



NEWSLETTER

Regional Office for Capacity Building for the World Customs Organization

2021/Q1

Webinar on Fight Against Smuggling Successfully Concludes

Regional Office for Capacity Building for the World Customs Organization Europe Region (ROCB Europe) hosted a Webinar under the theme of “Priorities for Strengthening International Cooperation in the Fight Against Smuggling” on 16 March 2021. The webinar was attended by 21 countries with more than 70

customs officers from the Member Administrations of the World Customs Organization European Region. The main purpose of the webinar, which is carried out with the participation



of experts from the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Center (CARICC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC) and ROCB Europe was to provide information on preventing smuggling, share experience on effective measures to be taken in this direction, promote international cooperation and investigation strategies, and present the latest achievements.

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The 16th Global Meeting of WCO Regional Structures

Meeting of the Global Meeting of WCO Regional Structures for strengthening collaboration among the Vice-Chairs' Offices, and all WCO Regional Structures, namely the Regional Offices for Capacity Building, Regional Training Centers, Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices, Regional Customs Laboratories and Regional Dog Training Centers, the WCO Secretariat was held on Thursday 18 and Friday 19 February 2021.



The Platform provided a suitable opportunity for interaction and exchange of experience among the participants. The Meeting was invited to further discuss the draft Terms of Reference of the Global Meeting of the WCO Regional Structures and made a recommendation to Capacity

for endorsement. Enhanced cooperation and coordination among the Regional Structures at a regional level, guide for a successful transition to live virtual training, operationalizing the WCO Capacity Building Strategy – Action Plan on the WCO Organizational Development Package and competency based HRM Tools for ROCBs were other Agenda items elaborated during the Meeting.

Head of the Regional Capacity Building Office for the WCO Europe Region, Mr. Eser Çengel made a presentation on ROCB Europe strategies and progress made. He also gave information about the new initiatives that will be carried out by ROCB Europe in the near future.

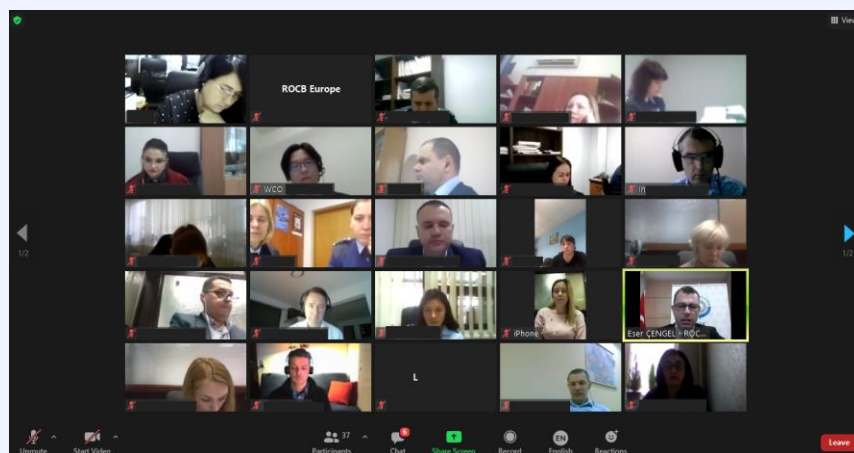


ROCB Europe Supports National Workshop on Post Clearance Audit for Moldova

A National Workshop on Post Clearance Audit was held virtually from 18 to 22 January 2021 for Moldova Customs as a part of the WCO capacity building delivery plan. The five-day event was made possible through technical support by the Regional Office for Capacity Building for the World Customs Organization Europe Region.

Delivered by WCO Secretariat Compliance and Enforcement Sub-Directorate and PCA Experts, the Workshop benefited nearly 30 officials of Moldova Customs. The head of the ROCB Europe, Eser Çengel in his opening remarks, emphasized the ongoing support of the Office for the customs capacity building assistance in the WCO Europe Region.

