



# WCO Integrity Newsletter

## First issue



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION

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# EDITORIAL

Integrity has remained a WCO priority over the years, despite occasionally being overshadowed by other issues in the light of international events. Tools have been developed and countless meetings held worldwide to promote integrity. It is worth recalling that if a Customs administration neglects to improve its professional ethics and fight corruption, it will find it difficult to modernize and be taken seriously by traders. Lest we forget, foreign investment and national security are also undermined by corruption.

Year after year, the Integrity Sub-Committee (ISC) has continued to produce good results and motivate its participants, with a view to promoting integrity in Customs throughout the world.

A Best Practice Guide was produced and met with considerable success, although it now requires updating. The idea of a database was also raised by Members who are extremely keen to find out what measures are being taken by their fellow Customs officers in the integrity domain, in order to draw inspiration from them.

The aim of this Newsletter, which is modest and brief in scope, is to focus on the most pressing matters by describing, in a few short pages, programmes and measures implemented by some of our Members good enough to provide this information to the WCO. Kindly let us know whether this approach is of interest to you and, if so, please share your experiences with us. The aim is not to present complicated and detailed articles on best practices in the integrity domain, but rather to respond to WCO Members' requests for information, provide contact points and seek your opinions.

*The choice of countries has been determined by replies to our request for information. In this first issue of the Newsletter we are pleased to share the experiences of our Belgian, Norwegian, Canadian and Thai colleagues.*



## BELGIUM

Belgian Customs has joined forces with academia in an innovative approach to raise Customs officers' awareness about corruption.

When it comes to fighting corruption, the Belgian Customs and Excise Administration is acutely aware of the urgent need to take action at a number of levels (especially repressive and preventive measures). It nevertheless favours an unusual approach, namely the primacy of the individual and his/her ability to make decisions in the corruption process. Action essentially has to be taken in terms of the individual and his/her capacity to refuse any involvement in corruption if a crime is to be prevented. The Administration has consequently decided to focus its attention on the Customs officer, the key player in the corruption pact and the last link in the chain : the only person who, when all else fails, can say "no" to corruption before it is perpetrated.



To that end, the Administration has enlisted the services of professors from the Universities of Liège and Ghent to devise a one-day awareness-raising programme for all Customs officers, who participate in groups.

This is a two-step awareness-raising programme. The first step involves defining and framing this phenomenon in a forthright manner, describing different theories on corruption as well as the administrative, legal and psychological aspects of this phenomenon, whilst stressing the impact and consequences of corruption. Participants' feedback is encouraged throughout the programme.

Step two of this one-day programme involves a series of role-play exercises about situations involving corruption, acted out by volunteers. Once again, all the officers are invited to share their views. This method puts the shiest and most reluctant officers at ease and enables them to say what they are really thinking.

Through this approach, Customs officers gain an awareness of the reality of this phenomenon and are equipped with the tools and instincts to identify a potentially dangerous situation and respond accordingly, if necessary.



An evaluation tool is currently under development, based on a number of questionnaires specially designed to that end. This tool is intended to measure the impact of awareness-raising activities on officers' perception of integrity.

A Handbook is also being produced. It should form a practical tool offering guidance to officers when faced with a situation involving corruption.

**For more information about this approach and the results thereof, please feel free to contact Mr. Julien de Meeûs.**

**Contact**

Mr. Julien de Meeûs, Premier Attaché des finances

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## CANADA

Canada is well-known within the Customs community for its activities related to good governance and integrity. In its continued endeavour to promote integrity, the CBSA agreed to share with us some of its recent plans and achievements.



In 2008, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) launched an Integrity and Professional Standards Strategy (IPSS) comprised of about 50 initiatives that would be implemented to ensure organizational integrity. Specifically, the IPSS was created to safeguard the efficient and effective operation of CBSA programs and strengthen support for employees in their efforts to reflect and uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in all their actions, both on and off duty.

Currently, many IPSS initiatives have already been implemented, while others will be implemented over the next several years. Ongoing monitoring and structured performance reporting will assure the success of implementation and the capacity to communicate and report the results of each initiative.

The initiatives of the IPSS are organized along the following seven themes:

- Recruitment and personnel security screening
- Operational management
- Systems review
- Physical security (facilities)
- Internal monitoring
- Professional standards investigations
- Ethics awareness and support to employees



**SNAPSHOT OF MEMBERS'  
BEST PRACTICES**

Within the first theme of recruitment and personnel security screening, the CBSA has already made significant progress. Enhancements are being made to the existing CBSA Personnel Security Screening Policy for all employees. Work is also well under way to create a Personnel Security Screening Standard for high-integrity positions. Under this new upcoming standard, high integrity positions will be identified for which enhanced security screening activities may include some or all of the following and more:

- Searches of CBSA enforcement databases
- Mandatory fingerprints and verification against linked databases
- An integrity questionnaire
- Integrity interview after assessment of all information
- Ethical judgement testing
- Further background checks via the Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Driving abstract verifications, criminal associations and pending charges
- Field investigations

In addition to enhancing internal security screening, the CBSA is standardizing security controls for all sensitive systems and developing a security screening standard for all external service providers with access to CBSA information and facilities.

