

**THE WAYS OF IMPROVING THE WORK OF CUSTOMS
AUTHORITIES: THE MAIN DIRECTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BELARUS AND PRIORITIES OF THE WCO
ПУТИ СОВЕРШЕНСТВОВАНИЯ РАБОТЫ ТАМОЖЕННЫХ
ОРГАНОВ: ОСНОВНЫЕ НАПРАВЛЕНИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ
БЕЛАРУСЬ И ПРИОРИТЕТЫ ВТАМО**

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The modern customs service of the Republic of Belarus is under the objective influence of regional and international challenges and trends that have a direct impact on its development and, ultimately, on results of work and security in the field of foreign economic activity of the state.

In these conditions, the phased modernization and improvement of the customs service in order to meet modern challenges and threats is seen as an important element of ensuring the security of the Belarusian contour of the customs border of the Eurasian Economic Union, the development of foreign economic relations of Belarus with other states and the national economy in general.

The State Customs Committee has developed the Main Directions for the Development of the Customs Service of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020 and for the forecast period until 2025, as well as indicators for assessing the fulfillment of the tasks set in the Main Directions and the Program of Measures for their implementation.

The strategic goals of the customs service of the Republic of Belarus are determined: ensuring the economic security of the country, promptly responding to emerging risks and threats in the field of customs, achieving the completeness of collection of payments to the budget controlled by the State Customs Committee, creating favorable conditions for doing business based on improving the quality and efficiency of customs administration while optimizing the costs of business support.

The Main Directions for the Development of the Customs Service of the Republic of Belarus have specific tasks closely related to the interests of the business community. Further improvement of electronic customs declaration and development of an automatic goods release system.

With the implementation of technologies for preliminary declaration, the share of electronic preliminary declarations will increase from 30% to 70%. At the same time, the automatic issue of such declarations will increase from 0 to 20%.

It is planned to switch to the use of an electronic remote form of contacting the customs authorities when submitting applications for the sale of excise stamps, including banks and non-bank credit and financial organizations in the register, applications for the return of overpaid customs payments in trade, as well as a number of other documents that are now provided in paper form.

The remote release of goods and the creation of a regional center for electronic declaration. Today, customs operations are carried out using the technology of remote release and the mechanism for automatic distribution of the declaration array both between customs clearance points and between officials who release goods. It doesn't matter where the goods are physically located. Control operations are carried out in accordance with the instructions of the system.

The use of these technologies has already shown its effectiveness, as it allowed to evenly distribute the load at the customs clearance points of customs, to use human resources more efficiently without the need to physically move employees, distributing the volumes of documents to be processed in an automatic mode between the most and least loaded structural divisions. The new format of customs operations helps to optimize the time of customs operations in general.

Reducing the time spent on customs operations, including by improving interaction with interested authorities in terms of automated control of documents confirming compliance with prohibitions and restrictions.

There are also a number of projects that the customs authorities are currently implementing and planning to launch as part of the digitalization of customs operations and improving interaction with business, such as interaction with other state bodies and the Belarusian Railway, automatic distribution to parking lots, development of a mobile application, etc.

It is important to understand that in addition to the directions of improving customs authorities in the context of the strategic goals of the customs service of the Republic of Belarus, there are also problems in the customs sphere, which also apply to the customs services of other states, the solution of which is primarily entrusted to the World Customs Organization (the WCO).

Gender equality and diversity has been part of the WCO capacity building agenda since 2013. In continuing its efforts to promote the advancement of gender equality and diversity in Customs, the WCO launched a number of new tools and initiatives in the past year.

Launched in 2013, the gender equality organizational assessment tool enables Customs administrations to self-assess their existing policies and procedures on gender equality, in order to identify areas where improvement may be needed. To advance its equality agenda, the WCO has fine-tuned the GEOAT, aligning it to international practices, with the support of the WCO Virtual Working Group on Gender Equality and Diversity.

New content includes definitions of gender equality and diversity-related concepts, a chapter on how to implement gender mainstreaming through project management, and a list of cross-cutting indicators aimed at supporting the transversal implementation of gender equality in Customs. In addition, the language of the GEOAT has been revised, and additional explanations have been added to highlight that gender equality concerns and benefits everyone.

With a long-term objective, a compendium of case studies and best practices that could be used as a complement to the GEOAT is also being developed within the Virtual Working Group, which currently gathers officials from 34 countries. They meet every two months via an online meeting platform to exchange experiences and best practices on gender equality and diversity-related initiatives within Customs.

The WCO encourages its Member Customs administrations to make use of the newly developed tools to gain a better understanding of how to improve and further advance gender equality and diversity both within their workforces and vis-à-vis external stakeholders, while also urging them to actively get involved in the work of the Virtual Working Group.

Returning honesty to the spotlight. Since the late 1980s, WCO Members have been drawing and sharing lessons from their experiences in combating corruption and promoting integrity. They identified various factors that effective national Customs integrity programmes must address, and consolidated them into 12 and later 10 factors in the Arusha Declaration Concerning Good Governance and Integrity in Customs, which was revised in 2003.

The main goal in the development stage of modern customs is to put the issues of integrity and corruption back in the spotlight as well as remind readers of the need to anchor the fight against corruption in a policy of reform and to keep it a priority.

WCO Members have asked the Secretariat to include integrity among the Organization's strategic priority areas for 2019-2022. Many tools are available for Customs administrations wishing to review their existing practices, such as the Integrity Development Guide and the Guide to Corruption Risk Mapping.

In conclusion it will be better to say that despite the sufficient development of the customs activity of the Republic of Belarus and the effectiveness of its individual areas, further improvement of the customs service is seen in the conditions of constant variability of world processes. Therefore, it is important to develop promising strategic directions for the development of the activities of customs authorities both at the level of the Eurasian Economic Union and in the international arena.

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THE MODEL OF THE MODERN CUSTOMS SERVICE МОДЕЛЬ СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ТАМОЖЕННОЙ СЛУЖБЫ

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The eighth annual session of the Committee was held at the WCO headquarters in Brussels from 7 to 9 March 2017. The topic of the meeting was "Mercator Program: formation of a trade facilitation system, partnership and economy". The session was attended by more than 230 delegates from customs services of various countries of the world, regional structures WCO, economic and customs unions, international organizations, academies and business associations.

Considering the functional aspect of the model of the modern customs service, the participants of the meeting supported the initiative to create a working group to form a "Model for analyzing the implementation of functional tasks by the customs service". The relevance of the problem is determined by the need to improve approaches to assessing the results of the work of customs authorities, as well as the emerging trend in recent years to increase the number of customs services that have become part of the state revenue services. So, if in 2013 43 national revenue services included customs authorities in their structure, then in 2015 there were 51 such services. The ongoing changes reflect the implementation of the line of International Cooperation of the International Monetary Fund to strengthen national revenue services and recommendations