HEADING 1A: Competitiveness for growth and jobs

Action programme for customs in the European Union (Customs 2020)

Lead DG: TAXUD

I. Overview

Customs 2020 aims to support and improve the proper functioning and modernisation of the customs union. It focuses on supporting customs authorities in protecting the financial and economic interests of the union and of the Member States, including the fight against fraud and the protection of intellectual property rights, increasing safety and security, protecting citizens and the environment, improving the administrative capacity of the customs authorities, and strengthening the competitiveness of European businesses. The vast majority of programme funding (approx. 80 %) goes into the operation of European Information Systems, followed by the organisation of the joint actions, the cooperation and collaboration side (around 15 %), and the training activities (around 5 %).

Strengthening security and protection of citizens while facilitating legitimate international trade, pursuing customs modernisation as well as developing and managing an effective and efficient EU customs union have been part of the Union's priorities in Customs Policy. The programme supports the achievement of these priorities, mainly through the setting-up of a paper-less customs environment. This environment improves both the trade facilitation and the effective enforcement of rules for protection of EU financial, safety and security interests. The European Information Systems supported by Customs 2020 play a vital role in interconnecting customs authorities.

Regarding operational cooperation, the programme funds expert teams, which are a structured form of cooperation, pooling expertise to perform tasks in specific domains or carry out operational activities, possibly with the support of online collaboration services, administrative assistance and the pooling of infrastructure and equipment facilities.

The programme finances also the development of eLearning courses on topics of common interest in collaboration with customs administrations and representatives of trade. Moreover, the collaboration between customs officials is a key sustainable success factor for implementing customs policy in Europe. This collaboration improves the understanding and the implementation of the customs law. It ensures the exchange of best practices and knowledge and creates the framework for joining efforts when IT solutions are developed. It also enhances the administrative capacity of participating countries.

The customs union is an exclusive competence of the Union. The implementation of Union legislation is however a national competence. The Union legal framework in itself does not ensure sufficiently the proper functioning of the customs union. It should be complemented by supporting measures as provided by the Customs programme in order to ensure that EU customs legislation is applied in a convergent and harmonised way at national level.

Many of the activities in the customs area are of a cross-border nature, involving and affecting all 28 Member States, and therefore cannot be effectively and efficiently delivered by individual Member States. The Customs 2020 programme, implemented by the Commission, offers Member States a Union framework to develop activities through cooperation amongst national customs officials, on the one hand, and IT cooperation and capacity building, on the other hand.

In this regard, it provides financial sustainability of the interoperable and interconnected European Information Systems, which implement with greater economies of scale and efficiency inter alia the requirements behind the Union Customs Code (UCC). The symbiotic features of the central pan-European IT architecture for customs, including the secured dedicated communication network which interconnects approximately 5000 connection points [1] across all Member States, are unmatched and unreproducible at national level. Additionally, the joint actions give the administrations unequalled opportunities for cooperation, communication and networking, ultimately building trust and leading to greater convergence of approaches and practices.

Given the scale of the Customs 2020 operations, versatility of topics, their European dimension or pan-European breadth, the Mid-term Evaluation of the programme concluded that it is difficult to assume that similar activities would be organised at any other level. None of the programme's outputs were found likely to endure beyond the short-term horizon if the programme were to discontinue. Existing differences would persist and networks built and reinforced through years of programme-fostered collaboration fade. The functioning of the customs union and the further integration of the national customs authorities that run it remain entirely dependent on the Customs programme. In view of the rapid changes and challenges ahead of the EU customs union, the programme's continuous support is essential.

The Customs programme is implemented under direct management, through:

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[1]   Customs and taxation connection points taken together.

–   Procurement contracts: for the European Information Systems expenditure, training activities and studies.
–   Grant agreements with the participating countries: for joint actions and expert teams.

II. Programme Implementation Update

Implementation Status (2017-2019)

The data collected in the performance measurement of the programme (see Section III) shows that Customs 2020 is on course to fulfilling its objectives and progressing towards achieving the expected results of the projects planned in the Annual Work Programmes. The results of the Mid-Term Evaluation exercise support this overall assessment.

The core outcomes of Customs 2020 programme are the European Information Systems (EIS), which are of critical importance for the well-functioning of the customs union. The list of the existing EIS is included in the Annex II of the Customs 2020 Regulation, while those planned for development are included in the Electronic Customs Multi-Annual Strategic Plan (MASP) ([2]). The Union Customs Code (UCC) adoption and application as of 1 May 2016 completes the shift by customs to a paperless and fully electronic and interoperable environment with core values of simplicity, service and speed. The IT systems required to implement the UCC have been also included in the MASP. The Customs 2020 programme provides funds for the Union components of the IT systems included in the MASP. These are assets (such as hardware, software, network connections) and services to support IT systems that are common to the Commission and the Member States. National components are expected to be developed and operated by Member States, who bear the associated costs ([3]).

In 2018 and 2019, DG TAXUD's budget was reinforced with a frontloading of 7.1 EUR million in total. The funds were used for the delivery of the specifications and software for the major UCC IT trans-European systems and for the implementation and management of coordination programme to closely monitor and encourage the Member States to perform their part of the implementation.

In 2019, DG TAXUD received additional funds for BREXIT preparedness (3,9 EUR million). The budget has been spent on making an impact analysis on the different scenarios (1: No Deal, 2: Withdrawal Agreement, 3: No Deal with UK Accession to Common Transit Convention) and on developing and testing all systems and networks for scenario 3. Following negotiations during the months of September and October 2019, an agreement was reached between EU and UK. Therefore, in 2020 TAXUD will be implementing the changes needed for the Scenario Withdrawal Agreement including the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

Throughout the 2014-2019 period, work on the implementation of the MASP progressed under the programme, notably to ensure that all EIS are deployed in accordance with UCC legal deadlines. It should be highlighted that during 2019 the Commission amended the UCC ([4]) to allow a longer period for the deployment of some of the 17 IT systems ([5]) that the UCC provides for the completion of customs formalities. It became clear in the last eighteen months that it would not be possible to deploy all the systems smoothly by the original deadline of end 2020 given the work involved and the interdependencies between the systems. The amendment maintains the original deadline of 2020 for 8 of the 17 systems. At the same time, it allows customs authorities and economic operators to continue using transitional arrangements (i.e. existing IT systems or paper-based arrangements) beyond 2020 for the completion of customs formalities to be managed by 9 systems that now have longer deployment deadlines. The 9 systems in question are 3 national systems that must be upgraded by Member States by end 2022, and 6 trans-European systems that must be upgraded or developed by the Commission by end 2025. According to the conclusions of the European Court of Auditor's Special Report 26/2018 ([6]), the main reasons for delivering some IT systems beyond 2020 were: a) changes in the scope of some projects and shifting from the Member States to the EU level, which added to their complexity; b) insufficient resources allocated by Commission and Member States for implementing IT systems; c) lengthy decision-making process due to the multi-layered governance structure.

