

# Strengthening the competitiveness of the internal market by developing the EU customs union and its governance

2018/2109(INI) - 14/02/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 492 votes to 33, with 17 abstentions, a resolution on strengthening the competitiveness of the internal market by developing the EU Customs Union and its governance.

Members recalled that the Customs Union, which is 50 years old this year, is a cornerstone of the EU and is one of the world's largest trading blocs. EU imports and exports totalled EUR 3 700 billion in 2017 and customs duties collected make up 15 % of the EU budget.

The implementation of the Union Customs Code (UCC) is essential to safeguard EU own resources, in particular customs duties, and national fiscal interests, but also to safeguard European consumers and fair competition in the internal market.

## *Need for an efficient Customs Union*

Parliament stressed that a fully functional Customs Union is essential to guarantee the credibility and strength of the EU and its negotiating position for the conclusion of new trade agreements. An efficient EU Customs Union helps to facilitate legal trade and to reduce administrative burdens for legitimate traders.

The resolution stressed the importance of:

- ensuring effective controls - in particular by encouraging cooperation with customs authorities in third countries - and to avoid any unjustified obstacles to legal trade;
- addressing the current divergences between the levels of control and their quality, as well as between customs procedures and sanctions policies at the points of entry into the Customs Union;
- establishing uniform customs procedures within the Union based on a reformed IT infrastructure;
- intensifying work on the creation of an integrated one-stop European electronic environment for customs.

## *Digitisation of customs procedures*

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to develop a more efficient, cost-effective and streamlined approach to the management of IT systems for customs authorities. Given the delays in this area, it called for a more precise and realistic estimate of the time and resources that will be needed, and of the scope of the individual IT projects that will help to digitise customs procedures.

Deploring the fact that the implementation of the new IT systems for the Customs Union has suffered a series of delays, resulting in the request by the Commission to Parliament and the Council for an extension of the transitional period beyond the deadline of 2020 laid down in the UCC, the Commission and the Council must, as a matter of the utmost priority, ensure that the customs code is implemented and customs procedures digitised within the new deadline.

The Commission is called on to:

- update the timetable of its UCC work programme to take account of the extension to the transitional period proposed by it;
- update its multiannual strategic plan by sequencing projects throughout the transition period so as to avoid, as far as possible, the concentration of deployments at the end of the period, and by establishing binding milestones, including for Member States;
- not to modify the statutory and technical specifications that have now been adopted for the 17 IT tools related to the Customs Code with major implications in terms of financial and human resources;
- continuously evaluate the Customs 2020 programme and address the weaknesses identified;
- further develop a tool on the performance of the Customs Union that will eventually allow its performance to be systematically assessed against its strategic objectives in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and uniformity.

### ***Governance, reports and funding for the Customs programme***

Parliament called on the Commission and Member States to step up their efforts and expand the resources deployed so as to ensure full application of the customs code adopted in 2013 and of uniform customs procedures throughout the EU. It called on the Commission, in that connection, to submit an action plan that might usefully be based on a peer review of customs practices, on the exchange of good practices, on stepped-up cooperation between customs services and on a sufficiently resourced training programme.

The Commission and the Member States are called on to step up their efforts to better cope with the increase in the volume of low-value goods imported into the Union, which increases each year from 10% to 15%.

Taking note of the funding effort made under the EU budget, increasing the allocation for the next [Customs programme](#) for 2021-2027 to EUR 842 844 000 at 2018 prices, Member States were called on to provide the necessary human and financial resources for deployment of the national components, on which the introduction of the European electronic customs system is dependent.

The Commission is called on to propose a more effective governance structure for the conduct of customs IT projects and their updates.

### ***Brexit***

Recalling that the United Kingdom will become a third country after withdrawal from the EU, thus altering the EU's external borders, the Brexit process should not impact negatively on the development and governance of EU Customs. Members stressed that, following the withdrawal of the UK there must be no loopholes in the customs system – including at the external borders of the EU – that would pave the way for illicit trade or the evasion of public-law debts provided for under EU law.