Implementation and Application of Rules of Origin to Enhance African Trade
The EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme aims to facilitating and increasing intra-African trade, trade between Africa and Europe and between Africa and the rest of the world.
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# List of Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AfCFTA</td>
<td>African Continental Free Trade Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Customs Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEMAC</td>
<td>Central African Economic and Monetary Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>CET</td>
<td>Common External Tariff</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMESA</td>
<td>Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTIG</td>
<td>Committee on Trade in Goods (AfCFTA body)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DG</td>
<td>Director General</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
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<td>ECCAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of Central African States</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>Member State</td>
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<tr>
<td>OGA</td>
<td>Other relevant Government Administrations</td>
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<td>REC</td>
<td>Regional Economic Community</td>
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<td>RoO</td>
<td>Rules of Origin</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACU</td>
<td>Southern African Customs Union</td>
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<td>SC</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
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<td>SCROO</td>
<td>Sub-Committee on Rules of Origin (AfCFTA body)</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFA</td>
<td>Trade Facilitation Agreement</td>
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<td>UEMOA</td>
<td>West African Economic and Monetary Union</td>
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<td>UMA</td>
<td>Arab Maghreb Union</td>
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<td>WCO</td>
<td>World Customs Organization</td>
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1. Executive Summary

This action, funded by the European Union under the PANAFRICA Programme, contributes to the EU support initiatives to African partners in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The Programme is implemented by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and aims to facilitating and increasing intra-African trade, trade between Africa and Europe, and between Africa and the rest of the world.

The AfCFTA is a landmark achievement in fostering regional integration to unify the continent and further its socio-economic development. Under the AfCFTA Agreement, it is the rules of origin – establishing the nationality of products produced in Africa – that will determine whether preferential trade liberalization can be a game changer for Africa’s industrialization.

The main objective of the Programme is to support the African continent to improve its capacity to deal with rules of origin and ultimately to support the harmonised and coordinated implementation and application of the rules of origin under Annex 2 of the AfCFTA.

The outcome of the Programme is that beneficiaries at continental (AfCFTA Secretariat and African Union Commission), regional (African Regional Economic Communities - RECs) and national level (African Customs Administrations, Government Administrations and Private Sector) implement and apply the rules of origin in compliance with Annex 2 of the AfCFTA and in line with international commitments and best practices.

For its second year of implementation, the Programme has surpassed its planned target of 38 activities for the year, with a total of 49 conducted activities in 2023, at continental, regional and national levels. This has seen the engagement of 48 countries (89% engagement rate) and 8 RECs, with targeted activities towards 13 national customs administrations, 4 RECs and private sector representatives from 2 regions and 4 countries and as well as dedicated support to the AfCFTA Secretariat.
The Programme is progressing efficiently, in close co-operation with the Tariff and Trade Affairs Directorate of the WCO and the different partners. The second year of implementation has been successful in terms of programme implementation, covering capacity building to the RECs, Customs Administrations, private sector as well as assistance to the AfCFTA Secretariat and publications of key studies and manuals. The Programme will continue adopting a demand-driven and tailored approach, focusing on RECs and Customs Administrations that are committed to ensure the sustainability of the origin competencies development.

48 countries and
8 RECs engaged

13 countries, 4 RECs and Private Sector from 2 regions and 4 countries benefited from the action during the second year of implementation

49 activities in 2023
The EU-WCO Programme on the implementation and application of Rules of Origin (RoO) to enhance African trade is a multi-stakeholder initiative funded by the European Union and implemented by the World Customs Organization.

The anticipated outcome of the Programme is that beneficiaries at continental (AfCFTA Secretariat and AU Commission), regional (African RECs) and national level (African Customs and Government Administrations, Private Sector) implement and apply rules of origin in compliance with Annex 2 of the AfCFTA, in line with international commitments and best practices. This will contribute to facilitating and increasing intra-African trade, trade between Africa and Europe, and between Africa and the rest of the world, optimizing the incorporation of the African States’ economies to the regional and global value chains.

This action contributes to the EU’s External Investment Plan and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy adopted at the Lisbon Summit in 2007 and refined at the Summits in 2010, 2014 and 2017. It also contributes to the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area formally launched by the Assembly of the African Union at its tenth extraordinary session held on 21 March 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda, and operationally launched at the Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the AU on 7 July 2019 in Niamey, Niger. A key objective of the AfCFTA is to facilitate and increase intra-African trade and with the rest of the world, including the European Union. This contributes to the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement that entered into force on 22 February 2017.

The Programme is intended to benefit selected African Regional Economic Communities, African Customs Administrations and relevant stakeholders, including the AfCFTA Secretariat, the African Union Commission, selected national government administrations and the private sector.
VISION

- Assist in the successful implementation of the AfCFTA and the WTO-TFA
- Contribute to trade facilitation and increasing intra-African trade, trade between Africa and Europe and between Africa and the rest of the world

OUTCOME

- Implementation and application of Rules of Origin in compliance with Annex 2 of the AfCFTA, and with international commitments and best practices

OBJECTIVE

- Supporting Africa in the coordinated and harmonized implementation and application of Rules of Origin, in particular those of Annex 2 of the AfCFTA - Protocol on Trade in Goods
3. Strategic Approach

In order to ensure coherence and consistency with the outlined objectives, the Programme has been designed around the following four components:

1. CONTINENTAL
   AfCFTA Secretariat/ AUC

2. REGIONAL
   RECs

3. NATIONAL
   CA and OGA

4. PRIVATE SECTOR
During the second year of implementation, the Programme pursued its objectives of focusing on programme implementation, covering capacity building to the AfCFTA Secretariat, RECs, CAs, private sector, as well as technical assistance to the AfCFTA Secretariat and publication of key studies and manuals. It continued adopting a demand-driven and tailored approach, focusing on RECs and CAs that are committed to ensure the sustainability of the origin competencies development.

