context, and refers to related Union policy initiatives and legislation. The indicated policy areas may be supported by joint actions (e.g. seminars, workshops, project groups) under the programme.

In the sections below, we have included four AWP projects corresponding to different specific objectives of the programme, with additional information on their work and achievement during 2019. The selected projects are representative of the type of AWP projects initiated under each part of the specific objective. The summaries of projects have been provided by the action managers and highlight the main actions and their results.

6.2 AWP project – IT capacity building

Title of the case study:
UCC Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Trader Portal
Description:
<p>The European Union's compliant trader initiative, the AEO programme entitles compliant and trustworthy traders to facilitations regarding security and safety and easier admittance to customs simplifications.</p> <p>The implementation of the eAEO Trader Portal allows the data exchange between the economic operators and the competent customs authorities in a uniform and harmonised way. The central EOS-AEO application provides services for the economic operators to submit requests and additional information and to receive notifications from the decision taking customs authority. The Member States that have developed their National EOS-AEO application and/or National Trader Portal can build their own trader interface compliant with the standard AEO data requirements. The EU eAEO Trader Portal has been deployed in two phases. The first release was operational on 1 October 2019 for the submission of the AEO applications and the decision-taking process. The second operational deployment has taken place on 16 December 2019 for the other subsequent processes.</p>

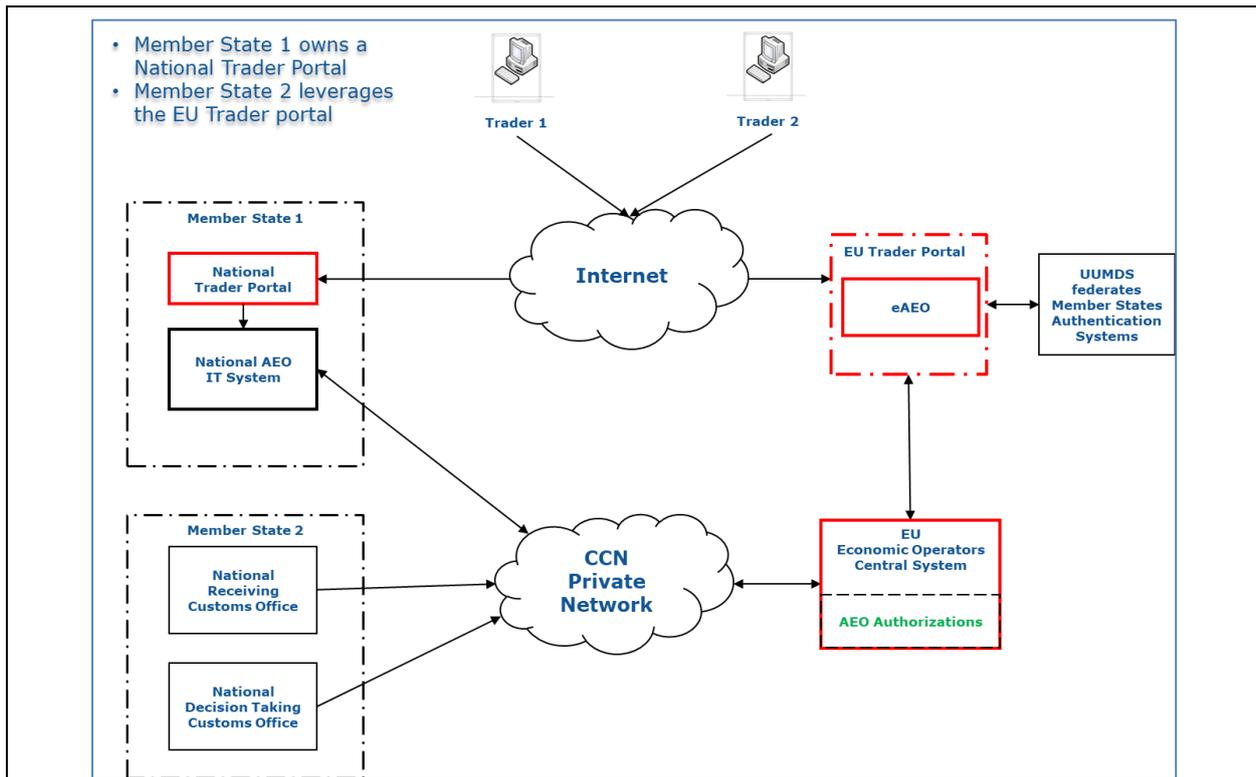


Figure 1: eAEO simplified architecture

Expected results:

- Build on the objectives of the Union Customs Code (UCC)⁵⁵ to streamline customs procedures and create modern electronic services for all actors involved in the international trade in goods.
- Provide online access for the Economic Operators (EOs) to apply for and manage their AEO applications and authorisations.
- Facilitate the communication between the EOs and the Customs Authority.

