



EUROPEAN UNION CUSTOMS ALLIANCE
FOR BORDERS EXPERT TEAM



EUCAB
FLASH

OCTOBER 2025

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Editorial – by the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Chair of the EUCAB Steering Committee

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure to introduce the first edition of the EUCAB Steering Committee Flash. At a time when customs administrations across Europe face both unprecedented challenges and promising opportunities, our cooperation and exchange of knowledge remain as important as ever.

This issue highlights a range of activities carried out within the EUCAB framework and beyond. We hear from Martin Reuter, Head of EUCAB, who shares a forward-looking perspective on the activities of the Units. We also reflect on the legacy of CELBET in an insightful interview with Sami Rakshit, Director General of Finnish Customs. Kristian Vanderwaeren, Director General of Belgian Customs, offers his views on resilience – a theme that resonates strongly with our shared priorities during the Danish Presidency.

Equally important are the contributions from the networks: the Port Directors Network meeting in Rotterdam, the Airport Directors Network meeting in Paris, and the Innovation Network, all of which illustrate the dynamism and commitment of our colleagues. In addition, this edition reports on the EUCAB Truck Search Training held at the Bregana Advanced Training Centre in Croatia, an excellent example of how expertise and best practices are shared across borders.

As we look ahead, the Danish Presidency is committed to fostering dialogue, resilience, and innovation. By working together, we ensure that customs administrations across Europe remain well-prepared to address today's challenges and to seize tomorrow's opportunities.

I warmly thank all contributors to this edition, which reflects the strength and diversity of our customs community.



Sincerely,

Christian Lützen

*Director General of the Danish Customs Agency
Chair of the EUCAB Steering Committee
Danish Presidency of the Council of the EU*

EUCAB - FROM PREPARATION TO ACTION

Building Europe's Customs Cooperation for Safer Borders

After months of preparations and strategic decisions during the ad hoc Steering Committee meetings in Brussels and Poland, the new expert team European Customs Alliance for Borders (EUCAB) officially launched its activities in March 2025 with a successful kick-off meeting in Bonn on 19 and 20 March.

Established under the EU Customs Programme, EUCAB builds on the strong foundation and proven methodology of CELBET, expanding its scope to strengthen operational cooperation across all border types – ports, land and air borders, as well as mobile units. This comprehensive approach ensures that the EU can tackle shared threats and trends effectively through coordinated, EU-wide action. It also enhances collaboration with third countries and other law enforcement authorities, contributing to a safer and more resilient customs environment.



Martin Reuter,
Head of EUCAB

Since EUCAB's start, all units have been working at full speed on their planned deliverables, and network meetings are now underway to connect senior as well as operational experts to exchange best practices. This first EUCAB Flash highlights just a few initiatives from the broad range of activities already in motion this year – with a particular focus on the networks, training, resilience and innovation.

Strengthening Cooperation, Building Capacity: EUCAB's Next Six Months

As EU Customs continues to evolve in response to global trade dynamics, technological change, and new enforcement challenges, EUCAB's work over the next six months will focus on translating collaboration into concrete results. The coming period will mark a decisive step toward greater operational integration, stronger analytical capabilities, and a more resilient Customs community across the Union.

Operational Integration at Borders

The integration of operational activities will continue to gain momentum. The new diagnostic framework for border crossing points and mobile units will support consistent assessments across Member

States, helping to align procedures and strengthen quality assurance. Future joint control activities will build on these diagnostics, combining risk-based targeting with closer cooperation between border and inland units to enhance both deterrence and efficiency.

Resilience, Integrity, and Innovation

EUCAB is also looking beyond immediate operational priorities to ensure long-term resilience and institutional integrity. New analyses on human resources and crisis management will help Member States identify shared vulnerabilities and develop solutions for continuity of operations. At the same time, innovation will remain a guiding theme—encouraging the exploration of emerging technologies and new methods to meet the challenges of modern Customs enforcement.

Deepening Cooperation Across Networks

Customs cooperation remains at the heart of EUCAB's mission. The next stage of work will bring Customs directors and experts from airports, postal hubs, ports, and land borders closer together through structured communication and joint thematic groups.

These networks will focus on shared challenges such as e-commerce supervision, risk analysis under the new ICS2 framework, and the strategic use of passenger data. Enhanced connectivity and the wider use of CRMS2 will enable more direct, intelligence-led collaboration between Member States.

