



Established in 1952 as the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC)

Location: **Brussels, Belgium**

Number of Members: **174**

174 + the European Communities which, since July 2007, has rights akin to those of a WCO Member for matters falling within its competency as an interim measure

Member for matters falling within its competency as an interim measure

International Customs Day: **26 January**

Working languages: **English & French**

Chairman of the Council: **Martyn Dunne**

Secretary General: **Kunio Mikuriya**

Deputy Secretary General: **Vacant**

Director of Capacity Building: **Lars Karlsson**

Director of Compliance and Facilitation: **Michael Schmitz**

Director of Tariff and Trade Affairs: **Antoine Manga**

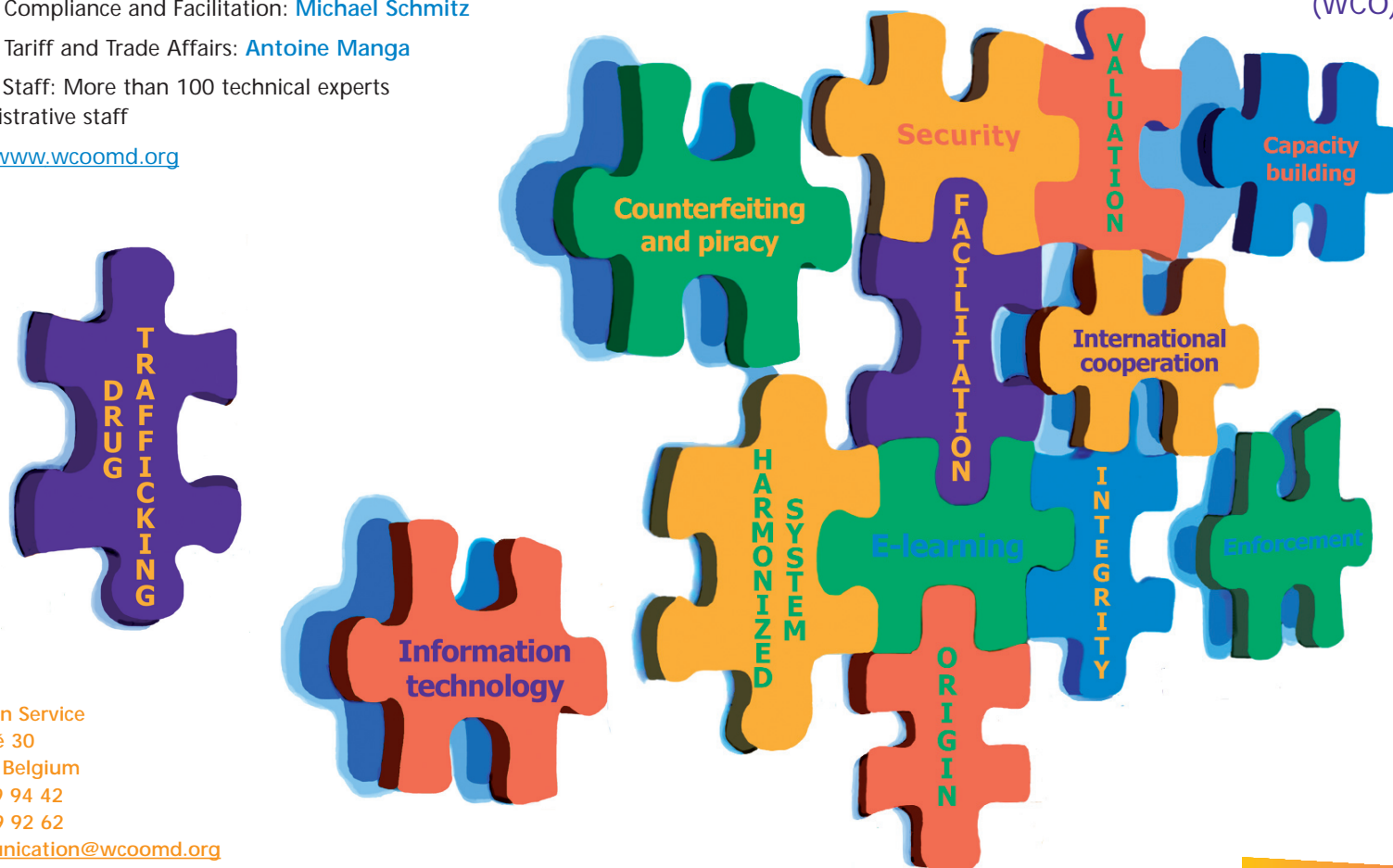
Secretariat Staff: More than 100 technical experts and administrative staff

Web Site: [www.wcoomd.org](http://www.wcoomd.org)

# The World Customs Organization in brief

The World Customs Organization (WCO) is the only intergovernmental organisation competent on Customs issues.

