



EUROPEAN UNION CUSTOMS ALLIANCE
FOR BORDERS EXPERT TEAM



EUCAB FLASH
MARCH 2026

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COVER PHOTO: COURTESY OF CYPRUS CUSTOMS

The Amalthea Initiative is a maritime humanitarian corridor launched by the Republic of Cyprus in January 2024 to facilitate the delivery of aid to Gaza in response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

The message Cyprus Customs wish to convey through this photograph is the dual role of Customs. Their role is not limited to enforcement and the fight against fraud. At the same time, in moments of crisis, they are able to contribute on a humanitarian level within the framework of their competences.

Dear colleagues,

As we advance through our Presidency term, Cyprus is pleased to share the second edition of the EUCAB Steering Committee Flash. This publication continues to highlight the expertise, commitment and cooperation that drive customs work across the EU and with our international partners.

We open with a word from **Mr. Martin Reuter, head of EUCAB**, who reflects on the achievements to date and the continued effort required to strengthen cooperation and alignment across customs administrations.

This is followed by the **interview with Mr. Roberto Alesse, Director of the Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency**, who addresses one of today's most dynamic challenges: e-commerce and the proliferation of counterfeit goods. As online markets transform supply chains and consumer habits, Italy's experience underscores the need for coordinated enforcement, innovative detection tools and close collaboration with international and private-sector partners.

Next, the interview with **Mr. Vladimír Pisár, Director General of the Customs Section, Financial Directorate of the Slovak Republic**, complemented by an in-focus box, sheds light on the evolving landscape of grant coordination. The Director General reflects on the shared responsibility to ensure that EU support instruments deliver strong value and tangible impact for customs administrations.

We then move to the interview with **Mr. George Pitsilis, Governor of Greek Independent Authority for Public Revenue**, exploring the future of customs cooperation with an emphasis on global risk management and the importance of international partnerships in an increasingly interconnected environment. This analysis encourages us to approach the next phase of customs transformation with ambition and unity.

The **Coordination Unit** also presents **new guidelines for the Centres of Excellence**, supporting consistency, operational innovation and the effective exchange of best practices.

Further on, the Flash turns to the E-commerce domain, featuring insights from the **Air & Post Unit** on Chinese e-commerce trends and shifting traffic flows—an area of growing operational significance for all Member States.

This edition also launches our new series, **"A Day in the Life of..."** beginning in Portugal with a look at frontline customs work in a major seaport. This human-centred perspective is a reminder that policy successes depend on the dedication of the officers implementing them every day.

Finally, we highlight the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (**ERCC**) **study visit**, organised by the "HR, Resilience and Integrity" Network under the **Support Unit**, which reinforces the importance of resilience, integrity and human capacity in modern customs operations.

Under the CY Presidency motto "An autonomous Union, open to the world," Cyprus remains firmly committed to cooperation, transparency and effectiveness. We extend our sincere appreciation to all contributors who made this edition possible and trust that you will find it both insightful and inspiring.



Sincerely,

Mari Charalambous Kliriotou

Director General of the Cyprus Customs and Excise Department
Chair of the EUCAB Steering Committee
Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU



MARTIN REUTER

Head of European Union
Customs Alliance for Borders

Strengthening EU Customs Cooperation: Taking Stock of One Year of EUCAB activities

When the Directors-General of all 27 EU Customs Administrations endorsed the establishment of the EU Customs Alliance for Borders (EUCAB) expert team in October 2024, they set a clear and ambitious objective: to reinforce operational cooperation across the Union and to bring existing expertise into a structured, forward-looking framework. One year into implementation, I am proud to highlight the concrete achievements that demonstrate how far we have already come — and how much potential lies ahead.

A Shared Vision, A Common Framework

EUCAB was designed around a simple but powerful idea: customs administrations are stronger when working together and acting as one. Our mission remains clear: to support operational cooperation — not to legislate, not to replace national competences, and not to interfere with bilateral relations. Rather, EUCAB acts as a facilitator, catalyst, and amplifier of Member States' expertise.

Cooperation Structures Fully Operational

We have established a robust architecture consisting of thematic units and cross-cutting networks, backed by a fully functioning Coordination Unit and Support Unit.

All planned networks have been established and have met in person. The response from participants to both the topics discussed and the opportunity to exchange ideas beyond their own administrations has been consistently positive.

EUCAB's operational units have grown rapidly and are delivering concrete results. The **Maritime Collaboration Unit** has already completed several port diagnostics and continues to support Member States in identifying smuggling patterns, improving risk assessment methods, enhancing training — including the priority on rummage operations — and exploring innovative equipment and technologies relevant to the maritime environment. In addition, gaps in training have been identified and initial training on vessel searches has been developed under EUCAB.

At the same time, the **Land Border Unit** has advanced its own diagnostic work at border crossing points, combining operational threat assessments with a broader understanding of training needs, equipment, and methodologies used in joint control activities. The results of this first JCA have provided valuable insights and will be incorporated into further work. Through this work, it strengthens cooperation between land border customs

services and fosters greater convergence in how controls are carried out.

The **Air & Post Unit** has created a specialised diagnostic tool that has already been tested and is now being rolled out across the board. The focus here is on both the movement of goods and eCommerce, as well as passenger flows. New trainings on aircraft rummage and passenger interviewing have been developed, and work is underway to identify minimum equipment standards and to compile good practices in inspection and technology use.

The **Customs Mobile Groups** have also progressed significantly. Their network has mapped the variety of powers and tools available across Member States, identified priority training needs — particularly in the field of dynamic vehicle stops — and defined a baseline for equipment. In particular, the creation of a tactical training course is the result of this work. These efforts directly support the operational readiness of customs officers on the move throughout the EU.

