

Guest Editor's Introduction: The European Union's New Union Customs Code (UCC) and Its Linkages to Customs Modernization, Rules of Origin, and Trade Facilitation

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Customs modernization is an evolutionary process where customs administrations are continuously seeking to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their work processes and the legal constructs that guide them. As such, customs modernization is a vital topic of interest at the World Customs Organization (WCO) and for customs stakeholders worldwide in both the public and private sectors. A core component of customs modernization is to ensure that the Customs Code of a country or Customs Union is appropriate and fit-for-purpose for modern times. A leading model of a modern Customs Code is the European Union's (EU) Union Customs Code (UCC) which was recently updated and took effect on 1 May 2016.

Accordingly, the time is right to lodge a special edition on the content of the UCC and analysis of a range of corollary issues, including rules of origin, customs modernization, and trade facilitation.

This special edition begins with an informed analysis of the UCC's core elements by *Susanne Aigner*. Because of the importance of the connection between the UCC and rules of origin, *Maarja Saluste* provides in-depth analysis and background on the subject of rules of origin and anti-dumping. Following this analytical basis, *Dylan Geraets* discusses rules of origin and global value chains in the context of the UCC.

The UCC and customs modernization depend extensively on information and communications technology

(ICT), which some are now calling 'Digital Customs'. In her article, *Giorgia Orsi* describes, among other things, the sophisticated automation processes and techniques that Italian Customs has been implementing and which emanate from the principles set forth in the UCC.

Another concept for reflection is that of 'trade facilitation' which, as defined by the World Trade Organization (WTO), means the 'simplification and harmonisation of international trade procedures' where 'trade procedures include the activities, practices and formalities involved in collecting, presenting, communicating and processing data and other information required for the movement of goods in international trade'. Trade facilitation is particularly of interest now in the global customs community following the passage by the WTO in 2013 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and subsequent efforts to implement its provisions. In his article, *Tom Cachet* provides an intriguing comparison of the UCC and TFA.

Although the new UCC is now taking effect, it is not the end of the story of customs modernization, even in Europe. There will be the need for research on the impacts and implications of the UCC in the years to come. Moreover, as customs continues to evolve, customs law will also continue to evolve, even beyond the new UCC.

Notes

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