The number of requests for support received from Customs Administrations, private sector and RECs in 2023 are a manifestation of the importance and relevance of the Programme and its added value to trade facilitation, regional and continental integration.
During this year of cooperation with the different partners and stakeholders, the Programme has conducted 49 activities, directly benefiting 4 RECs, 13 national Customs Administrations, and private sector representatives from 2 regions and 4 countries, as well as dedicated support to the AfCFTA Secretariat.

### Countries engaged in the Programme

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<thead>
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<td>9. Central African Republic</td>
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<td>10. Chad</td>
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<td>13. Congo, Republic of the</td>
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<td>15. Egypt</td>
<td>37. Senegal</td>
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<td>43. Tanzania</td>
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<td>22. Guinea</td>
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<td>23. Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>45. Tunisia</td>
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<td>46. Uganda</td>
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<td>47. Zambia</td>
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<td>48. Zimbabwe</td>
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4. 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

RECs engaged in the Programme

1. Central African Economic and Monetary Community - CEMAC
2. East African Community - EAC
3. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa - COMESA
4. Economic Community of West African States - ECOWAS
5. Southern African Customs Union - SACU
6. West African Economic and Monetary Union - UEMOA
7. Southern African Development Community - SADC
8. Arab Maghreb Union - UMA
Our impact in 2023

8 Continental Activities

Consultation Meeting with the AfCFTA - Preparation of the 8th Sub-Committee on Rules of Origin for AfCFTA

Participation at the AfCFTA-AUC-RECs Meeting on Certificate/e-Certificate of Origin

Intra-REC Consultation and Workshop on RoO and EPA, e-Certification and data exchange

Study visit for AfCFTA Secretariat and RoO team to WCO and Participation at the Technical Committee on Rules of Origin (TCRO)

Publication of a Practical Guide on AfCFTA Rules of Origin

Advanced Workshop for African Accredited and Pre-accredited Experts

Participation at the Third WCO Global Origin Conference

Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee

16 Regional Activities

Diagnostic and Consultation with EAC and selected members

Diagnostic and Consultation with COMESA and selected members

Participation and Technical assistance in five IMF Workshops on implementation of AfCFTA RoO

Support in two SADC Workshops on update and validation on Rules of Origin, Annex 1

Participation at the AfCFTA-AUC-RECs Meeting on Certificate/e-Certificate of Origin

Intra-REC Consultation and Workshop on RoO and EPA, e-Certification and data exchange

Study visit for AfCFTA Secretariat and RoO team to WCO and Participation at the Technical Committee on Rules of Origin (TCRO)

Publication of a Practical Guide on AfCFTA Rules of Origin

Advanced Workshop for African Accredited and Pre-accredited Experts

Participation at the Third WCO Global Origin Conference

Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee

Training on Rules of Origin for the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region

Support of CEMAC Origin Committee Meetings

Collaboration with COMESA on the Technical update of Rules of Origin to HS 2022

Intra-REC Consultation and Workshop on RoO and EPA, e-certification and data exchange

Publication of Comparative Study on applicable Rules of Origin in the ESA region

Support to ECOWAS Database of Originating Goods migration from HS 2017 to HS 2022
National Activities targeting 13 countries

- National training on Rules of Origin and advance rulings for Namibia
- National training on Rules of Origin for Ethiopia
- National training on Rules of Origin for Guinea-Bissau
- National training on rules of origin for Côte d’Ivoire
- Advanced national training on Rules of Origin for Côte d’Ivoire
- Train the Trainer Workshop on Rules of Origin for Côte d’Ivoire
- Assistance of Côte d’Ivoire in the development of an Advanced Ruling mechanism
- National training on Rules of Origin for Kenya
- Train the Trainer Workshop on Rules of Origin for Kenya
- National Workshop on Rules of Origin for Ghana
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Egypt
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Mauritius
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Malawi
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Botswana
- National Training on Rules of Origin for the Republic of Congo
- Advanced national training on Rules of Origin for The Gambia
- Advanced National Training on Rules of Origin for Zambia

Private Sector Activities targeting 2 regions and 4 countries

- EABC awareness-raising Webinar
- Training on Rules of Origin for EABC
- Representation at the ICC World Chambers Congress
- COMESA Business Council awareness-raising Webinar
- Workshop on Rules of Origin for private sector stakeholders in Namibia
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Guinea-Bissau
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Kenya
- National Training on Rules of Origin for Egypt
The RoO Africa Programme organized a series of working sessions to prepare the AfCFTA Secretariat for the SCROO-8 and to hold consultations with the AfCFTA Secretariat on their needs for capacity building and technical assistance. During the working session, the update of product specific rules of origin in the AfCFTA Appendix IV to HS 2022 was validated, and new product specific rules of origin that have been agreed by ministers were included in Appendix IV. Origin provisions adopted through the Origin Manual were included in an updated version of Annex 2 and Appendix IV (product specific rules of origin) was ‘cleaned’. The way forward for further updates was discussed and agreed in order to ensure that final results to be adopted during the Council of Ministers meeting in October 2023 are included in Annex 2.
The AfCFTA Secretariat staff participated in a training session organized by the Programme and the TTA Origin Sub-Directorate. The training was organized back to back with the Technical Committee on Rules of Origin (TCRO) and the informal TCRO workshop on rules of origin.

