

Catching the export cheats: Customs agencies join forces

Cooperation across borders in the Western Balkans is being improved and customs procedures harmonised. This will help catch those exporters who deliberately falsify export data in order to avoid paying customs duty. Not only is this illegal, but they are also harming cross-border trade.

ELECTRONIC SYSTEM

To help crack down on these practices, a specialised IT system has been developed to establish electronic connections between all regional customs agencies. This allows for accurate and rapid exchange and analysis of customs data.

The project, known as “Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data” or SEED, has also contributed to reducing the security risks in the area and in making consistent steps towards EU integration. The concept of an effective integrated border management system has been also promoted.

The system has been designed and developed based on examples of the EU’s e-Customs systems. It operates within the Customs Administrations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

This IT system not only helps catch exporters who try to cheat, but it also speeds up procedures and encourages legitimate trade. It also reduces smuggling and helps in collecting the correct customs duties.

NEW SOFTWARE

Based on the additional requirements of the beneficiary administrations, a special new version of the computer software was developed, tested and deployed.



* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Western Balkans

IPA – AN INVESTMENT IN EUROPE. AN INVESTMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM.

The main value of the system is in its preventative aspect. If exporters think that irregularities in their customs documentation may be spotted, they will be more careful. Already in Serbia alone, this new system has detected 19 cases worth €0.3 million within 6 months.

Because this project operates across borders in the Western Balkans, there is also a significant benefit for

the EU Member States in that SEED allows for improved border protection at the EU's external borders, especially in preventing fraud and illegal traffic.

This multi-beneficiary project will also speed up customs procedures and reduce the spread of organised crime. Moreover the system can also prevent corruption within the customs services.

PROJECT DETAILS –

Maintenance of the Systematic Electronic Exchange of Data system in the Western Balkans (SEED Maintenance)

Partners:
Agenzia delle Dogane (Italy)

Total cost in €:
2.05 million

EU contribution:
100%

Start date:
October 2012

End date:
June 2014

Results:
Increased regional cooperation and security; customs fraud prevention; faster customs clearance

Techniques:
Training information exchange

