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32. Recalls the Council Conclusions of December 2007 on the development and establishment of Early Warning Systems in the EU and on the establishment of an Early Warning System for tsunamis in the North East Atlantic and the Mediterranean region, and reaffirms the need for the Member States and the Commission to take forward initiatives to improve early warning systems and alert signals for disasters;
33. Asks the Commission to include the issue of adequate EU funding for disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in its proposals for the budgetary review 2008/2009;
34. Calls on the Commission to ensure the efficiency of the single European emergency number 112;
35. Calls for the specific nature of natural disasters occurring in the Mediterranean, such as drought and forest fires, to be acknowledged at Community level and for Community prevention, research, risk-management, civil-defence and solidarity tools to be adapted accordingly so as to improve the response to this type of disaster in each Member State;
36. Urges that due recognition be given to the need for more Community funding for prevention measures;
37. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the parliaments of the Member States.

Fortieth anniversary of the Customs Union

P6_TA(2008)0305

European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2008 on the fortieth anniversary of the Customs Union

(2009/C 286 E/05)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the recent adoption of Regulation (EC) No 450/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 laying down the Community Customs Code (Modernised Customs Code) ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Decision No 70/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008 on a paperless environment for customs and trade ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Decision No 624/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 May 2007 establishing an action programme for customs in the Community (Customs 2013) ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to the Communication from the Commission entitled 'Strategy for the evolution of the Customs Union' (COM(2008)0169),
- having regard to its resolution of 5 June 2008 on implementing trade policy through efficient import and export rules and procedures ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to the report of its Committee of Inquiry into the Community Transit System (January 1996 to March 1997),

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 145, 4.6.2008, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 23, 26.1.2008, p. 21.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 154, 14.6.2007, p. 25.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2008)0247.

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- having regard to the Agreement between the European Community and the United States of America on customs cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters ⁽¹⁾, signed on 28 May 1997,
 - having regard the proposal for a Council decision on the accession of the European Communities to the World Customs Organisation and the exercise of rights and obligations akin to membership ad interim (COM(2007)0252),
 - having regard the Council conclusions of 14 May 2008 on the strategy for the evolution of the Customs Union,
 - having regard the report on Community customs activities on counterfeit and piracy, published by the Commission on 19 May 2008,
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Customs Union has since 1968 played a crucial role in preserving and developing the Single Market and creating prosperity by facilitating legitimate and competitive trade with and within the Union, while protecting its citizens,
- B. whereas the existence of a customs union means the absence of customs duties at internal borders between Member States, common customs duties on imports from third countries, common rules of origin for third-country products and a common definition of customs value,
- C. whereas the development of Community law has been aimed at guaranteeing that the same rules apply to all products imported into the EU,
- D. whereas the EU customs authorities have a dual role to play, namely to levy import duties and taxes and to act as guardian of the health and safety of citizens at the EU's external borders,
- E. whereas its first Committee of Inquiry focused on customs issues and concluded at point 17.3.1. of its abovementioned report that 'in order to provide economic operators and the public at large with the necessary confidence that the Single Market trading environment is adequately protected, ... the creation of a single EU framework for customs services must be a long-term objective of the EU',
- F. whereas globalisation has resulted in a huge increase in international trade and in the development of new production and consumer patterns, but has also introduced new threats such as global terrorism, climate change and illicit trade,
- G. whereas reducing compliance and administrative costs has become a key issue for efficient and effective administration within the EU,

Evolution of the Customs Union

1. Considers that 40 years of the Customs Union represents a substantial achievement and provided benefits for EU business and citizens;
2. Affirms that customs authorities, who are mainly responsible for supervising the EU's international trade, thus contribute to guaranteeing open and fair trade, implementing the external dimension of the internal market, the common commercial policy and other EU common policies, and ensuring the security of the supply chain as a whole;
3. Recognises that the measures taken by the customs authorities are aimed at protecting the financial interests of the EU and its Member States, and at protecting the EU against unfair and unlawful commercial practices;

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 222, 12.8.1997, p. 17.

