



eLearning module

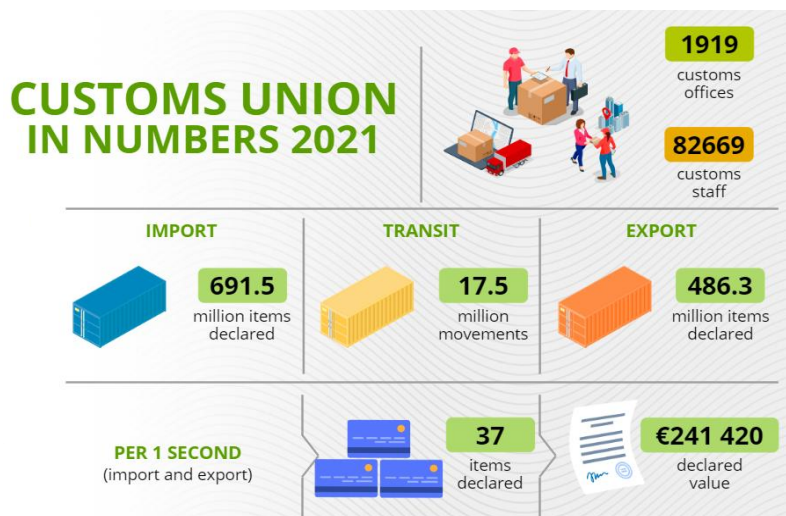
The ABCs of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

Course takeaways

This eLearning module will guide you through the EU Single Window Environment for Customs; a legal framework to improve information sharing and digital cooperation between customs authorities and other government authorities in charge of enforcing non-customs regulatory formalities at the EU border in areas such as health and safety, environmental protection, food, and product safety and agriculture.

This is a quick and handy summary of the most relevant course information:

1 Introduction



1.1 What is the EU Single Window for Customs?

The Regulation establishing the EU Single Window Environment for Customs made its way into EU law in December 2022. This Regulation provides a **new legal framework to improve information sharing and digital cooperation between customs administrations and other government authorities** ('partner competent authorities') in charge of enforcing non-customs formalities at the EU border in areas such as health and safety, environmental protection, food and product safety, agriculture, etc. This, in turn, will allow economic operators to clear certain customs formalities more easily.

In simple terms, the EU Single Window Environment for Customs will enable **interoperability between the customs and non-customs domains to streamline the electronic exchange of documents and information** required for the goods clearance process. The framework legally establishes a centralised system developed by the Directorate-General of Taxation and Customs Union (DG TAXUD) to interconnect the import, export and transit systems of the Member States with Union non-customs systems that manage non-customs formalities.

The **system is known as the EU Customs Single Window Certificates Exchange System (EU CSW-CERTEX)**. This system is designed to improve the sharing and processing of data submitted to customs and non-customs authorities by economic operators by ensuring that those authorities receive the original data in real time.

2 Understanding the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

2.1 The concept behind the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

Various **standardisation bodies and international organisations** such as the **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)**, its subsidiary, the **United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT)**, the **World Customs Organisation (WCO)**, and the

World Trade Organisation (WTO) have promoted the single window concept and supported efforts for its implementation through international standards and guidance documents.

The single window is defined (*UN/CEFACT Recommendation 33 of July 2005*):

“as a facility that allows parties involved in trade and transport to lodge standardized information and documents with a single-entry point to fulfil all import, export, and transit-related regulatory requirements. If information is electronic, then individual data elements should only be submitted once.”

Before the roll out of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs, the formalities required at the EU’s external borders often **involve many different authorities** in charge of different policy areas.

As a result, businesses have to **submit information to several different authorities**, each with its own portal and procedures. This is **cumbersome and time-consuming for traders** and reduces the capacity of authorities to act in a joined-up way in combatting risks.