Actions initiated under the programme:

- Construction of the new AEO Trader Portal
- Implementation based on the latest DG TAXUD standard IT frameworks
- Integration with several complex IT systems (Economic Operator System, Reference Data System, Authentication System, etc.)
- Training courses for EU customs officials, eLearning modules for economic operators in all EU languages⁵⁶ and communication plans
- Deployment in the EC DG TAXUD Data Centres
- Setup the Service Management
- Support to the Member States

Summary of main outcomes:

- In addition to the requirements directly imposed by the UCC regulations, some additional processes have also been taken into account to reflect the processes of information exchanges that were existing with the paper-based procedures and directly coming from the field.

⁵⁵ Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 09/10/2013 laying down the Union Customs Code, OJ L 269, 10/10/2013, p. 1–101.

⁵⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/eu-training/general-overview/ucc-elearning-programme_en#UCC%2018

- DG TAXUD IT units carried out successfully the enhancements and modification of the existing functional and technical specifications for the new eAEO Trader Portal and the EOS-AEO CDCO in collaboration with Member States and DG TAXUD business units.
- The eAEO Trader Portal has been developed leveraging the latest frameworks, technologies and infrastructure available at DG TAXUD.
- The eAEO and EBTI Trader Portals are the first projects deployed on the new EU Customs Trader Portal (EU CTP) that was still in pilot mode at the beginning of the development.
- The authentication and authorisation of the traders are ensured by the recent UUM&DS security access platform federating several Identity and Access Management systems by the Member States. The usual UUM&DS guidelines had to be reviewed to allow a thinner granularity of authorizations granted to the users. Thanks to the Uniform User Management and Digital Signatures (UUM&DS) capabilities, the configuration changes were implemented successfully at Commission (central) and at Member State levels.
- Numerous workshops, webinars and trainings organized for and with the MSs have not only ensured successfully the coordination, the transfer of knowledge, the awareness of the changes brought to the existing EOS processes but also an excellent collaboration between all the stakeholders that has led to a smooth roll out in Production.
- Despite the very tight planning for such an internet facing system that integrates with several others, the Phase 1 of the project has met successfully the legal deadline (01 October 2019) allowing the electronic submission of AEO applications and the consultation of the existing AEO data by the Economic Operators.
- The Phase 2 delivered three months later enhanced the functionalities to support all the existing AEO workflows in use between the Economics Operators and the competent customs authorities.
- The eAEO Trader Portal and its Online User Manual is translated in all the EU official languages.
- The eAEO eLearning courses for the traders are available in all the EU official languages.
- The eAEO eLearning courses for the Customs Officers are available in English.
- Twenty four Member States use the EU eAEO Trader Portal. (4 MSs have built their own National Trader Portal.)
- Member States and DG TAXUD provided a lot of feedback from the field and expressed their high interest for a considerable number of improvements for 2021. The considered changes are overall linked to simplifying the work of the customs officers. The AEO landscape could be even more paperless by offering additional capabilities to digitalize all the exchanged information but also the existing documents stored in the “cupboards” of the customs offices by the Member States.