Key Achievements

Strengthening security and protection of citizens while facilitating legitimate international trade, pursuing customs modernisation as well as developing and managing an effective and efficient EU customs union have been part of the Union's priorities for Customs Policy. Those priorities are implemented largely through the Customs 2020 programme.

The achievement of these priorities is enabled under the programme, mainly through setting-up of a paper-less customs environment. This environment improves both the trade facilitation and the effective enforcement of rules for protection of EU

([2])   The MASP is drawn up by the European Commission in partnership with Member States, in accordance with Article 8(2) of the Decision 70/2008/EC on a Paperless environment for customs and trade.
([3])   The complete picture on the progress made by the Member States and the Commission in the development and implementation of all customs IT systems can be found in the **e-Customs progress reports.** These reports cover the IT systems/components funded by the Customs 2020 programme (Union components) and those managed and funded by Member States (national components). The e-Customs progress reports are produced pursuant to Article 12 of the e-Customs Decision (Decision No 70/2008/EC) and are published in the Europa website: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/general-information-customs/electronic-customs_en
([4])   Regulation (EU) 2019/632 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 amending Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 to prolong the transitional use of means other than the electronic data-processing techniques provided for in the Union Customs Code (OJ L 111, 25.4.2019, p. 54–58).
([5])   See https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/union-customs-code/ucc-work-programme_en#heading_2
([6])   ECA Special Report 26/2018 'A series of delays in Customs IT systems: what went wrong?', published on 10/10/2018.

financial, safety and security interests. Mainly, the European Information Systems supported by Customs 2020 play a vital role in interconnecting customs authorities. The functioning of these IT systems is enabled by the closed and secure Common Communication Network/Common Systems Interface (CCN/CSI) infrastructure, which since the launch of the programme in 2014 has performed with high availability and reliability (see Indicator 3). The CCN/CSI network registered over 6 902 million messages exchanged during the period January 2019 – December 2019, compared to 5 790 million messages exchanged during 2018. This represents a 19.2 % growth of the number of messages. In terms of traffic, the CCN Network registered around 32.23 TB during the period January 2019 – December 2019, compared to around 29.08 TB during 2018. This represents an increase of 10.8 % of traffic volume. The high volume of information channelled during the year via CCN/CSI and EIS, shows that the programme is a solid and robust enabler for the paper-less environment and information exchange amongst customs and tax authorities.

The correct calculation of tariffs and the fight against fraud are crucial to the protection of EU's financial interests. In this sense, TAXUD continued to ensure during 2019 the daily update of the TARIC system (Integrated Tariff of the EU), that provides the required data for the customs clearance systems of the Member States and gives economic operators a comprehensive view of all the measures applicable when importing or exporting goods into/from the EU. Other EIS such as NCTS (New Computerised Transit System) allow to monitor the movement of goods within the EU territory and to identify cases of fraud or non-payment of customs duties. NCTS has created traceable records for each transit transaction reducing the deviation from standard procedures. The Import Control (ICS) and the Export Control (ECS) systems are two of the main systems that contribute to increased interconnectivity among Member States and with economic operators. In 2019, the systems (NCTS, ICS and ECS) have maintained the highest availability rate over the last 3 years (99.45 %).

Since the launch of the programme, IT developments and adaptations of the IT environment to the UCC have been carried out, bringing the total number of EIS in operations to 54. These developments were essential for a well-functioning and modern customs union. During 2019, the Customs 2020 programme continued to finance the development of new EIS projects, in close cooperation with national customs authorities and in line with the deadlines agreed with the Member States and trade. DG TAXUD progressed in 2019 in the development of the Import Control System 2 (ICS2) and of the reshaped Customs Risk Management System (CRMS2). The two systems are core Union customs instruments aimed to protecting the external borders of the EU internal market from risks linked to the international movement of goods, including those associated to terrorism and crime. ICS2 is a large-scale system and underpins customs pre-arrival safety and security programme. It will provide a new platform for collection of advance electronic data on all goods and shipments prior to their arrival to the Union customs territory and from different trade sources. DG TAXUD nearly completed the construction of the two central components of ICS2 (shared trader interface and common repository) by the end of 2019. Development and testing work will continue with a view to rendering the first phase of the system into operation on 15 March 2021 as per the revised UCC Work Programme.

In 2019, customs officials continued to exchange views and best practices in the joint actions organised under the programme. As an example, a high-level seminar took place in May 2019 in Bucharest on the Single Window environment for customs. This event allowed sharing information with the Heads of Customs Administrations on the draft legal proposal and provided the opportunity to have a political discussion at an advanced stage of the processes but still ahead of the preparation of the final drafting of the impact assessment report and the legal proposal.

Working practices, administrative procedures and guidelines were developed and shared among the national administrations following the joint actions. These outcomes assist countries to increase the performance, effectiveness and efficiency of the customs administration. Guidelines and recommendations were also produced to support the implementation of Union law in the national administrations. They identify and address outstanding technical issues and constitute background information for Union law preparation and review. Across the programme, over 2000 guidelines and recommendations (according to data available in March 2019) were issued further to a Joint Action (indicator 4) and in the national administrations following participation in programme activities (indicator 2). For example, during 2019 guidelines were issued on customs related matters of the UK withdrawal. Some recommendations were produced regarding dual-use goods, and others on customs detection technology. As in previous years, more than 98 % of the responding participants in these joint actions declared that from a professional point of view, the activities were very useful or useful for them. In the coming years, it is intended to maintain a similar high level of relevance perception.