Work has also begun on activities related to physical security and employee security awareness training. The CBSA developed and launched a new online security awareness training program in June 2009, mandatory for all CBSA employees.

In addition, the CBSA successfully implemented a number of initiatives to address operational gaps such as: increasing oversight by managers in operational environments; banning the use of personal two way communication devices for on-duty officers; introducing mandatory shift reports by supervisors; and, random rotation of daily roster assignments.

Other areas of focus have included strengthening the internal investigations program by increasing the number of investigators, implementing an automated case management system, and considering legislative amendments to enhance the investigative powers of internal investigators.



However, as important as systems, process, and personnel security are, employee awareness is also essential to assure organizational integrity. Activities to promote ethics awareness and support mechanisms for employees include practical sessions on ethical decision-making, ethical risk factors, and integrity awareness. Resource materials for employees are available on the CBSA intranet website, and one-on-one support is available. As well, a federally legislated support mechanism for employees has been created to afford employees an avenue to report suspected wrongdoing confidentially and without fear of reprisal.

**If you would like to learn more about CBSA's experience in developing and implementing the Integrity and Professional Standards Strategy (IPSS), please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Paulette Lefebvre.**

Contact

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NORWAY



Norway is one of the countries having answered the WCO Secretariat's call to share its experiences and measures in the integrity domain.

Some countries, and this is true of Norway, use an independent body tasked with verifying the proper use of the States' resources in general, including those of Customs. In Norway, this body is called the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and, amongst other tasks, it audits the accounts of the various Ministries and State services and systematically conducts investigations to that end. Its findings are submitted to Parliament. These audits enable the OAG to prevent and detect irregularities and errors. The existence of an independent audit body is an additional weapon in the fight against corruption and ought to improve integrity within the civil service as a whole. More information on this body is available via the link featured in the box.

More information

<http://www.riksrevisjonen.no/en/AboutRR/RoleAndTasks>

In the Norwegian Customs Administration, integrity training forms part of the basic Customs curriculum and new recruits follow a course which covers the different integrity theories and recommended methods. It provides a detailed description of the Government ethical guidelines as well as of the Customs Code of Conduct by which officers undertake to abide.



The course employs actual situations facing officers on a daily basis and is designed to raise their awareness about their role and to ensure that all aspects of their work are integrity-driven. Integrity is also one of the subjects covered in the final exam to be taken by new recruits. Several other courses are also conducted where ethical behaviour, good performance and service to customers are vital elements.

Contact

Directorate of Norwegian Customs and Excise

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**You are most welcome to contact the Norwegian Customs Administration for more information on the measures it has taken to fight corruption and safeguard integrity.**

## THAILAND



Very often when discussing the reasons for corruption reference is made to Customs officers' insufficient remuneration and in times of financial crisis this argument can become even more relevant.

In the light of the foregoing, in 2004, the Thai government introduced a system called "Customs Formality Processing Fee". The Customs Formality Processing Fee is a fee business operators are required to pay for Customs services related to Customs formality processing and cargo clearance and for data key-in for both import and export declarations. Even though there are certain conditions for exemption or refund, in general all importers and exporters are required to pay a Customs Formality Processing fee to Customs. The actual amounts of the fee are set at 200 baht (about 4 EUR) per declaration for Customs formality processing and 70 baht (about 1.42 EUR) per declaration for data key-in.

A special regulation stipulates the rules for distribution of the revenue generated from the fee among the eligible staff. The largest proportion (85%) goes to eligible Customs officers. The exact proportion distributed to different categories of Customs staff - government officers, government employed staff, permanent employed staff, temporary employed staff and other staff of Customs, is defined using strict schemes taking into consideration the monthly salaries as compared to a mid-standard level of government officer or the educational levels of the eligible officers, depending on which amount is higher.

Furthermore, 10% of the Customs Formality Processing Fee of each month is accumulated and distributed twice a year as monetary reward to a person eligible to receive such a fee, committees, working groups or other offices under the Thai Customs that demonstrate outstanding performance.



SNAPSHOT OF MEMBERS'  
BEST PRACTICES

A positive example of investing into the future is the fact that 5% of the Customs Formality Processing Fee is always reserved for the procurement of equipment used for processing Customs formalities and cargo clearance.

Is there any evidence or study that the fee lowers corruption in Customs?

Two surveys conducted by Academia in recent years indicated that corruption and misconduct in Royal Thai Customs lowered since the introduction of the Customs Formality Processing Fee scheme.

The first one was conducted in April 2007 and revealed that under-table money lowered by 50.4%. At that time the level of client satisfaction with Customs services was generally estimated at “quite satisfied”.