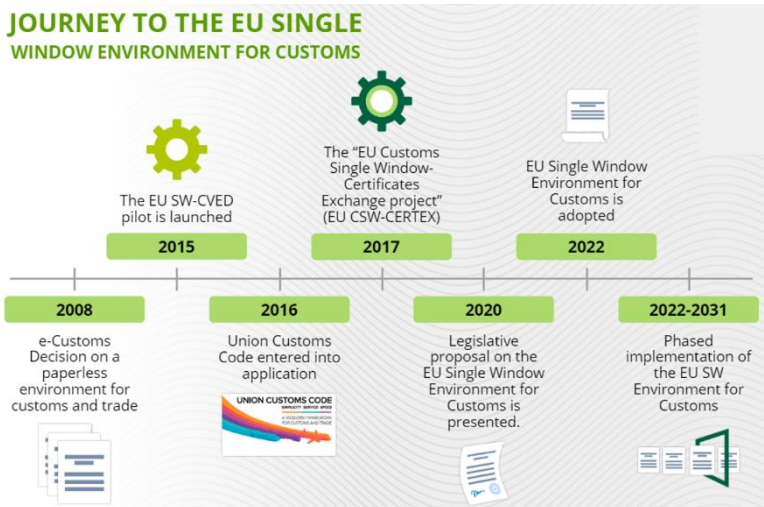
The problems experienced were that the **process of goods clearance was complex** and the **human and financial resources weren’t being used efficiently**. Some regulatory formalities were being duplicated which often led to **delays for businesses and traders**. The application of rules in the Single Market was ineffective due to patchy and **inconsistent monitoring of authorised goods**.

The implementation of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs will be phased in gradually over the coming decade.

The first phase will **come into effect by 2025** and focus on **enhancing intergovernmental exchanges at EU borders**. Customs authorities will be able to **automatically verify** that non-customs formalities comply with the rules enforced by partner competent authorities.

A second phase, **planned for 2031**, will provide a **Business-to-Government scheme** to simplify clearance processes for economic operators when moving goods in and out of the EU. This scheme will allow economic operators to use a **single portal to submit data** in an individual Member State for each specific policy domain phased in under the EU Single Window Environment for Customs.

2.2 Journey to the EU Single Window Environment for Customs



2.3 Constructing a new legislative framework for the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

The success of EU CSW-CERTEX generated the need to create a new legal framework that would ensure the **mandatory participation of all Member States in EU CSW-CERTEX** to realise the full potential of its benefits at EU level.

Each year, customs authorities process millions of customs declarations for goods entering the customs territory of the Union. Some of these goods are **subject to non-customs requirements for which only a specific consignment can be imported in the EU**. Before being released into the Single Market, these consignments could be split across different Member States, while the whole consignment is covered by the same authorisation.

EU CSW-CERTEX provides an EU-wide quantity management functionality that allows authorities to verify that quantities have not been exhausted before allowing goods to be released, irrespective of the Member State in which the release has taken place.

A similar principle applies to goods subject to **quotas**, meaning that the economic operator can import only a certain quota of the concerned goods in the EU and further imports are prohibited after a threshold is reached.

The creation of a legal framework is needed to **uniformly define the necessary exchanges of information between customs and partner competent authorities** that enable EU-wide quantity management.

2.4 Formalities covered by the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

Union non-customs formalities comprise **all operations which are to be carried out by a natural person, an economic operator, or a partner competent authority for the international movement of goods**, including the part of **the movement between Member States**, when required.

Those formalities impose **different obligations for the import, export or transit of certain goods**, and their **verification through customs controls** is fundamental to the effective functioning of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs.

EU CSW-CERTEX covers digitalised formalities laid down in Union legislation and managed by partner competent authorities in electronic Union non-customs systems, storing the relevant information from all Member States required for goods clearance.

The **EU Customs Single Window enables the automated verification by customs of several non-customs regulatory formalities** submitted with the customs declaration as evidence of compliance.

The formalities are stored in Union non-customs systems, which will be interconnected to EU CSW-CERTEX to exchange information with the national single window environments for customs. The Union non-customs systems represent **IT systems or databases developed by various Commission departments** across policy areas to **digitalise documentary requirements and authorisation/licensing schemes** regulated at EU level.