Advancing Risk Management Excellence

A more data-driven and harmonized approach to risk management is taking shape. Building on the analysis of recent feedback and field experience, EUCAB will develop targeted recommendations to strengthen risk assessment and operational decision-making. The goal is to ensure that high-risk movements are identified more consistently, with better coordination of controls across all transport modes. This work supports a broader shift toward preventive, intelligence-based enforcement at EU borders.

Investing in People and Skills

People remain EU Customs' most valuable asset. EUCAB's training initiatives will expand significantly, fostering a new generation of skilled, confident, and interoperable officers. Upcoming programmes will promote excellence in passenger profiling, X-ray image analysis, and control of emerging transport technologies. A harmonised EUCAB training model will support mutual recognition of skills and create a shared culture of professionalism and cooperation across Member States.

Modern Tools and Shared Knowledge

Technology and equipment are key enablers of effective Customs work. EUCAB's upcoming actions will focus on mapping available equipment, identifying good practices from the field, and creating a shared product database to support knowledge exchange and future investment planning. Cooperation within scanner, K9, and procurement networks will continue to build common understanding and trust, while reinforcing the importance of evidence-based decisions in equipping Customs services.

A Stronger, More Connected Customs Union

Together, these initiatives reflect a coherent vision: a Customs Union that is intelligent, interoperable, and resilient. By investing in people, systems, and partnerships, EUCAB is helping to shape a future where collaboration and competence drive both security and facilitation. The months ahead will consolidate these achievements, ensuring that European Customs remains a model of cooperation and operational excellence.

No team without teammates

I am looking forward to the time ahead and would like to take this opportunity to thank you and all your engaged and motivated colleagues. The project is based on commitment and a willingness to participate. I feel this commitment every time I speak with you, and every time I meet your colleagues, I feel their desire to make a difference and actively contribute to realising the vision.

On behalf of the EUCAB management team and especially on my own behalf:
Thank you very much.
- Martin



BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF CELBET – THE PATH FORWARD WITH EUCAB



Sami Rakshit,
Director General of Finnish Customs

As EUCAB embarks on a new chapter of EU-wide customs cooperation, we had the opportunity to speak with Sami Rakshit, Director General of Finnish Customs.

As one of the participating member states in CELBET—the expert team that serves as a flagship model for collaboration along the EU’s eastern and south-eastern borders — Finland offers valuable insights into how lessons learned from CELBET can shape the future of customs cooperation across Europe.

What were the key successes that made this expert team a prime example of EU customs cooperation?

The establishment of CELBET is widely regarded as a success, driven by strong leadership and commitment from directors and customs administration leaders along the eastern and south-eastern land borders of the EU. CELBET received excellent feedback, contributing to the unification and enhancement of customs control practices across the EU. Participants expressed a strong sense of community and pride, feeling valued and part of the “CELBET family.”

What tools and methods did CELBET introduce to improve operations?

CELBET introduced several impactful tools and methods that have significantly improved operational efficiency. The BCP Diagnostic Tool has been instrumental in evaluating and enhancing performance at border crossing points, helping to identify and address operational gaps. Finland played a particularly notable role through the creation of a Centre of Expertise in Vaalimaa, complemented by similar centers in other EU countries that have been actively utilized.

Common training programs facilitated the development of harmonized operational models, while the BCP Network enabled secure data exchange on threats and risks among customs officers. These efforts promoted a joint understanding and harmonization of customs operations across the EU, strengthening the role and visibility of authorities as key security actors.

How did CELBET promote collaboration and shared learning?

The collaborative approach of CELBET fostered knowledge sharing and deeper mutual understanding between countries. It laid the groundwork for continued harmonization of joint operations at the Union’s external borders, reinforcing the belief that collective strength is essential.

What are the expectations for EUCAB moving forward?

Looking ahead, EUCAB is expected to build on CELBET’s achievements. There is a clear opportunity to leverage the tools and methods developed under CELBET to enhance EUCAB’s operational work.

Promoting joint operations and exercises will help identify weaknesses and improve customs control processes. Strengthening cooperation between countries will lead to deeper relationships and better resource management, especially in the face of tightening budgets. Aligning activities with future tasks of the customs authorities will ensure continued relevance and impact. It is in the common interest of the entire EU region and its member states that EU customs authorities perform their tasks in common matters to promote the common good – ultimately, acting as one.