The training gave the AfCFTA Secretariat a better understanding of the work of the WCO in the area of rules of origin as well as of the implementation and management of rules of origin on a global level. The RoO Africa Programme team learnt about the tasks carried out by the AfCFTA Secretariat Origin Unit.

The workshop took place as part of the WCO support for the effective implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement and in line with the work plan and capacity building needs agreed with the AfCFTA Secretariat.

The objective of the refresher workshop was to further enhance the knowledge of WCO accredited and pre-accredited experts on current issues around rules of origin, with a focus on the AfCFTA agreement, hence creating a solid base of trainers in Africa to deliver on national and regional capacity building activities.
The workshop saw the participation of origin and IT experts from the ECOWAS pilot countries, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. The workshop was building on the needs expressed by ECOWAS and its members during consultations with the RoO Africa Programme in October 2022.

The automation status of each pilot country was presented as well as the detailed overall process of exchange of electronic certificates. Member countries also presented the list of companies preselected for the pilot project on self-certification and discussed the challenges in the selection process.

The workshop concluded with the adoption of the road map for the go live of the e-certification and the road map for the implementation of self-certification in the ECOWAS region. The participants also discussed needs for technical assistance in relation to self-certification and e-certification and how the RoO Africa Programme could contribute. The Programme will continue to support ECOWAS and its members with the aim to provide meaningful and targeted capacity building and technical assistance.
Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee
2 October 2023, Mauritius, Pointe-a-Pitre

Under the auspices of the Mauritius Revenue Authority, Vice-Chair of the WCO ESA region, the EU-WCO RoO and HS Africa and Programmes held their annual Steering Committee meetings on 2 October 2023. The high level meetings gathered representatives from the European Union, the WCO, the AfCFTA Secretariat, the WCO ESA and WCA Regional Offices for Capacity Building, Regional Economic Communities and Customs administrations from Africa to appraise the results of the Programmes, provide guidance and orientation, and approve the work plan for the next reporting period.

The Steering Committee commended the work accomplished by the Programmes to date and the significant milestone it had played in advancing harmonized trade through the timely implementation of the Harmonized System (HS), robust capacity building initiatives as well as the implementation of advance rulings among the African partners at regional and national levels. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the EU for the partnership and highlighted the paramount importance of continuity of both the RoO and HS Programmes.

The Steering Committee Members reviewed the progress made so far by the Programmes and examined the key areas that still needed interventions such as supporting efforts towards establishment of Customs laboratories, implementation of advance rulings, origin adapted training materials, self-certification of origin, electronic certificate of origin, and support to the AfCFTA Secretariat.

The Committee adopted and validated recommendations for the way forward and concluded the meeting by endorsing the Programmes’ Annual Reports for 2022 and 2023.
Intra-REC Consultation and Workshop on RoO and EPA, E-certification and data exchange
3 October 2023, Mauritius, Plaine Magnien

Back to back with the Steering Committee, a consultation with the RECs and the AfCFTA Secretariat was held on 3 October 2023. Participants discussed challenges and needs for technical assistance and capacity building linked to the overlapping FTAs and rules of origin on the African continent, the processes for certification and verification of origin, and the need to streamline the RoO for better regional integration and seamless trade facilitation. The experts also exchanged and presented recommendations regarding e-certificates and self-certification of origin, as well as the necessity to build competencies and a solid pool of experts in Africa.

The RoO Africa Programme continues to provide support on e-certification and self-certification (COMESA, ECOWAS, EAC, AfCFTA) and to develop evidence based research to support the technical work.

Practical Guide on AfCFTA RoO

The Programme has developed a very detailed and comprehensive Practical Guide for the implementation of the AfCFTA Rules of Origin to assist Customs Administrations and economic operators with the practical implementation of the AfCFTA Annex 2 on Rules of Origin of the Protocol on Trade and its relevant appendices. The document provides detailed explanations on different origin concepts, explains how these concepts are applied in the framework of the AfCFTA Agreement, Annex 2 on Rules of Origin and Appendix IV, and includes examples to enhance the comprehension of the provision.

A better understanding of the AfCFTA rules of origin is crucial to the correct implementation and application of the agreement and necessary to enhance intra-African trade.
The WCO organized the Third Global Origin Conference in Santiago, Chile, on 8-9 November 2023. The theme of the conference was ‘Building trust in the origin environment’ and the event contained sessions on utilization of FTAs, building new origin systems with a focus on trust among stakeholders, digitalization in relation to origin, rules of origin in the green transition and a discussion on the future of rules of origin.

The first session was focusing on ‘navigating the spaghetti bowl of origin: the African experience in the international context’. This session discussed the challenges of navigating rules of origin under several trade agreements and how to streamline the implementation and application of RoO in this context. The AfCFTA, being the latest and largest agreement to date, was highlighted as an example with interventions from the EU, Customs administrations and the private sector. The session also saw the presentation of the Chilean experience in navigating rules of origin in various FTAs.