3 Components of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

3.1 Introduction

The EU Single Window Environment for Customs is designed to provide a framework for cooperation that facilitates interoperability between customs and non-customs authorities through three main components: **Union non-customs systems, national single window environments for customs, and the European Union Customs Single Window Certificates Exchange System, known as EU CSW-CERTEX.**

The Union Non-Customs Systems



“Union Non-Customs Systems are electronic systems that store information about the fulfilment of **specific non-customs formalities required for the international trade in goods**. These systems are developed by various policy departments of the Commission to facilitate exchanges between economic operators and partner competent authorities. Union non-customs systems will be connected to EU CSW-CERTEX to exchange information with the National Single Window Environments for Customs. These systems are used on a mandatory or voluntary basis depending on the requirements of EU sectoral legislation for each policy domain.”

The European Union Customs Single Window Certificates Exchange System (EU CSW-CERTEX)

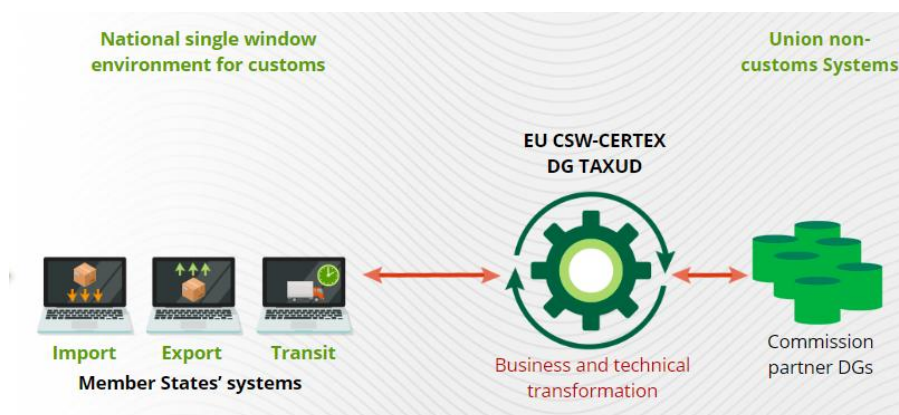
“EU CSW-CERTEX is an electronic system developed and maintained by the Commission in collaboration with the Member States. As the **central component of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs**, EU CSW-CERTEX allows for **information exchange between national single window environments for customs and Union non-customs systems**. It will cover digital exchanges for a multitude of non-customs formalities digitalised at the EU level and stored at different Union non-customs systems.”

National single window environments for customs

“are a **set of services and systems owned, managed, and developed by the Member States that constitute the national components of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs**. These environments enable information to be exchanged between the electronic systems of the customs authority, partner competent authorities, and economic operators in an individual Member State, thus bridging these systems with Union non-customs systems.

3.2 National single window environments for customs

The national single window environments for customs are **a set of services and systems owned, managed, developed, and operated by the Member States** that constitute the national components of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs.



These environments enable **information to be exchanged between the electronic systems of the customs authority, partner competent authorities, and economic operators** in an individual Member State, thus bridging these systems with Union non-customs systems.

According to the EU Single Window Regulation, **each Member State can develop its national single window environment for customs as it sees fit**, provided that its national customs systems are **interconnected with EU CSW-CERTEX**.

3.3 EU CSW-CERTEX

The EU Single Window Environment for Customs has a **central component called the EU Customs Single Window Certificates Exchange System (EU CSW-CERTEX)**. This is an electronic system developed and maintained by the European Commission to link the Member States to allow information to be exchanged between the national single window environments for customs and Union non-customs systems so that all relevant authorities can access the relevant data and collaborate more easily on border checks.

EU CSW-CERTEX covers **digital exchanges for a multitude of non-customs documents** (i.e., certificates, licences, permits, and other non-customs formalities) stored at different Union non-customs systems and **regulated by sectoral legislation under the responsibility of various Commission services**. The system allows national customs authorities to access non-customs formalities through a single interface, performing almost all transactions within seconds.

The core business functions of EU CSW-CERTEX enable the automated exchange of the required information:

1. Technical transformation of data
2. Business transformation of data
3. Quantity management
4. Check availability
5. Request for list
6. 'Push' mechanism

3.4 EU CSW-CERTEX – Use case

EU CSW-CERTEX offers several technical possibilities that can be used to fulfil the specific needs of non-customs policy areas. It is important to understand that **all the different use cases can be used individually or combined in different configurations to fulfil the specific needs of each non-customs policy area.**



4 Layers of digital and administrative cooperation supporting the information exchange within the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

4.1 Overview

Customs and Union-non-customs systems do not “speak” to each other, meaning that they do not use the same data models or business logic. The following case story outlines the process of how the EU Single Window Environment for Customs can help a compliant economic operator speed up the import process.

