



ALBANIAN CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION

Green Book 2022

Priorities for 2023



ACA
ALBANIAN CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION

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Foreword

The Green Book was published for the first time during 2022 with the aim of increasing transparency of the Customs Administration towards partners, businesses and citizens.

The content of the Green Book mainly consists of synthetic information related to action plans and strategies of the Customs Administration, which play the main role in achieving the objectives pursuant to the Customs Code:

to protect financial and environmental interests of the Republic of Albania from unfair and unlawful trade, while supporting lawful business activities;

- to ensure the security and safety of the Republic of Albania and its inhabitants;
- to contribute to environmental protection in close cooperation with other authorities; as well as;
- to maintain the proper balance between customs controls and the facilitation of legitimate trade.

Designed in the form of an annual report, the Green Book opens with the speech of the General Director, as a summary of the achievements and challenges of the Customs Administration, followed by the new ACA's organizational chart, its performance and main statistics, law-enforcement activities, facilitation of procedures, international relations and priorities for 2023.

The Customs Administration is grateful for your attention and invites you to cooperate towards the modernization of the customs system compliant with European standards. Enjoy the reading!

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I. Speech of the General Director

Z. Genti Gazheli

2022 was a challenging year for the Customs, but despite the extended consequences of the earthquake, pandemics and Russia-Ukraine conflict, the Customs Administration has served with responsibility and professionalism, contributing to the open and fair trade.

The main principles of Customs for 2022 have been: The respect for the dignity of every business or citizen that comes to the customs, problem solving, facilitation of lawful trade and equality before the law.

Generation of customs record-high revenues, which exceeded 2 billion USD in 2022 served as an important resource of state budget expenditures for schools, infrastructure and health services. This has been achieved through the prudent management, responsibility and commitment of the Customs Administration 24/7.

Increased cooperation with partners such as the European Union, the World Customs Organization, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, has led to an improvement of customs service standards. This was acknowledged even by the World Bank in the IFC's study in April 2022, where the clearance time was assessed to have been reduced by over 50%, whereas the Balkan Barometer (August 2022) confirmed that Albania has the quickest customs import and export procedures in the region.

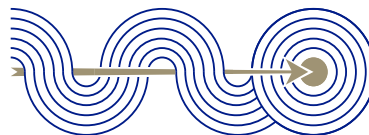
Another fulfilled mission for 2022 was the digitization of customs, where we managed to provide 100% of the services online, adding even 4 new applications and significantly reducing the costs and time for businesses and citizens that have benefited from the customs facilitation measures.

Within one year, 9 operators have been granted the status of “authorised economic operator”, which benefit from facilitations with regard to exports and imports via the Green Lane, also recognized by the North Macedonia, Serbia and soon even Kosovo.

The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Italy for the “Blue Corridor” to facilitate the maritime trade was another significant achievement, whereas at the last CEFTA meeting in Brussels the process was set to continue even with the European Union, following the opening of accession negotiations. This leads to an increase of customs standards to match those of the EU.

Our objective for 2023 is the advancement towards digitalization and innovation via engagement in important projects with the support of DG Taxud and IMF, such as the project “Single Window” or the project “One-Stop-Shop” which will enable provision of services through a “single window” for businesses, the new international transit system, the integrated tariff management system, improvement of customs branches etc.

The mission



The main responsibility of the customs authorities is the supervision of the international trade of the Republic of Albania, contributing to the open and fair trade in the implementation of the trade policies and those of other sectors of the Albanian economy, which affect the trade and the security of the entire commercial chain. For this purpose, the Customs Authorities aim at protecting the financial and environmental interests of the Republic of Albania from unfair and illegal trade, while supporting the lawful business activity; ensuring the security and protection of the Republic of Albania and its inhabitants, as well as environmental protection in close cooperation with other authorities, while also maintaining the proper balance between customs controls and the facilitation of lawful trade.



The Albanian Customs, for the fulfillment of its Mission, define the following strategic principles:

- The principle of protection of the society and financial interests of the Republic of Albania.

- The principle of supporting the competitiveness of Albanian companies.

- The principle of further facilitating lawful trade.

- The principle of control and management of the supply chain used for the international movement of goods.

- Principle of cooperation, maintaining, developing and enhancing mutual relations between customs authorities and other government agencies and between customs.



The Vision

- Full compliance with EU standards and best practices.

- A modern, professional, impartial, honest, credible and uncorrupted public institution.