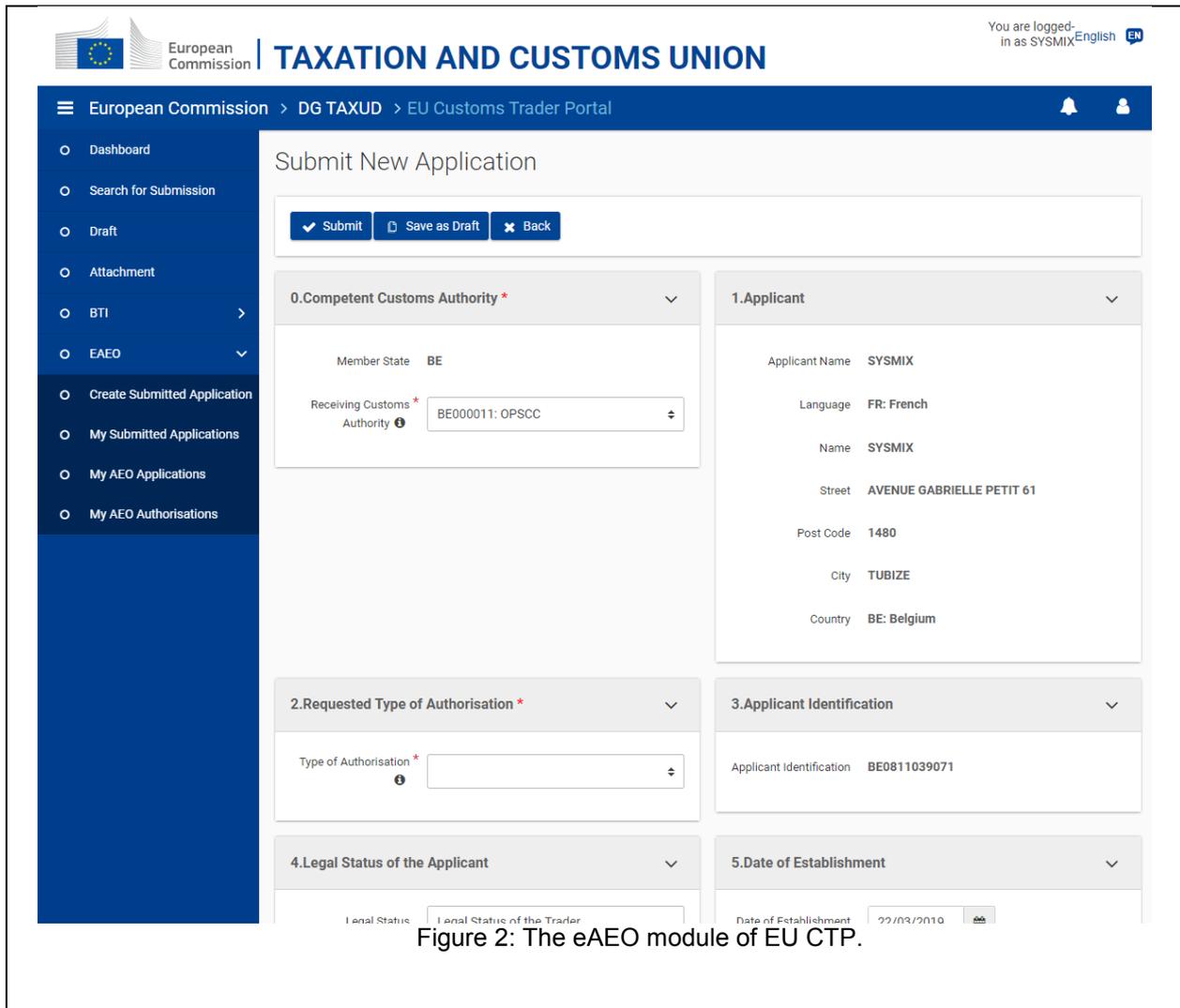


Figure 2: The eAEO module of EU CTP.

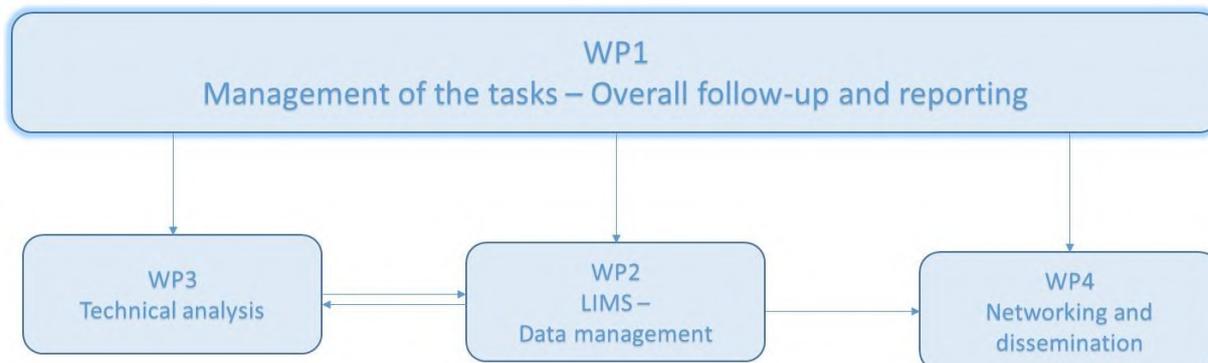
6.3 AWP project – European Customs Laboratories

Title of the case study:
Customs Laboratories Expert Team (CLET)
Description:
<p>The main objective of the expert team was to strengthen and improve the operational co-operation by pooling experts in order to create a platform for common understanding of specific problems and contributing to tackle challenges more efficiently. This is in line with the implementation of common customs legislation and policy objective set for the Customs 2020 programme. The expert team, working under the supervision of DG TAXUD, provided expertise and made proposals based on practical experience of new analytical and working methods required by legislation, in close collaboration with the Customs Code Committee and the Customs Laboratories European Network (CLEN). It used experts in specific fields (mineral oils, tobacco, drugs...), pooling a large number of equipment (e.g. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance, Liquid Scintillation Counting, DNA analysis, etc.). 11 Member States participate actively in the expert team. As a result of their successful work the originally planned duration of 18 months has been extended to over 2 years. The expert team is running strongly</p>

and the continuation is scheduled under the post-2020 programme.