It is particularly noted for its work in areas covering the development of global Customs standards, compliance issues, the simplification and harmonization of Customs procedures, the security and facilitation of the trade supply chain, trade facilitation, and Sustainable Customs capacity building initiatives.



## Contact us

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## Customs protects society

Customs has a major role to play in the administration of national economic and commercial interests, trade facilitation and security. This includes the collection of Customs duties and taxes, the preparation of foreign trade statistics, trade compliance, supply chain security and facilitation, and the protection of society, the environment and cultural heritage.

As international trade has developed within the global economy, out-of-date, incompatible, and inefficient Customs procedures have been recognized as a costly constraint on economic and social development.

Customs modernisation and harmonisation therefore represent a key objective to facilitate international trade. Customs must also continue to maintain effective controls to combat cross-border crime, which has grown and become sophisticated as a result of the new possibilities offered by world markets.

The World Customs Organization promotes the national economic and social well being of its Members by promoting an honest, transparent and predictable Customs environment. This helps licit international trade to flourish, while at the same time making it possible to take effective action against fraudulent activities.

## History

In 1952, the Convention establishing a Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) came into force. In 1994, after years of membership growth, the Council adopted the working name "World Customs Organization" (WCO), to more clearly reflect its status as a global institution. It is now the voice of 174 Customs administrations (+ the European Communities which, since July 2007, has rights akin to those of a WCO Member for matters falling within its competency as an interim measure). WCO Members are responsible for processing more than 98% of all international trade.

## Structure

The WCO is led by the Council, which is assisted by the Policy Commission. Financial, budgetary and management advice is provided to these bodies by the Finance Committee and the Audit Committee. The Council operates essentially through its Secretariat and various high-level strategic groups, technical committees and working groups.

## Mission

The WCO's mission is to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of its Member Customs administrations across the globe.

## Functions

The WCO fulfils its mission by:

- **Developing and administering various international instruments** for the harmonization and uniform application of simplified and effective Customs systems and procedures governing the cross-border movement of commodities, people and means of transport.
  - **The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System** contributes to the facilitation of international trade by providing a common basis for the classification of goods and the collection of Customs duties.
  - **The Revised Kyoto Convention**, a key instrument covering Customs procedures, provides customs administrations with a modern set of uniform principles for simple, effective and predictable Customs procedures and effective Customs control.
  - **The Istanbul Convention** on temporary admission combines in one legal instrument all existing agreements covering temporary admission of goods exempted from the payment of duties and taxes in a State or Customs Union.
  - The WCO ensures the uniform interpretation and application of the **World Trade Organization (WTO) Valuation Agreement**, and has developed **Harmonized Rules of Origin** which are currently being examined by the WTO.
- **Developing international standards, particularly in order to ensure-**
  - the safe movement of goods: the SAFE Framework of Standards lists the minimum standards that Customs and economic operators should apply in order to secure the international trade supply chain. Its application requires sustainable Customs capacity building, and for this purpose the WCO has developed the Columbus Programme.
  - respect for Intellectual Property Rights: the SECURE programme is a set of Standards and an Action Plan designed to build Customs capacity and foster co-operation with international partners, rights holders and the private sector.
- **Assisting its Members** via its capacity building programme. In this regard, the WCO has developed various tools enabling Customs to base their practices on internationally-accepted standards relating to the organization and functioning of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Customs administration, Customs integrity, etc. It also provides a multilateral forum for discussion, the exchange of information and delivers technical assistance as well as new learning and training methods.
- **Encouraging cooperation** between Customs administrations, and between Customs administrations, international organizations and the trading community, notably with respect to trade security and the fight against fraud.
- **Training the private sector:** the World Customs Centre of Learning organizes training sessions that enhance knowledge about international Customs rules and enable the business community to respond more efficiently to the dynamics of the global trade environment.