The **Coordination Unit** has managed to create an overview of the skills and competencies across customs administrations, preparing the integration of EUCAB training modules into national programmes and advancing the development of Centres of Excellence in areas such as scanning technologies, equipment, and K9 capacities. It has also enabled closer collaboration on procurement and created a common reference point for customs equipment, which will help Member States access informed and coordinated information on equipment. It has also enabled closer cooperation on procurement and created a common reference point for customs equipment, which will help Member States to access well-founded and coordinated information on equipment. Activities in the area of risk management have highlighted how Member States work, where there are commonalities, and what challenges exist. Common approaches for further concretization

of the issues have also been identified.

The **Support Unit**, meanwhile, has helped consolidate EUCAB's identity and visibility. With the launch of the EUCAB website and LinkedIn account, as well as the establishment of the Communication Network and its dedicated publications team, EUCAB now communicates more effectively with customs administrations and other stakeholders alike. The Support Unit has also contributed in the areas of human resources, integrity and resilience, through surveys, crisis-preparedness initiatives and the creation of three dedicated networks. In parallel, work in international cooperation has brought together a comprehensive mapping of ongoing cooperation projects and existing networks in third country cooperation, preparing the ground for future coordination efforts across borders.

Outlook

Looking ahead, EUCAB is still a young initiative, but in its first year it has already demonstrated that it brings real added value to the EU customs community. By strengthening operational cooperation between Member States, encouraging innovation, and supporting more consistent approaches across the Union, it lays the foundation for a more resilient and agile customs union — one that is better equipped to respond to geopolitical developments, technological shifts and emerging risks. The work of EUCAB does not replace national efforts; it amplifies them. It ensures that every customs officer, regardless of where they serve, benefits from the collective experience and expertise of the entire European customs family.

I would like to express my gratitude to all network chairs, experts, and national colleagues whose dedication makes EUCAB's achievements possible. Their work is shaping the future of EU customs cooperation, and this is only the beginning.



ROBERTO ALESSE

Director of the Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency

Communication, Technology and Cooperation: Europe's Frontline Against Counterfeiting

Roberto Alesse, Director of the Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency, outlines his view on the growing challenge of counterfeiting. According to him, tackling such a multifaceted threat requires a blended strategy rooted in technology, public awareness, and strong international cooperation.

How is e-commerce reshaping the landscape?

E-commerce has transformed consumer habits and, in turn, the operational reality of customs authorities. The surge in low-value parcels has created highly fragmented flows, often accompanied by incomplete or inaccurate data. This trend, visible across the EU, makes spotting counterfeits far more challenging than in traditional cargo shipments.

As a result, e-commerce has become the preferred channel for delivering counterfeit goods. Digital marketplaces—ranging from well-known e-commerce platforms to social media channels and even metaverse environments—offer counterfeiters new paths into the European market.

How crucial is consumer awareness—especially among young people?

It is a strategic pillar of prevention. Enforcement alone cannot succeed without a cultural shift that enables consumers to recognize the economic, social and safety risks associated with counterfeit goods.

Italian Customs works on this front through annual awareness campaigns developed for Anti-Counterfeiting Week, an initiative promoted by the National Council for the Fight Against Counterfeiting and Italian Sounding. The campaigns highlight topics ranging from health risks to links between the counterfeit market and organised crime.

COUNTERFEIT GOODS SEIZED BY EU AUTHORITIES

19.7 mln

In 2024, EU border authorities seized **19.7 million** counterfeit items (+12% compared with 2023), worth **€1.5 billion (+86%)**.

According to OECD and EUIPO estimates, counterfeit goods represent **2.5% of global trade and around 5.8% of EU imports**.

Why must counterfeiting be addressed at EU level?

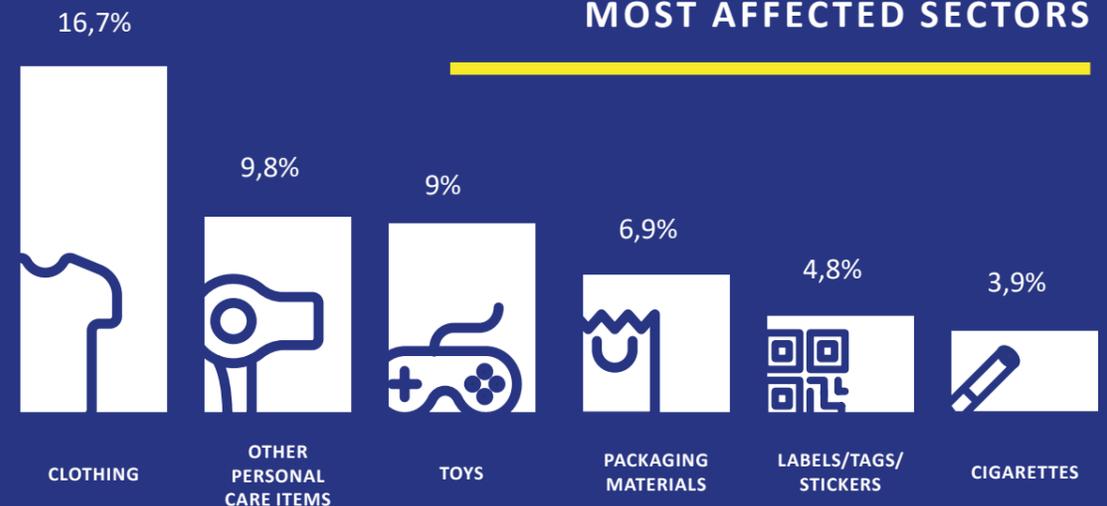
Counterfeiting has evolved alongside increasingly complex global value chains. With production and logistics spread across multiple countries, supply chains have become harder to monitor and more vulnerable to illicit infiltration. At the same time, counterfeiters—often transnational criminal groups—have adopted sophisticated tools and technologies, turning counterfeiting into a lucrative revenue stream. The economic cost is substantial: billions of euros are diverted from the European economy each year, shrinking Member States' tax revenues and distorting competition. The threat also extends to public health and safety, with counterfeit medicines, cosmetics, toys, automotive parts and electronic devices among the most frequently seized items.