Expected results:

The activities of the CLET were organised under four Work Packages (WP) as it is shown in the flow-chart here below:



- 1. Work package 1: Management of the expert team – Overall follow-up and reporting**
The purpose of this Work Package was to coordinate the project from a managerial and organisational perspective. It allowed liaising with experts and ensuring that the milestones were reached and that the deliverables supplied on time.
- 2. Work package 2: Coordination of technical activities and Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)**
This work package ensured the coordination of the technical activities with the support of a simplified LIMS. The LIMS coordinator was the responsible for the creation and maintenance of the repository.
- 3. Work package 3: Technical analysis**
This work package is the operational hand of the expert team. The experts of the partner MS performed the analysis or the operation and provided the technical report, in English, according to the requirements of EN ISO/IEC 17025.
- 4. Work package 4: Preparation of other activities - Networking and dissemination of the results**

Through its 4 WPs, in 2019 the expert team was expected to deliver on the following elements:

- Analysis of a large number of potentially dangerous substances or of products representing an important loss of revenue for EU and MS budgets.
- Sharing of results of analysis at EU level by setting up and maintaining a common database, which includes analysis results, data, and spectra of a large number of samples. This could be used as a documentation management centre and as a common reference for the Customs laboratories in order, for example, to compare data or to complement the assessment of samples detected at the borders.
- Specifically, concerning the 'preparation of other activities', the expert team contributes to:
 - Networking among the experts outside the expert team. The experts are requested to share their experience and to collaborate in order to make results and data of interest available to the Customs Laboratories European Network (CLEN) for future activities.
 - Preparatory activities regarding methods, techniques and guidelines in synergy with the CLEN's work. The expert group complements the CLEN activities mainly by performing analysis on products that in practice are not subject to routine or standard analysis by the customs laboratories.

Actions initiated under the programme:

1. The Laboratory Expert Team Information System (LETIS) was created by the Italian administration and stored to the external website www.clet.eu. LETIS is a specific laboratory information management system (LIMS) to manage the requests received by the laboratories and to provide their results. LETIS is currently working in all its phases and the workflow can be considered as stable. The database is a simple tool maintained by the laboratory information management system coordinator and is constantly fed with the tracking of the sample, the allotment of the tasks, the timeline and the results of the analysis performed and results retrieved by literature search.
The database is a simple tool able to store and share results and reports.
2. The new tool to improve the efficiency of customs labs was put in place, providing at the end of the project 444 analysis in different fields.
3. New analytical methods have been translated into English and included in the ILIADe database, with the aim to make them available to all CLET participant Member States and to all the countries interested. In addition, CLET initiated to develop a method for the characterization of the metabolites of *Hoodia gordonii*, a CITES protected plant whose products are sold for dietetic purposes. This analysis allows customs to identify the protected plant, to seize the relevant cargo and apply the legislation to protect the plant.

Summary of main outcomes:

Considering the novelty of such collaborative work, the launch phase required effort and time. Some problems at the beginning (e.g. a delay in signing the agreement, doubts on the hourly costs reported in the budget forecast, difficulty to host the LIMS system, need to promote CLET and explain how to use it) caused a considerable delay in reaching the operational stage. The project became effective towards the end of the 2017. Since then, however, the expert team became an integral part in the structure of European customs' laboratories providing a gap-filling service that reinforces the control capabilities at EU-level.

It has to be noted that the use of this tool gives no reason anymore for a country not to control some goods due to lack of expertise or instruments, because under the CLET there is always a laboratory which can do the analysis and provide reliable results in short time.

By using CLET, it has been possible in particular to improve the efficiency of customs laboratories by performing non-routine and uncommon requests, to name few:

- identification of a freeze dried unknown powder in a glass vial,
- analysis with the Reformulyzer instrument,
- identification of hormones by liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry,
- species identification by DNA sequencing,
- distinction between natural and artificial graphite,
- determination if a tobacco product contains tobacco by microscopy, chromatography and DNA analysis.

CLET also allowed more wide-spread analysis in particular fields like narcotics and mineral oils or with highly sophisticated techniques, which are available in only some customs laboratories.

The original plan was fine-tuned during the course of the project, in order to address more specific needs of the laboratories. For this reason, some analysis which were originally available to be performed were replaced by others, more relevant for the customs purposes or performed by sophisticated machine which are very expensive and not available in many Member States.

A special example of the collaborative spirit generated by CLET reaches beyond the strict limits of the expert team: good collaboration was shown when one Member State had to close its laboratories due to the refurbishing of its premises. The routine work for this Member State did not stop at all, thanks to the support provided by the expert team. For the most urgent matters, the other members of the CLET

performed the analysis and the submitting Member State used the results for its specific purposes. Under the coordination of Italy, all 11 Member States involved showed positive spirit, commitment and trust in this project always expressing great solidarity and their willingness to cooperate and collaborate with the others.

