

# Action programme for customs (Customs 2020), 2014-2020

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The Commission presents a report on the mid-term evaluation of the Customs 2020 programme.

Its purpose being to assess the Customs 2020 programme since its launch on 1 January 2014 up to the halfway point of its implementation (31 December 2017).

The current report aims to chart the progress made in the following areas:

## *Achievement of the programme's objectives*

The programme has been effective in achieving its objectives and has contributed significantly to the proper functioning of the Customs Union and modernising it. It has fostered cooperation and the exchange of information, ranging from facilitating convergence at the strategic level to approximating approaches, interpretation, administrative procedures, best practice and rules at the operational level. The secure platform for exchanging information has helped Member States and economic operators to overcome their reluctance to share sensitive data and has built trust. The value of human networks and personal contacts has been among the programme's most appreciated benefits.

## *Efficiency of resource usage and aspects of simplification*

The Customs 2020 programme's overall budget is EUR 522 943 000, with EUR 288 722 000 committed in 2014-2017. Nearly 85 % of the budget has been spent on developing, operating and maintaining the European Information Systems. These common IT systems are clearly resource-intensive. However, they bring an array of benefits in all areas of customs activities, including standardisation of customs procedures, uniform implementation of customs law, sharing of information and generating economies of scale. Their importance in terms of modernising customs to create a paperless environment is invaluable.

Different benefits arise from the joint actions and training activities, which provide a framework for broad and inclusive continuous collaboration, increasing understanding, knowledge and capacity, creating professional relationships and acting as catalysts. The common IT systems and databases supported by the programme lead directly to a simpler, more robust and more reliable technological framework that is easy to maintain and support.

Although simplification as such is not one of the programme's objectives, the programme does provide support to other initiatives that are designed to simplify and modernise the customs environment. Some efficiency gains have also been achieved in terms of synergies between the Customs 2020 and Fiscalis 2020 programmes. While the policy areas for the two programmes differ, they share a similar focus in enabling administrations to cooperate and exchange information.

## *Continued relevance of the programme*

Through its different iterations, the Customs programme has been in place for over 25 years and has evolved with the single market. There are 34 countries that currently participate in the programme: 28 EU Member States and 6 candidate and potential candidate countries.

It is deemed highly relevant for the broad needs of a well-functioning EU Customs Union and in particular meeting the needs of customs administrations, economic operators and European citizens.

***Coherence with and contribution to the EU's broader policies and other initiatives***

Internal coherence between the different features, components and design of the programme is extremely strong, with a high level of consistency between the intervention logic and objectives of the programme and its execution. The various activities also strengthen and complement each other, enhancing the results of the programme.

The Customs 2020 programme plays an integral part in the EU's broader policies and coherent with the EU's goal of creating a modern, paperless environment for customs and trade, while preserving the EU's financial, economic and societal interests and well-being.

***Added value of the programme at EU level***

The Customs 2020 programme's greatest EU added value lies in supporting all aspects of Union Custom Code (UCC) implementation, which require EU solutions for EU problems and close cooperation of the Member States; they need to apply the same rules and assist each other in pursuing the Customs Union's objectives. The programme has provided for financial sustainability of the interoperable and interconnected European Information Systems, meeting the requirements of the UCC with greater economies of scale and efficiency.

Customs 2020 has created tangible outputs and helped customs officials acquire skills and exchange experiences. However, none of the programme's outputs would likely continue beyond the short term if the programme were to be discontinued. Existing differences would persist and networks built and improved thanks to years of collaboration would fade.