And with counterfeit goods entering the EU through a wide variety of points and transport modes—land, air and sea—a coordinated European response is essential to protect the single market and dismantle criminal supply chains.

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



MOST AFFECTED SECTORS



SOURCE: DG TAXUD-EUIPO JOINT REPORT 2024. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/YSBT7Y7P](https://tinyurl.com/ysbt7y7p)



The 2025 campaign focused particularly on young people through targeted actions, videos, events and collaborations with influencers and content creators. This educational approach reinforces enforcement by reducing future demand for counterfeit products.

I believe that similar communication strategies could be adopted at EU level through joint campaigns and exchanges of best practices between customs administrations.

What role can new technologies play?

An indispensable one. Artificial intelligence and machine-learning tools integrated into customs systems now make it possible to analyse large datasets, identify risky patterns across shipments, routes and operators, and anticipate potential violations before goods even arrive.

Italy is investing heavily in an integrated digital infrastructure built on data, interoperable databases and advanced risk-selection algorithms. Among the most innovative

projects is Autentica, an AI-powered app that uses computer vision to verify product origins and help customs officers detect counterfeit goods in ports and airports.

Currently being piloted in major maritime and air hubs, Autentica is intended to be rolled out nationwide.

The reform of the EU Customs Code also strengthens the fight against counterfeiting

through the creation of a Data Hub and a common EU framework for risk management and customs controls. This shared information base will allow national authorities to analyse and manage risks in a unified, coordinated way.

How important is international cooperation?

Given the transnational nature of counterfeiting, national-level action alone cannot be effective.

International customs cooperation is therefore a cornerstone of the strategy—and human collaboration remains at its centre.

Initiatives such as EUCAB enhance the effectiveness of anti-counterfeiting efforts by encouraging the exchange of information, best practices and operational experience. EUCAB’s dedicated working groups—covering maritime, air, postal and land controls—provide a forum for continuous dialogue and knowledge transfer across Member States. The involvement of all 27 EU customs authorities in a single cooperative framework is a unique and invaluable opportunity.

LARGEST NUMBER OF SEIZURES WITHIN EU

-  Romania (17.8%)
-  Germany (17.6%)
-  Bulgaria (10%)

MOST USED TRANSPORT MODE

Transport modes most used for counterfeit shipments:

-  maritime (52%)
-  road (26%)
-  air (9.5%)
-  express couriers (6.7%)
-  postal shipments (4.3%)

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CZECH REPUBLIC CUSTOMS



COL. VLADIMÍR PÍSÁR

Director General of the Customs Section
Financial Directorate of the Slovak Republic

Slovakia as Grant Coordinator in EUCAB: Strengthening Expertise and Cooperation Across the EU

How can the EUCAB project reinforce European cooperation, support the mutual sharing of expertise, and contribute to the development of unified standards among the financial and customs administrations of EU Member States?

The EUCAB project strengthens European operational cooperation by providing a structured framework through which the financial and customs administrations of EU Member States can jointly develop their capacities. In a system where expertise, technological readiness and regulatory interpretation vary significantly across countries, EUCAB serves as a mechanism for aligning national approaches and improving the overall functioning of the EU Customs Union.

A central contribution of the project is the systematic exchange of knowledge. Although Member States face similar problems and

challenges, our responses often differ. The project also supports the creation of best minimum standards in different areas. Harmonized training materials, shared methodologies and best practices help to improve the national procedures. At the same time, it leads to greater interoperability, more consistent enforcement, and fewer discrepancies that could undermine the Single Market.

In addition, EUCAB enhances strategic alignment with EU priorities. By bringing together experts from different administrations, it helps translate broad EU objectives, such as digitalizing customs processes or strengthening the fight against fraud into concrete national actions. Over time, this fosters a culture of cooperation in which Member States learn from each other and respond to emerging risks in a more coordinated way.

Overall, the project contributes to a more cohesive, professional and resilient network of customs and financial authorities capable of addressing the complex challenges of today's trade and financial environment.

How do you define the role of grant coordinator?

The grant coordinator is the central managerial and strategic driver of the project. Their role is to ensure that planning, implementation, reporting, and communication run smoothly and in full compliance with EU rules. In practical

terms, the coordinator is the backbone of the expert team. Participation in CELBET has already demonstrated Slovakia's ability to coordinate complex international cooperation, manage expert groups, and deliver outputs that are respected across the EU. This background provides Slovakia with a strong operational and managerial foundation, reinforcing its credibility and positioning it as a capable and trusted leader within the EUCAB project.

Strategically, Slovakia benefits significantly from coordinating an international project of this scale. It strengthens the country's visibility and influence within the European customs community, enhances its reputation as a reliable partner, and allows Slovak experts to shape methodologies and standards used across the EU. It also accelerates the professional development of Slovak officers, who gain access to best expertise, international networks, and leadership experience. Ultimately, leading EUCAB reinforces Slovakia's role as an active contributor to European cooperation and positions its administration at the forefront of modernizing customs in the EU.

Here, I need to also mention how we value the support of Denmark, the Czech Republic, and Hungary in managing the EUCAB grant. Our administrations are jointly managing the administrative tasks for the EUCAB grant implementation. This collaborative approach significantly takes the pressure off our national capacities, which would otherwise face substantial challenges. The idea of forming a dedicated cooperation team was first introduced by the Hungarian Presidency during the pre-Steering Committee, and it has demonstrated the strategic commitment of partner countries to building a strong, collaborative framework.

How do the support and expertise provided by partner countries contribute to achieving the objectives of the EUCAB project and

to enhancing the capacities of the Slovak Financial Administration?