Expert teams represent an increasingly used tool from the programme toolbox supporting enhanced operational collaboration, either on a regional or on a thematic basis. The expert team approach allows customs experts of Member States to have in depth cooperation on operational issues which go beyond the traditional means of cooperation to realise the pre-identified objectives of a common long term project (expert teams are active between 12 and 36 months). This approach gives the chance to involve more the participants and make their administration more committed to the projects. During the year 2019, all four existing customs expert teams, i.e. EU Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border 2 (CELBET 2), Customs Laboratories (CLET), Binding Tariff Information (BTI) and the Customs IT Collaboration (ETCIT ([7])) continued their work, and three of them started the next phase: CLET 2, ETCIT 2 and BTI 2. In general, all the existing expert teams show an increase involvement of participating countries, both regarding the number of the participants and the committed Member States. CELBET 2 continued to improve the collaboration at the level of the customs experts at the Eastern and South-Eastern EU land frontier by producing analysis on Border Crossing Points, scanners, tactical and strategical methodology, and risk management. The Customs Laboratories started their second expert team in spring 2019 and targeted a higher number of analysis by continuing to pool expertise and equipment in a network (meta-laboratory)

([7])   Expert team on new approaches to develop and operate Customs IT systems

to analyse samples and share analytical results. The BTI expert team also renewed their activities in late 2019 for supporting all Member States in the analysis of the complex cases of divergent classification of goods and in proposing an expert opinion on the result. Also the expert team on IT Collaboration started a new phase in autumn 2019 (ETCIT 2) to continue to explore and identify new approaches for customs IT systems development and operation, including the realisation of a pilot project among Member States: the idea of pooling and sharing the expertise on the Customs IT attracted 17 participating Members States.

The Customs 2020 programme finances also the development of eLearning courses on topics of common interest in collaboration with customs administrations and representatives of trade. Such courses support the implementation of EU legislation and ensure the dissemination of good customs practices throughout the European Union. As in the previous year, in 2019, TAXUD continued to support in particular the implementation of the UCC, by supporting its related IT systems for public and private customs users with eLearning modules, namely through producing further language versions of the new UCC REX IT System eLearning module, producing an update of the UCC Customs Decision Systems (CDS IT System) eLearning module, developing eLearning on the new UCC EBTI-3 IT system (for public sector) and on the new EU Trader Portal on EBTI and on AEO (for private sector/EOs).). In total, by end 2019 the EU eLearning portfolio contains more than 30 eLearning courses in the customs area, all of which support customs professionals from both public and private sector with the application of the UCC and related common customs legal, operational and technical requirements. By end 2019, this full EU eLearning portfolio was reproduced in a content-updated and technically innovated format (also allowing for use on mobile devices). Furthermore, Customs 2020 continued to support national customs administrations with the national implementation and/or introduction of competency-based staff development and training, based on the EU Customs Competency Framework (CustCompEU), through a series of common and/or country-specific implementation training events in 2018 and 2019. Furthermore, in 2019 the European Commission awarded for the first time 7 Universities for their high quality academic customs study programmes (MA/BA level), acknowledging their leading role in raising Customs performance and professionalism. Started in 2019, this award based on the EU customs competency framework (CustCompEU) will take place annually. As in the previous year, cross-country expertise sharing/-building was provided throughout 2019, e.g. in form of CLEP events (Common Learning Events Programme). Similarly, innovative common knowledge building and/or – sharing formats were further explored throughout 2019, such as EU Training webinars, eBooks, nano-learnings and similar. These build the foundation for further enhanced structured EU Customs Training cooperation in the years to come. Specific EU Training support was provided in 2019 in the context of the preparation for BREXIT, such as through the development of fast-track upskilling and onboarding ([8]) customs training programmes for direct national administrations' use.

Regarding economic operators, the aims and activities of the programme are consistent with needs to minimise administrative burdens and maximise legal certainty. Most of the programme activities allow the national customs administrations to work and share information in a better way resulting in indirect benefits for the economic operators in the form of more efficient customs processes. Similarly, the eLearning modules support a harmonised application of EU law. More directly, economic operators can use certain Customs Information Systems as part of simplified and standardised customs procedures, take part in some joint actions and participate in certain eLearning modules. Although the programme does not involve European citizens directly, it addresses issues related to safety, security and trade facilitation that are important to them, such as fighting smuggling and fraud and protecting citizens from security threats.

Evaluation/studies conducted

The Customs programme finances the procurement of studies, evaluations and comparative analysis in the customs area by external contractors, covering mainly technical issues as the ones mentioned below as examples:

– 2017: study to support the impact assessment of a new legal act to establish the EU Customs Single Window environment for cross-border movements of goods. The EU Customs Single Window can be implemented through a number of options, with different roles for the EU and the Member States. This study supported the definition of the costs benefits with a focus on the benefits for economic operators.

– 2018: evaluation of the European Customs Inventory of Chemical Substances (ECICS) to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, EU added value and sustainability of the ECICS database. The ECICS database allows economic operators and national customs authorities to clearly and easily identify chemicals; classify them correctly and easily in the Combined Nomenclature and name them in all EU languages for regulation purposes.

– 2019: study to provide scientific and technical assistance in the field of scientific customs, in particular expertise in pharmaceutical science and botany. The study analysed scientific literature, databases and regulations, on plants and the alike (parts and extracts of plants, vitamins, minerals, traditional medicine and pharmaceuticals) in order to support the work of DG TAXUD and the Customs Code Committee when facing difficulties in the classification or naming of these products.

In addition to technical studies and evaluations, the mid-term evaluation of Customs 2020 was launched in 2017 (finalised in 2018) and the final evaluation of the programme is planned for 2020 ([9]). The key findings of the latest evaluation (SWD(2019)14 final) have been presented in the Programme Statement DB2020.

([8]) In the context of the preparation for BREXIT; onboarding is used to refer to target recruitment.
([9]) Both evaluations are conducted in accordance with Art. 18.1 of Regulation 1294/2013

The studies and evaluations financed under the programme Customs 2020 can be found on the TAXUD EUROPA website: https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/calls-tenders-grants-calls-expression-interest_en and on the EU Bookshop on https://bookshop.europa.eu/en/home/ (author: Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union).