- A supportive partner of the business community and custodian of the society and the supply chain.

The Albanian Customs Administration is in constant effort to successfully fulfill its missions, such as the fiscal mission, the trade facilitation mission, the defense mission, as well as the mission of the commitments undertaken by the Albanian Government in the process of Albania's integration into the European Union.

Based on the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 921 dated 29.12.2014 "On the Customs Administration Personnel", as amended, the staff of the General Directorate of Customs comprises 1102 employees, distributed at central (GDC 464) and local level (Customs Branches 638).

ADSH has 1074 employees distributed at central and local level.

Specifically, the General Directorate of Customs has 429 employees and the customs branches consist of 654 employees.

At the central level, DPD is organized in 4 (four) departments and directorates near:



Office of General Director	51
Administrative Department	63
Technical department	86
Department of Excise	35
Investigative Operative Department	194

Locally, it is organized in 18 customs branches

[Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Bllatë, Tiranë, Rinas, Durrës, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korçë, Kapshticë, Berat, Fier, Vlorë, Gjirokaštër, Sarandë and Tri Urat Përmet]:

Land

[Shkodër, Kukës, Bllatë, Tiranë, Elbasan, Qafë Thanë, Korçë, Kapshticë, Berat, Fier, Gjirokaštër, Sarandë and Tri Urat]

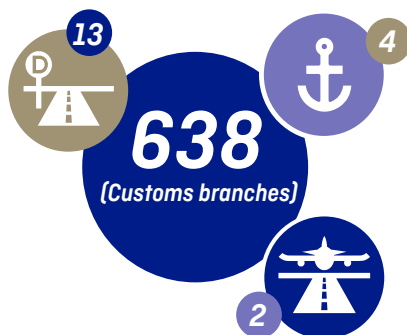
Sea

[Lezhë, Durrës, Vlorë, Sarandë] and

Air

[Rinas, Kukës Airport]