6.4 AWP project – Overall functioning of the Customs Union

Title of the case study:
The Future of Customs In the EU 2030+
Description:
<p>Global trade is evolving fast and the EU is one of the world's most important trading partners. New regulations, technologies, products and trade flows continuously create risks and opportunities that challenge customs in the EU. The scale and speed of these changes create challenges which are unprecedented in the 50 years of history of EU customs policy. Even though this project was performed before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, this event reinforces the point.</p> <p>In this context, DG TAXUD recognised the importance of engaging in a thorough work of anticipation to make sure that the EU Customs System remains relevant and effective in the long-term, in line with current and future challenges and that the policy-makers have the best possible evidence to create the EU customs system of the future.</p> <p>This process was built on the outcomes of the pilot activity on foresight started in 2018 by DG TAXUD with the support of their "Think Tank" composed of expert representatives from 6 EU Member States. This pilot activity followed up on a reflection triggered by the celebration of 50 years of the Customs Union.</p> <p>The foresight process was designed to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy-relevant: to provide a longer-term view in which current policy choices and options can be situated and interpreted. The study aims at better preparing policy makers and stakeholders to create an efficient EU customs system for the future. • Systemic and integrated: providing a qualitative understanding of possible in- and out-of-the-box developments that will affect EU Customs, and developing an integrated, systemic approach to understand EU customs. This will help to consider and link meaningfully the issues that will have a large impact on the sector but are now out of the view of policymakers and stakeholders. <p>In order to obtain as robust as possible an outcome, the project recruited participants from all the relevant groups of stakeholder: traders, business, international organisations, consumers, academia, representatives of key EU trading partners, representatives of customs from various EU Member States, relevant European Commission services and of course DG TAXUD.</p>
Expected results:
<p>The aim of the project was to be inclusive of all relevant stakeholders, to develop a systemic and integrated view of the future of customs in the EU to all participants and to provide a qualitative understanding of possible in- and out-of-the-box developments that will affect EU Customs. All this to support the policy makers of today in building a resilient, relevant and efficient EU customs system of</p>

the future.

The main objectives of the project were:

- To develop a process to generate strategic intelligence for EU policy making in the domain of customs in the EU, including scenarios
- To generate a tool to help relevant actors and stakeholders of EU customs engage with the foresight scenarios developed by the project
- To generate a vision for customs in the EU in 2040 and
- To support an action-oriented reflection on what the outcomes of the foresight process could mean for decision-making in the present.

Actions initiated under the programme⁵⁷:

- CSM/026/001 “High Level Seminar on Strategic Foresight”: the seminar took place in October 2019 (Helsinki).
- CPG/182 “Foresight for EU Customs 2030+”: three meetings of this project group took place during 2019 in February, May and November (Belgium).

Summary of main outcomes:

The participatory phase of this project, between January 2019 and February 2020 covered:

- Horizon scanning as a way to build situational awareness and help in the scoping phase
- The Canvas tool as a system mapping approach to help scope the project.
- The Real-Time Delphi method as a first collection of intelligence on the future of customs in the EU.
- **A scenario-building methodology to provide a strategic and systemic thinking space (see below).**
- The Scenario Exploration System, an award-winning tool that enables participants to use scenarios to simulate their possible paths towards the future in relation to an issue of their choice.
- **Vision building** to give a sense of direction for the long-term (**see below**).
- Road-mapping to orient the strategic reflection.

Detailed description of two of the foresight phases – scenario and vision building:

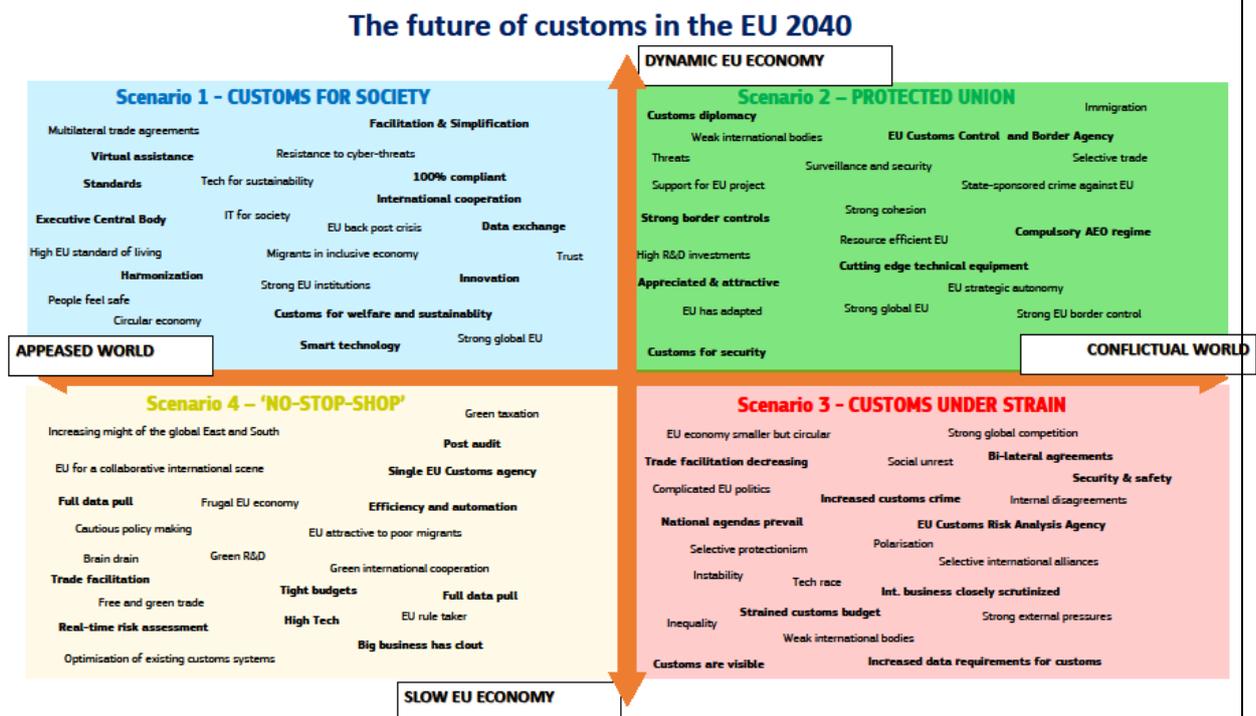
In the **scenario building**, possibly the most emblematic and used foresight method, scenarios were