Forthcoming implementation

In the coming years, emphasis will be put on improving the administrative capacity of Member States, be it through continuous IT capacity building, traditional and innovative forms of cooperation (including new expert teams) or human competency building initiatives. The capacity of customs administrations is indeed instrumental to ensure they run efficiently the customs union. In the medium-term, the implementation of the following programme's main outcomes will be pursued to achieve the customs policy objectives:

1. Ensuring business continuity of existing **European Information Systems** and development of new ones. The vast majority of the programme's budget will continue to focus on the European Information Systems. The IT related expenditure is projected to rise further in the future, as the new systems connected to the Union Customs Code continue to be developed (implementation of the UCC work programme). A number of projects are planned to deliver new IT systems/applications in the period 2020-2021, including: CSI2, CRMS2, Generic Trader Portal (GTP), CLASS, UCC BTI Phase 2, eAEO Specific Trader Portal, Customs Decision Iteration 2, REX2, REX Specific Trader Portal (REX3).

The new form of IT collaboration created in 2018 by the ETCIT expert team was given continuity by creating its successor (ETCIT 2) in 2019, whose results will be presented in 2020. These expert teams follow the Council 'Conclusions on the way forward to developing Customs IT systems' (November 2017), as the Council invited the Commission and the Member States to explore new approaches to develop and operate future Customs IT systems. IT collaboration should reduce the costs for deploying EU wide customs IT systems, both at EU and national level while responding more agile to European customs union policy needs.

2. Enhancing the traditional collaboration between customs officials to ensure high standards of administrative capacity. For the next two years of the programme, TAXUD envisages a similar rhythm of **joint actions** as in the previous years, for all type of actions (project groups, seminars, workshops, working visits, monitoring visits, and capacity building). In addition, we plan to strengthen further the operational cooperation through the continued use of expert teams, which will be pooling expertise to perform tasks in specific domains. Year 2020 will be key for extend the scope of the biggest Customs expert team, the CELBET 3 planned for three years and involving more than 100 customs officers. They will continue working on the key achievements like the border crossing points (BCP) analysis, methodology on the checks, risk analysis and control equipment but at the same time launching a study on the future perspective how to improve the customs collaboration on the land borders' as well. Moreover, the study will examine the possibility how to turn CELBET into a permanent structure helping the customs domain cooperating with OLAF and FRONTEX. The experience gained so far in CELBET, shows the influential role of the expert team as an instrument for supporting decision-makers. Besides the important project of the Easter and South-Eastern Land borders, there will be a continuation of the Customs Laboratories expert team foreseen in 2021.

3. Reinforcing the capacity of customs administrations and development of new skills of their staff by steering the implementation of the human competency framework for customs administrations, in line with the strategic requirements and goals as set out in a common multi-annual customs and tax training and staff development Action Plan (2017 – 2020) that provides the necessary policy back-up and national engagement for common EU training & staff development measures until 2020. Key projects in 2019/2020 are the development of an EU customs and tax online learning environment (EU LMS), widest possible EU eLearning support for the full implementation of the UCC related IT systems, introduction of innovative training delivery methods (e.g. EU Training webinars, nano-learnings, eBooks etc.) as a structured concept and continuous support to national customs administrations with the implementation of competency-based staff development/training, e.g. through the development of a staff competency assessment application (EU CAT). In particular the EU LMS and the EU CAT will, once finalised by mid/end 2020, pave the way for enhanced EU cooperation and contribute to establishing a most uniform performance of customs professionals across the EU. The 2019 and 2020 projects contribute further specifically to the implementation of the EU Customs Governance.

Outlook for the 2021-2027 period

The proposal for the future Customs programme is included in the 2021-2027 MFF Heading 1 'Single Market, Innovation and Digital' as an independent programme in view of its specificities, under the name 'Cooperation in the field of Customs'. The proposed programme, which is the successor programme of Customs 2020, will support cooperation in the field of customs. The programme will support customs in safeguarding the financial interests of the Union and of the Member States and, in their role as guardians of the external EU border for goods, also protect the public against terrorist, health, environmental and other threats. The programme will support also the implementation of the Union Customs Code aiming to end paper-based procedures and to digitalise the interactions between trade and customs, as well as to reinforce risk management with a view to advance cargo information. The implementation of all these aspects can only be achieved through intense operational cooperation between customs administrations of the Member States, between them and other authorities, with trade and other third parties.

Customs cooperation and capacity building will be clustered around human networking and competency building actions, on the one hand, and information technology (IT) capacity building actions on the other hand. The first cluster will streamline the exchange of good practices and operational knowledge amongst the Member States and other countries participating in the programme, with a specific focus on project-based structured collaboration allowing for deep and integrated forms of cooperation between participating countries. The second cluster enables the programme to fund a complete set of IT infrastructure and systems,

including the digitalisation of interactions between trade and customs as well as a reinforced risk management that will allow Union customs administrations becoming fully-fledged e-administrations.

Negotiations between the two co-legislators (Council and European Parliament) regarding the adoption of the programme made very good progress in 2019 and are expected to come to a successful end in 2020. This will allow to start implementing the new Customs programme as envisaged as of January 2021.

III. Programme key facts and performance framework

1. Financial programming

Legal Basis	Period of application	Reference Amount (EUR million)
Regulation (EU) No 1294/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing an action programme for customs in the European Union for the period 2014-2020 (Customs 2020) and repealing Decision No 624/2007/EC	2014 – 2020	522,9

	Financial Programming (EUR million)							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total Programme
Administrative support	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,7
Operational appropriations	66,3	68,8	71,7	89,2	82,3	78,3	75,2	531,8
Total	**66,4**	**68,9**	**71,8**	**89,3**	**82,4**	**78,4**	**75,3**	**532,5**

2. Implementation rates

	2019				2020			
	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate	CA	Impl. Rate	PA	Impl. Rate
Voted appropriations	78,386	100,00 %	79,577	99,97 %	75,264	35,39 %	75,300	37,41 %
Authorised appropriations (*)	85,574	98,03 %	86,685	95,49 %	77,670	36,46 %	79,933	35,29 %

(*) Authorised appropriations include voted appropriations, appropriations originating from assigned revenues (internal and external) as well as carried-over and reconstituted appropriations; the execution rate is calculated on 15 April 2020