During his opening speech, the WCO Secretary General launched the Practical Guide on the AfCFTA RoO, which has been developed and published by the EU-WCO RoO Africa Programme. The Guide is freely available on the WCO website.
The Programme has supported the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the alignment of its Rules of Origin to the 2022 edition of the HS. A validation workshop on the alignment was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 20 to 23 March 2023. The objective of this workshop was to validate the initial draft of the technical updates on Appendix I of the SADC Rules of Origin to the HS 2022 edition, thus facilitating trade and trade statistics in the region. The non-alignment of SADC list rules to the latest HS version is said to have caused implementation problems for both the economic operators and Customs authorities because goods had to be classified twice, meaning that goods will be classified for purposes of custom clearance and collection of import duties and then for purposes of origin determination. Therefore, this alignment exercise is a positive step in the right direction for the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Trade.
4. 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

**Diagnostic and Consultation with COMESA and selected members**
5 June 2023, Kenya, Mombasa

The consultation was an occasion for the exchange of experiences and lessons learned, especially in the area of self-certification and electronic certification. The outcomes of this consultation will feed into the work plan of the Programme and steer the partnership and support for COMESA and their members.

**ECOWAS Workshop on self and e-Certification**
2-5 May 2023, Ghana, Accra

The workshop saw the participation of origin and IT experts from the ECOWAS pilot countries, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal. The workshop is building on the needs expressed by ECOWAS and its members during consultations with the Programme in October 2022.

The automation status of each pilot country was presented as well as the detailed overall process of exchange of electronic certificates. Member countries also presented the list of companies pre-selected for the pilot project on self-certification and discussed the challenges in the selection process. The workshop concluded with the adoption of the roadmap for the go-live of the e-certification and the roadmap for the implementation of self-certification in ECOWAS. The participants also discussed needs for technical assistance in relation to self-certification and e-certification and how the Programme could contribute. The Programme will continue to support ECOWAS and its members with the aim to provide meaningful and targeted capacity building and technical assistance.
The RoO Africa Programme has provided technical assistance and participated as resource in five continental consultations with African countries undertaken by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to explore modernisation of customs procedures that will support the implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement. The workshops focused on modernisation of procedures used by African Customs Administrations to achieve the objectives set by the AfCFTA Agreement. The purpose of the workshops was to reach a convergence of views among the participants on the priority needs for modernisation of customs administrations in relation to implementing the AfCFTA Agreement successfully, and on the modern options that should be retained to meet them. Among the themes addressed were modernisation of the management and control of preferential origin, the digitalized, harmonized and data exchange-based intra-continental customs clearance procedure and the use of digital technologies such as electronic customs declarations, certificates of origin and automated risk management to speed up processes and promote trade facilitation.

The objective of the consultations was to discuss the state of play for the implementation of applicable preferential rules of origin and trade agreements in the EAC and address challenges in the implementation of rules of origin in the region. The consultation was an opportunity to take stock of capacity building and technical assistance needs, and consider best avenues for regional and national initiatives focusing on rules of origin.
Participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination, related operational and procedural issues, including origin certification and origin irregularities, as well as the establishment of efficient origin management. In addition, participants discussed specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of the Free Trade Agreements and challenges linked to verification of origin, including through administrative cooperation. Recommendations for better management and implementation of rules of origin on a national and regional level were also discussed.
The RoO Africa Programme, together with the EU-funded HS Programme, in partnership with CEMAC (Communauté économique et monétaire de l’Afrique centrale) Commission, organized meetings of the Committee of Tariff and Nomenclature, and the Committee of Origin from 1 to 4 August 2023 in Douala, Cameroon.

Both Committees, in the context of the established work plan with the CEMAC Commission, work to enhance the capacities of the CEMAC Commission and its Member States for better management of tariff matters and to ensure full implementation of the 2022 edition of the Harmonized System. The meetings were attended by Origin and Tariff experts from Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon, as well as representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the AfCFTA Secretariat and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The meetings were a driver to support all countries to finalize the migration to the HS 2022, considering that Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, and Equatorial Guinea have not implemented to the latest version of the HS yet. One of the objectives of this meeting was to take stock of the state of play in the migration process, the challenges hindering the migration to HS 2022 and the support needed for each country.

During the meetings, the legal texts establishing the CEMAC Committees of Tariff and Nomenclature and Origin were reviewed and adopted at technical level. The Origin Committee also revised and adopted the regulation relating to the approval procedure for products originating from CEMAC, which shall contribute to facilitating trade and implementing self-certification. All adopted legal texts shall be submitted to the Council of Ministers of the Union of Central African States for validation.
A consultation with the RECs and the AfCFTA Secretariat was held on 3 October 2023 allowing participants to discuss challenges and needs for technical assistance and capacity building linked to the overlapping FTAs and rules of origin on the African continent, the processes for certification and verification of origin, and the need to streamline the RoO for better regional integration and seamless trade facilitation.

Experts specifically exchanged and presented recommendations regarding e-certificates and self-certification of origin, as well as the necessity to build competencies and a solid pool of experts in Africa.
In a stride towards improving trade efficiency and fostering economic growth within the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA), the EU and the WCO collaborated with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Secretariat in updating the rules of origin from the HS 2017 to the HS 2022 edition. This critical development was achieved in a workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 9 to 11 October 2023.

Approaching technical assistance through the lens of sustainability, the RoO Africa Programme extended an invitation to experts from COMESA Member States to contribute to the alignment exercise, fostering their competency to undertake similar exercises for future HS editions.

The main goal was to support the COMESA Secretariat and TFTA Member/Partner States in aligning the RoO with the HS 2022 edition, thereby mitigating the risk of incorrect origin determination. The updated draft of the TFTA RoO for HS 2022 will undergo validation by the TFTA Technical Working Group on Rules of Origin.
Comparative Study on applicable Rules of Origin in the ESA region

To facilitate the seamless implementation of rules of origin, the Programme conducted a comprehensive comparative analysis of the applicable rules of origin within the Eastern and Southern African (ESA) region.