The purpose of the Workshop was to introduce WCO's concept and policy on Post Clearance Audit (PCA) and its application in Experts' Administrations. The WCO Secretariat introduced the policy and management aspects of PCA. Details of current situation in Moldova such as legal background, organizational chart, operational processes were submitted to attention.



Vice-Chair of the WCO Europe Region Meets with WCO Deputy Secretary General



On January 14, chairman of the State Customs Committee, Vice-Chair of the World Customs Organization (WCO) Europe region Safar Mehdiyev and WCO Deputy Secretary General Ricardo Treviño Chapa held a videoconference. The meeting, which the Committee chairman attended in capacity of Vice-Chair of the WCO Europe region, focused on the organization of the virtual regional seminar to be held on February 15-16 this year. The seminar will be held on the use of strategic forecasting methodology in determining the WCO strategy.

The sides expressed their views and made proposals on the organizational issues. It was said that the seminars that would be held on all regions of the WCO would create favorable conditions for further strengthening the cooperation, determining targets and discussing issues on enhancing relations, would play an important role in the strategic development of customs bodies.

Services Trade Recovery Not Yet in Sight, Reports WTO

Global services trade in the third quarter of 2020 fell 24% compared to the same period in 2019, according to statistics released by the WTO on 26 January. This represents only a small uptick from the 30% year-on-year decline registered in the second quarter, in marked contrast to the much stronger rebound in goods trade.

Unlike goods, services cannot be stockpiled, which means that despite pent-up demand, many of the revenue losses from cancelled flights, holidays abroad, restaurant meals, and cultural/recreational activities are likely to be permanent. Travel remains the most affected service sector, down 68% globally compared with the same period of 2019. In the third quarter of 2020, spending by international travelers was down 88% in Latin America and the Caribbean, 80% in both Asia and Africa, 78% in North America, and 55% in Europe. The relaxation of travel restrictions in Europe during the summer months produced only a modest rebound in services trade in the third quarter.

Preliminary figures, on a customs basis, from 72 countries accounting for 92% of global merchandise trade suggest that the rebound that started in the second half of the year picked up strength in October and November. The value of global merchandise trade in October 2020 was 3% higher than in October 2019, with a 6% increase year-on-year for the month of November.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala Chosen as WTO Director-General

WTO members on 15 February agreed by consensus to select Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria as the organization's seventh Director-General.

Dr Okonjo-Iweala said a key priority for her would be to work with members to quickly address the economic and health consequences brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