Support and expertise from partner countries are essential for achieving the objectives of the EUCAB project. Each administration brings specific operational strengths, practical experience, and methodological know-how that enrich the project's outputs and ensure that its solutions are relevant across the EU. Their contributions help create high-quality training materials, harmonized procedures, and shared analytical tools that reflect the diversity of European customs.

For the Slovak Financial Administration, this cooperation significantly enhances institutional capacity. Working alongside experienced partners exposes Slovak experts to advanced practices, innovative analytical

NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS: THE BACKBONE OF EUCAB

While the Grant Coordinator ensures the strategic steering and financial governance that make EUCAB possible, delivery does not happen at EU level alone. Across Member States, National Contact Points (NCPs) transform coordination into implementation. They ensure financial and administrative compliance, align participation with national priorities and enable experts to contribute effectively.

Without the Grant Coordinator, there would be no strategic centre.

Without the NCPs, there would be no operational delivery.

Together, they form the governance architecture that sustains EUCAB.

approaches, and peer-learning opportunities that accelerate professional development. It also strengthens Slovakia's position within the European customs community by embedding it in a network of trusted partners and by reinforcing its role as a coordinator capable of leading complex international initiatives.

In essence, partner countries' expertise not only supports the successful delivery of EUCAB but also contributes directly to the modernization, confidence, and long-term professional growth of the Slovak Financial Administration.

Why is it important to ensure the long-term sustainability of the EUCAB project, and what impact would its potential discontinuation have on European cooperation and the professional capacities of Member States?

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the EUCAB project is essential because the work, results and professional networks it creates cannot be rebuilt quickly or easily. EUCAB delivers practical tools, harmonized methodologies, and expert connections that strengthen the daily functioning of customs and financial administrations across the EU. These achievements grow in value over time and sustaining the project allows Member States to keep improving their analytical, operational, and training capacities in a coordinated way.

If the project were discontinued, the impact would be immediate. The shared platforms for cooperation would weaken, expert networks would lose continuity, and any progress made could fragment. Smaller or less-resourced administrations would be particularly affected, as they rely on EUCAB for access to expertise, training, and peer support.

The involvement and support of the European Commission further underline the project's strategic importance. In essence, sustaining EUCAB protects the collective achievements already made and ensures that Member

States continue to benefit from a strong, interconnected, and professionally growing European customs community.

HOW NATIONAL CONTACT POINTS SEE THEIR ROLE?

 **BELGIUM**
NCPs allow experts and network members to successfully contribute by providing support in navigating procedures and facilitating knowledge sharing

 **SLOVENIA**
We have established an internal EUCAB working group headed by the Director of the Customs Department

 **GREECE**
The role of the NCP is much more than what is described in the Implementation Plan

 **SWEDEN**
We have meetings with our DG and Deputy DG once a month, and EUCAB is always on the agenda

 **ESTONIA**
Being an NCP means serving as an essential link between the project and every officer within the national administration

 **HUNGARY**
Being the NCP means ensuring our administration and experts have clear, reliable and up-to-date information

 **BULGARIA**
All incoming requests are summarised and accompanied by structured recommendations to management



GEORGE PITSILIS

Governor of Greek Independent Authority for Public Revenue

Greece at the Crossroads: Strengthening the Southeastern Gateway

The Independent Authority for Public Revenue (IAPR) safeguards one of the European Union’s most complex external borders, combining extensive coastlines, major international ports, and critical land crossings at the EU’s southeastern frontier.

This frictionless flow of intelligence and the strengthening of international cooperation allow for better resource management, especially when facing tightening budgets.

As a key EUCAB partner, Greece contributes operational expertise in maritime security and Mediterranean trade routes. **George Pitsilis, Governor of Greek Independent Authority for Public Revenue**, outlines how intelligence-led enforcement and European cooperation are transforming customs operations, with Mobile Units emerging as a strategic force multiplier.

When looking at the ‘big picture’ of European security, how do you see the role of EUCAB and, more generally, European customs cooperation in the coming years?

European customs must move from individual national defense toward a collective, seamless frontier. For Greece, EUCAB represents the shift from acting alone to acting as one. This transition from the CELBET framework to the EUCAB alliance is essential for ensuring that a risk identified at a Greek maritime terminal immediately becomes actionable intelligence at a land border in another Member State.

We often talk about smart borders. In practical terms, what does this transition mean for the day-to-day work of Greek customs officers on the front line?

The shift toward a „next-generation” customs administration in Greece is defined by a move from manual, high-volume inspections to intelligence-led, targeted precision. This evolution is driven by the following key pillars:

- **Risk Management:** Utilizing real-time risk analysis across maritime, road, and postal traffic data through the rollout of ICS2 Release 3.
- **Predictive Targeting Frameworks:** Employing frameworks like CRMS2 and ICS2 to identify high-risk movements before they reach the border gate.
- **European Operational Integration:** Integrating Greek frontline staff into

a broader European network where best practices from major logistical hubs are directly applied to national borders.

- **AI-Driven Detection:** Leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and advanced analytical tools to detect complex fraud and smuggling patterns in real-time.

Could you share some recent operational successes that demonstrate the effectiveness of the latest inspection approaches?

In 2024, Greece established a robust enforcement baseline, conducting over 92,000 customs inspections. Of these, more than 12,000 were supported by mobile X-ray scanning systems, while an additional 17,000 post-clearance audits were carried out by Customs Offices and specialized units. This high-volume strategy was instrumental in stabilizing our operational presence and



PHOTO: COURTESY OF IRISH CUSTOMS

ensuring consistent oversight at both the national level and the EU’s external borders.

By 2025, the Customs Agency shifted toward a more sophisticated model, delivering a significant increase in intelligence-led controls. By October alone, Mobile Units had executed 12,360 targeted inspections driven by real-time risk analysis. These operations resulted in 1,459 confirmed offenses, validating the operational efficiency of a precision-based, data-driven approach.