This analysis encompassed rules of origin related to various trade agreements within ESA, including the AfCFTA, the EAC, the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) between Africa and the EU, the SADC, the COMESA, and the Tripartite Free Trade Area (an agreement involving EAC, COMESA, and SADC). The objective was to assess both the commonalities and disparities in rules of origin within this region, with the aim of providing recommendations.

Preliminary findings have indicated that generic topics commonly found in preferential origin legislation often cover similar subjects across various ESA rules of origin legal instruments. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing the variations among African trade agreements, which can potentially result in significant differences in determining the origin of goods. There is thus a pressing need for convergence in this regard.

Furthermore, the study has revealed substantial disparities among origin regimes within the ESA region, even in overlapping trade agreements. The establishment of the AfCFTA is seen as a critical milestone towards resolving these overlapping rules of origin and paving the way for an African Customs Union, which would require unified trading rules.

In addition, the study’s conclusion highlights that the EPAs can play a catalytic role, particularly through cumulation provisions, in promoting African economic integration. The harmonization of EPA rules of origin is viewed as a means to foster the development of African value chains.

The Rules of Origin Africa Programme will continue its efforts in the comparative analysis of rules of origin by launching an extensive study that will encompass all African Union Regional Economic Communities.

In order to improve its communication channel with Member States and facilitate the free movement of originating products within the Community, the ECOWAS Commission has developed a website/portal for the ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS). Part of this portal is a database of all originating products under the ETLS since 1988, which facilitates the origin recognition process in ECOWAS Member States. This database is available on the ETLS website which is used by all Customs Administrations to confirm the originating status of a good and the enterprise before granting preferential access.

With the coming into force of HS 2022, it had become critical to update the database by migrating the approved products which are based on HS 2017 to HS 2022 to enable registered companies and their originating products to continue to benefit from the preferential tariff treatment with minimal technical interruption or frustration at the importing country.

The Rules of Origin Africa Programme provided technical and financial support to ECOWAS to migrate the database of originating goods from HS 2017 to HS 2022.
The Programme held a national training workshop on rules of origin in Windhoek, Namibia, that brought together Customs officials from different units and border stations within the Customs services department. The objective of the workshop was to assist the Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA) in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin and contribute to a seamless implementation of the AfCFTA and relevant FTAs.

This workshop was conducted as part of the comprehensive technical assistance and partnership with NamRA, including in relation to the implementation and launch of advance rulings system in Namibia in July 2022. The support provided under the RoO Africa and the EU-funded HS Africa Programmes allows for the deployment of all-inclusive and wide-ranging capacity building activities, to enhance the infrastructure and capacity of NamRa both on RoO and HS.
The Programme, in partnership with Ethiopian Customs Commission (ECC), held a national training workshop on rules of origin in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 6 to 10 March 2023 with the participation of Customs officials from different branches and regional stations within the Ethiopian Customs Commission and officials from the Chamber of Commerce.

The objective of the workshop was to assist ECC in enhancing its knowledge on preferential rules of origin and its ability to understand and use rules related to origin especially in view of the implementation of the AfCFTA Rules of Origin.

The workshop was an occasion to discuss the state of play of the Continental Free Trade Agreement as well as its Annex 2 on rules of origin. In addition, participants exchanged on specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of the FTAs and challenges linked to administrative cooperation. Discussions also emphasized the importance of verifying the originating status of goods, rather than merely checking the authenticity of the certificate of origin.
A national training on rules of origin for Guinea-Bissau Customs was co-organized with UEMOA, with the participation of officials from Guinea-Bissau Customs, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Energy and Industry, Chamber of Commerce and private sector. The objective of the workshop was to assist Guinea-Bissau in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

During the workshop, participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination, related operational and procedural issues, including origin certification and origin irregularities, as well as the establishment of efficient origin management. In addition, participants discussed specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of the FTAs and challenges linked to administrative cooperation. Recommendations for better management and implementation of rules of origin on a national and regional level were also discussed.

The Programme shall hold consultations with UEMOA to better address challenges and gaps in capacity building and implementation of rules of origin at regional and national levels and will continue its work with UEMOA and Guinea-Bissau Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules or origin.
Assistance of Côte d’Ivoire in the development of an Advanced Ruling mechanism
Online

The Programme has assisted in reviewing the draft legal text on Advance Rulings for Côte d’Ivoire and provided recommendations for its improvement.

National Training on Rules of Origin for Côte d’Ivoire
22-26 May 2023, Côte d’Ivoire, Grand Bassam

The workshop was held in Grand-Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire, from 22 to 26 May 2023 with the objective to assist Côte d’Ivoire in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin in the light of the imminent implementation of an advance rulings mechanism on a national level.

The Programme will continue its work with Côte d’Ivoire Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules or origin.
4. 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

National Training on Rules of Origin for Kenya
29 May - 2 June, Kenya, Nairobi

The Programme held a basic national training workshop on rules of origin in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 May to 2 June 2023, with the participation of Customs officials from different units and border stations within the Customs Services department, other Government agencies and private sector stakeholders. The objective of the workshop was to assist KRA and stakeholders in enhancing their knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin and contribute to the seamless implementation of the AfCFTA and relevant Free Trade Agreements. The training workshop was held in parallel with the training of trainers for the Kenya School of Revenue Administration.

