

Customs: action programme Customs 2007, 2003-2007

2002/0029(COD) - 07/10/2008 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents its final evaluation of the Customs 2007 programme in accordance with Article 19 of Decision 253/2003/EC on Customs 2007.

The final evaluation has confirmed that the Customs 2007 programme has had a positive impact on the work of customs in Europe. It is greatly appreciated by its beneficiaries and stakeholders, and effectively contributes (in some cases very significantly) to all of its main objectives. The final evaluation reaffirms what was already indicated in the midterm evaluation — the need for continuation of the Customs 2007 programme. The paper makes a series of recommendations to ensure the successor programme work as smoothly and effectively as possible.

The evaluation has identified a number of issues related to specific subject areas that should be addressed.

Place increased emphasis on trade facilitation. This is the key objective for traders as well as for many participating countries' national customs administrations, but it has received relatively less attention under Customs 2007 (in comparison with the other main objectives). To help minimise the burdens on legitimate trade, it will be particularly important to:

- ensure timely delivery on the E-Customs initiative and avoid de-acceleration of the process before the benefits for economic operators begin to materialise;
- prioritise activities concerning single authorisations, including the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) and Single Authorisations for Simplified Procedures (SASP), and work towards truly uniform recognition and application of these concepts across the entire EU;
- continue to involve economic operators in relevant joint actions so as to ensure that the views of traders are taken into account in the development of new rules and procedures;

Undertake further work on risk analysis and management, which is a key area for improving and standardising customs controls and procedures and combating fraud. Further work on risk profiles, indicators, rules, etc., as well as on finding ways to facilitate their use by all national customs administrations, should focus on:

- identifying politically sensitive elements of risk management (partly due to the fact that what is legal in one Member State can be illegal in another), and addressing them;
- continuing to emphasise activities and practical exercises directly aimed at further harmonisation of risk management approaches across the EU.

Continue to pursue the new common training approach while ensuring that the production of e-learning/blended learning modules does not become an end in itself, and that other areas for action are not neglected. This includes:

- holding an open dialogue between the Commission and participating countries in order to decide on the priorities for future years (including what other training-related areas participating countries would like the programme to address);
- reviewing the content, frequency, duration and structure of the meetings of the Training Management Group, in order to enable it to play a more active role in coordinating programme activities in the area of training.

Continue to build on the progress made concerning the IT systems, by:

- addressing the specific challenges and weaknesses identified by the evaluation that affect several of the IT systems currently deployed at the EU level;
- striving for pan-European harmonisation of interfaces with traders for all customs procedures. The Commission has proposed guidelines for the harmonisation of such interfaces across the EU in the past, and the evaluation found that nearly half of the participating countries considered that Customs 2007 could or should have further supported the harmonisation of interfaces at European level.

There are also some “flanking” measures recommended by the evaluators:

- urge participating countries to ensure that sufficient human resources are allocated to programme management at the level of each national customs administration;
- develop communication activities targeted particularly at the respective national ministries responsible for customs, in order to raise the profile of Customs 2007 (and thereby *inter alia* enhance the chances of sufficient resources being made available);
- revisit the indicators and measures of success developed at the start of the Customs 2007 programme, with a view to deciding on a definitive list of feasible indicators that can be used for programme monitoring and evaluation in the future.