What challenges might EUCAB face in this transition?

We must keep in mind that there could be several challenges that must be addressed should they arise. These possible challenges could include varying levels of commitment from participating countries, difficulties in aligning national agendas with shared goals, and the need to build trust and foster open communication. We need to find a balance between transport modes, ensure support for all units implementing activities, and be aware that making use of previous achievements can also pose obstacles.

What does the transition from CELBET to EUCAB represent overall?

To conclude, the transition from CELBET to EUCAB represents a powerful opportunity to deepen cooperation, harmonize customs operations, and reinforce the collective strength of EU customs authorities. The spirit of collaboration and shared purpose remains central to this vision—together, we are stronger.

CELBET in a nutshell

Under the guidance of Andràs Bartha, CELBET (Customs Eastern and South-Eastern Land Border Expert Team) was an EU initiative established to strengthen cooperation and coordination among customs administrations along the EU's eastern and south-eastern land borders.

Its main goal was to improve border management, enhance customs control practices, and promote security and trade facilitation through shared expertise, joint training, and harmonized operational models. By developing practical tools like the BCP Diagnostic Tool, creating Centres of Expertise, and establishing common training and information-sharing networks, CELBET helped unify customs operations across participating countries.

CELBET built a strong sense of community among customs professionals and laid the foundation for continued collaboration under its successor initiative, EUCAB.

Thank you, Mr. Rakshit, for sharing your insights and reflections on the journey from CELBET to EUCAB. Your perspective underscores the importance of collaboration, capacity building, and innovation in customs cooperation.

EUCAB – RESILIENCE THROUGH UNITY



Kristian Vanderwaeren,
Director General of Belgian Customs

Today, the European Union faces an increasingly complex landscape of hybrid threats — where economic instability, cyber risks, organized crime, and geopolitical tensions are deeply intertwined. Within this environment, the role of customs is transforming profoundly: from a revenue-collecting administration to a key pillar of Europe's security architecture. Resilience is therefore at the heart of the EU Customs Union's future.

We had a chance to talk to Kristian Vanderwaeren, Director General of Belgian Customs, who shares best practices from managing past crises and explores how these lessons can strengthen collaboration across all 27 Member States through EUCAB. The goal is clear: building a resilient Union with concrete tools and processes.

What have been the main challenges in recent years that truly tested your administration's resilience?

"Over the past years, we've been confronted with several crises that have truly tested our capacity to adapt," Vanderwaeren explains. "The terrorist attacks in Brussels, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the geopolitical tensions following Russia's aggression each brought their own challenges. We had to react quickly — to protect our people, maintain operations at the borders, and keep essential goods moving. Every crisis has taught us something new about resilience, flexibility, and the importance of collaboration."

"Resilience is about more than bouncing back after a crisis. Think of it as building shock absorbers into everything we do."

How can EU customs administrations strengthen Europe's resilience against crises while keeping trade and passenger flows smooth?

"Resilience is about more than bouncing back after a crisis. It's about being prepared, adapting, and continuing to deliver essential services no matter what happens. Think of it as building shock absorbers into everything we do — strategy, people, technology, and partnerships."

We need to invest in training — not just technical training, but also in crisis management, data analysis, and security awareness. Our officers are on the front line of Europe's external borders; they need the right skills and the right mindset to detect and respond to complex, evolving threats.

At the same time, customs must have access to the right data and systems. Real-time information and connectivity to European security databases and intelligence networks are essential to anticipate risks and act decisively. Customs should not operate in isolation but be fully integrated into Europe's broader security architecture, alongside police, intelligence, and border management services.

By combining strong coordination, qualified personnel, and data-driven decision-making, we can make customs both a guardian of security and a facilitator of legitimate trade. That's how we keep Europe resilient — and open."

What are the biggest challenges in achieving a common vision for EU customs?

"The diversity among our administrations is both a strength and a challenge," Vanderwaeren notes. "We all work within different realities — different capacities, resources, and national priorities. The key is to turn that diversity into a shared vision. EUCAB plays an essential role in supporting member states to commit to collective solutions instead of fragmented ones — it's a place where we can learn from one another and build genuine European cooperation."