Land	13
Sea	4
Air	2



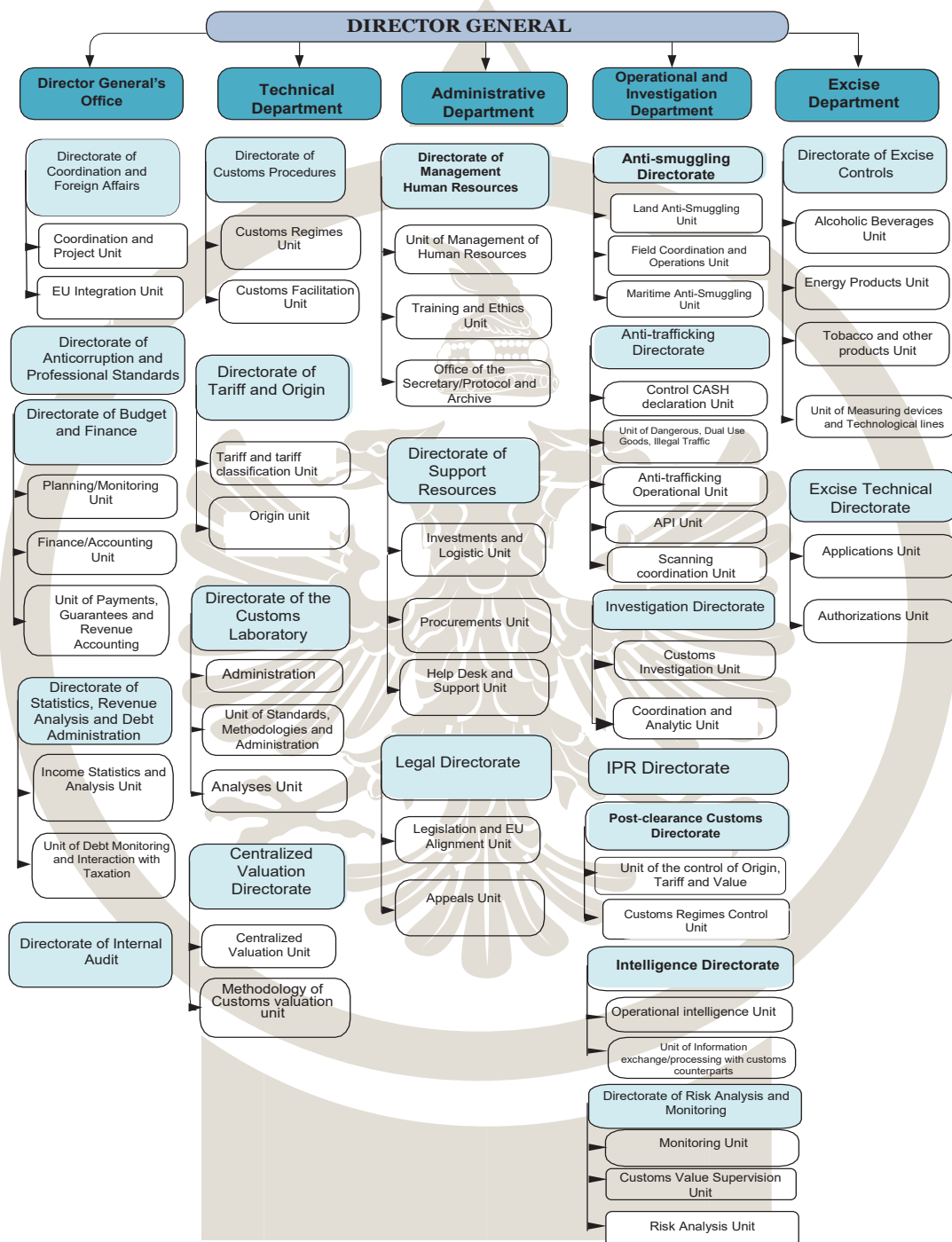


"Mother Teresa" Airport



Vlora port quay

II. New organizational chart - Customs Administration 2022 2023





Port of Vlora

III. Main developments

■ January 2022

Customs received support from the European Commission for the 2021-2027 programme

The General Director of Customs, Genti Gazheli, held a meeting in Brussels with the Director General for Taxation and Customs Union at European Commission, Gerassimos Thomas. The EU representative, Mr. Thomas, gave his support for the Albanian Customs which will be a part of the new DG TAXUD programme “Customs Programme” for 2021- 2027, in continuation of the “Customs 2020” programme.



Through this programme, the Albanian Customs Administration will continue to work for responding to challenges such as the protection of financial and economic interests of the EU, facilitation of trade and cooperation, general strategic support, strengthening of security, particularly at Ports. Another priority of the ACA, in the framework of the European Commission recommendations, is the development of Integrated Tariff Management System (ITMS) modules, which provide for the establishment of an Integrated Tariff Management System fully compatible with the EU’s ITMS.

February 2022

February USA donates X-ray scanner for the Rinas Customs Branch

The US Embassy in Tirana donated to the Albanian Customs Administration an X-ray baggage scanner, to be used at the Rinas International Airport. During a ceremony held on this occasion, the General Customs Director, Genti Gazheli, expressed his gratitude to the US Government, which have provided support to the ACA in different projects through the Embassy.



March 2022

March Prime Minister meets with business owners at Tirana Customs Branch

Prime Minister, Edi Rama, Minister of Finance and Economy, Delina Ibrahimaj and General Customs Director, Genti Gazheli, held a meeting with importers, exporters and



representatives of basic food supply chain, as the war in Ukraine has disrupted the entire chain of trade ties in Europe and all over the world.

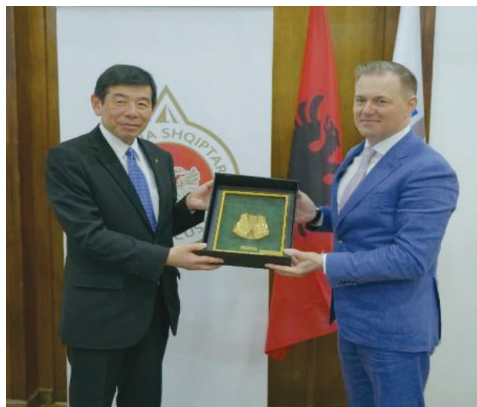
The Customs Administration is one of the institutions that has facilitated the procedures to help the import-export undertakings, by significantly reducing the time of processing of customs declarations in order to save time and costs for businesses, while currently providing 34 services online, hence making the customs services more modern and digitalized.

Meanwhile, PM Edi Rama informed business representatives that the Ministry of Finance and Economy is working on a Sovereign Guarantee fund, which will serve to businesses to use it under full state guarantees for any bank loan, for circulating capital for raw materials and basic food items.