3. Performance information

Programme performance

The data collected in the performance measurement of the programme from 2014 (first year of implementation) until 2018 (latest complete measurement of performance indicators), together with the results of the Mid-Term Evaluation show that Customs 2020 is on course to fulfilling its objectives and that it plays an important role in facilitating the implementation and development of Union customs policy. The programme has been effective in providing solutions for problems with a clear EU dimension. This is anchored in its role as facilitator of cooperation between participating countries, including their national administrations and economic operators. Many of the joint actions were directly supporting implementation of a policy or a plan. By providing mechanisms for discussions, exchange of information, networking between participating countries, Customs European Information Systems and common training, the programme ensures a harmonised approach to the implementation of customs legislation, procedures and rules. Efficiency gains and costs savings are among the key elements of EU added value when it comes to the IT systems. They help the national administrations save time and resources, particularly for participating countries with smaller customs administrations and fewer resources. The interoperability and interconnectivity provided through the central systems would be highly impractical and costly to produce through other means. Thanks to the programme, these results have been achieved more effectively and efficiently, saving significant resources for national administrations. The same is true for the common training activities, which provide access to standardised and comprehensive information on the various aspects of the functioning of the Customs Union The functioning of the customs union and the further integration of the national customs authorities that run it remain entirely dependent on Customs 2020. In view of the rapid changes and challenges ahead the EU customs union, the programme's continuous support is considered essential.

The main conclusions of the Mid-Term Evaluation can be found below:

– RELEVANCE: the programme has been highly relevant to meet the needs of the customs administrations, the economic operators, the citizens and ultimately the customs union as a whole. Throughout the years, it has engrained in the national and European customs landscape, policies, processes and procedures, providing interoperable, interconnected and reliant European Information Systems. As the Member States are dependent on each other in pursuing their customs functions well, they need effective and efficient tools for communication, exchange of information and overall cooperation, all of which are the programme's objectives.

– EFFECTIVENESS: the programme was effective in the achievement of its objectives and contributing significantly to the good functioning of the customs union and its modernisation. It fostered cooperation and exchange of information, ranging

from facilitating convergence at the strategic level to approximating approaches, interpretation of law, administrative procedures, best practice and rules at the operation level. The secured platform for information exchange helped Member States and economic operators to overcome their reluctance of sharing sensitive data and built trust. Further exchanges of best practices and learning were possible thanks to the programme's joint actions. The value of human networks and personal contacts were amongst the programme's most appreciated benefits.

– EFFICIENCY: the most resource-intensive component – the European Information Systems – were also the most useful, bringing an array of benefits in all areas of customs activities including harmonisation of customs procedures, uniform implementation of the customs law, sharing of information and generating economies of scale, particularly through the centralised systems. Different benefits stem from the joint actions and training activities, which provide framework for broad and inclusive continuous collaboration, increasing understanding, knowledge and capacity, creating professional bonds and acting as catalysts.

– EU ADDED VALUE: the programme's greatest EU added value lies in supporting all the aspects of the implementation of the UCC, which demand EU solutions for EU problems, and close cooperation of the Member States, which need to apply the same rules and assist each other in pursuing the customs union's objectives.

– COHERENCE: Customs 2020 has become an integral part of 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 wellbeing. By supporting the implementation of the UCC, the programme contributes to facilitation of trade and reduction of costs for businesses, increasing their productivity and competitiveness.

The numbers of actions, events and participants remained during the period at high levels, demonstrating a strong demand from business owners and national administrations for programme activities. In 2014, a score of 3.2 was achieved on the extent to which programme activities achieved their expected results, on a scale from 0 to 4 (fully). Over the last three years, this value has remained above 3.3, which shows the consolidation in the achievement of results over the course of the programme's implementation (the data for 2019 is still in the process of collection at the time of writing).

Ensuring the business and IT systems' continuity is a major responsibility under the programme since disruptions in the operation of the European Information Systems would affect customs national administrations, citizens and businesses across the entire EU, and hamper the functioning of the internal market. The underlying infrastructure (Common Communications Network/Common Systems Interface CCN/CSI) developed, managed and maintained by the Commission was available during the period 2014-2019 more than 99 % of the time during working hours. In particular during 2019, the availability of this platform was 99.47 %, which represents 0.51 percentage points less than in 2018 and slightly below target (99.9 %). The figure of 2019 availability rate reflects planned, agreed unavailability to deploy new CCN releases and new applications on the platform, as per the MASP-C Revision 2019, endorsed by the Customs Policy Group in December 2019. This was well communicated in advance to all stakeholders, including national customs authorities, which did not face any negative impact. All the centralised IT customs applications remained available 96.27 % of the time, which represents a decrease of 3.17 percentage points less than in 2018 and slightly below target (97 %). The decreases in terms of availability were the due to disaster recovery activities (that were not present in 2018) and to increased number of application releases.

The collaboration between customs officials is a key sustainable success factor for the customs policy in Europe. This collaboration improves the understanding and the implementation of the customs law. The feedback from participants in joint actions financed from the Customs programme shows that the collaboration robustness between programme stakeholders (customs national administrations) is progressing in the desired direction. In 2014, more than 95 % of the responding participants declared that the programme provided a good opportunity for them to expand their network of customs officials abroad; similar outcome has been maintained in the following years, well above the target of 90 %. In 2019, the rate has been 96 %, same than in previous years. Additionally, in the same period, the number of respondents who declared that they have been in contact for work purposes with the officials they met during programme activities (lasting networking effect) has reached 70 % in 2019. This result represents a decrease by comparison to 2018 of 3 percentage points, returning to a similar level of baseline but below target (80 %). The figures on network opportunity and lasting networking effect show some fluctuations over the years, but overall the rates are above/close the baseline and there is a progress towards the targets (already achieved in relation to network opportunity). In order to improve the lasting networking effect, work continues on improvements in the area of communication and to facilitate online collaboration and sharing between the participants of programme activities after the events end. In addition, the decrease in the long-lasting network effect rate may be the result of an unclear understanding of the different possibilities to 'be in contact', which more often includes collaborative tools beyond the traditional contacts, such as physical meetings or direct phone calls. Additional explanations have been included in the form requesting feedback from participants, where this information is extracted from.