Through active participation in CELBET JCA 12 joint actions, Greece systematically leveraged shared intelligence, advanced risk management protocols, and emerging technologies. This exchange of expertise directly catalyzed an increase in detections and seizures of narcotics, counterfeit goods, and undeclared cash. Furthermore, the launch of a central operations room now facilitates the real-time coordination of field controls nationwide, significantly strengthening both deterrence and rapid response capacities.

Building on this momentum, Greece continues its engagement within the expanded EUCAB framework, which unites all EU Member States under a unified operational platform. By contributing national expertise and benefiting from collective situational awareness, Greece strengthens its own enforcement capacity while bolstering the resilience of the EU’s external borders.

Our current strategy is structured around evolving risk patterns rather than fixed inspection quotas. Recognizing the seasonal surge in cross-border flows, controls are intensified during the summer months at high-traffic maritime, land, and tourist entry points. This adaptive, risk-based model ensures that intelligence-led resources are concentrated during periods of heightened exposure, maximizing visibility and enforcement impact when the movement of goods and passengers peaks.

Based on your experience, how can we cultivate a culture of excellence and resilience among staff to help them address the complexities of modern smuggling?

People are our most valuable asset. The culture of excellence is built by evolving beyond basic technical training and integrating ‘operational shock absorbers’— such as crisis management and advanced data analytics – directly into our strategic framework. We empower Customs Officers to view themselves as integral components of Europe’s broader security architecture, acting with the confidence that comes from being part of a collective, continent-wide mission.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF FRENCH AND HUNGARIAN CUSTOMS

This development stems from the interaction of three critical factors:

- **Technological Empowerment:** Artificial intelligence is leveraged to liberate personnel from repetitive, manual tasks, allowing them to focus on high-value areas that demand strategic thinking and human judgment.
- **European Professional Integration:** Active participation in the EUCAB training framework fosters a shared professional culture across Member States.
- **Operational Resilience & Ethics:** Resilience is built upon a foundation of mutual trust, adaptability, and an unyielding ethical commitment to cooperation, to ensure operational continuity and maintain high morale.



Advancing Customs Expertise: Building Centres of Excellence Across the EU

EUCAB Coordination Unit – The EU customs community has been steadily strengthening its approach to specialised training and knowledge sharing. What began as **Centres of Training Expertise and Innovation** under earlier Customs Programmes and CELBET has now evolved into a broader ambition: the creation of **Centres of Excellence (CoE)**.

CELBET’s seven Centres of Expertise—covering domains such as vehicle searches, X-ray analysis, canine operations, and e-learning—laid the foundation for structured, practice-driven collaboration. Building on this legacy, the Customs Control Equipment Instruments (CCEI) working group identified the core features that should define a future CoE:

- A clear operational function paired with continuous capacity-building.
- Strong knowledge management, especially where expertise is dynamic and evolves with operational needs.
- A permanent structure—physical or virtual—that looks both inward and outward to capture new practices.

These principles formed the basis for developing a coherent, EU-wide framework.

■ A New Guideline and a Pilot Phase

Following the recommendation of the CCEI Deliverable 14, a **Project Group (PG) on Centres of Training Excellence** was launched in March 2025. Led by Hungary and composed of representatives from nine Member States, the PG set out to analyse current capacities and draft a unified EU approach.

The PG has now produced a **new CoE Guide** outlining:

- The CoE establishment process
- Governance structures and roles
- Stakeholder engagement
- Operational and reporting arrangements

LATVIA’S K9 TRAINING CENTRE – A PROMISING CANDIDATE FOR EUCAB CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

In 2024, the National Customs Board of the State Revenue Service (SRS) of Latvia opened the Customs Dog Training Centre in Rēzekne—a modern, purpose-built facility that already reflects many attributes of a future Centre of Excellence.

For more than twenty years, Latvia’s K9 units have played a vital role in detecting narcotics, tobacco, cash and other restricted goods.

Today, 41 service dogs operate with their handlers across border crossing points, ports, airports and railway control points in Latvia and beyond.

The new Rēzekne Centre marks a significant step forward. It offers:

- Specialized scent-detection rooms
- Purpose-designed training spaces



Five supporting annexes were developed, including an application form, evaluation templates, and partnership agreements. Templates for the Certificate of Recognition and Training Report are under preparation.

To validate the new model in practice, a **voluntary pilot phase** was opened to both existing CELBET Centres of Expertise and new candidates. Croatia and Sweden were the first to express interest in taking part.

■ Looking Forward

The development of the CoE framework—combined with strong candidates like the Latvian K9 Centre—marks a strategic shift toward a more coordinated, high-quality training landscape across the Union. The pilot phase will help refine the approach and ensure that the future network of Centres of Excellence meets the operational needs of EU customs in a rapidly evolving environment.

E-Commerce Logistics in the EU: Observations Following a Targeted Control Operation

In early November 2025, French authorities conducted a comprehensive control operation on e-commerce parcels at Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport. This action followed repeated detections of non-compliant items in certain low-value consignments entering the European Union.

To better understand the impact of this operation and the adaptability of major e-commerce operators, the EUCAB Air & Post Network took action. The goal was to monitor how parcel flows—previously routed through Paris—shifted across other EU airports in the days and weeks that followed. The resulting study provides insights into the responsiveness and volatility of e-commerce supply chains operating at EU borders.