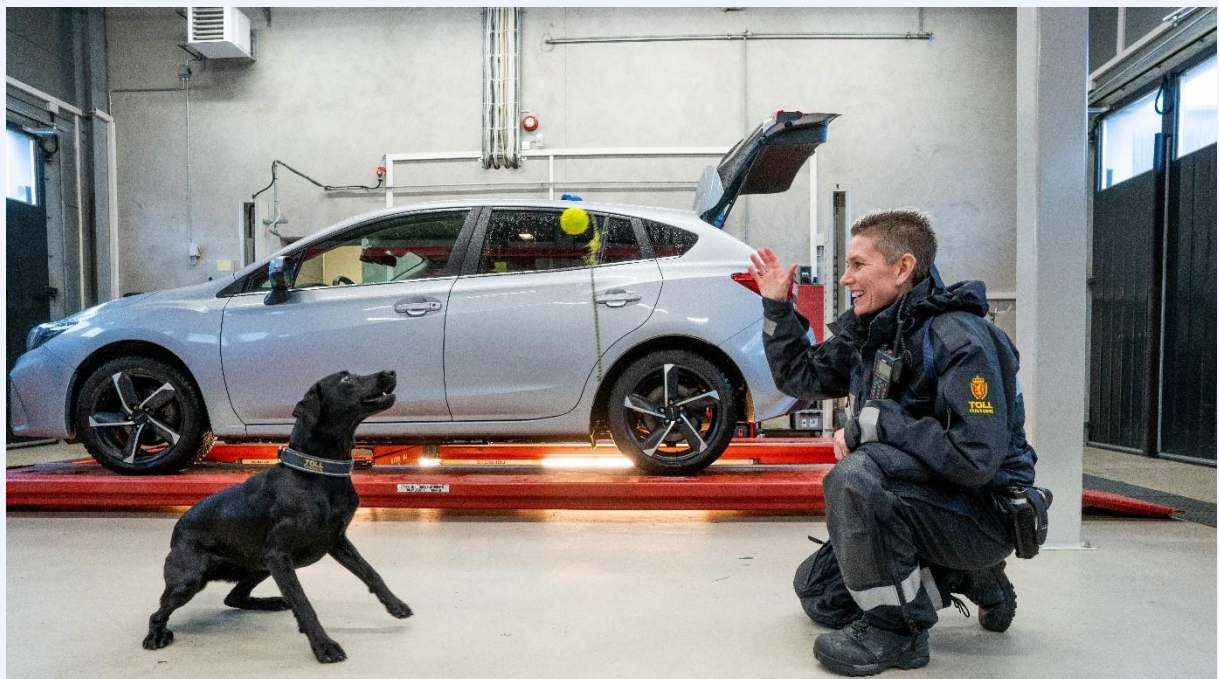


Norwegian TV Series on Customs Goes on with Season 2

On March 1, last year's viewer success "Toll" (Customs) is back on TV 2 in Norway. In season 2, viewers get a unique insight into what happened on Norway's borders when the corona pandemic hit the world and the country shut down.

With the launch of "Customs" in the spring of 2020, the Customs Service opened its doors to the public in the TV format for the first time. The series received attention above all expectations, with over 600,000 viewers on average per episode.

TV 2 was also surprised by the enormous popularity of the customs officers, and quickly ordered a sequel.



No Gear Down on Trade at Turkish Border Crossings in 2020

In 2020, entry and exit of 3.4 million commercial vehicles took place at Turkey's land border. The Minister of Trade Ruhsar Pekcan said: "The border point through which most number of commercial vehicles crossed is Habur Customs Gate vehicles with Iraq totaling 1 million 90 thousand, while Kapıkule with 704 thousand vehicles and Sarp Customs Gate with 315 thousand vehicles followed".

As Turkey reacting very rapidly to the situation; explaining that contactless trade practice was implemented at Habur, Kapıkule and Kapıköy customs gates and Ro-Ro ports, Ms. Pekcan stated that thanks to the measures taken quickly, shipment flows close to the pre-epidemic periods was ensured.

Pekcan pointed out that despite the pandemic, they achieved many successes and records in foreign trade in 2020, and noted that due to the measures taken, there were passenger decreases in crossings at the border gates, and commercial vehicle transitions continued uninterrupted thanks to the contactless trade and digital applications they implemented in the first months of the epidemic.

Turkey and the United Kingdom Sign Free Trade Agreement

Turkey and the United Kingdom extended their free-trade deal on 29 December 2020, days before Britain formally leaves the European Union, to keep up the existing flow of goods. The trade ministers of the two countries signed the agreement in a televised videoconference call. It took effect on Jan. 1, 2021, ensuring a quick transition after the existing deal ends at the end of the year, Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan said. British trade minister Liz Truss said that she was hopeful a bespoke deal between the countries could be struck soon.



