



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on International Trade

2011/2083(INI)

21.10.2011

OPINION

of the Committee on International Trade

for the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

on the modernisation of customs
(2011/2083(INI))

Rapporteur: Cristiana Muscardini

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on International Trade calls on the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Acknowledges that customs are of vital importance to international trade; appreciates, in this regard, the regulatory role of the WTO agreement on customs valuation that aims for a fair, uniform and neutral system for the valuation of goods for customs purposes, outlawing the use of arbitrary or fictitious customs values that can constitute a barrier to open and fair trade; stresses also that well functioning customs are essential to the competitiveness of the European Union as they play a unique role in combating the illegal import, export and transit of goods and counterfeited products, in protecting intellectual property rights, and in guaranteeing product safety;
2. Calls on the Commission to maintain Article 24 of the Community Customs Code, so that the origin of goods continues to be determined according to the place where their last substantial economically justified processing occurred; at the same time stresses that export certificates on non-preferential origin of the relevant authorities of third countries must also in future be recognised by the EU; stresses that changes to the status quo would burden businesses with administrative procedures and undermine ongoing harmonisation efforts at WTO level;
3. Believes there is a need for modernisation measures such as simpler customs legislation and interoperable computerised customs systems which will help facilitate commercial practices, and that they should be introduced as quickly as possible, as well as a need for greater coordination of prevention and prosecution activities by the tax police at European level; recalls that an oral customs declaration for goods of less than EUR 1 000, which is currently in place, constitutes an essential simplification of trade operations for many SMEs and should be maintained; expresses the wish for the work in progress on updating the Customs Code to stress the central role of eliminating customs declarations in order to facilitate trade;
4. Welcomes the simplified customs control system that was introduced in 2009 and recognises its importance in facilitating international trade; notes with concern that the Court of Auditors has revealed an insufficient control and audit of these simplified procedures in Member States; therefore emphasises the importance of suitable implementation of this control system and encourages the Commission to closely follow this process in order to avoid losses to the EU budget as well as breaches of trade policy provisions;
5. Identifies the need in a functional European Union of 27 Member States to define a common set of mandatory physical checks on goods applicable to all the different points of entry (ports, airports, roads) to the Union's Single market; calls also for increased cooperation and exchange of best practices with respect to the collection of VAT on imported goods, in the opening hours of customs services, and in fees and penalties for non compliance with the Union's custom code, as existing differences are resulting in trade distortions;

6. Stresses the need for consistency in the management of the EU's external borders; reiterates its call on the Commission and the Member States to step up harmonisation of customs control systems on the one hand, and sanctions on the other hand; calls for the establishment of operational platforms that are common to the Member States and the Commission and stresses the need to provide customs officers and economic operators with adequate training in order to ensure the uniform enforcement of EU rules and better protection for consumers;
7. Reiterates the importance of ensuring equal treatment for authorised economic operators (AEO) throughout the Community customs territory as regards uniformity of the controls and mutual recognition;
8. Calls on the Commission to include in the new customs code more rigorous requirements for the provision of the European Union's customs representation services, helping to increase the level of professionalism and ownership on the part of these intermediaries and laying down clear rules to guide relations between customs agents and forwarding undertakings, so as to change the role of the agents to that of consolidators for small and medium-sized importers that do not have the capacity to implement customs compliance programmes similar to the European AEO;
9. Welcomes the activation of the cooperation agreement on the mutual recognition of AEO between the European Union and Japan; encourages the Commission to negotiate similar agreements with other major partners, such as the USA, Canada, China and Russia, with full regard for the role of Parliament and to include this element in the negotiations on bilateral trade agreements; emphasises the value of stepping up customs cooperation with Russia and the Eastern Partnership and Mediterranean Partnership countries in order to facilitate international trade and combat customs fraud and counterfeiting;
10. Encourages the Commission to develop multilateral cooperation and coordination plans within the World Customs Organisation (WCO), in order to lay down joint standards and rules that will improve the security and effectiveness of customs and border procedures and reduce costs through the sharing of standards and the exchange of good practices;
11. Believes that an agreement on trade facilitation as part of the Doha Round would benefit the member states of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), notably by strengthening legal certainty and reducing commercial costs; thus encourages the Commission for its part to push forward the conclusion of this agreement with a view to the ministerial conference next December;
12. Stresses the importance of ensuring that legitimate customs checks carried out by third countries are not, in certain circumstances, misused to create new, de facto non-tariff barriers to goods originating from the EU.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	11.10.2011
Result of final vote	+: 24 -: 0 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	William (The Earl of) Dartmouth, Laima Liucija Andrikienė, Kader Arif, Martin Callanan, David Campbell Bannerman, Daniel Caspary, Marielle De Sarnez, Christofer Fjellner, Yannick Jadot, Bernd Lange, David Martin, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Vital Moreira, Paul Murphy, Franck Proust, Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl, Niccolò Rinaldi, Helmut Scholz, Peter Šťastný, Robert Sturdy, Gianluca Susta, Iuliu Winkler, Pablo Zalba Bidegain, Paweł Zalewski
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	José Bové, George Sabin Cutaş, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Elisabeth Köstinger, Jörg Leichtfried