Computerization in the field of customs. Convention

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OBJECTIVE: draft Convention on the introduction of a customs information system in order to help prevent, investigate and prosecute serious infringements of national customs legislation. CONTENT: the system comprises a central database accessed from terminals in each Member State and containing data (including personal data) on: . goods, . means of transport, . companies, . persons, . fraud trends, . powers available. . There are provisions to limit information of a personal nature in the database, especially for goods and persons (an alarm code is included for persons in order to warn that they have already carried a weapon, used violence or are wanted by the authorities). This information will only be included if there is reason to suspect that these persons have seriously infringed or are currently seriously infringing national legislation and if specific controls or undercover observation has been set up. If this is the case, certain items of information need to be collated (location of the goods, company or person, reason for the control, destination of the journey, means of transport used, objects transported etc.). Only the national authorities designated by each Member State shall have access to the information (mainly, but not only, the customs administrations). . There are provisions governing the amendment and storage of data. As far as amendments are concerned, only the country which entered the data (the "supplier contracting state") shall be entitled to amend, supplement, correct or delete the data and shall notify the other Member States accordingly. As far as data storage is concerned, data shall only be stored for as long as necessary in order to achieve the objective which was the reason for their input (there is no storage expiry date but data will be examined at least once a year in order to decide whether or not the information should be retained). If no decision is taken in this respect, the information will automatically be transferred to a restricted section of the database for one year. . There are also provisions in order to protect personal data (the Member States must adopt legislation on data protection by the time the Convention enters into force) and monitor data protection (each Member State must designate a national monitoring authority to carry out this task). . Finally, there are provisions to safeguard the security of the system (the national authorities are responsible for the terminals installed in their own country) and to refuse access to unauthorized persons.