Responsiveness of E-commerce Flows: Rapid Rerouting of Parcels

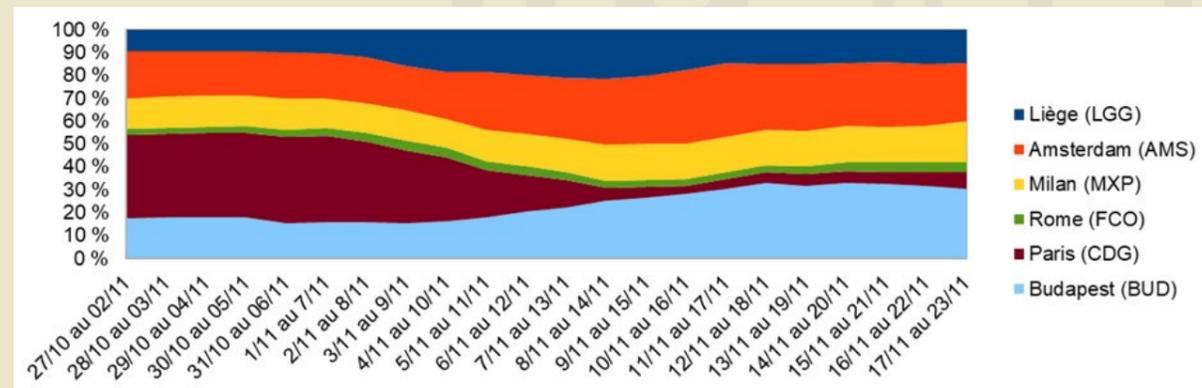
The analysis focused on declarations submitted at the item level, allowing Member States to track changes in volumes per airport. The day after the French control operation, declarations recorded at Paris fell sharply—by more than 80%. This indicates a high degree of logistical flexibility: within 24 hours, operators were able to redirect parcel traffic away from the affected airport.

New entry points emerged almost immediately. Parcels were rerouted first to Liège, and subsequently to Amsterdam Schiphol and Budapest. Notably, some of these alternative airports required the establishment of entirely new distribution chains to ensure timely delivery to customers in Western

Europe. This speed of reaction underscores the ability of large e-commerce players to rapidly adapt their routes when encountering operational constraints at EU borders.

Volatility of Entry Points Across EU Airports

Rerouted flows resulted in significant day-to-day fluctuations in the distribution of e-commerce traffic across European airports. During the three-week observation period, the relative share of incoming consignments handled by Paris, Liège, Amsterdam, and Budapest changed markedly every day. The findings demonstrate that major e-commerce platforms are able to react extremely quickly



SOURCE: EUCAB AIR & POST NETWORK

to operational measures by customs authorities. A targeted control at a single airport is sufficient to trigger immediate and substantial rerouting of flows across the EU.

This fluidity of logistical channels reinforces a key message:

Isolated measures at one airport can be circumvented unless supported by coordinated EU-wide action. EU customs authorities must continue strengthening cooperation and strive to act as one.

What's Next for the EUCAB Air & Post Unit?

To monitor the consequences of other events, such as national handling fees in some Member States, the EUCAB Air & Post Unit will expand the study with additional data from more Member States and more e-commerce platforms. Their findings will be shared within the Air & Post Network and transmitted to the European Commission to support ongoing work on e-commerce, including PCAs, analytical questionnaires, and the Customs Union reform.