Looking ahead, what does a strong and resilient EU Customs Union look like to you in 10 years' time?

"I envision a Union where customs truly act as one — where intelligence flows seamlessly across borders, where innovation is shared, and where every Member State contributes confidently to the collective mission."

Thank you, Mr. Vanderwaeren, for sharing your views and insights regarding this important topic for EU customs cooperation.

Resilience in Customs

Why?

The European Union is facing an increasingly volatile security landscape. Hybrid attacks, organized crime, cyber intrusions, and geopolitical tensions disrupt supply chains and trade flows. Customs administrations, positioned at the frontlines of Europe's external borders, must be equipped to anticipate and respond to these challenges if Europe's economic security and social stability are to be safeguarded.

How?

Resilience is the capacity of an organization, system, or community to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and recover from crises and disruptions, while ensuring the continuity of essential functions and safeguarding integrity. At its core, resilience is not only about procedures and structures, but also about the human factor—the skills, adaptability, cooperation, and ethical commitment of people.

In the customs context, resilience rests on the ability of officers and administrations to work together, uphold integrity, exchange expertise, and learn from experience, thereby ensuring that operational continuity is matched by human trust and cooperation.

EUCAB MARITIME NETWORK HOLDS INAUGURAL MEETING IN ROTTERDAM

ROTTERDAM – Europe’s customs community is setting sail for a new era of cooperation.

In early September, representatives from the customs administrations of nearly all EU member states gathered in the port city for the inaugural meeting of the EUCAB Maritime Network for port directors and experts. The two-day event marked a major step toward building a stronger, more coordinated customs cooperation at Europe’s maritime borders.

Bringing the Maritime Community Together

Colleagues from across the Union travelled to Rotterdam to focus on the maritime pillar of EUCAB – specifically addressing customs operations and risks in ports. From Europe’s major seaports to smaller inland terminals, this network will cover a wide range of logistical hubs. Around 50 customs officers gathered on September 1 to get to know one another and define the operational needs and priorities for cooperation.

“Finding solutions together is more important than ever,” said Karin Borsboom, Acting Head of International Affairs, who delivered the opening speech on behalf of DG Customs Nanette van Schelven. Borsboom emphasized the challenges of a fast-changing customs landscape: geopolitical tensions, organized crime, new security tasks, growing global trade flows, digitalization, and the loss of institutional knowledge.

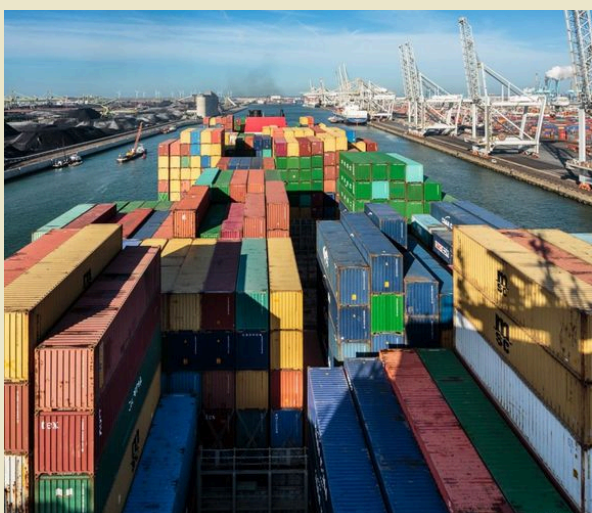


“In these dynamic times, EUCAB can play a key role. The launch of the Maritime Network marks a new era of cooperation between European customs services. Together, you are working toward future-proof customs administrations, a strong Customs Union, and a stronger EU.”

Martin Reuter urged participants to share their administrations’ specific needs: “Everyone’s input matters – from operational staff to management. Only by continuously challenging our assumptions can we build sustainable European border management and present a united front against smuggling, fraud, and other threats.”

Beyond Drug Smuggling: A Holistic Approach

Jeroen Engelberts, Maritime Unit Leader within EUCAB, provided context on the new organization. “In the past, Europe had several cooperation platforms for different transport modes, such as RALFH, ODYSSUD, and ICARUS. Most of these no longer exist, and that gap has been felt. EUCAB – including its Maritime Network – is here to fill that void.” Engelberts pointed to successful models such as CELBET (which improved cooperation along Eastern European land borders) and the European Ports Alliance (which combats displacement effects in drug smuggling). “But the Maritime Network is not just about narcotics,” he stressed. “It is about a coordinated EU-wide approach to all customs law infringements – fiscal and non-fiscal – including cooperation with third countries, enforcement agencies, and private partners like terminals and shipping lines.”