■ March 2022

March 2022, Visit from the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization

Secretary General of WCO, Mr. Kunio Mikuriya and the WCO Regional Development Manager for Europe region, Dashgin Aliyev, were received by the General Albanian Customs Director, Genti Gazheli. During the welcoming meeting, Mr. Mikuriya was informed about the achievements of the Customs Administration as regards the increase in the quality of services, their digitalization and cost reduction, with a view to align them with international standards. Whereas the Head of WCO, Mr. Mikuriya, praised the progress made in the recent years by ACA, including the introduction of new technologies and development of human resources.



■ April 2022

Cooperation between law-enforcement structures boosts security at Port of Durrës

General Customs Director, Genti Gazheli and French Ambassador to Albania, Elisabeth Barsacq, conducted a visit to the Container Control Centre at the Port of Durrës, where they appreciated the cooperation of structures operating there as regards security and border protection at this crucial entry point to our country.



■ May 2022

May Customs receive assistance from HMRC

The representative office of HM Revenue & Customs at the British Embassy in Tirana donated 17 cash counting machines to the Albanian Customs Administration. During a ceremony held on this occasion, the General Customs Director, Genti Gazheli, expressed his gratitude to the British authorities for providing support to the ACA in different projects through the Embassy.



Deputy Ambassador of the United Kingdom in Albania, Mrs. Mia Marzouk, noted that international interaction is essential for the detection of fraud and money laundering, and according to her, cooperation will continue in a productive and fruitful way with the Albanian Customs. HMRC Liaison Officer, Emma Harper, appreciated the work done by ACA, and stated that crime does not recognise borders and that is why international cooperation is pivotal.

■ May 2022

May World Bank appreciates projects on trade facilitation

The General Director of Customs Genti Gazheli, held a meeting with the World Bank Mission, chaired by Mr. Alberto Criscuolo, in the framework of Western Balkans Trade and Transport Facilitation Project and the “Open Balkan” initiative .

During his speech, Mr. Gazheli acknowledged the facilitations that the project provides for granting certificates, licenses or authorizations for import, export and transit undertakings in Albania, for which such documents are indispensable.

As regards the new project on International Computerized Transit System (New Computerised Transit System (NCTS)), Mr. Gazheli stressed that it will put Albania or the Albanian Border Crossing Points at the same level with the European ones, from the perspective of customs procedures simplification.

The third project with the World Bank is the setting up of the Joint Border Crossing Point with North Macedonia, namely that of Qafë-Thinë, in order to establish the “One-Stop-Shop” procedure, with a view to facilitate import and export customs procedures on both sides of the border.

June 2022

PM Rama visits the customs branch of Qafë-Thanë

Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama and Minister of Finance and Economy, Mrs. Delina Ibrahimaj visited the customs branch of Qafë-Thanë, where they were received by the General Director of Customs, Mr. Genti Gazheli. During his speech, the Prime Minister said that facilitations will be available for all import-export businesses within region countries.

“The Open Balkan initiative has brought about benefits and concrete results with regards to trade facilitation and mutual recognition of Authorized Economic Operators (AEO):

- Less physical and documentary checks compared to other economic operators;
- Priority handling and priority notification where selected for customs control;
- Possibility for choice of the place of customs controls, apart from customs offices”.



■ June 2022

Gazheli at the Open Balkan summit

The General Customs Director, Genti Gazheli, participated in the technical meeting held within the Open Balkan initiative in Ohrid of North Macedonia, on 7-8 June. This meeting was chaired by Ministers of Agriculture of Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia, and it was attended even by customs directors and representatives from National Food Authority (NFA). The Albanian Customs Director, Mr. Gazheli emphasized the importance of cooperation between the countries as regards trade facilitation, mutual recognition of AEOs and future intensification of relations in the framework of the Open Balkan initiative. At the Open Balkan summit, held in Ohrid of North Macedonia, the General Director of Albanian Customs, Mr. Genti Gazheli, held a meeting with the Director General of the Serbian Customs Administration, Mr. Branko Radujko, where they discussed about the cooperation between the two administrations.



General Director of Customs, Mr. Gazheli, attends the WCO Council Meeting

The General Director of Customs, Genti Gazheli, attended the meeting of 139th/140th sessions of the World Customs Organization Council, which is the decision-making



body of the Organization. During this meeting that took place on 2325 June 2022, at the headquarters of the World Customs Organization (WCO) in Brussels, Mr. Gazheli, conducted a meeting with the WCO Secretary General, Kunio Mikuriya, as well as with the General Directors of Customs in the Western Balkans, namely those of Kosovo, Serbia and North Macedonia.