The second survey was conducted 14 months later and revealed that the situation improved even more as corruption and misconduct levels lowered significantly. The clients were very satisfied with the performance of Customs officers, transparency in Customs improved and complaints on corruption and misconduct were reduced.

The Thai Customs experience has gained international recognition in the World Bank indices. The World Bank ranked Thailand as 13<sup>th</sup> in the “2009 Doing Business” rankings while the country occupied the 19<sup>th</sup> place before. Thailand proves to be not only the 13<sup>th</sup> most favourable country for business and investment out of the 181 countries around the world included in the survey, but also the 4<sup>th</sup> most favourable amongst Asian countries. With regard to the index most relevant to Customs – “trade across border”, in 2009 Thailand occupied the 10<sup>th</sup> position in the world while a year ago they ranked 51<sup>st</sup>.

**Should you be interested in obtaining more information about the scheme implemented by Royal Thai Customs, please contact Mr. Tada Choomchaiyo.**

Contact

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**Did your Customs Administration launch an initiative or embarked on a project aimed at improving integrity and you want to share it with the WCO Members ? Please send your contribution to the WCO Integrity Development officers at :**

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## PILOT PROJECTS

### Cameroon



In November 2009, the WCO Secretariat received a letter from the Director General of Cameroon Customs explaining that her Administration had launched an integrity development programme and was seeking WCO Secretariat assistance to validate its integrity action plan.

A WCO mission consequently took place in Yaoundé in February 2010. During the course of the mission, the WCO experts reviewed Cameroon's draft integrity action plan and made suggestions regarding the objectives described in the plan and activities required to reach recipients against the current economic and administrative backdrop. A series of potential activities and assistance missions was identified, one being the establishment of an internal audit and investigation unit. In the near future, Cameroon will select one element of its integrity action plan to be implemented using the pilot project approach.

### Costa Rica



In October 2009, a Member of the WCO Secretariat and an integrity expert from Guatemala conducted an integrity development workshop at the request of the Director General of Costa Rican Customs. The workshop culminated in the drafting of an integrity action plan with deliverables and deadlines. Costa Rica identified the development of a Customs Code of Conduct as one of the priorities of the integrity action plan. During the week following the workshop, a project team was appointed to develop the text of the Code of Conduct to be issued shortly.

### Morocco



Morocco embarked on an integrity pilot project which will focus on partnership with the private sector and will consist in setting up an "Observatory" that will collect and analyze complaints related to integrity from the private sector and Customs to find potential solutions to address the issue. This Observatory is composed of members from Customs and the private sector.

The project was officially launched on 19 January 2010 and a WCO follow-up mission was organized. The Observatory is operational.



## PILOT PROJECTS

### Rwanda



In August 2009, a team of integrity experts from the Norwegian Customs Administration, sponsored by NORAD, conducted an integrity workshop resulting in the drafting of an integrity development plan. Discussions are ongoing to define what activities could be piloted.

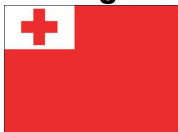
This could be done with the assistance of another institution, thus serving as a good illustration of multilateral co-operation. In the meantime, the Rwanda Revenue Authority has already made progress in implementing some elements of the integrity action plan aimed at enhancing integrity within the Administration.

### Serbia



The WCO Secretariat visited Serbia in September 2009 to assist the Customs Administration with the identification of a pilot project that will focus on several aspects, i.e.; the implementation of their Customs code of conduct, the development of integrity measurement tools and improving the relationship with the private sector. An event was organized in February 2010 in order to listen to international and national best practices in the areas identified. This event was followed up by a meeting with the Secretariat to shape up the pilot project based on the outcomes of the event .

### Tonga



In Asia/Pacific, a WCO expert went to Tonga to run a workshop aimed at developing a Customs code of conduct in February 2009. The approach was being tested in the context of a pilot project and reproduced during a regional seminar held in Fiji in December 2009.

**Are you interested in knowing more about those pilot projects?  
Do not hesitate to call us.**

#### Contact

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**Maurice**



At the request of the **Mauritius Revenue Administration (MRA)**, the WCO Secretariat participated in a workshop entitled *Workshop II on Integrity Development*. The Director General of MRA has asked the WCO to run an integrity self-assessment workshop.

**Albanie**



In January 2010, the WCO was represented in **Albania** at a Workshop on Ethics in Customs organised by the European Union's Technical Assistance Information Exchange Instrument (TAIEX) in co-operation with Albanian Customs.

This newsletter is aimed at providing interested Members with an update of the WCO activities as well as with integrity best practices that other Members have developed. Please share your impression of this newsletter with the WCO Secretariat :

([patricia.revesz@wcoomd.org](mailto:patricia.revesz@wcoomd.org) or [bistra.teodosieva@wcoomd.org](mailto:bistra.teodosieva@wcoomd.org))