

Chapter 29: Customs union

All Member States are part of the EU customs union and follow the same customs rules and procedures. This requires legislative alignment as well as adequate implementing and enforcement capacity and access to the common computerised customs systems.

North Macedonia has a **good level of preparation** in this area. **Limited progress** was made on consolidation, application and upgrade of IT systems while the Concept of authorised economic operators (AEO) was further promoted, including through regional cooperation initiatives among the customs administrations of the WB6 countries. The implementation of the New Computerised Transit System Phase (NCTS) Phase 5 is facing delays. North Macedonia has yet to ratify the Protocol on Elimination of Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

Last year's recommendations were partially implemented. In the coming year, the country should, in particular:

- implement the New Computerised Transit System Phase 5;
- continue the consolidation and full application of its IT systems, including alignment with the Commission's Multiannual Strategic Plan (MASP) modules, ensure their continuous upgrade, and business continuity;
- ratify the Protocol on Elimination of Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

The **customs legislation** is highly aligned with the EU acquis. The 2023 customs tariff was adopted to reflect the latest changes in the EU Combined Nomenclature. The CEFTA Additional Protocol 5 on trade facilitation was implemented, and the authorised economic operators (AEO) concept was further promoted. So far, 27 companies have been AEO¹certified.

North Macedonia is yet to ratify the Protocol on Elimination of Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, signed in 2014. On **administrative and operational capacity**, the standards of professional integrity and anti-corruption are consistently applied.

A comprehensive intelligence system in support of investigation and enforcement is in place. Risk management is applied systematically with the percentage of physical controls at 5.9 % and documentary controls accounting for 15.7 % of all shipments in 2022. Revenues collected by the Customs Administration increased by 15% compared to 2021, totalling close to EUR 2 billion.

The one-stop control with Serbia was implemented and the one-stop system was also established at the man border crossing with Albania in August 2023 . The digitalisation of customs procedures continued and a green customs declaration was introduced, enabling import and export procedures to be completed in one hour, fully paperless.

The 2021-2025 strategy for ICT development, aimed at coordinating the alignment of national systems with those of the EU, was implemented. The implementation of NCTS Phase 5 is facing delays. The System for Electronic Exchange of Data (SEED+)_is operational, ensuring harmonised work of the agencies present at the borders. The number of seizures doubled compared to the previous year, with 114 seizures in 2022, including drugs, as well as foreign currency, gold and undeclared excise goods .

¹ Овластен економски оператор

Cooperation and exchange of intelligence with the customs agencies from the region and with international and regional organisations continued.