Albanian Customs receives positive assessment from CEFTA for the validation

The CEFTA Validation Team under the supervision of DG TAXUD of the European Union, at the end of the several-day evaluation in Tirana, concluded that the Albanian Customs program for the Authorized Economic Operators has satisfied all the standards of the relevant Protocol, receiving a positive opinion.



Albania-Kosovo sign Memorandum of Cooperation on the mutual recognition of customs seals

In the framework of the upcoming joint meeting between the Governments of Albania and Kosovo, and in order to step up the cooperation in the field of customs, namely at Morinë border checkpoint, the Protocol of Cooperation between the Customs Administrations on the mutual recognition of customs seals was signed. This Memorandum was signed by the Albanian and Kosovo General Directors of Customs, Mr. Genti Gazheli and Mr. Agron Llugaliu, respectively. Mr. Gazheli noted that the Memorandum comes about as the result of cooperation agreements and protocols in the field of customs and is expected to



provide facilitations for businesses with regards to the movement of goods (transit). The recognition of customs seals by both customs administrations has resulted in vehicles spending less time at the border crossing point Morinë-Vërnice.

Businesses appraise Customs for facilitating trade

Upon invitation of the American Chamber of Commerce in Albania, the General Directorate of Customs discussed in a business forum the main aspects of the facilitation of customs procedures, reduction of clearance time, improvement of the business climate and the results of the questionnaire on the business-customs relations. Customs is engaged in a digitalization upgrading and expansion process.



Businesses carry out declaration procedures in the customs electronic system via a paperless process, they obtain authorizations/facilitations/certificates through the e-Albania platform, so they no longer appear to front offices of the customs authorities for submitting requests/documents, which used to last approximately for 2 days, one day for registering the documents and another day for their issuance. Currently, the General Customs Directorate provides 34 online services and 4 applications (starting from March 2022 the “Status of transit declaration”, “Status of import-export declaration”, “Prepaid account balance” and the “Confirmation of payments made by entities to the accounts of Customs”); meanwhile, all services are expected to be offered online within the year.



Customs Morin Kukes

■ July 2022

July Thessaloniki Connectivity Forum for the facilitation of customs procedures

The General Customs Director, Mr. Genti Gazheli, attended the Thessaloniki Connectivity Forum, an important activity on the cooperation of the European Union with countries in the region, with the participation of high representatives of the European Commission, Ministries of Transport and Customs Administrations. During this Forum, Mr. Gazheli conducted bilateral meetings with representatives of Italian and Greek Customs Administrations, where they talked about expanding cooperation, exchanging information and facilitating the customs procedures.



■ August 2022

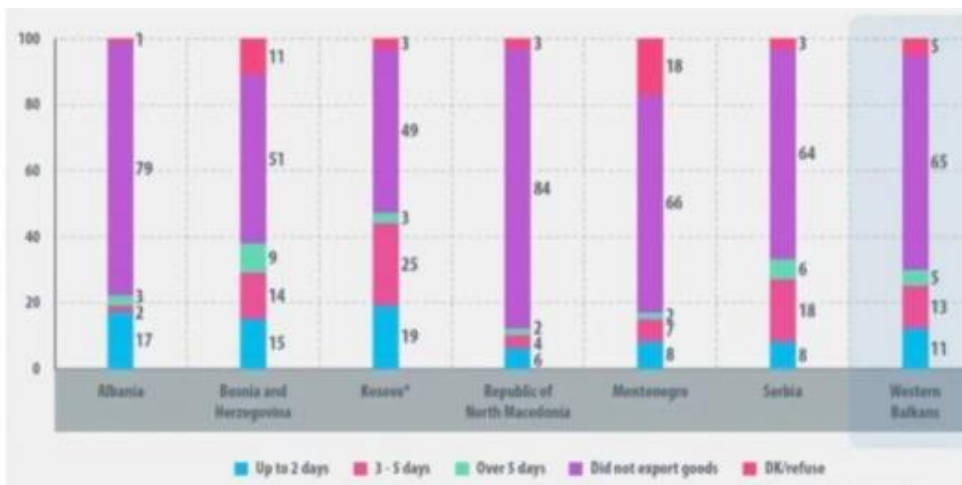
Balkan Barometer: Albania has the quickest customs procedures

“Balkan Barometer Business Opinion 2022”, developed by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and funded by the European Union (EU) complimented the advancement of procedures at the service of businesses by the Albanian Customs. The 2022 edition of the Balkan Barometer - Regional Cooperation Council (Balkan Barometer Business Opinion 2022) (rcc.int), evaluated the business perceptions via a questionnaire composed of 177 questions to 1203 business representatives, including the import-export customs procedures.

