

for example, an automatic release of goods, an electronic declaration center and a single window system.

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«International customs cooperation during the spread of COVID-19»

Research Field:

Features of the activities of customs authorities in the context of the spread of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented negative effect on global and regional economic processes. According to the International Monetary Fund, world economy contracted by 3,5% over 2020¹. At the same time the volume of international mail was down by 20% last year, whereas e-commerce volume expanded significantly².

Over this period the World Customs Organization (WCO) developed close relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) in order to recommend national customs services how to proceed working under the difficult circumstances of the pandemic. Within the WCO framework COVID-19 Trade Facilitation Repository was created. On a specially dedicated web-page the WCO disseminated a classification list of medical supplies, facilitating COVID-19 treatment and prevention, a note on creating national essential goods lists, and also guidelines to maintain supply chain continuity. The WCO simultaneously cooperated with the private sector consultative group, that articulated the need for the implementation of adequate border controls during the pandemic.

COVID-19 induced an increase in illegal trafficking of low-quality medical supplies. The number of seizures of such goods raised serious concerns in the Secretariat that informed its partners of the counterfeiting risks and, besides that, set up the IPR CENcomm Group to expedite data exchange and consequently to impede illegal trafficking, linked to COVID-19. The communication channel bonding Regional Intelligence Liaison Offices enabled the success of a global emergency operation “STOP”, in which 99 Member customs services took part. 300 million fake medicine units, over 47 million units of medical supplies and about 2.8 million liters

¹ World Economic Outlook Update January 2021 [Electronic resource] // International Monetary Fund. – Mode of access: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2021/01/26/2021-world-economic-outlook-update>. – Date of access: 19.05.2021.

² How COVID-19 is changing the world: a statistical perspective [Electronic resource] // Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. – 2021. – 3 vol. – Mode of access: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/ccsa_publication_vol3_e.pdf. – Date of access: 19.05.2021.

of counterfeit hand sanitizer gel were seized over a two-month period¹. All the negotiations within Operation STOP were conducted in a video conference form or as document-based webinars.

The spread of COVID-19 greatly affected the work of The General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China (GACC). A new decree brought in Health declaration form, that is obligatory to fill in on arrival at and departure from China. To make form completion more convenient a mini program based on WeChat app was launched. Thanks to that the whole process of filling in and identifying health information takes less than two minutes: users only have to show a bar code to a customs officer. Single window system, preliminary provision of customs declaration information, wholesale transition to electronic record management allowed customs clearance of consignments and vehicles to be finalised in a few minutes 24 hours a day. Close and fruitful collaboration between Chinese customs and logistics providers, freight operators and airlines on the other side facilitated the elimination of redundant barriers between supplies and their consumers. By early February 2021 Chinese customs had cleared 94 thousand consignments or 240 million units of goods worth over 810 million yuan². Those consignment were exempt from customs duty and a range of indirect taxes.

Chinese customs administration greatly simplified health control of medical supplies for COVID-19 treatment, prevention and diagnosis: admission of anti-epidemiological goods and related goods, transported accompanied by incorrectly filled-in customs papers, or those that should be verified by paper documents (their e-variants were accepted in anticipation of original copies later on). Having said that, GACC erected efficient barriers in the way of poor-quality and counterfeit medical supplies export and import. This way April 4 and 7 in Chengdu customs district there were detected protective masks consignments of 700 thousand units, heading for Belgium and Spain without a medical registration certificate².

In March 2020 Eurasian Economic Commission ratified a list of goods, imported with a view to preventing the spreading of new coronavirus infection. Those goods were exempt from import duty by March 31 2021. A 6-month ban on the export of some medicines and medical supplies was also imposed. Ban on the export of certain foodstuffs lasted no more than three months. Some member states of the EAEU compiled their own lists of essential products. Import duties levied on items on the lists were significantly reduced (in the Republic of Kazakhstan by

¹ Operation STOP: the WCO operation hits hard the illegal trafficking linked to COVID-19 [Electronic resource] // World Customs Organisation. – Mode of access: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2020/october/operation-stop--the-wco-operation-hits-hard-the-illegal-trafficking-linked-to-covid19.aspx>. – Date of access: 26.04.2021.

² Newsroom [Electronic resource] : General administration of customs People's Republic of China. – Mode of access: <http://english.customs.gov.cn/newsroom/news>. – Date of access: 20.04.2021.

33% for definite goods). Aside from that, the rate of VAT was lowered to 0% on exact imported products¹. Companies importing epidemiological protective goods into the Russian Federation were exempted from paying a considerable amount of money as customs and other kinds of payments. Deductions from VAT on imports payments amounted to around 2 billion rubles, from customs duties payments – 8 billion rubles².