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4. Recognises also that the measures are aimed at guaranteeing the safety and security of the EU and its residents while protecting the environment, and at maintaining a fair balance between the need to conduct customs controls and to facilitate legitimate trade with a view to improving European competitiveness;
5. Congratulates customs officials, in this connection, on their effective work to combat counterfeiting, which led to the seizure of 79 million counterfeit and pirated articles relating to 43 000 cases recorded in 2007; in view of the exponential increase in seizures of counterfeit products, supports practical customs measures to combat counterfeiting and piracy, such as increasing the number of specialised customs officers devoted to this work at the Commission and in the Member States, and the reflection on establishing a European Counterfeiting Observatory (ECO);
6. Welcomes, therefore, the abovementioned Commission Communication, which seeks to set out a clear orientation for customs for the period 2013 to 2019;
7. Underlines that EU customs authorities need to continuously anticipate the challenges ahead and to develop and use 'state of the art' skills, technologies and methods to facilitate and control trade in the most efficient and effective manner;
8. Emphasises the importance of candidate countries aligning with EU standards in customs, and acknowledges the technical assistance to candidate countries provided by the Commission and the Member States;

Closer cooperation

9. Welcomes the major conclusions of the various seminars organised as part of the Customs 2013 Programme, namely to improve the cooperation network between customs and market surveillance authorities, and to improve risk management and share experiences, knowledge and best practice with regard to cooperation and control;
10. Considers that cooperation is essential to ensure the effectiveness of EU customs services in the face of the many threats which they have to combat;
11. Calls, therefore, on the Member States to reinforce administrative cooperation between their customs authorities and between customs and other governmental agencies, such as veterinary authorities and bodies responsible for product safety, in order to ensure that the administration of the external borders of the EU is a joint responsibility, and to guarantee the security and safety of EU citizens;
12. Calls on the Commission to enhance cooperation with trading partners via existing and future customs cooperation programmes in order to facilitate trade for reliable traders and to ensure supply chain security;
13. Stresses the importance of ensuring that all economic stakeholders are represented in the Customs Code Committee;
14. Endorses the signing of the various agreements by the European Community with its main trade partners around the world;
15. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce international cooperation in the framework of international organisations (World Trade Organisation and World Customs Organisation) and with third countries in the area of customs; points out that this is aimed at achieving more effective customs control and promoting EU standards, while allowing trade to benefit the EU and its trading partners; points out also that this will enable, in particular, joint operations and pilot projects to be set up to strengthen cooperation on the ground between EU and third-country customs officials;

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Security issues

16. Calls on the Member States to further strengthen the role of customs in fighting the particular dangers inherent in fake products, in particular fake medicines and toys;
17. Calls on the Commission to maintain its opposition to the recent US legislation on 100 % scanning of maritime container cargo in foreign ports; points out that it has not been demonstrated that this unilateral decision by the US is needed and is effective in economic and security terms;
18. Considers that Regulation (EC) No 648/2005 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2005 amending Council Regulation (EEC) No 2913/92 establishing the Community Customs Code ⁽¹⁾ ('security amendment') already meets the expectations of the US authorities as regards security control in Europe;

Enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and delivery for the Internal Market

19. Welcomes the two initiatives which Community customs authorities plan to develop over the next ten years to serve EU citizens as best possible, namely the electronic customs proposal, already approved by Parliament, and the establishment of a European customs laboratories' network with a view to uniform interpretation of new EU technical standards, and supports any other initiative serving the same purpose;
20. Recognises that this modernisation will make it possible to step up the fight against dangerous products and to strengthen consumer protection;
21. Calls on the Member States to develop new working methods and technology in a synchronised and harmonised way and to ensure a coordinated and common implementation of customs legislation; calls on the Commission to monitor closely the uniform application of customs legislation in the Member States and to report back to Parliament;
22. Calls on the Member States to provide customs authorities with sufficient resources and (technological and human) investment to enable them to carry out their tasks, implement new paperless systems and train their staff;
23. Calls on the Member States to ensure a high level of cooperation between customs authorities and the business community in order to enhance compliance and reduce red tape, in particular by using a more risk-management oriented approach and developing 'Single Window/One Stop Shop' services;
24. Calls on the Commission to pay particular attention to the problems encountered by small and medium-sized enterprises, specifically by facilitating the process of adapting their IT systems to those employed by customs administrations, at the lowest possible cost, and by simplifying the procedures for securing 'authorised economic operator' status;

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25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States.

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 117, 4.5.2005, p. 13.