In relation to training activities, we can observe a very positive trend overall throughout the period. In particular for 2016, there was a high number of releases of training modules dedicated to the Union Customs Code (UCC), which resulted in exceptionally large increases in both the number of officials trained by using common training material of the Union and the number of times Programme eLearning modules were downloaded. Figures in 2017, 2018 and 2019 remained at very high levels in comparison with the baseline. A similar positive use tendency can be expected for 2020, given the EU-wide relevance of the topics on which EU eLearning materials are currently developed, e.g. supporting the UCC-based IT systems roll-out (like the REX system, CDS system, trader portal for AEO and for EBTI and similar). The number of officials trained in 2019 reached more than 37 700, which represents a considerable increase by comparison with previous years. This growth is understood to be a reaction to TAXUD's large scale 'technical migration and content updating' exercise on the full EU eLearning portfolio during the past 1.5 years.

General objectives

General Objective 1: to support the functioning and modernisation of the customs union in order to strengthen the internal market by means of cooperation between participating countries, their customs authorities and their officials

Indicator 1: International Logistics Performance Index (LPI)

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Within the top 30: 15	15		No Member State below the rank 60		No Member State below the rank 60		All Members States within top 50	All Members States within top 50
	Actual results							
	15		15		16			
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Between the ranks 31-50: 7	12 (rank 31-60)		No Member State below the rank 60		No Member State below the rank 60		All Members States within top 50	All Members States within top 50
	Actual results							
	9		8		10			
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Between the ranks 51-60: 3			No Member State below the rank 60		No Member State below the rank 60		All Members States within top 50	All Members States within top 50
	Actual results							
	3		4		2			
2010	Milestones foreseen							2020
Below the rank 60: 3	1		No Member State below the rank 60		No Member State below the rank 60		All Members States within top 50	All Members States within top 50
	Actual results							
	1		1		0			

Methodology: World Bank own methodology. Timeliness: data published bi-annually.
Narrative: The LPI is an interactive benchmarking tool created to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance on trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
Comment: LPI: the composite elements of this indicator are not exclusively related to the performance of the customs administrations. There are equally subjective elements in it, namely the opinions of traders and economic operators. For these reasons, it is difficult to rely solely on this indicator when assessing the impacts of the customs performance and, in particular, of the Customs programme.
Availability of Data: No data available, the LPI is measured once every 2 years
Source: https://lpi.worldbank.org/
Unit of measure: Number of countries

Specific objectives

Specific Objective 1: to support customs authorities in protecting the financial and economic interests of the Union and of the Member States, including the fight against fraud and the protection of intellectual property rights, to increase safety and security, to protect citizens and the environment, to improve the administrative capacity of the customs authorities and to strengthen the competitiveness of European businesses

Indicator 1: the feedback from participants in actions under the Programme and users of the Programme index (Collaboration robustness)

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Network opportunity: 0 %	96 %	90 %	90 %	90 %	90 %	90 %	90 %	90 %
	Actual results							
	97 %	96 %	96 %	96 %	96 %	96 %		

2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Lasting network effect (at least one contact after the end of the programme activity):	70 %	80 %	80 %	80 %	80 %	80 %	80 %	80 %
	Actual results							
	72 %	73 %	70 %	78 %	73 %	70 %		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Cooperation: Number of face to face meetings: 380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380	380.00
	Actual results							
	265	547	552	448	473	570		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of online groups (taxation and joint groups): 40	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve the annual levels	Improve the annual levels
	Actual results							
	117	124	465	147	186	237		

Methodology:

–EAFs are filled in online via EUSurvey by participants to an event. Timeliness: annual frequency; data collection for year X takes place between March X and March X+1.

–Query in ART: total number of meetings, minus virtual meetings. Timeliness: annual query.

–Query in PICS: online groups (total); filter results by programme.

Narrative:

–The Collaboration Robustness index measures the collaboration generated by the programme, in terms of events where MSs meet and speak for exchanging experiences and best practices, for joint problem solving or for identifying new ways of working and future actions. Working as one, instead as 28 different administrations, is one of the basis of the Customs Union. The network opportunity measures whether the programme provided participants with a good opportunity to expand their professional contacts with other customs officials abroad.

–The Collaboration Robustness index measures the collaboration generated by the programme, in terms of events where MSs meet and speak for exchanging experiences and best practices, for joint problem solving or for identifying new ways of working and future actions. Working as one, instead as 28 different administrations, is one of the basis of the Customs Union. The lasting networking effect measures whether the programme contributed to establish contact points with officials in other national customs administrations (at least one contact with an official met during a programme activity after the activity ended).

–The Collaboration Robustness index measures the collaboration generated by the programme, in terms of events where MSs meet and speak for exchanging experiences and best practices, for joint problem solving or for identifying new ways of working and future actions. Working as one, instead as 28 different administrations, is one of the basis of the Customs Union. The number of face-to-face meetings measures the events where customs officials have the chance to meet in person their peers from other countries, thus facilitating cooperation.

–The Collaboration Robustness index measures the collaboration generated by the programme, in terms of events where MSs meet and speak for exchanging experiences and best practices, for joint problem solving or for identifying new ways of working and future actions. Working as one, instead as 28 different administrations, is one of the basis of the Customs Union. The number of online groups measures the extent to which customs offials collaborates beyond physicall meetings.

Comment: Data on networking effect can be obtained from the EAF and from the programme's poll. In order to ensure comparability of results acroos years and consistency with figures reported in the AAR, the results for 2017 and 2018 have been modified to those obtained from the EAF.

Source:

–Relevant question on the Event Assessment Form (EAF).

–Activity Reporting Tool (ART). ART is an IT tool used to manage activities carried out under the Customs and Fiscalis programmes.

–Programmes Information and Collaboration Space (PICS). PICS is DG TAXUD's online collaboration tool for tax and customs professionals working in administrations across Europe.

Unit of measure:

–Degree of networking expressed in percentage terms of positive replies.

–Number of face-to-face meetings held under the programme.

–Number of ongoing online collaboration groups on the Programme Information and Collaboration Space (PICS).

Indicator 2: number of guidelines and recommendations issued by MS in their national administrations following activities under the Programme relating to modern and harmonised approaches to customs procedures								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
0	94 %	Improve the level of 2014	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve the level of 2014	Improve the level of 2014
	Actual results							
	108	151	82	186	66	236		

Methodology: EAFs are filled in online via EUSurvey by participants to an event. Timeliness: annual frequency; definitive data for year X available in March year X+1.