The WCO facilitators presented the Revenue Package initiatives, including the Guidelines on Origin Certification, Preferential Origin Verification and Advance Rulings, which have been designed to assist WCO Members in bringing the provisions in Free Trade Agreements into application. Participants raised the challenges in implementing trade agreements and AfCFTA implementation status.

The Programme will continue its work with GIZ and KRA on enhancing Customs officials and stakeholders knowledge of rules of origin through capacity building for efficient implementation of free trade agreements.
Training of Trainers
Workshop on Rules of Origin for Kenya
29 May-2 June, Kenya, Nairobi

The workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 May to 2 June 2023 with the objective to assist Kenya Customs in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

The Training of Trainers workshop was held in parallel with a national workshop on rules of origin for the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and other governmental and private stakeholders.

During the workshop, participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination and related operational and procedural issues mainly in relation to the AfCFTA. They also focused on communication and training skills which will enhance the capacity of Customs trainers to further cascade their knowledge to colleagues as well as to other relevant stakeholders, including economic operators.
The Programme, in partnership with the German Alliance for Trade Facilitation, through GIZ, held a national training workshop on rules of origin for Côte d’Ivoire Customs. The workshop was held in Grand-Bassam, Côte d’Ivoire, from 3 to 7 July 2023 with the objective to assist Côte d’Ivoire in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin in the light of the imminent implementation of a national advance rulings mechanism. The advanced training workshop builds on the acquis from an intermediate training conducted in May 2023.

During the workshop, participants dug deeper into key concepts for proper origin determination, including cumulation, as well as related operational and procedural issues, as origin certification and verification. Case studies allowed participants to detangle the spaghetti bowl of rules of origin in various free trade agreements applicable in Côte d’Ivoire. They also had the opportunity to observe the practical application and management of rules of origin through study visits to a producer and exporter of originating products and a Customs border office.

The Programme will continue its work with Côte d’Ivoire Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules of origin.
The Programme, in collaboration with the Gambia Revenue Authority (GRA), conducted an Advanced Training on Rules of Origin in Banjul, The Gambia, from the 3 to the 7 July 2023. The workshop welcomed the participation of customs officials representing various units and border stations within the Customs and Excise Department. A precursor to this event was the basic training on rules of origin held in Banjul in November 2022.

The main objective of this comprehensive training initiative was to bolster the GRA’s proficiency in the domain of preferential rules of origin. This initiative was strategically designed to empower customs officials with an enhanced grasp of rules of origin, including AfCFTA rules of origin.

In addition to the theoretical component, the workshop incorporated a day of fieldwork at a local manufacturing company. This practical experience allowed participants to apply their theoretical knowledge by analyzing manufacturing processes, assessing the origin status of inputs, and determining the origin status of the final product during an evaluation session. Subsequently, they enhanced their skills by completing AfCFTA sample certificates as part of their practical training.

The RoO Africa Programme remains committed to collaborating with the GRA, with plans underway for the Training of Trainers.
The Programme, in partnership with the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA), held a national training workshop on rules of origin for Ghana Customs. The workshop was held in Accra, Ghana, from 10 to 14 July 2023 with the objective to assist Ghana in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

This workshop intervenes as part of a comprehensive support to Ghana and in synergy with the technical assistance and actions that the Programme is conducting with the ECOWAS Commission. It also complements the partnership and support provided by the European Union on RoO under the Economic Partnership Agreement.

During the workshop, participants discussed specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of the FTAs and challenges linked to verification of origin including trough administrative cooperation. They also discussed recommendations for better management and implementation of rules of origin on a national and regional level.

The Programme will continue its work with Ghana Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules or origin.
The workshop was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 3 to 7 September 2023 and brought together Customs officers, participants from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the General Organization for Export and Import Control (GOIEC) as well as the private sector with the objective to assist Egypt in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

Participants appreciated the opportunity given by the workshop to exchange knowledge and experiences among different stakeholders and stressed that this broad approach is highly beneficial for enhanced cooperation and coordination on a national level.

The Programme will continue its work with Egypt Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules or origin.
A national training workshop on rules of origin for Mauritius Customs brought together Customs officers from various services with the objective to assist Mauritius in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

During the workshop, participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination, related operational and procedural issues, including origin certification and origin irregularities, as well as the establishment of efficient origin management. In addition, participants discussed specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of the FTAs and challenges linked to verification of origin including through administrative cooperation.

Throughout the workshop, participants actively contributed to the discussions and various case studies and appreciated the opportunity given by the workshop to exchange knowledge and experiences among different services as this approach is beneficial for enhanced cooperation and coordination within the Administration.
The WCO, in partnership with the German Alliance for Trade Facilitation, through GIZ, held a national Train the Trainer workshop on rules of origin and HS for Côte d’Ivoire Customs with the objective to assist Côte d’Ivoire in enhancing its knowledge and application of the Harmonized System and preferential rules of origin in the light of the imminent implementation of a national advance rulings mechanism. The Train the Trainer workshop builds on the skills and knowledge acquired by participants in the intermediate and advanced trainings conducted earlier in 2023. The new trainers will form part of the Administration’s pool of experts and will be used both for the day to day application of advance rulings as well as for training of Customs staff and private stakeholders.

The Train the Trainer workshop allowed experts to deepen their understanding on rules of origin and Harmonized System and as well as develop and strengthen their skills to deliver training. The workshop offered the participants a unique opportunity to deliver a number of group and individual presentations in various origin and HS related topics while taking into account the facilitation and communication skills and tips learnt from the WCO experts.

