General Administration of Customs and Excise  
20 March 2020

Belgian Customs Administration Corona Measures – best practices  
Version 20 March 2020

Protective equipment

Export

Despite the fact that procurement has increased and additional production has been encouraged, the current level of Union production and existing stocks of protective equipment will not be sufficient to meet the demand within the Union. Therefore, the EU has issued Regulation 2020/402 of 14 March to control the export of protective equipment.

For the Belgian Customs Administration, that means:

- Selection system does not release the items of the annex of the regulation for export. Goods can only be cleared for export after verifying officers confirm that the shipment does not contain protective equipment OR if a licence is available.
- The necessary capacity is provided for the control of the measures
- There is ongoing concertation with major Belgian industrial stakeholders on the operational side of the regulation
- The competent authority provides certification for traders that are not targeted by the regulation (e.g. protective gear for automotive industry that has no medical use).

Import

The Belgian Customs Administration issued temporary measures to allow relief of VAT and Customs duties for donations of equipment for the protection of personnel.

The relief is based on articles 57 – 58 of regulation 1186/2009.

Disinfectants, sanitizers, etc.

Pharmacists shall be allowed, as an exception and for a limited time, to store and use ethanol. We do require the beneficiaries of the exceptional rules to hold a register.

As a second measure, to increase the production of base substances for disinfectant sprays and liquids, the Belgian Customs Administration temporarily broadens the products that can be used for denaturation for this purpose. This enables pharmacists and hospitals to use alcohols to produce disinfectants based on stocks of available alcohols that would otherwise receive another destination (industrial use, destruction, etc.)

Measures for customs officers

The minister of Internal Affairs and Safety has listed the Customs Administration as an essential service for the vital functions of the Kingdom of Belgium.

This means the Customs Administration will continue its core function of protecting the interests of the Union and facilitate trade.
With this in mind, the Administration took severe measures for protection, based on the social distancing principle. Legislation, central services, litigation and prosecution, and all other non-first line officers work from home. Field officers have reduced staff numbers to allow less interaction.