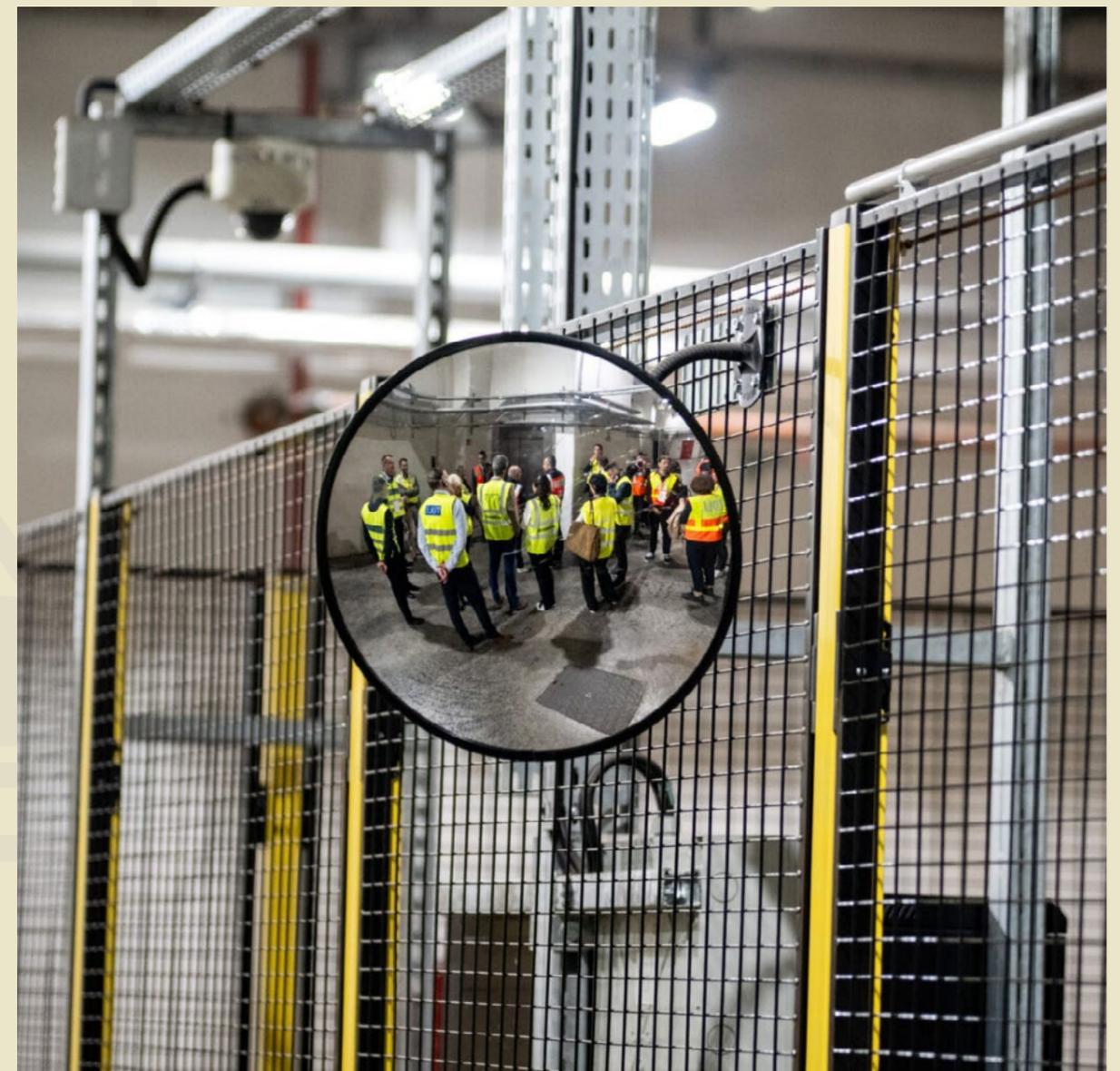


PHOTO: COURTESY OF FRENCH REPUBLIC CUSTOMS

A Day in the Life of a Customs Officer at Scanner Operation Portuguese Seaport

As dawn breaks over the Atlantic, the Port of Setúbal is already up and running, as is the local Customs Authority.

In 2024, mainland Portuguese ports handled approximately 88 million tonnes of cargo, including 37 million tonnes of containerised general cargo, 3.3 million TEU, and a strong performance in roll-on roll-off traffic, with Setúbal standing out as a national reference. Within this broader maritime ecosystem, the Port of Setúbal recorded 1.666 vessel calls, representing 23.4 million gross tonnes, and handled around 6.6 million tonnes of cargo across its commercial terminals. This included 3.27 million tonnes of general cargo, 155.872 TEU, and 309.607 vehicles, with key traffic segments such as metallurgical products, vehicles, foodstuffs, and fresh fruit.

Against this backdrop of scale, diversity, and operational intensity, container trucks queue at the terminals, cranes operate with mechanical precision, and vessels prepare for another cycle of global trade. For João and his team, this is not just another working day—it is another opportunity to safeguard the integrity of international supply chains and citizens safeguard, through advanced non-intrusive inspection technology.



João is a Customs Officer at the Portuguese Tax and Customs Authority, who leads a team with huge expertise in Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII). With more than a decade of experience in cargo control and risk analysis, he represents the core of customs professionals: technologically skilled, operationally agile, and deeply aware of the balance between security and trade facilitation.

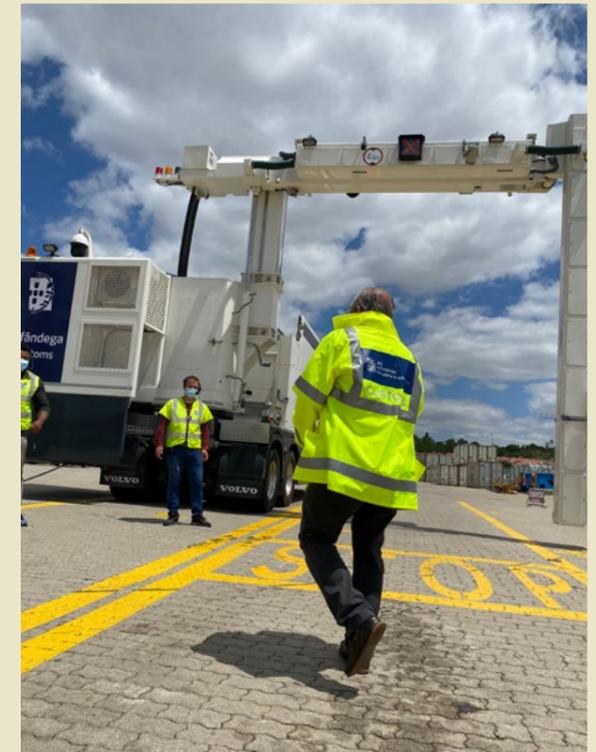
Morning Briefing: Risk, Coordination, and Preparation

The working day begins not at the scanner itself, but at the Intelligence and Inspection Centre. Together with analysts and colleagues from risk management, João reviews a list of non-EU cargo selected for inspection based on intelligence, data analysis, and international risk profiles.

This preparatory phase is critical. In today's global environment—where supply chains extend across continents and involve multiple jurisdictions—customs security must be both precise and proportionate. Non-Intrusive Inspection Technology (NII) plays a central role in achieving this balance, allowing authorities to focus resources where risks are highest without disrupting legitimate trade flows.

Once the inspection targets are confirmed, the four-member operational team moves to the scanner area, a modernised and protected space designed to support high-throughput inspection while ensuring radiation safety and operational efficiency.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PORTUGUESE CUSTOMS



At the Scanner: Technology in Action

The heart of the operation is the drive-through high-energy scanner portal, capable of inspecting trucks and containers without opening them. As the first vehicle approaches, roles are clearly defined.

Alice, the team member that secures the radiation safety perimeter and performs a preliminary visual check of the container, verifying seals and looking for signs of structural tampering. Luís coordinates vehicle movement and communication with terminal operators. Inside the scanner control cabin, João oversees scanner operation while Pedro focuses exclusively on image analysis.

Within seconds, high-resolution X-ray images appear on the screens and allows the team to visualise dense cargo, identify anomalies, and compare the scanned image with the declared manifest. Organic and inorganic materials are differentiated, and automated systems assist in detecting potential threats such as concealed narcotics, weapons, explosives, or undeclared goods.

The advantages are immediate and measurable:

- **Speed:** up to 100–120 vehicles inspected per hour.
- **Minimal logistical impact:** no unloading, no cargo handling.
- **Reduced risk of damage** to goods.
- **Enhanced detection capability** through advanced imaging and data integration.

For João, the scanner is not just a machine—it is a force multiplier. “Without this technology,” he often reflects, “we would never be able to control this volume of trade with the same level of accuracy and efficiency.”