Step 1 - Sending the Customs Declaration

A compliant economic operator submits the customs declaration in national customs systems, indicating the reference number of the respective non-customs document.

Step 2 – Request via EU CSW-CERTEX

National customs systems push this information out to EU CSW-CERTEX, which uses the reference number entered in the customs declaration to retrieve the relevant document from the Union non-customs systems.

Step 3 – Response via EU CSW-CERTEX

EU CSW-CERTEX then transforms the data and sends them back to the customs systems in customs-compliant format.

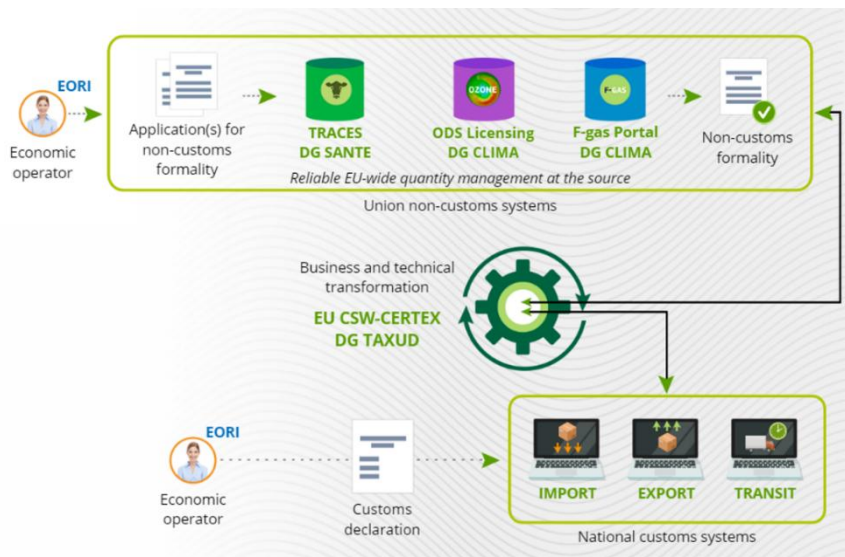
Step 4 – Validation of the Customs Declaration

Data transformation also includes access to customs procedures on specific decisions made by other partner competent authorities. EU CSW-CERTEX does not store any information beyond a log-file indicating that a conversion on the referenced documents has taken place. The EORI number allows the correct identification of economic operators in all systems.

4.2 G2G Cooperation

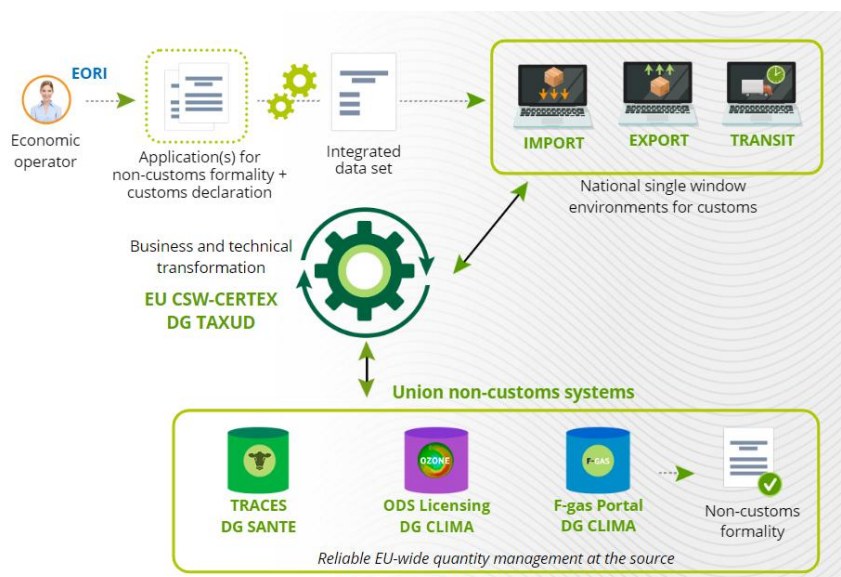
The interoperability between the components of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs is enabled through **two layers of digital administrative cooperation among customs, partner**

competent authorities and traders. The first layer, **government-to-government (G2G) digital cooperation**, will enhance and streamline the sharing of information between customs and partner competent authorities.