Field Visit to Maasvlakte

On day two, the group visited Rotterdam's Maasvlakte port area, where Regional Director Peter van Buijtenen introduced the visitors to Dutch Customs operations and partnerships with agencies such as the Seaport Police. After the morning program and lunch, participants attended workshops on recognizing counterfeit seals, saw demonstrations of drones used for site surveillance, and toured the container terminal and the National Customs Training Centre.

Looking Ahead

The two-day event provided inspiration and a preview of what lies ahead for EUCAB's maritime pillar. Annual meetings are planned to focus on topics such as risk management, training, and tools. Additionally, four port visits per year will be organized, each hosted by a different member state. These efforts aim to maximize knowledge-sharing among European customs services and avoid duplication of work.



EUCAB AIR AND POST NETWORK TAKES OFF IN PARIS



PARIS – The EUCAB Air & Post Network officially took off with its inaugural meeting at Paris–Charles de Gaulle Airport.

From September 30th to October 1st, EUCAB Air & Post network held its inaugural meeting at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport. The event marked an important milestone in strengthening EU-wide operational cooperation on key customs challenges linked to passenger flows, cargo management, express courier operations, and e-commerce controls.

Building a New Network for Shared Challenges

As Xavier Pascual, Leader of EUCAB's Air & Post Unit, highlighted, "Today's challenges go far beyond national borders."

The creation of this network represents a significant innovation, providing a long-needed platform for connection, expertise sharing, and collaboration among customs professionals. Its launch gathered representatives from airports and postal hubs across all EU Member States, demonstrating the shared commitment to collective progress.

A Platform for Operational Excellence and Innovation

EUCAB Head Martin Reuter emphasized the originality of this cooperation framework: "The Air & Post Network enables experts to engage in medium- and long-term analysis and innovation, delivering solutions tailored to Member States' operational needs."

The initiative is designed to strengthen expertise hubs in areas crucial to customs administrations, combining practical cooperation with forward-looking development.

Collaboration Beyond Borders

In welcoming remarks, representatives from the French State's safety and security authorities, Paris Airports, and Air France underscored the importance of collaboration across all stakeholders—customs, airport operators, and private partners alike. Effective flow management, control efficiency, and intelligence gathering all depend on mutual trust and cooperation. Participants reaffirmed the need to build “airport communities” capable of responding collectively to future challenges and crises.

Defining the Agenda for Action

The meeting set clear priorities for cooperation, focusing on practical improvements in customs operations. Participants exchanged experiences and best practices on inspections, risk management, officer exchanges, training, equipment, and airport crime prevention.

Discussions highlighted the importance of harmonised tools, shared expertise, and closer coordination between customs, postal, and airport stakeholders. The network agreed to pursue concrete actions that enhance efficiency, strengthen security, and support innovation across Europe's air and postal environments.

Creating Momentum for the Future

The first Air & Post Network meeting generated strong momentum toward establishing a shared operational space for customs and airport partners. By fostering dialogue, trust, and innovation, EUCAB is helping to build a more resilient, secure, and efficient European customs landscape — proving that together, Member States can go further than any could travel alone.



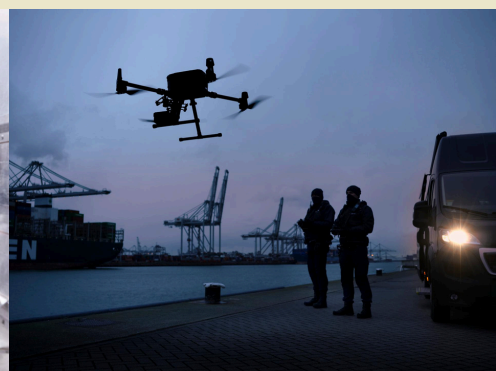
EUCAB INNOVATION NETWORK: COLLABORATING FOR THE CUSTOMS OF THE FUTURE

European cooperation as a driving force for innovation — Within the European Union, customs administrations have joined forces in the EUCAB Innovation Network to work collectively on innovative solutions for today's and tomorrow's challenges. This initiative, which originated under the former Ports Alliance, aims to promote knowledge sharing and collaboration among member states. Since its integration into the European Union Customs Alliance for Borders (EUCAB), the focus has been on exchanging expertise and jointly developing innovative applications.