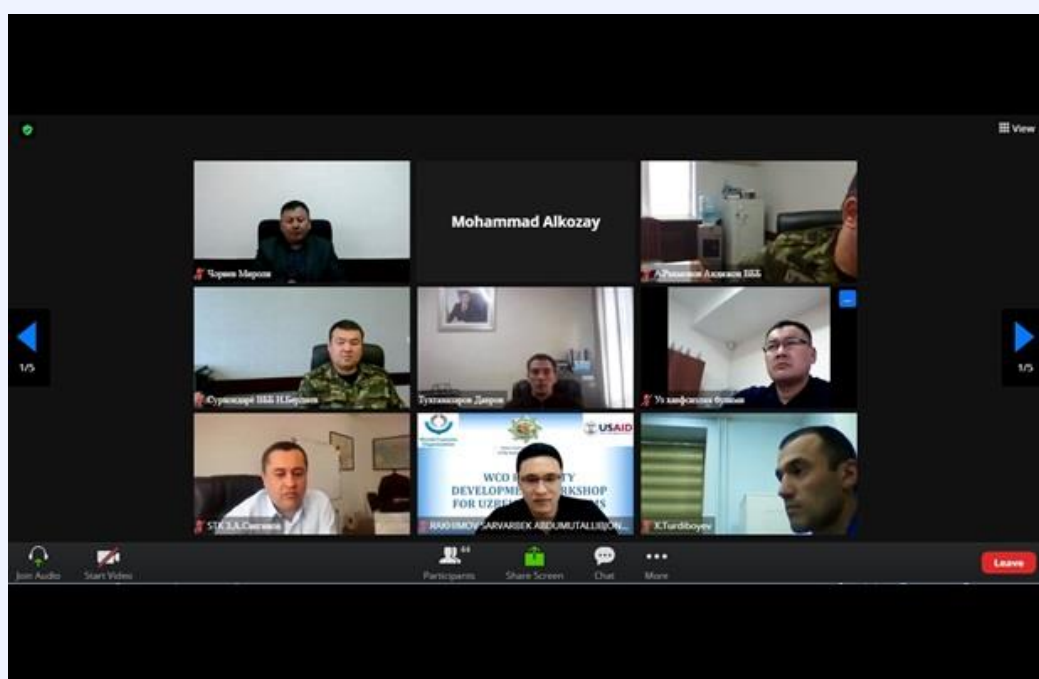


Uzbekistan Customs Benefits from WCO Integrity Development Workshop

The World Customs Organization (WCO), with the support of integrity experts from Mauritius and Turkey Customs, has successfully completed an integrity development workshop for the benefit of the State Customs Committee of Uzbekistan. The workshop was delivered online over three days from 3-5 March 2021 with participation of approximately 50 Customs officers, which illustrates the importance that the Customs of Uzbekistan renders to integrity agenda. The mission was conducted with the financial support of USAID (Competitiveness, Trade and Jobs Activity in Central Asia).

The objective of the mission was to support the Uzbekistan Customs in further improvement of integrity development strategies in Customs, meeting international commitments in the area of fighting corruption and raising awareness of the WCO tools and instruments on Customs integrity.

In addition, the workshop participants were updated with the latest anti-corruption trends, good integrity practices and received training on the following topics: managing conflict of interest, corruption risk mapping and analysis, enhancing co-operation and information exchange between Customs and national anti-corruption authorities, transparency, code of conduct, as well as enhancing the effectiveness of internal affairs (control) function and other good practices.



EU to Implement New Customs Pre-Arrival Security and Safety Programme

The European Union is implementing a new customs pre-arrival security and safety programme, underpinned by a large-scale advance cargo information system – Import Control System 2 (ICS2). ICS2 is a new IT system created to collect data about all goods entering the EU prior to their arrival.



Economic Operators (EOs) will have to declare safety and security data to ICS2, through the Entry Summary Declaration (ENS). The system aims to better protect Europe's single market and its citizens with new customs safety and security measures and will facilitate free flow of trade through improved data-driven customs security processes, adapted to global business models. For all goods brought into the EU Flag of European Union customs territory, express carriers Airplane and postal

operators European post office will have to provide a minimum set of advance electronic data,

European Commission Sets Course for New EU Trade Policy

On 18 February 2021, the European Commission has set out its trade strategy for the coming years. Reflecting the concept of open strategic autonomy, it builds on the EU's openness to contribute to the economic recovery through support for the green and digital transformations, as well as a renewed focus on strengthening multilateralism and reforming global trade rules to ensure that they are fair and sustainable.

The new strategy will strengthen the capacity of trade to support the digital and climate transitions. First, by contributing to achieving the European Green Deal objectives. Second, by removing unjustified trade barriers in the digital economy to reap the benefits of digital technologies in trade. In tandem, the EU will adopt a tougher, more assertive approach towards the implementation and enforcement of its trade agreements, fighting unfair trade and addressing sustainability concerns.