In conclusion of the workshop, the WCO experts provided feedback to the participants with a focus on key areas that needed improvement as well as commending the areas where participants deployed the acquired skills in developing training materials and delivering a training session.

As a follow-up, the Programme will accompany the new trainers in their first training sessions which are scheduled to take place in January 2024.
National Training on Rules of Origin for Malawi
16-20 October 2023, Malawi, Blantyre

The Rules of Origin Africa Programme, in collaboration with the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA), organized a national rules of origin training workshop drawing the participation of Customs officials from various units and border stations within the Customs Services department.

The main objective of the workshop was to enhance the MRA’s understanding and application of preferential rules of origin. This action was aimed at facilitating the seamless implementation of the AfCFTA and other relevant Free Trade Agreements. Key focus areas during the workshop included origin determination concepts, efficient management practices, and the introduction of the Revenue Package initiatives by WCO facilitators. Challenges related to the implementation of trade agreements, the current status of the AfCFTA, and issues such as certification and administrative cooperation were discussed during the workshop.
An advanced rules of origin training workshop was held in Lusaka, Zambia. The workshop covered crucial aspects such as proper origin determination, operational and procedural issues and the establishment of efficient origin management. The WCO team presented comprehensive core origin provisions, including the Guidelines on Origin Certification and Preferential Origin Verification. These guidelines were designed to assist WCO Members in applying provisions in Free Trade Agreements. Practical exercises and case studies were conducted, allowing participants to apply learned origin concepts using regional agreements of their choice, including the AfCFTA.

In a hands-on approach, participants engaged in a day of fieldwork at a manufacturing factory, where they followed and analysed manufacturing processes, raw materials used, and the final product’s origin status. The participants concluded the workshop by going through the process of completing sample AfCFTA certificates.

The Rules of Origin Africa Programme will continue its collaboration with ZRA. The next phase involves the preparation for the Train the Trainer (ToT) course, a critical step for sustained capacity in origin matters. The ToT course will further build on the knowledge acquired during the workshop, ensuring that selected ZRA Customs officials are equipped with the skills necessary to provide ongoing training for relevant stakeholders.
4. 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

National Training on Rules of Origin for Botswana (virtual)
27 November-1 December 2023

The Programme conducted a virtual basic national training workshop on rules of origin for the Botswana Unified Revenue Service (BURS). Twenty-six Customs officials participated from various units and border stations.

This workshop marked the beginning of a series of training sessions outlined in the partnership between the Rules of Origin Africa Programme and BURS. The primary goal was to enhance the knowledge of BURS officials on preferential rules of origin, particularly in preparation for an advanced training workshop.

The focus was on understanding and applying rules related to origin, especially considering the implementation of AfCFTA Rules of Origin. Topics covered included origin determination concepts, efficient management practices, Revenue Package initiatives, challenges in implementing trade agreements and the status of the AfCFTA.

The Programme plans to continue collaborating with BURS to strengthen expertise in rules of origin, supporting the efficient implementation of free trade agreements at national and regional levels.
A national training workshop on rules of origin for Customs and other relevant stakeholders brought together Customs and trade officials as well as representatives from Chambers of Commerce and private sector with the objective to assist Congo in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

To kick off the workshop, a visit to a local manufacturing and packaging company was organized to discuss challenges and opportunities facing the private sector at the wake of the implementation of the AfCFTA in the Republic of Congo.

During the workshop, participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination, related operational and procedural issues, including origin certification and origin irregularities, as well as the establishment of efficient origin management. In addition, participants discussed specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of FTAs and challenges linked to verification of origin, including through administrative cooperation.

Throughout the workshop, participants actively contributed to the discussions and case studies and appreciated the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences among different services. At the end of the workshop, participants made recommendations to the administration on possible improvements of origin related matters.
4. 2023 HIGHLIGHTS

Workshop on Rules of Origin for Private sector stakeholders in Namibia (Fisheries)
15-17 March 2023, Namibia, Walvis Bay

The Programme, in partnership with Namibia Revenue Authority (NamRA), held a stakeholder training workshop on rules of origin in Walvis Bay, Namibia, which was attended by Customs officers, Ministry of Fisheries Officials and Namibia Standards Institution staff from the public sector and importers, exporters, customs brokers and manufacturers from the private sector. The workshop was part of a comprehensive support package to NamRA under the RoO Africa Programme, delivered on a demand-driven basis. Rules of origin play a critical component of the customs clearance, thus knowledge attained from the training will contribute to efficiency and effectiveness of customs brokers (Clearing Agents) and minimize if not eradicate delays at the ports of exit or entry. During the workshop, participants worked on key concepts for proper origin determination, related operational and procedural issues, and the establishment of efficient origin management. Further, WCO facilitators presented the WCO rules of origin tools, such as the rules of origin facilitator, Guidelines on Origin Certification, which have been designed to assist WCO Members in bringing the provisions in Free Trade Agreements into application. The participants examined several practical case studies and discussed specific areas of concern, including the day-to-day challenges faced by the business community in implementing rules of origin in the FTAs.
A National training on rules of origin for Guinea-Bissau Customs was co-organized with UEMOA, with the participation of officials from Guinea-Bissau Customs, Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Energy and Industry, Chamber of Commerce and private sector. The objective of the workshop was to assist Guinea-Bissau in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin.