Narrative: This indicator measures the extent to which participation in a programme's activity relating to modern and harmonized approaches to

customs procedures led national administrations to develop their own guidelines and recommendations.
Comment: The recommendations and guidelines are counted here individually, rather than by the number of documents containing them. Fluctuations in this indicator, however, need to be interpreted carefully, as not every recommendation or guideline is equally important and is dependent on its actual business value. Preliminary measurement for 2019: data used to calculate the 2019 results in this table has been extracted in February 2020 (definitive data only available in March 2020).
Source: Relevant questions on the Event Assessment Form (EAF).
Unit of measure: Recommendations and guidelines are counted individually, rather by the number of documents containing them.

Indicator 3: the Common Communication Network for the European Information Systems								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
99.94 %	99.90 %	99.90 %	99.90 %	99.90 %	99.90 %	99.90 %	99.90 %	99.90 %
	Actual results							
	99.89 %	99.95 %	99.98 %	99.98 %	99.98 %	99.47 %		

Methodology: Timeliness: for the purpose of monitoring programme's objectives, the frequency is annual. However, availability can be also measured on weekly, monthly or quarterly basis, if needed for specific IT monitoring.
Narrative: The Common Communication Network and Common System Interface (CCN/CSI), are indispensable for the running of the customs related European Information Systems (EIS). In accordance with the Union Customs Code and the e-Customs Decision, the customs EIS lie at the heart of the Customs Union, which is one of the elements supporting the smooth running of the Single Market by allowing the free circulation of goods. This indicator provides a measurement of the programme's results on the effective operation of the CCN/CSI.
Source: IT statistics produced by TAXUD.
Unit of measure: Percentage terms of the availability (time) of the Common Communication Network and Common System Interface (CCN/CSI).

Indicator 4: the Union Law and Policy Application and Implementation Index								
Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of actions under the Programme organised in this area:	67	Improve the level of 2014	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve in the average score	Improve in the average score
	Actual results							
	67	65	123	122	114	132		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of recommendations issued following those actions: 0		Improve the level of 2014	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve in the average score	Improve in the average score
	Actual results							
	312	290	225	267	133			

Methodology:
–Query in ART: total number of actions ongoing for year X; filter by operational objective. Timeliness: annual query.
–Data collection for year X only starts in Feb. X+1; available April X+1.
Narrative: The Union Law and Policy application and implementation index measures the progress in the preparation, application and uniform implementation of customs legislation and policy inter alia on the basis of: number of actions under the programme organised in this area and number of recommendations/guidelines issued following those actions. The uniform implementation of customs legislation and policy is the pillar of the Customs Union, which is one of the elements supporting the smooth running of the Single Market by allowing the free circulation of goods.
Comment: When counting the number of actions that are operational in a year under a specific objective, it should be taken into account that the indicator only counts the actions for which the objective in question was chosen as primary objective. This is done so to avoid counting twice the same action under different objectives. However, it should be noticed that there are many actions having 'Support the preparation, coherent application and effective implementation of Union law/policy' as secondary objective that are not counted under this indicator. In addition, when counting the number of actions that are operational in a year under a specific objective, we should consider that, while earlier years had more actions in total, and more actions specifically addressing concrete issues, in the last years many actions were to a greater extent organised in broader projects covering themes rather than specific interventions. Content-wise, the projects are usually multi-annual rather than annual, as the actions and processes they cover stretch over more than one year. This may lead to less new initiatives and in a decrease in the total number of actions for a specific year.
The recommendations and guidelines are counted here individually, rather than by the number of documents containing them. Fluctuations in this indicator, however, need to be interpreted carefully, as not every recommendation or guideline is equally important and is dependent on its actual business value.
Source:
–Activity Reporting Tool (ART). ART is an IT tool used to manage activities carried out under the Customs and Fiscalis programmes.
–Relevant question on the Action Follow-up Form (AFF). AFFs are filled online in by action managers via EUSurvey.
Unit of measure:
–Number of actions under the programme organised in this area.
–Number of recommendations/guidelines issued or revised resulting from the Joint Actions measured in the other sub-indicator of this index.

Indicator 5: the European Information System Availability

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Centralised IT customs applications (including tariff systems): business hours: 99.11 %	99.00 %	97.00 %	97.00 %	97.00 %	97.00 %	97.00 %	97.00 %	97.00 %
	Actual results							
	99.00 %	99.00 %	98.00 %	98.70 %	99.44 %	96.27 %		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Centralised IT customs applications (including tariff systems): otherwise: 95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %	95.00 %
	Actual results							
	99.00 %	99.00 %	98.00 %	98.70 %	99.44 %	96.27 %		

Methodology: Timeliness: for the purpose of monitoring programme's objectives, the frequency is annual. However, availability can be also measured on weekly, monthly or quarterly basis, if needed for specific IT monitoring.
Narrative: In accordance with the Union Customs Code and the e-Customs Decision, the customs European Information Systems (EIS) lie at the heart of the Customs Union, which is one of the elements supporting the smooth running of the Single Market by allowing the free circulation of goods. This indicator provides a measurement of the availability of specific Union components of the EIS that are in operation, namely centralised IT customs applications (inducing tariff systems).
Source: IT statistics produced by TAXUD.
Unit of measure: Percentage terms of the availability (time) of specific Union components of the European Information Systems during business hours or outside business hours respectively.

Indicator 6: Best Practices and Guideline Index

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of actions under the Programme organised in this area:	84	Improve the level of 2014	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve compared to 2014	Improve compared to 2014
	Actual results							
	85	200	191	92	133	121		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Percentage of participants that made use of working practice/administrative procedure/guideline developed/shared with Programme support: 0 %	88.00 %	Improve the level of 2014	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve compared to 2014	Improve compared to 2014
	Actual results							
	50.42 %	81.01 %	68.25 %	75.00 %	81.00 %	82.66 %		