Republic of Kazakhstan and China Review the Functioning of Checkpoints

On January 29, 2021, negotiations were held between interested state bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan and China on the functioning of checkpoints on the Kazakh-Chinese border in the conditions of COVID-19. During the negotiations, the Parties reaffirmed their commitment to the previously reached



agreements at a high level, aimed at strengthening transport and communication interconnection and interregional contacts, helping to improve the quality of trade and economic cooperation.

As a result of the negotiations, the Parties agreed to take joint measures to increase the capacity at road and rail checkpoints of the Kazakh-Chinese state border, to carry out anti-epidemic measures in relation to vehicles and cargo.

Azerbaijan Kickstarts Twinning Project on Accession to New Computerized Transit System

The opening event of the Twinning Project "Support to the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan in the accession to the Convention on a Common Transit Procedure, Convention on Simplification of Formalities in Trade in Goods and implementation of the New Computerized Transit System (NCTS)" was held on January 29. It should be noted that the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Italy's Customs and Monopolies Agency are twinning partners. The purpose of the twinning project is to facilitate Azerbaijan's connection with the existing EU customs systems and trade among the parties.

New Online Services for Freight Forwarders in Turkmenistan

An automated system of online services for processing international cargo transportation is implemented in Turkmenistan on railways. With the help of a new digital system on the trl.gov.tm website, a shipper can obtain and register a railway code, which will provide access to a personal account.

The trl.gov.tm website offers a number of convenient online services for customers in our country, as well as foreign shippers. After authorization, a user can fill out an online application and pay for the shipment of the cargo, select a wagon, track the movement of cargo, the State News Agency of Turkmenistan reports.

4.2 Tonnes of Europe-bound Cocaine Seized

A major operation involving the National Crime Agency has resulted in the seizure of 4.2 tonnes of cocaine that was destined for Europe. Working with European partners as part of an investigation started last year, the NCA (National Crime Agency of the United Kingdom) developed intelligence leading to the identification of a fishing vessel that was carrying the drugs.

Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Seized by Azerbaijan Customs

Officers of the Main Customs Administration on Air Transport of the State Customs Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan prevented an attempt for smuggling large quantities of drugs and psychotropic substances into the country at the Heydar Aliyev International Airport. During the inspection, 1,542



MDMAs (methylenedioxymethamphetamine) hidden in coffee boxes, 320,105 grams of cocaine in a package placed in baby food were found in twist hidden inside the suitcase using methods that make it difficult to find the goods. MDMB-4en-PINACA (Bonsai), the most dangerous drug in the world, was found in a cellophane bag placed inside a tea bag with a total amount of 87,106 grams of the active substance.

Record Levels of Cocaine Seized in Hamburg

On February 12, 2021, customs officers checked five containers in the port of Hamburg. These were classified as suspicious on the basis of an extensive risk analysis carried out by several European customs authorities. In the container testing system, clear irregularities were found in three containers loaded with filler in tin cans. Apparently, after a layer of real goods directly behind the container door, numerous tin cans were also filled with other goods. The containers were unloaded and the customs investigators pulled eight cocaine packages weighing more than 9 kilograms from each of the 20-kilogram canisters. More than 16,000 kilograms of cocaine were found in over 1,700 doses. This is the largest amount of cocaine ever seized in Europe, and this amount is also one of the largest individual seizures worldwide.

In the days that followed, numerous operational measures were planned and carried out together with the Dutch investigative authorities. The investigations led to a further seizure of over 7,200 kilograms of cocaine in the port of Antwerp (Belgium) on February 21, 2021.



Regional Office for Capacity Building for the World Customs Organization Europe Region



This newsletter is a product of the ROCB Europe. It is intended for the Member Administrations of the World Customs Organization Europe Region as well as the related audience. The newsletter is also available on the ROCB Europe web site. For additional information and recent updates, please visit rocb-europe.org.

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