During the workshop, participants, including from the private sector, worked on key concepts for proper origin determination, related operational and procedural issues, including origin certification and origin irregularities, as well as the establishment of efficient origin management. In addition, participants discussed specific areas of concern, including the low level of knowledge and use of the FTAs and challenges linked to administrative cooperation. They also discussed recommendations for better management and implementation of rules of origin on a national and regional level.
On 11 May 2023, the Programme, in collaboration with the East Africa Business Council (EABC), conducted an awareness raising webinar dedicated to AfCFTA rules of origin.

It drew a substantial audience, with participants hailing from both the East African region and other parts of the African continent.

The objective of the webinar was to impart essential skills and knowledge related to the technical and administrative procedures of the AfCFTA Rules of Origin to the private sector within the EAC.

The organization of this webinar was the result of deliberations and consultations with the EABC.

The webinar served as a crucial precursor to the in-person workshop which took place in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in July 2023.
The Programme held a basic national training workshop on rules of origin in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 May to 2 June 2023, with the participation of Customs officials from different units and border stations within the Customs Services department, private sector stakeholders and other government agencies. The objective of the workshop was to assist the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) and stakeholders in enhancing their knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin and contribute to the seamless implementation of the AfCFTA and relevant Free Trade Agreements. The training workshop was held in parallel with the Training of Trainers for the Kenya School of Revenue Administration.

The WCO facilitators presented the Revenue Package initiatives, including the Guidelines on Origin Certification, Preferential Origin Verification and Advance Rulings, which have been designed to assist WCO Members in bringing the provisions in Free Trade Agreements into application. Participants presented the challenges in implementing trade agreements and AfCFTA implementation status.

The Programme will continue its work with GIZ and KRA on enhancing Customs officials and stakeholders knowledge of rules of origin through capacity building for efficient implementation of free trade agreements.
The World Chamber Congress organized by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) is the world’s largest economic forum for chambers and businesses, including economic actors, business leaders and policymakers. The Programme attended the Congress as speaker to share its experience with the international audience on the importance of the digitalization of Certificates of Origin for businesses and Chambers of all sizes.

The experience in supporting the harmonized and well-coordinated implementation and application of rules of origin in the AfCFTA, regional economic communities and other international commitments made the WCO an essential presence in the session on how Chambers can play a role and develop their trade documentation activities to support smaller businesses within this FTA.

Uniting over 1,500 business leaders from more than 120 countries, the Congress is an ideal platform to connect public and private sector voices. Participants discussed the challenges and opportunities created by current fluctuations in trends, exchanged insights, strengthened networks and learnt about new areas of innovation that will contribute to a more inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable future.
The Programme, in partnership with the East African Business Council (EABC), successfully conducted a training workshop on the AfCFTA Rules of Origin in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from July 12 to 14, 2023.

The workshop saw active participation from private sector stakeholders, who had the opportunity to deepen their understanding and refine their skills in the application of rules of origin.

Participants worked on and presented case studies pertaining to the implementation of AfCFTA Rules of Origin. Additionally, they discussed specific areas of concern such as certification and verification.

The Programme will continue its collaboration with the EABC and private sector stakeholders to enhance their knowledge of rules of origin through capacity building, aiming for the efficient implementation of AfCFTA and other free trade agreements.
On 19 July 2023, the Programme, in partnership with the COMESA Business Council (CBC) held an awareness-raising webinar on AfCFTA Rules of Origin. The webinar was attended by over 90 participants from the region and across the African continent and aimed to equip the CBC private sector with essential skills and knowledge on the technical and administrative aspects of the AfCFTA Rules of Origin. The webinar showcased comprehensive presentations delivered by the Programme on Rules of Origin under the AfCFTA. These presentations included explanations of AfCFTA origin criteria, administrative arrangements, and implementation procedures.

The workshop was held in Cairo, Egypt, from 3 to 7 September 2023 and brought together Customs officers, participants from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the General Organization for Export and Import Control (GOIEC) as well as the private sector with the objective to assist Egypt in enhancing its knowledge and application of preferential rules of origin. Participants greatly appreciated the opportunity provided by the workshop to exchange knowledge and experiences among different stakeholders and stressed that this broad approach is highly beneficial for enhanced cooperation and coordination on a national level. The Programme will continue its work with Egypt Customs to equip Customs officials and relevant stakeholders with extended knowledge for efficient implementation and application of rules or origin.
The EU-WCO Rules of Origin Africa Programme is unique as it operates on a continental level and is therefore overlooking all levels of implementation of rules of origin. The added value is the holistic and overall Pan-African approach backed by a solid partnership with the regional WCO structures.

For 2024, the programme has already foreseen:

- 8 continental activities
- 6 regional activities
- 26 national activities
- 4 private sector activities

as per its work plan.

The programme remains open to administrations and RECs in Africa.

We invite you to send us your request to EU-WCORoOAfrica.Program@wcoomd.org

Vision for 2024

The Programme will continue focusing on programme implementation, covering capacity building to the AfCFTA Secretariat, RECs, CAs, private sector, as well as publications of key studies and manuals. It will continue adopting a demand-driven and tailored approach, focusing on RECs and CAs that are committed to ensure the sustainability of the origin competencies development.
The table below is an extract from the financial report for the second year as communicated to the donor and covering the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Lines</th>
<th>Expenditure (€)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Component 1 - Continental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component 2 - Regional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Component 3 - National CAs</td>
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<td>Component 4 - Private Sector</td>
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<td>Programme steering and coordination</td>
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<td>Tools and Publications</td>
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<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td><strong>791,240</strong></td>
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