Methodology:
–Query in ART: total number of actions ongoing for year X; filter by operational objective. Timeliness: annual query.
–EAFs are filled in online via EUSurvey by participants to an event. Timeliness: annual frequency; definitive data for year X available in March year X+1.
Narrative: The Best Practices and Guideline index measures the evolution in the identification, development, sharing and application of best working practices and administrative procedures, inter alia on the basis of: number of actions under the programme organised in this area; percentage of participants that made use of a working practice/guideline developed with the support of the programme. The uniform implementation of customs legislation and policy is the pillar of the Customs Union, which is one of the elements supporting the smooth running of the Single Market by allowing the free circulation of goods.
Comment: When counting the number of actions that are operational in a year under a specific objective, it should be taken into account that the indicator only counts the actions for which the objective in question was chosen as primary objective. This is done so to avoid counting twice the same action under different objectives. However, it should be noticed that there are many actions having 'Identify, develop, share and apply best working practices and administrative procedures' as secondary objective that are not counted under this indicator. In addition, when counting the number of actions that are operational in a year under a specific objective, we should consider that, while earlier years had more actions in total, and more actions specifically addressing concrete issues, in the last years many actions were to a greater extent organised in broader projects covering themes rather than specific interventions. Content-wise, the projects are usually multi-annual rather than annual, as the actions and processes they cover stretch over more than one year. This may lead to less new initiatives and in a decrease in the total number of actions for a specific year. The different nature of some of the working practices and guidelines produced to be taken into account when comparing between the years.
Source:
–Activity Reporting Tool (ART). ART is an IT tool used to manage activities carried out under the Customs and Fiscalis programmes.
–Relevant question on the Event Assessment Form (EAF).
Unit of measure: -Number of actions under the programme organised in this area.
–Percentage of participants that made use of a working practice/administrative procedure/guideline that was developed or shared with the support of the programme.

Indicator 7: Learning Index

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of officials trained by using common training material of the Union:	4 112	Improve the level of 2014	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve compared to 2014	Improve compared to 2014
	Actual results							
	4 776	3 092	23 685	19 234	17 547	37 796		
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
Number of times Programme eLearning modules were downloaded: 0	3 219	Improve the level of 2014	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve	Improve compared to 2014	Improve compared to 2014
	Actual results							
	3 219	3 202	12 920	12 291	12 612	9 978		

Methodology: Timeliness: annual frequency.

Narrative: The Learning index measures the progress resulting from actions under the programme aiming to reinforce skills and competences of customs officials, inter alia on the basis of: number of customs officials trained by using common training material and number of times eLearning customs modules were downloaded. Human capacity building will support the customs authorities to reinforce their capacities in fulfilling their role in the Customs Union.

Comment: We can observe a very positive trend overall though the period. In particular for 2016, there was a high number releases of training modules dedicated to the Union Customs Code, which resulted in exceptional large increases in both the number of officials trained by using common training material of the Union and the number of times Programme eLearning modules were downloaded. Figures in 2017/2018 remain at very high levels in comparison with baseline.

Source:

–Data provided by national administrations and compiled in the eLearning monitoring board.

–Europa.eu website statistics.

Unit of measure:

–Number of customs officials trained by using EU common training material.

–Number of downloads.

Indicator 8: Cooperation with third parties Indicator: Number of actions under the Programme aiming at authorities other than Member States' customs authorities

Baseline	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Target
2013	Milestones foreseen							2020
0	23	Improve the level of 2014	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stable	Improve or stability over programme lifetime	Improve or stability over programme lifetime
	Actual results							
	22	26	39	30	18	24		

Methodology: Query in ART: total number of actions ongoing for year X; filter by operational objective. Timeliness: annual query.

Narrative: The Cooperation with third parties indicator measures the number of actions under the programme aiming at improving cooperation between customs authorities of the EU and international organisations, third countries or other governmental authorities.

Comment: When counting the number of actions that are operational in a year under a specific objective, it should be taken into account that the indicator only counts the actions for which the objective in question was chosen as primary objective. This is done so to avoid counting twice the same action under different objectives. However, it should be noticed that there are many actions having 'Cooperation with third parties' as secondary objective that are not counted under this indicator. In addition, we should also take into account that, while earlier years had more actions in total, and more actions specifically addressing concrete issues, in the last years many actions were to a greater extent organised in broader projects covering themes rather than specific interventions. Content-wise, the projects are usually multi-annual rather than annual, as the actions and processes they cover stretch over more than one year. This may lead to less new initiatives and in a decrease in the total number of actions for a specific year.

Source: Activity Reporting Tool (ART). ART is an IT tool used to manage activities carried out under the Customs and Fiscalis programmes.

Unit of measure: Number of actions under the programme organised in this area.

Expenditure related outputs

Outputs	Budget line	Budget 2020	
		Number	EUR million
Number of IT Contracts	14 02 01	90	62.3
Number of events organised	14 02 01	500	7.85
Number of training projects	14 02 01	2	1.814

Number of expert teams projects	14 02 01	1	3
Other (including reimbursement of external experts)	14 02 01		0.2
Total			**75.164**

Outputs		Number of outputs foreseen (F) and produced (P)						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of IT Contracts*	F	30	30	60	75	90	90	95
	P	59	62	82	85	80	76	
Number of events organised	F	380	380	500	500	500	500	500
	P	265	547	552	438	468	521	
Number of training contracts	F	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
	P	1	2	2	2	1	2	
Number of expert teams organised	F	0	0	3	1	1	4	1
	P	0	0	3	1	2	3	

4. Programme contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

The Customs Union is a foundation of the European Union and an essential element in the functioning of the single market. The single market can only function properly when there is a common application of common rules at its external borders. To achieve that, the 28 national customs administrations of the EU act as though they were one. These common rules they apply go beyond the Customs Union as such with its common tariff and extend to all aspects of trade policy, such as preferential trade, health and environmental controls, the common agricultural and fisheries policies, the protection of our economic interests by non-tariff instruments and external relations policy measures.

For this reason, one can establish a link between the Customs 2020 programme's activities and several Sustainable Development Goals, such as Goal 8 (Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all) and Goal 15 (Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss).

Example: Export and external demand are among the main sources of growth in the EU. Therefore, the fast release of goods upon entry and the facilitation of the use of simplifications and special procedures are key to fostering trade and increasing competitiveness. In October 2019, TAXUD launched the EU Customs Trader Portal, an electronic single point-of-access to a number of EU customs systems. In a first stage, the portal will be used for Binding Tariff Information (eBTI) and for Authorised Economic Operator status (eAEO) applications. The portal serves as a single point of contact for applications by the economic operators, additional information requests by the customs authority and replies from economic operators, and the subsequent management of the applications and decisions. As of 1 October, these applications have been made electronically and can no longer be introduced on paper. This will reduce the administrative burden as regards the granting of the authorisation, and will considerably speed up the process.

SDG 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

See above, reference to Sustainable Development Goal 15.