⁵⁷ In addition to the actions initiated under Customs 2020, there were four workshops organised during 2019 and one in early 2020: Workshop 1 (Establishing a scenario logic), Workshop 2 (Developing scenarios), Workshop 3 (Scenarios as a way to engage with the future of EU customs), Workshop 4 (Vision building) and Workshop 5 (From vision to action).

built as 'stories' illustrating a possible future. Scenarios are not predictions about the future but rather descriptions of some possible futures or of some aspects of possible futures.

They are used both as a way to explore the future and as a tool to help decision-making. For the latter, scenarios are used mainly to highlight key differences from the present and to reveal the choices available as well as their potential consequences and trade-offs. This is why this approach was used in this study.

Here, the scenarios were built through two consecutive participatory workshops using the classic 'matrix' approach. During the first scenario building workshop, participants identified the key drivers of change for customs in the EU and selected the two key factors around which the logic to construct the scenarios for customs in the EU in 2040 was built. During the second scenario building workshop, participants put flesh on the bones of the scenarios.



The exploration of the scenarios in the High-level Foresight Seminar in Helsinki in October 2019 was then used to create a vision for Customs in 2040.

The role of a good vision is to inspire all people concerned in such a way as to influence decision making today. A vision serves to give a sense of direction, to rally people around common values and to set people onto coherent paths. However, a vision is not a mission, nor a goal nor a fantasy.

A good vision is:

- **Future-oriented**, with a sufficiently distant time horizon to go beyond the usual range of planning.
- **Ideal**, to give an inspiring positive image of the future to achieve something better than today.
- **Engaging** to make sure that it can motivate people.
- **Co-created** with as many relevant stakeholders as possible to ensure broad buy-in.
- **Credible** so as to avoid the vision being abandoned as unrealistic.
- **Challenging** to avoid complacency and generate enough momentum for progress.
- **Clear** so that all concerned understand it and can work towards it.
- **Stable**, to make sure that people can use it reliably to set long-term goals.
- **Achievable**, so that people can build enough confidence a successful achievement of the vision.

A template for the key elements of a vision can help build a good vision. In this case, we started by

asking the following questions for EU customs:

- What do we want to be?
- What for? What functions do we want to have?
- What values and principles do we want to hold?
- What are the key needs and requirements? (This last question is optional)

With this in mind and helped by vision-relevant keywords harvested from previous policy documents and from the Helsinki High-Level Foresight Seminar, the vision building started by asking the participants to organise the 50 or so visioning elements into the vision building template. Subsequently, people were led through a cumulative process. People were first asked to work in pairs on the basis of the vision elements collected previously. They were then asked to join two other pairs, and reconcile their draft visions. The groups of 6 were then asked to merge by 2 and reconcile again their co-designed draft visions. After that, the two groups of 12 each presented their draft vision and a plenary debate was held to come up with one single vision. The emerging vision was projected and edited in real-time on a large screen. This led to a strong draft 2040 vision agreed by all participants, representing all key stakeholder groups. It was a vision clearly charting a path from customs in the EU to EU customs.

The outcome of the foresight exercise painted a vision of an EU Customs Union of the future in which customs would:

- Fully protect society, the environment and the EU economy through effective facilitation of legitimate trade and intelligent, risk-based supervision of supply chains;
- Be proactive, working seamlessly with stakeholders and be committed to innovation and sustainability and be the reference for customs worldwide;
- Be seen to act as one.

At the end of the process, high-level representatives of the national customs administrations in the EU Member States engaged with the vision and discussed ideas that would lead to achieving it. They included actions like more data mining and better use of data resources; more interoperability between customs and other systems; stronger governance of the Customs Union; a better system for training customs officials; and improved cooperation between the EU and other countries at multilateral and bilateral level.

The outcomes of the foresight exercise were then used by DG TAXUD in a policy process, informing the drafting of the Communication on the Action Plan taking the Customs Union to the Next Level (planned for adoption in September 2020). This closed the circle of creating the anticipation of the future of the EU Customs Union in a foresight project and then acting on it today.

