

RECOMMENDATION OF THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL*
CONCERNING THE USE OF
WORLD WIDE WEB SITES BY CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATIONS
(26 June 1999)

THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL,

DESIRING to facilitate the international movement of goods and people through Customs,

DESIRING to facilitate access to, and dissemination of, Customs regulatory information in the public domain, particularly for travellers and participants in international trade,

CONSIDERING the importance of making relevant regulatory information available to the public in a cost-effective and easily accessible manner,

HAVING REGARD to the widespread acceptance of the Internet and World Wide Web (WWW) as a means of communication and information dissemination,

HAVING REGARD to growing use of the Internet and WWW by Customs administrations,

RECOMMENDS that Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions, should implement a Customs World Wide Web site for their administration,

FURTHER RECOMMENDS that Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions, should make available on Customs administration web, sites, where practical or feasible, the data content as specified in the Annex to this Recommendation,

REQUESTS Members of the Council and members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies, and Customs or Economic Unions which accept this Recommendation to notify the Secretary General of the Council of the date from which they will apply the Recommendation and of the conditions of its application. The Secretary General will transmit this information to the Customs administrations of all Members of the Council. He will also transmit it to the Customs administrations of the members of the United Nations Organization or its specialized agencies and to Customs or Economic Unions which have accepted this Recommendation.

* Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is the official name of the World Customs Organization (WCO)

Annex to the Recommendation on Customs Web Sites

Basic information to be made available on Customs web sites

Information for travellers

- General overview of Customs
- Comprehensive details of duty-free allowances
- Comprehensive details of prohibited goods for import and export
- Information about Customs channels (dual-channel system)
- Penalties for Customs offences
- Contact information (including e-mail address) for further information
- Links to other relevant sites, especially immigration and agriculture
- Multiple language versions of the information.
- Access to official publications

Comprehensive details of duty-free allowances

Details on duty-free allowances should cover all products, including quantities and maximum values. The conditions under which duty-free privileges are given should be covered such as origin of the journey, length of stay, the age of the traveller, etc. In some cases, especially where economic zones are concerned, different allowances are available depending upon where the journey has originated and these differences should be clearly indicated.

Comprehensive details of prohibited goods for import and export

Goods which are prohibited or restricted should be clearly identified, e.g. arms and ammunition, live animals, certain types of plants, ivory, currency, etc. Penalties for breaches of the legislation should also be highlighted.

Information about Customs channels (dual-channel system)

Information on how the dual channel system works and how passengers declare goods to Customs on arrival should be presented. This should include examples of Customs forms to be completed.

Penalties for Customs offences

A comprehensive set of information should be given indicating what penalties a traveller should expect to receive if caught deliberately breaking the law.

Contact information (including e-mail address) for further information

Customs contact information for travellers, especially a public e-mail address, should be given to allow the public to make specific enquiries.

Links to other relevant sites, especially immigration and agriculture

Links to other government web sites such as immigration, tourism and agriculture should, where possible, be established to help visitors obtain complete information on all regulatory requirements necessary upon arrival in the country.

Multiple language versions of the information

Tourism is a very important part of the economy for many countries. Significant numbers of visitors may not speak the native language of the country they are visiting. The Customs administration should have information available for travellers in a number of other languages.

Access to official publications

Access to various official publications, brochures, etc. should be made available for downloading or ordering through the web site. Consideration should be given to the format used for documents being made available for downloading.

Information for traders

- General overview of Customs
- Overview of Customs procedures and legislation
- National legislation including Customs regulations on all the Customs procedures
- Tariff and duty information
- Currency rates of exchange
- Details of prohibitions and restrictions
- Details of how to complete a Customs declaration
- Classification decisions
- Penalties for Customs offences
- Contact information (including e-mail addresses)
- Links to other government agencies
- Access to official publications

Overview of Customs procedures and legislation

This section would give a general overview of the various Customs procedures and the legislation under which they operate. It should be considered as a broad introduction to Customs business. Links to the more detailed explanations of particular procedures or sections of national legislation should be established.

National legislation including Customs regulations on all the Customs procedures

Placing the texts of national legislation covering international trade (imports, exports, transit, etc.) on the WWW is a basic requirement of a Customs web site. However, in most cases the legislation is in plain text without any hypertext links. To make this more useful to traders, Customs administrations should establish, where possible, hypertext links to important references throughout the body of the documents.

Search engines should also be made available on the web site to allow users to conduct key word searches.

Tariff and duty information

Basic information on tariff and duty rates for various classes of goods should be made available. Access to a complete electronic version of the national tariff would be the most useful. However, at the minimum a copy of the paper version of the tariff should be made available in a "pdf" format (portable document format). This would allow the trader to download the document for viewing and printing only.

Currency rates of exchange

A list of the official currency rates of exchange for Customs purposes should be a basic element included on the web site.

Details of prohibitions and restrictions

Details of prohibited or restricted goods, goods covered by quota and similar prohibitions or restrictions should be highlighted. Special conditions for the importation or exportation of such goods should be clearly indicated.

Details of how to complete a Customs declaration

A user guide on how to complete a Customs declaration is most useful to traders and improves the quality of data input to Customs systems. Most Customs administrations already have this type of guide in paper form. Customs administrations should convert this guide into a format that could be placed on the web, and such a "training guide" should be developed into a comprehensive interactive program.

Classification decisions

Traders frequently need information about classification issues. All official classification decisions therefore should be made available on the Customs web site, thereby reducing the need to directly contact Customs officials for the information.

Penalties for Customs offences

A comprehensive set of information should be given indicating what penalties a trader should expect to receive if caught deliberately breaking the law.

Contact information (including e-mail addresses)

As with the information for travellers, contact details (including e-mail addresses) for Customs officials dealing with specific issues should be given.

Links to other government agencies

links to such other web sites as the Ministries of Trade and Finance and the national Chamber of Commerce should be included.

Access to official publications

Access to various official publications, brochures, etc. should be made available for downloading or ordering through the web site. Consideration should be given to the format used for documents being made available for downloading.

Developing computer applications on the web

The information being made available to traders and travellers may become static, i.e. the readers can receive the information and print it, but generally cannot integrate it into their own applications. Customs administrations should develop interactive applications that can be used either by external clients or internal staff members.