As reported by the Barometer “within the area, Albania appears to have the quickest customs clearance of imports, with more than 50% of importers completing it in as little as two days. Whereas, over five days were most commonly required in Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia (14% and 10% each)”. According to the Barometer,

Albania has one of the fastest customs procedures in terms of export clearance, completing them in less than two days, whereas for other countries the time of export clearance takes 3- 5 days.

If you have imported in the last 12 months what is the average number of days for customs procedures?



September 2022

European Union and GIZ support the Customs Administration and NFA

The General Director of Customs, Mr. Genti Gazheli, attended the regional meeting on “Strengthening cooperation between Customs Administrations and Agencies



responsible for the Phytosanitary sector in the framework of the AEO programme”, held in Vlora, on 21 September 2022. The regional meeting took place in the framework of the project “Support to Regional Economic Integration” implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

GmbH, and supported by the European Commission and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). This meeting aimed at generating a shared viewpoint on the current situation and to identify the joint priorities, in order to further improve the efficacy and transparency of both authorities of importance to the business world and the region.

■ September 2022

Blue Lanes between CEFTA and EU to facilitate sea traffic

General Director of the Customs Administration of Albania, Mr. Genti Gazheli, and Director General of the Excise, Customs and Monopolies Agency of Italy, Mr. Marcello Minenna, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the electronic data exchange between these institutions in Rome. SEED system for electronic data exchange has a crucial role in this initiative, which will speed up customs procedures, formalities and customs controls. This was an opportunity to discuss the future development of the Blue Lanes initiative and trade relationships in the Adriatic Sea area.



■ October 2022

October Brussels, Towards “Customs Union” with EU

Albania remains committed to move forwards with its administrative and institutional reforms needed for the approximation of legislation with the EU.

The European Commission, the Albanian delegation chaired by the Deputy Minister and Negotiator at the Ministry of Finance and Economy, Mrs. Vasilika Vjero, conducted the explanatory meeting for Chapter 29 “Customs Union” at Brussels.



The country’s progress with regards to Chapter 29 “Customs Union” was assessed in the EC Albania Report 2022, pointing out the preparatory work done for the development of the New Computerised Transit System, the implementation of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme, the successful validation of safety and security standards in line with CEFTA Additional Protocol 5, application of the transitional rules of preferential origin of the Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention, as well as strengthening and digitalization of services etc.

Washington D.C. - General Director of Customs at annual meetings with IMF-WB

The General Director of Customs, Mr. Genti Gazheli, participated for the first time in the joint high-level delegation of the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Bank of Albania, attending the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In this high-level forum the main developments of the world economy were discussed, focusing particularly on the current inflation challenges, fiscal consolidation, climate changes, energy and food crises.



■ November 2022

AEO Status - Facilitations for all regional businesses

Ministry of Finance and Economy, Delina Ibrahimaj, General Director of Customs, Genti Gazheli, and the French Ambassador to Albania, Elisabeth Barsacq, conducted a visit



to the company “Marlotex”, in Berat, which was provided with the certificate of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO). The “Marlotex” company, founded in 2005 in Berat, is an Albanian-French investment in the field of textile industry. It has 250 workers, and the company is export-based. Upon close inspection of all work processes, the Minister Ibrahimaj said that the initiatives of the government are in the function of creating a favourable business climate.

■ November 2022

Regional cooperation with counterparts and increase of standards

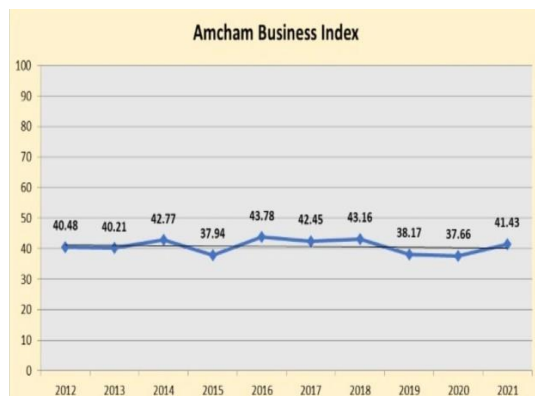
The General Director of Customs, Mr. Genti Gazheli, attended the conference organized by the regional Authorized Economic Operators (AEO) Association, with the topic “Improving AEO programmes in the Region - Embracing the digital data culture for continuous improvement, improved transparency, partnerships and stronger resilience”, held in Belgrade, on 3- 4 November 2022.