The network is characterized by an open and curious approach to new technologies and methodologies. The underlying principle is: "Think big, start small". Within EUCAB, innovative ideas are tested through small-scale proofs of concept and pilot projects, enabling quick adjustments when challenges arise and allowing successful initiatives to be scaled up rapidly. Examples include topics such as Generative AI, Machine Learning, Image Recognition, Tracking Devices, Sensing Technologies, Drones, and Smart Seals. By collaborating on these themes, a strong learning culture is fostered in which best practices and lessons learned are actively shared.

Since its launch in September 2024, three successful innovation sessions have been organized: an in-person kick-off event in Rotterdam and two online sessions, also hosted from Rotterdam. The next physical meeting is scheduled for the first quarter of 2026. Through this structured and cross-border collaboration, EUCAB aims to strengthen the alignment between policy and operational implementation and to further stimulate innovation within European customs administrations.

Would you like to learn more or become involved in the network? Follow our channels for updates and future events or get in touch with the Head of the Maritime Unit. Together, we are making European customs smarter, more efficient, and future-ready.



EUCAB LAUNCHES FIRST TRAINING SESSION IN CROATIA: IMPROVING SKILLS AND ENHANCING EU CUSTOMS' ABILITY TO DETECT INFRINGEMENTS



Bregana Advanced Training Centre hosts cross-country customs officers for specialized vehicle inspection training

BREGANA, CROATIA — In June, the Customs Administration of the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Croatia proudly hosted the inaugural training session under EUCAB at the newly modernized Centre for Advanced Training in Bregana. This milestone event brought together 17 customs officers from 14 countries — including Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, Poland, Moldova, Turkey, Spain, Greece, Estonia, and Romania — for a week-long intensive programme focused on vehicle inspection, search and control techniques.

Organised under the EU Common Learning Event Programme (CLEP), this cross-country initiative aims to strengthen customs officers' skills to improve safety, security, and the protection of EU citizens, markets, and the environment. The practical training sessions were held at the former border security checkpoint Bregana, a facility transformed into a state-of-the-art training centre equipped with the latest technology and resources.

Focus Areas: From Personal Safety to Document Control

The training emphasized critical areas such as personal safety at work, vehicle structure, truck search techniques, and document control procedures. These topics are essential for customs officials to detect infringements effectively and maintain robust border security.

“From cooperation to excellence” was the guiding message delivered by Mario Demirović, Director General of the Croatian Customs Administration, and Martin Reuter, Head of EUCAB, in their welcome speech to participants. Their words underscored Croatia’s dedication to fostering expertise and collaboration across EU Member States and neighbouring countries.

State-of-the-Art Facilities at Bregana

The Bregana facility has been extensively modernized, featuring advanced equipment including handheld devices, scanners, radiation detection tools, and comprehensive K-9 training facilities. The centre offers modern classrooms, garages, vehicle testing polygons, dog training and breeding areas, as well as accommodation for trainees, providing an ideal environment for specialised customs training.

Looking Forward: Building a EUCAB Centre of Excellence

Croatia’s Customs Administration envisions the Bregana centre as a EUCAB Centre of Excellence, welcoming customs officials from EU Member States and third countries in the region. This initiative not only builds regional capacity, but also enhances the collective capability to combat customs violations.

Looking forward, the Croatian Customs Administration is eager to continue hosting similar training sessions at Bregana, contributing to the ongoing development of customs expertise across Europe and beyond.

Edition: #1 - October 2025
Publisher: EUCAB Expert Team

Editorial Team:
EUCAB Support Unit
Design & Layout:
Chloé Lejeune - BE Customs
Images & Photography:
Courtesy of Danish, Dutch,
French and Croatian Customs

This edition was made possible thanks to the contributions of:
Danish, German, Finnish, Belgian,
Dutch, French and Croatian Customs



Contact: Ruth Verhelst
ruth.verhelst@minfin.fed.be

Follow us on LinkedIn:
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