Decision-Making: When Technology Meets Experience

Not every scan leads to further action. In most cases, the inspection confirms compliance, and the container continues its journey with minimal delay.

However, when an image reveals inconsistencies—unexpected density patterns, hidden compartments, or discrepancies with

the declaration—the process does not end at the screen.

This is where **complementarity between non-intrusive inspection and physical inspection** becomes essential.

The scan acts as the first line of control, a sophisticated triage mechanism. When justified, a targeted physical inspection is initiated. Unlike random checks, this intervention is focused, intelligence-driven, and proportionate. Containers are opened, specific cargo areas are examined, samples may be collected, and material evidence is secured if necessary.

João values this dual approach. Non-intrusive inspection provides speed and coverage; physical inspection provides confirmation and legal certainty. Together, they ensure effective enforcement while respecting the operational realities of international trade.

In 2024 alone, these targeted interventions led to the seizure of more than 1.031 kilograms of cocaine and heroin, the interception of 2.908.738 cigarettes, and 9.148 enforcement actions involving counterfeit goods, motor vehicles, medicinal products, and merchandise protected under CITES regulations. These results underscore the effectiveness of a risk-based control model in which non-intrusive inspection guides physical intervention, ensuring that enforcement efforts are both decisive and proportionate.

Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

As the day progresses, João exchanges observations with colleagues—not only on site, but also through established networks with other Portuguese ports and European customs administrations.

Experience sharing is a cornerstone of effective scanner operations. Image interpretation, concealment methods, and emerging fraud patterns evolve constantly. A concealment technique identified previously in the Port



of Leixões, was detected today in Setúbal and may appear in Antwerp or Rotterdam in the future.

Through joint training sessions, technical workshops, and European cooperation platforms, scanner operators across Europe build a shared knowledge base. This collective expertise enhances detection capability, harmonises practices, and strengthens mutual trust between customs authorities.

For João, this European dimension is essential. “Technology alone is not enough,” he often says. “What truly makes the difference is the professionals behind the screen—and the ability to learn from each other.”



End of the Day: Impact Beyond the Port

As operations wind down and the final reports are completed, the impact of the day’s work extends far beyond the port perimeter.

Each scanned container contributes to:

- **Combatting fiscal fraud and revenue loss**
- **Preventing trafficking of illicit goods**
- **Facilitating legitimate trade**
- **Protecting citizens and markets**

Non-Intrusive Inspection Technology has transformed customs control from a predominantly manual process into

a data-driven, intelligence-led function. While challenges remain—such as equipment investment costs and the need for continuous training—the trajectory is clear.

The future points toward greater integration of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cross-border data sharing, further enhancing accuracy and responsiveness to emerging threats.

Conclusion

A day in the life of a non-intrusive inspection team at a Portuguese seaport illustrates a broader reality shared across Europe: customs authorities are no longer gatekeepers alone, but strategic actors in global supply chain security.

By combining advanced scanning technology, targeted physical inspections, and strong European cooperation, teams like João’s ensure that security and trade facilitation are not competing objectives, but complementary pillars of a resilient and secure international trading system.



Strengthening European Crisis Response: Why Customs Must Be Part of the Equation

In a context of growing geopolitical instability, hybrid threats, supply chain disruptions, and increasing pressure at the EU's external borders, the ability to respond swiftly and coherently to crises has never been more critical. Against this backdrop, the recent visit of the EUCAB HR, Integrity & Resilience Network to the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) of the European Commission's DG ECHO provided valuable insights into how the European Union organises civil protection and humanitarian assistance in times of crisis.

The ERCC is a cornerstone of the EU's crisis response architecture, enabling rapid coordination, information exchange, and operational support among Member States and partners. For the EUCAB HR, Integrity & Resilience Network, the visit was not only an opportunity to learn from an established coordination model, but also to reflect on how similar principles could further strengthen customs resilience across the EU.

Customs administrations are often among the first public authorities to feel the impact of crises. Whether dealing with sudden supply chain disruptions, the implementation of restrictive measures and sanctions, increased security risks, or the facilitation of emergency goods, customs services operate

at the intersection of security, trade, and resilience. These challenges are closely linked to human resources preparedness, organisational integrity, and institutional resilience — the very areas at the core of the EUCAB network's mandate.

By bringing together experts from across Member States, the EUCAB HR, Integrity & Resilience Network provides a trusted forum to exchange experiences, identify vulnerabilities, and share practical solutions. In times of crisis, this horizontal cooperation becomes a strategic asset: it helps administrations learn from each other, align approaches where possible, and strengthen their capacity to act under pressure.

Looking ahead, the future of European crisis response must strike a careful balance. Member States retain sovereignty over national crisis management and customs administrations, a principle that must be respected. At the same time, crises do not stop at national borders. Fragmented responses, delayed information sharing, or uncoordinated measures can weaken the collective European response and reduce overall effectiveness.

Here, the **EUCAB HR, Integrity & Resilience Network** can play a key enabling role.

By fostering trust, promoting common understanding, and supporting structured information sharing, the network helps ensure that coordination is swift, and that national expertise can be mobilised quickly while remaining fully respected. Being fast should not mean acting alone; acting together should not mean slowing down.

Improved situational awareness, clearer communication channels, and stronger links between civil protection, humanitarian actors, and customs authorities are essential. Building on its cross-cutting focus and Member State-driven approach, the EUCAB network is well

placed to contribute to these efforts and to help embed a customs perspective more firmly into broader EU crisis response frameworks.

Ultimately, resilience is a collective effort. A true Team Europe approach means connecting people, structures, and expertise across borders and sectors — including customs — while respecting national competencies. Through networks such as EUCAB's HR, Integrity & Resilience Network, the EU can strengthen preparedness, enhance mutual trust, and ensure that customs administrations are ready to face the crises of today and tomorrow.

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