December 2022

Business Index - Highest for Customs

Customs services have received positive evaluations from businesses. The American Chamber of Commerce Business Index evaluated the Customs with the highest score among public authorities, with over 62,5%. In the Business Index survey, relations of businesses with customs authorities have seen an improvement for 2021, having one of the highest indices with regards to business-public institutions relations.



■ December 2022

CEFTA, Customs part of Green Corridors with EU

The General Director of Customs, Genti Gazheli, participated in the central CEFTA conference “A stepping stone to the EU Single Market”, held on 9 December 2022, where the Customs Administrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro will sign Memoranda of Understanding, further expanding the CEFTA-TCT Green Corridors with the European Union. The conference was hailed by Oliver Varhelyi, European Union Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement and by Michela Matuella, Acting Director in the Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations.

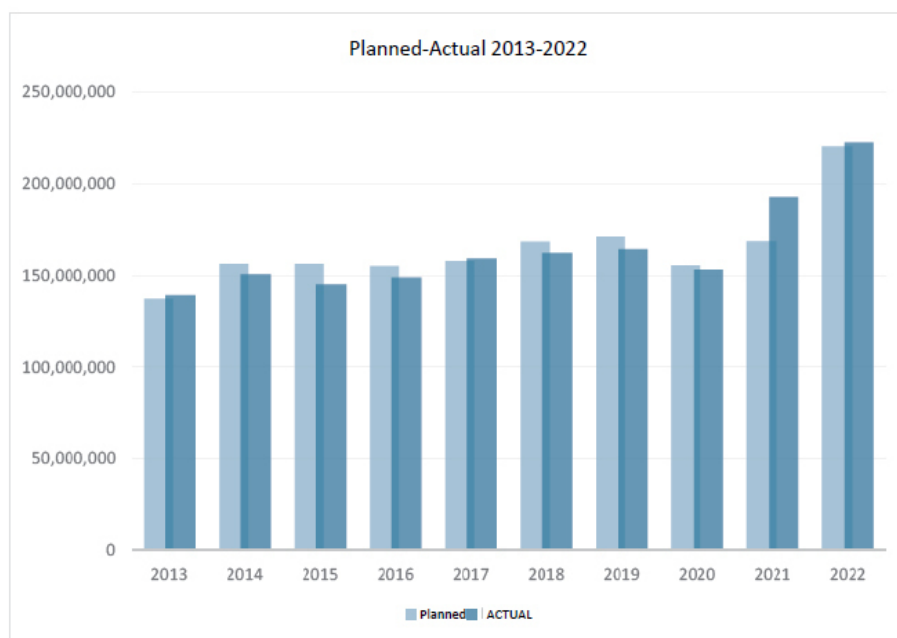


IV. Revenue performance from Customs

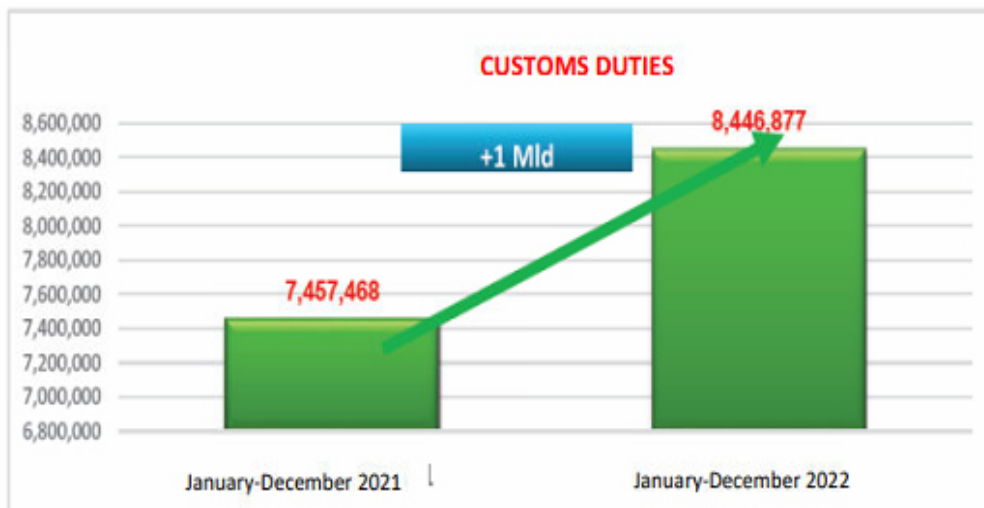
Revenues from Customs for 2022 reached the record-high figure of 223.3 billion ALL or over 2 billion dollars.