4.3 B2G Cooperation

The second layer builds on the G2G layer and will put in place a **Business-to-Government scheme** to further enable the streamlining of clearance processes for economic operators dealing with certain Union non-customs requirements.



The B2G layer will allow **economic operators two options**:

1. **Submit the data separately** to customs and Union non-customs systems or
2. **Submit all data at once** to the national single window environments for customs.

The data submission will take place through an **“integrated data set”** that contains all data required by customs and non-customs authorities for all policy domains applicable to a given product. To obtain the integrated data set, the Commission will **identify the common data elements included in**

both the customs declaration and the application for a non-customs document and the data sets required only by customs and partner competent authorities.

This process will be pursued through a delegated act governed by the Regulation in line with the guidelines on trade facilitation promoted by international organisations, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

The national single window environments for customs will **use the integrated data set to transmit the common data set and the partner competent authority data set to EU CSW-CERTEX**, and the common and the specific data required by customs to customs authorities. Before this process occurs, the implementation of the B2G mechanism requires **an enabling G2G framework** and the **fulfilment of certain eligibility criteria relevant to trade facilitation**. These criteria include the modification of EU sectorial legislation to allow for changes in the way economic operators interact with the respective partner competent authorities.

4.4 Key facilitation tool to implement the G2G and B2G layers of cooperation

The **Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI) number will be the main identifier** to ensure that economic operators are identified in a consistent and coherent manner for the information exchanged through the G2G and B2G channels, including for controls carried out by partner-competent authorities.

The **Commission maintains a central EORI system** to store and handle EORI-related data. While customs systems have used the EORI number as an identifier for each economic operator engaged in customs operations in accordance with EU customs law, **Union non-customs systems have used their own means to identify economic operators**. This Regulation extends the use of the EORI system to partner-competent authorities to validate the EORI number in the context of their formalities.

5 Benefits of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

5.1 Overall benefits of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs

The simplified exchange of information between customs and partner competent authorities offered by the EU Single Window Environment for Customs is expected to generate major efficiency gains and time savings in the clearance of goods.

1. Creates a framework for interoperability
2. Ensures consistent use of data
3. Ensures compliance with EU law
4. Reduce costs and administrative burden
5. Reduces the scope for fraud and error
6. Streamlines processes for economic operators

5.2 Benefits of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs for economic operators

The EU Single Window will also benefit all the economic operators importing and exporting goods.

1. Time savings
2. Reduced administrative burdens
3. Improved interactions with customs and competent authorities
4. Efficiency gains
5. Consistent use of data for border formalities
6. Better monitoring of the use of non-customs formalities
7. Simplified business processes for lodging customs and non-customs data

5.3 Benefits of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs authorities

The EU Single Window will bring significant improvements for customs authorities:

1. Time and human resources savings
2. Simplified interactions with economic operators
3. Integrated data sets including all clearance-related information
4. Improves digital cooperation with partner competent authorities
5. Reduced scope for fraud and error through automated EU-wide quantity management.
6. Fully automated documentary controls
7. More efficient enforcement of and compliance with EU legislation

5.4 Benefits of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs for partner competent authorities

Just as for customs authorities, the EU Single Window will bring significant similar benefits for partner competent authorities.

1. Time and lower administrative costs
2. Simplified interactions with economic operators
3. Integrated data sets including all clearance-related information
4. Improves digital cooperation with customs authorities
5. Reduced scope for fraud and error through automated EU-wide quantity management.
6. Efficiency gains through automated information sharing
7. More efficient compliance with EU legislation

Remember, this is a quick and handy summary of the most relevant course information. Only the European Union legislation published in the Official Journal of the European Union is deemed authentic. The Commission accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever with regard to the training.