6.5 AWP project – Training and human competency building

Title of the case study:

EU Certificate of Recognition for Customs Bachelor's and Master's Study Programmes: 2019 Pilot Project

(Initiative 4 of the EU Learning & Development Action Plan for Customs and Taxation (2017-2020)⁵⁸)

⁵⁸ EU Learning & Development Action Plan for Customs and Taxation (2017 – 2020) - SWD (2017) 34 final

Description:
<p>To support training and competence development for current and future customs professionals in the European Union, a series of concrete customs training and staff development actions are taken under the Customs 2020 programme by the Commission/DG TAXUD in cooperation with national administrations every year, on the basis of a commonly agreed EU Learning & Development Action Plan for Customs and Taxation (2017-2020).</p> <p>Within the scope of this agreed EU-wide multi-annual Action Plan, and further based on the EU Customs Competency Framework (CustCompEU, a common strategic performance development framework for the customs profession within the EU) DG TAXUD, in cooperation with national customs administrations' training institutes and the support of an external consultant, has undertaken the initiative to develop an EU Recognition scheme for customs specific training programmes ('EU certificate of recognition'), for annual roll-out as of 2019.</p> <p>This EU Recognition initiative is targeted towards academic customs programmes (Master/Bachelor, and customs-specific modules within these programmes). The process to obtain the EU Certificate of Recognition has been developed partly in coordination with the World Customs Organisation. It is designed to acknowledge the high customs-specific quality of an awarded study programme (or modules within), as based on their alinement with the EU Customs Competency Framework (CustCompEU) and related academic reference training programmes (RTPs). Considering that the CustCompEU is also aligned with WCO's PICARD Professional Standards and the WCO international recognition of academic customs study programmes, the academic study programmes that successfully lead to the EU Certificate of Recognition will have privileged access to WCO recognition.</p> <p>The 2019 recognition cycle was considered as a pilot year for this initiative. Following 2019, study programmes can be awarded annually with a Certificate of Recognition that serves as an EU label of excellence for high-quality, modern customs study programmes, acknowledging their leading role in raising customs performance and professionalism.</p> <p>The process to obtain the EU Certificate of Recognition is set out in the publically available EU Recognition Application Guide (on EUROPA). Further detailed information on the EU Recognition initiative is available on-line.</p>
Expected results:
<p>It was expected to put in place an EU Recognition scheme, that serves as an EU label of excellence for high-quality, modern customs study programmes, acknowledging their leading role in raising customs performance and professionalism.</p> <p>Following a successful pilot cycle in 2019, customs-specific academic study programmes would have the opportunity on an annual basis to be awarded with a Certificate of Recognition (3 years validity with prolongation options).</p> <p>The delivery of recognised academic customs study programmes and modules is expected to equip in the future students with the optimal competencies to engage or advance their career in customs and contribute to the rise of customs professionalism and performance in the European Union.</p> <p>As a direct result of the 2019 Pilot recognition cycle, maximal 5 EU level recognised academic customs study programmes were envisaged in 2019 (actual 2019 result topped the expectations: 7 EU recognitions could be awarded by end 2019).</p>
Actions initiated under the programme:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based on the EU Customs Competency Framework (CustCompEU) - a recognised common quality benchmark for optimal knowledge and skills building of customs professionals in the EU - and its related EU Customs Training Curriculum and EU Reference Training Programme for Academic Customs Education (RTP), both developed between 2014 and 2017, an "EU Customs Certificate of Recognition" process had been set up in 2018, having the RTP as quality reference benchmark for optimal, high-quality customs training at academic

level.

2. To provide the applicants and interested institutions with clear guidance on the objectives of the EU Recognition and on application process, were created :
 - “EU Recognition of State-of-the-Art Customs Academic Programmes” [Europa page](#)
 - **Application guide** with practical guidance on how to complete each form, available on Europa
 - The EU Customs Certificate of Recognition [Process document](#) available on Europa page
 - “EU Recognition of State-of-the-Art Customs Academic Programmes” printed [leaflet](#)
3. To assist the Commission with the decision-taking regarding the granting of EU Recognition for applying customs academic programmes, DG TAXUD nominated an Assessment Board composed of 8 profile-based and selected experts from customs administrations, trade and academia.

The Assessment Board (AB), following an established assessment process⁵⁹, and after the eligibility check and quantitative assessment performed by DG TAXUD with support of the external contractor, made a qualitative assessment of applying customs study programmes, in line with established assessment criteria and reference mapping material.
4. Based on this qualitative assessment, covering the evaluation of the academic programme as a whole, the representation of the competencies in the academic programme, the methods of delivery, the proficiency levels accomplished, the training hours taught, etc., the AB provided the Commission with the consolidated recommendation to approve or reject an application for EU Recognition.
5. Based on the AB Group recommendations, DG TAXUD drafted and communicated to the applicants the Final Recognition decisions in November 2019. To close the 2019 pilot EU Recognition cycle, DG TAXUD organised on 10 December 2019 an Award ceremony and a networking meeting that offered a platform for cooperation, discussion and exchange of views between awarded universities, EU Commission, WCO and the EU Recognition Assessment Board. The award ceremony was held at the margin of the Customs Policy Group meeting to further raise awareness amongst the national Heads of Customs of this new EU initiative and in particular of the availability of recognised high-quality customs study programmes in their country (and even more across the EU).
6. Following the application process and the assessment of the applications both applicants and the AB members provided their feedback to further facilitate and optimize the EU Recognition processes. It was already implemented in the methodology and documentation in 2020 cycle.

