

Union Customs Code. Recast

2012/0027(COD) - 13/12/2019 - Follow-up document

The Commission presented a report giving an overview of the progress made in the implementation of the electronic systems provided for in the Union Customs Code (UCC), which is the main legal framework governing customs rules and procedures in the customs territory of the Union.

The UCC provides for the transition to a paperless environment for customs formalities. To achieve this objective, the UCC requires the European Commission and the Member States to upgrade most of the existing electronic systems, interconnect some of these systems at trans-European level and introduce a number of new systems to complete the full automation of the customs procedures and formalities.

The projects listed in the UCC work programme can be divided into three system categories:

- 11 trans-European central systems to be developed or upgraded by the Commission (often also requiring developments or upgrades by the Member States of national systems);
- three decentralised trans-European systems that have to be developed or upgraded by the Commission but have a major national component to be implemented by the Member States;
- three national systems that have to be developed or upgraded by the Member States themselves.

Challenges and progress made

The report highlighted that the Commission and the Member States face challenges in ensuring the full deployment of the UCC electronic systems by the relevant deadlines. There are resource issues in Member States, the systems are complex and interconnected, and there must be a smooth transition from existing systems to upgraded ones, so that the impact on trade is minimised.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that tangible progress is being made. An important number of electronic systems have already been deployed and are now fully operational. The remaining ones are mostly on track and planned to be completed in the period 2020-2025 in line with the planning of the projects defined in the UCC work programme. The Commission has successfully upgraded or deployed six core systems and will complete two more by 31 December 2020. Thus, by the end of 2020, the Commission will have completed eight of the fourteen trans-European systems for which it is responsible.

The six completed trans-European core systems (new systems and upgrades) are: (i) Registered Exporters System (REX); (ii) Customs Decisions (CDS); (iii) Direct Trader Access to European Information Systems - UUM&DS (Uniform User Management and Digital Signature); (iv) Upgrade of the Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) system; (v) Surveillance 3 in the framework of the CDU; (vi) Binding Tariff Information (BTI).

The two trans-European core systems to be completed by 31 December 2020 are: (i) Upgrading of Authorised Economic Operators (AEO); (ii) Information Sheets for Special Procedures (INF).

Remaining systems

Most of the remaining systems are on track and are expected to be completed during the period 2020-2025 according to the project planning defined in the UCC work programme. The report provides an overview of the planning and progress made.

As regards the remaining systems, although a number of issues have been raised at Member State level, no critical risks have been identified at the time of writing. However, the IT teams of the Commission and of the Member States Customs Administrations need to be provided with the appropriate resources to mitigate the existing high risks of missing deadlines for some of the systems, notably concerning national systems. There is a need to ensure appropriate statutory staff in the IT teams to lead the projects, and financial resources in the current Customs 2020 and future replacement programme to ensure the delivery by outsourcing partners.

Future steps

The Commission and the Member States will continue their regular meetings to steer and monitor the projects via the multi-annual strategic plan for customs dashboards and the enhanced requirements for planning and reporting on progress in the implementation of the UCC work programme. The Commission and the Member States will also continue the elaboration and development work for the remaining trans-European systems in terms of business cases and vision documents, as well as to prepare the functional and technical specifications (including transitional technical specifications in some cases) as the basis for the systems rollouts and deployments.

The Commission plans to take additional mitigation measures from the beginning of 2020, in the form of a coordination programme to assist Member States in the deployment of their components of the Automated Export Systems (AES) and the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS) in particular, and a monitoring programme to assess progress in this area. Many Member States, for their part, have expressed their willingness to take mitigation measures to ensure that planning deadlines are met.