“Green lane” system was utilized in the case of critical supplies. Providers of such goods were put into a low-risk group, which allowed automatic goods clearance. In the Republic of Belarus from the beginning of April to mid-May 2020 150 tons of “critical importance goods” went through the above-mentioned customs operations being given number one priority. 57% of them were conveyed as transit goods. In addition, the importers of such goods essential for production chains continuity were offered deferred payments or payments by instalments. An e-copy or a paper one of the certificate could confirm country of origin thus giving grounds for tariff preferences application. On the whole, transit through the territory of Belarus was to be completed following a definite route and on the day succeeding that of crossing the state border. However, as there were revealed 1600 violations of the governmental decree over one and a half months of its being in force, from May 25 2020 haulers, whose drivers have infringed the regulation, can convey transit goods only on condition of sealing³.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan customs convoy of vehicles was limited in order to minimize a number of contacts between customs officers and those crossing the customs border. As a rule, customs processing issues were addressed remotely. In the Republic of Armenia communication as to administrative arrangements linked to customs rules violation was conducted via e-mail. In the Russian Federation appeals from citizens were accumulated and analyzed in newly set-up call-centers, where the peculiarities of conducting customs operations on prime necessity goods were explained to the public⁴.

International customs cooperation was adjusted to the form of remote electronic dialogue. According to R. Davydov, First Deputy Head of Federal Customs Service, as of April 2020 at

¹ Мониторинг принятых государствами-членами ЕАЭС мер, направленных на преодоление негативных последствий распространения коронавирусной инфекции (COVID-2019) [Электронный ресурс] : по состоянию на 17.04.2020 // Евразийская экономическая комиссия. – Режим доступа: <http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/covid-19/Documents/%D0%9C%D0%9E%D0%9D%D0%98%D0%A2%D0%9E%D0%A0%D0%98%D0%9D%D0%93%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%2017%2004.pdf>. Дата доступа: 20.04.2021.

² Телеканал НТВ, программа «Поздняков». Интервью Владимира Булавина [Электронный ресурс] // Федеральная таможенная служба. – Режим доступа: <https://customs.gov.ru/press/aktual-no/document/261532>. – Дата доступа : 20.04.2021.

³ В первоочерёдном порядке // Таможенный вестник. – 2020. – № 5. – С. 28.

⁴ Официальный сайт Федеральной таможенной службы России. Режим доступа: <https://customs.gov.ru/info/v-czelyax-preduprezhdeniya-rasprostraneniya-koronavirusnoj-infekczii-%28covid-19%29-fts-rossii-provodyatsya-sleduyushhie-meropriyatiya>. – Дата доступа: 20.04.2021.

the central office of the establishment 30–35% of officers go on duty, while the rest either work remotely or are on furlough. In large Russian airports customs officers, who manage carriage of passengers, are also on leave or furlough, due to reduced numbers of passengers at border crossings. Officers managing customs control of freight goods, in the event of virus contamination, were immediately quarantined. Their workplaces were filled by officers in reserve¹.

Support of vital customs officers activities in so difficult a period is exemplified by the activities of the SCC of the Republic of Belarus official representatives in the People`s Republic of China and Brussels (Belgium). Despite the pandemic Belarusian manufacturers were systematically accredited on the Chinese market, other than that a new Plan for Belarus-EU cooperation for 2020-2023 was signed.

Chinese customs and EAEU members` customs strengthened during the spread of the pandemic. In December 2020 the fourth session of the Belarusian-Chinese intergovernmental cooperation Committee was held in the form of a video conference. Within its framework a Commission on customs and quarantine cooperation was established. Talks about giving Belarusian “critical importance goods” simplified access to the Chinese market and forming sustainable logistics chains were set going. That helped to carry out joint action programs and create “road maps” to tighten production and trade contacts, connections between commercial entities of the two countries².

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«Problems and improvement of control for the application of deposits during the import of pre-decision goods to the EAEU customs territory»

Research Field:

Professional standards in the field of foreign economic activity: national and international components.

The Customs Code of the EAEU has brought pleasant changes and simplified the rules of the processes. Currently, you can issue a product without personally submitting the original documentation, and do it by filling out forms in electronic form. Also, the customs control of the

¹ Интервью Руслана Давыдова о работе таможи во время пандемии COVID-19 [Электронный ресурс] // Альта-Софт. – Режим доступа : https://www.alt.ru/external_news/73932/. – Дата доступа : 20.04.2021.

² Орловский, М. Коронавирус как новый вызов для международного сотрудничества / М. Орловский // Таможенный вестник. – 2021. – № 1. – С. 10–13.