Summary of main outcomes:

The 2019 EU Recognition pilot cycle resulted in a step forward toward systematic recognition of customs-specific Bachelor and Master’s study programmes (and customs-specific modules within wider BA/MA programmes) and the objective to equip students with the optimal competencies to engage in – or further advance in – their customs career, both in public and private sectors.

EU recognised academic customs programmes will in consequence contribute to the rise of customs performance and professionalism across the EU.

The 2019 assessment resulted in 7 award cases out of 8 applications:

1. Master’s programme in Customs Law, by Academia Aduanera / Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), Spain;
2. Master’s programme in Customs and Supply Chain Compliance, by Rotterdam School of Management (RSM), Netherlands;
3. Bachelor’s programme module on Customs and Finance Guard in the Law Enforcement Administration, by the National University of Public Service (NUPS), Hungary;

⁵⁹ EU Recognition Assessment Process documentation (<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/pics/filedepot/655#>)

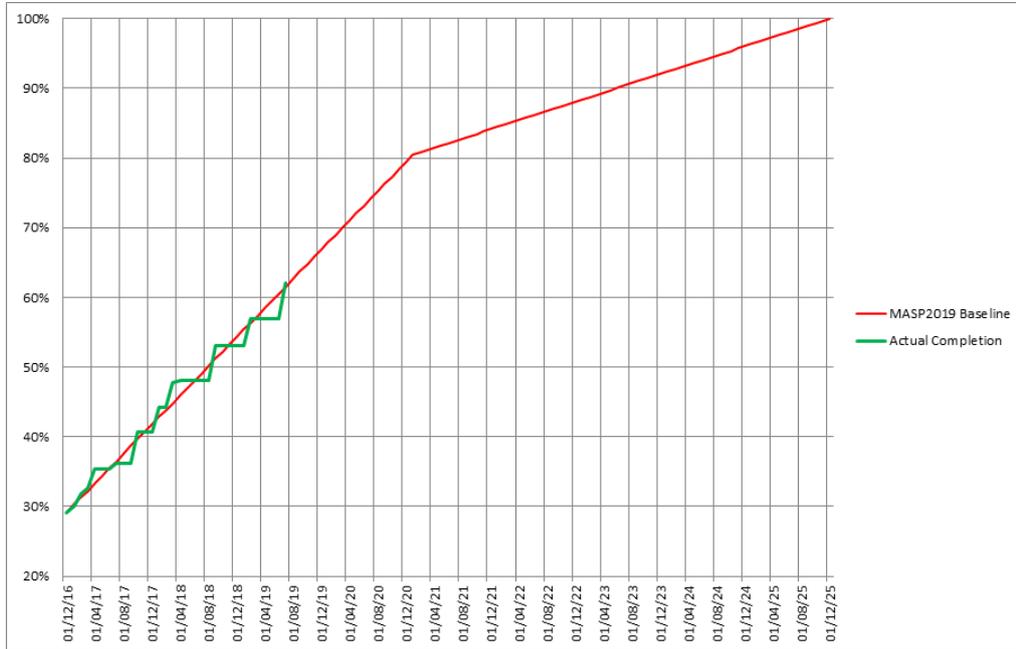
4. Master's programme in in Customs, Compliance and International Trade Law (MCC), by Institute of Customs and International Trade Law (affiliated with the University of Münster, Germany) EBS-Universität für Wirtschaft und Recht, Wiesbaden, Germany;
5. Master's programme in Customs, Taxation and International Trade Law (MCA), by Institute of Customs and International Trade Law (affiliated with the University of Münster), Germany;
6. Master's programme in International Supply Chain & Customs, by NEOMA Business School, France;
7. Master's programme module on Currency, Customs and Tax control (CCTC), by D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics, Svishtov, Bulgaria.

The 2019 EU Recognition Process resulted in 1 rejection case, the Master's programme in Customs and Excise by University of Antwerp, for not meeting the formal eligibility criteria (MA study programme not yet nationally accredited).

Following the successful piloting of the EU Certificate of Recognition initiative in 2019, annual EU recognition process cycles are planned to be offered in the years to come.

ANNEX 1: UCC IT PROJECTS – PROGRESS STATUS⁶⁰

Percentage of achievement of Commission tasks in the implementation of the UCC WP



Planning of the UCC Work Programme projects (status Q4 2019)

⁶⁰ Annex 1 provides a complete picture on the progress made on all UCC systems by both the Commission and the Member States. However, it should be noticed that the Customs 2020 programme only finances the EU components and that national components are financed by Member States' budgets.

