



Activity Title and Number: Study assignment on customs laboratory, A377-C4

Beneficiary: General Administration of Customs (GACC)

Location and Date: French Customs, Lyon and Paris; Dutch Customs, Amsterdam; 15-21 October 2014

Stakeholders: DG TAXUD, Member States Customs Administrations

Brief Activity Report

Relevance and Impact

The main responsibility of customs laboratories is to support the determination of tariff classification by performing chemical analyses and sampling of commodities. The correct classification of commodities underpins a number of trade policies, including the determination of tariffs, duties and anti-dumping measures. Faster lab decisions lead to faster determinations, thereby reducing the time to clear goods. Customs laboratories also play an important role in national security, environmental protection and narcotics control. Accordingly, customs laboratories need to produce consistently high quality results to support customs regulatory responsibilities. Operating under best practice governance and quality management systems, in line with international standards, is essential to achieving this outcome. Accordingly, EUCTP supported a delegation of four laboratory specialists and policy-makers from GACC to customs laboratories in France and the Netherlands to learn how to maintain quality and entrench continuous improvement in the day to day operations of a customs laboratory.

Activity Description

Four GACC officials, including laboratory specialists and policy-makers, attended the five-day training in customs laboratories in Lyon, Paris and Amsterdam. These are three of the largest customs laboratories in the EU, handling thousands of matters every year while maintaining quality in line with international standards and best practice. Major topics covered included:

- Overarching legal framework -roles, functions and responsibilities of customs laboratories in legislation
- Operational settings – best practice quality management systems, standards and procedures to manage risk, and promote quality and consistency of lab results, including international standard, ISO 17025
- Lab Information Management System – using systems for workflow and data tracking, improve workflow efficiency and enable data exchange across labs in the regional laboratory network
- Qualitative and quantitative testing methods for key commodity classifications, including: analysis methods for excise control of mineral oils; quantitative analysis of animal or vegetable fats and oils; and analysis of hazardous wastes.

Results and Dissemination

- GACC will apply this knowledge to rollout an improved Lab Management Information System across its six regional customs labs which will improve workflow efficiency. This will translate into faster tariff classification decisions, thereby facilitating trade.
- Improved GACC's understanding of the quality systems it must implement to gain ISO 17025 certification for its two newest labs, which GACC is planning to apply for in 2015.
- Improved GACC's understanding of best practice testing methods for key commodities which will improve GACC's technical capacity and inform a review to standardise current laboratory testing and sampling practices.