



Customs Administration of the  
Netherlands  
*Ministry of Finance*

# Annual Report

## National Committee on Trade Facilitation 2021



# Introduction

Within the National Committee on Trade Facilitation of The Netherlands (*Overleg Douane-Bedrijfsleven* or *ODB in Dutch*), representatives of the public and private sector discuss issues that concern EU external cross-border goods traffic, customs logistics and customs clearance. During the course of such consultations, the Customs Administration of The Netherlands and umbrella organizations in trade and logistics together seek the best possible balance between enforcement and trade facilitation.

The Committee has general consultations, two of which were held in 2021. In addition, we distinguish forums that discuss IT matters, current affairs and medium-term affairs, which each met on four occasions in 2021. These three forums can set up – temporary – feedback groups and work groups and they organize activities such as theme sessions and webinars. The COVID-19 measures in 2021 unfortunately made it impossible to organize an annual event.

This Annual Report gives an indication as to which topics were the subject of discussion in the Committee last year. We also focus on the development of the Customs-Business Strategic Development Agenda. In this way, we wish to provide the reader with a general picture of what the cooperation within the Committee entails.

## 1. Important developments in and around the Committee

### **Unbundling of the Dutch Tax Administration**

More steps were taken in 2021 in the process of separating the three departments of the Tax Administration. Customs is no longer part of the Tax Administration but it is now an independent Directorate-General within the Ministry of Finance. It has its own Director-General of Customs who chairs the National Committee on Trade Facilitation. This new position has given Customs opportunity to take up a position that is both autonomous and strong, as a result. It is already visible on the website 'Customs for Businesses', which now has a separate page showing information on the Committee. The website shows the dates of the consultations as well as the meeting documents. Such documents used to be shared externally in a different way.

### **The composition of the Committee**

There have been some changes in the composition of the Committee in 2021. Due to the increasing impact of automation in the declaration procedures of Customs, the Alliance of Customs Software Suppliers (*ADS in Dutch*) has been admitted the general consultations of the Committee. A positive development, because ADS has an in-depth understanding of the digital customs-related business management of a large diversity of companies. Furthermore the trial membership of the professional tax advisors association (*Register Belastingadviseurs*) was converted into a permanent membership.

### **Committee member receives award**

It is noteworthy that in 2021, one of the Committee members from the business sector was awarded a *Diplôme d'Honneur* by the World Customs Organization. It is the highest award in the Customs world. The Committee member received said award as a token of appreciation for his long-standing commitment to the cooperation between the business sector and Customs.

## 2. Important themes for the Committee in 2021

### **Brexit**

At the beginning of 2021, Brexit became a fact. The Committee conducted intensive consultations with the business sector and leading government authorities in the United Kingdom on the problematic issues as expected and experienced, both before Brexit and afterwards. These consultations were held during the course of bilateral Trade Facilitation Committee UK / Netherlands meetings. The Director-General of Customs and the Director-General of the Border and Protocol Delivery Group (BPDG) of the British Cabinet Office chaired these consultations.

Just like in previous years, under the umbrella of the Committee, there have been Brexit-specific feedback group consultations with the ferry companies and the ferry terminals in 2021 in the Netherlands. Furthermore, substance was given to the close private-public cooperation concerning Brexit, which was evident in the information campaign 'Get ready for Brexit'. This cooperation contributed to a smooth transition of the UK to having a 'non-member status'.

### **E-commerce**

One of the principal themes in 2021 was e-commerce, and more specifically, the implementation of the European legislation in this field which came into force on 1 July 2021. A temporary feedback group was set up with regard to this topic, attended by Committee members and some non-associated e-commerce companies as well as the Tax Administration. They considered the legal implications for the business sector, possible misuse of the IOSS number, the new customs declaration system DECO and what is referred to as the negative list. In addition, the feedback group contributed to the drawing up of a Q&A list about the new legislation, which has been published in June on the special Customs e-commerce web page. Customs, the Tax Administration and the companies most involved have together ensured an orderly transition.

### **The EU data model and the adjustment of the declaration systems**

The implementation of the EU data model – and the subsequent changes in the declaration systems: from AGS to DMS, from GPA/SPA/IIAA to DMS – is one of the largest IT projects of Customs this century. Committee members have been engaged in this project for more than three years, including the Committee's feedback group IIAA to DMS.

### **ICS2/Import**

In 2021, a new feedback group named ICS2/Import has been installed. The feedback group will engage over the coming years in the consequences in the Netherlands of the introduction of the second release of ICS. In addition to UCC-wide developments which concern temporary storage, the entry message and the placement message. There are also Committee members in this feedback group as well as some non-associated market participants.

### **Container Release Message**

Following years of preparation, the implementation of the first stage of the Container Release Message (*CVB in Dutch*) was put into effect in the second half of 2021. Starting on 4 October 2021, Customs checks upon importation whether the ship arrived, whether the goods are available for a check and/or whether the – prior – declaration refers to a preceding arrangement. This check must prevent goods from being withdrawn without the certainty of the customs obligations having been met. In addition, the check must contribute to resolving the issues of mismatches within the declaration processes which Customs has been experiencing for some time.

Customs, the business sector and Portbase have cooperated intensely at the start of the implementation of the CVB. It included the launching of the campaign [www.vorbereidophetcvb.nl/en](http://www.vorbereidophetcvb.nl/en). This information has contributed significantly to the possibility chain partners were offered to make good preparations.

Theme sessions for the CVB were also organized to address the issues the business sector had. There were certain fears that the starting of stage 1 might lead to delays in logistics at the terminals. Eventually, the introduction of stage 1 did not lead to any significant problems which was also a result of the good collaboration between the chain partners in the Committee. In the coming years there will be more cooperation to prepare for the next stages.

### **Other points of discussion, questions and communications**

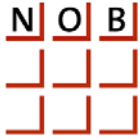
There have been intensive consultations about other issues apart from the principal matters referred to, such as the improvement of the quality of data, the development of what is referred to as the Customs Work Division Points, taking stock of the preferences concerning the contact history on the portals *MijnDouane* and the European (Customs) Trader Portal and the continued development of the Proof of Good Service. Work was done on a new version of the external release schedule, which will provide more extensive information on the consequences of new releases. Outside the Committee meetings, Customs responded to wide-ranging questions from the business sector, it shared communications with the Committee and it engaged the Committee in its own general communications.

## **3. Strategic Development Agenda**

The Committee has what is referred to as a Long-Term Strategic Development Agenda. The business sector submitted some vision papers, which resulted in periodical sub-consultations named 'working together in Brussels'. In those consultations, possibilities are discussed to influence the development of the European customs legislation.

The vision papers of the Strategic Development Agenda show clear correlations to the priority initiatives of Customs' Strategic Mid-Term Plan (*SMP in Dutch*). It is for that reason that a choice is made to link the Committee's consultation structure to a number of activities and programmes from the SMP, such as Layered Enforcement and Customer-oriented Supervision. The business sector has provided useful input in 2021.

In the short term, the business sector did not specify any new priorities in 2021. The short-term priorities of 2020 have either been dealt with, or the handling is safeguarded via the Committee's workgroup concerned.



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