Compared to 2021, an amount of about 30.2 billion ALL more have been generated (approximately \$300 billion more).

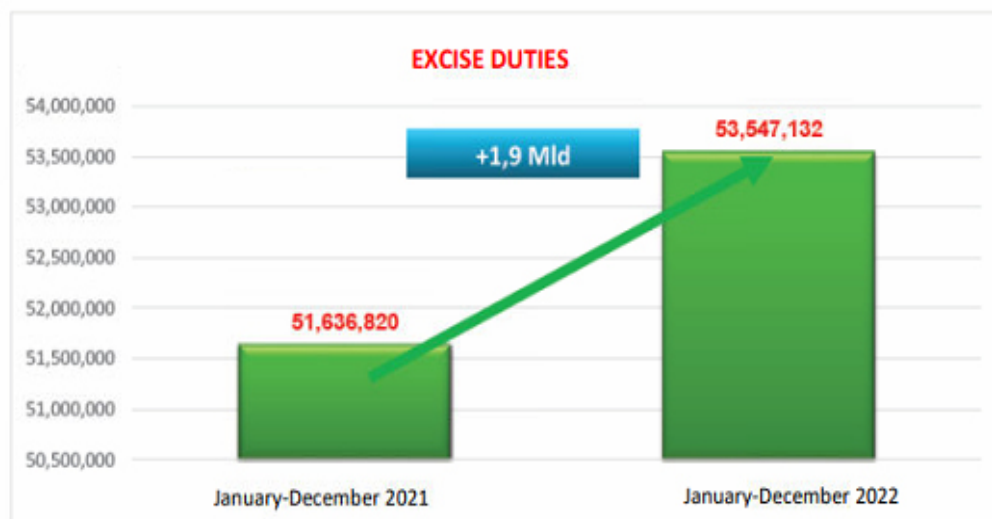
The fact that 2022 has the highest generation since 2013 should be applauded, despite it was affected by the situation of a prolonged crisis:



Custom duties, +989 million ALL, an amount resulting from the increase in imports from China.

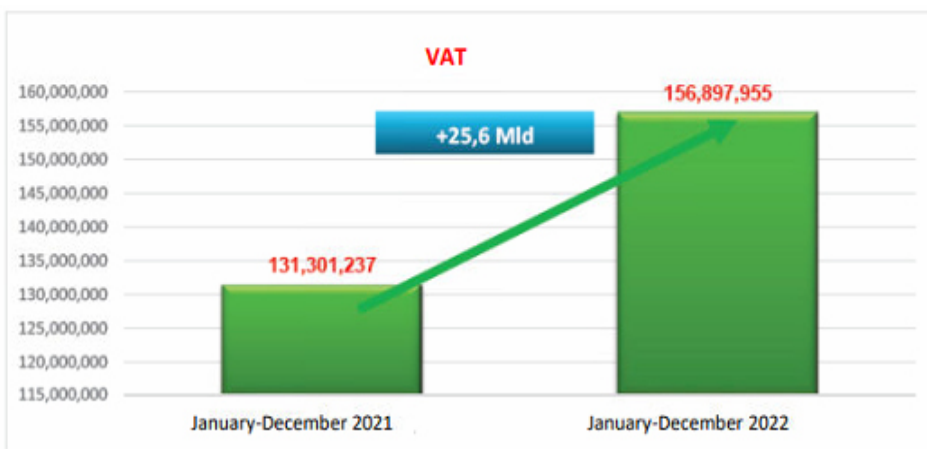


Excise duties, a total of **+1,9 billion** ALL, resulting mainly from the increase of excise duty on cigarettes and a growth in consumption with about 191 tonnes, having a resultant of about 2,3 billion ALL; Gas with +500 million; Beer with about +120 million; Alcoholic beverages with +50 million, as well as the indexation of excise duties with 3.3%. The imported fuel has had an adverse impact to the excise duties, with about -1,2 billion ALL, resulting from a decrease in consumption with about 57,000 tonnes, directly impacted by the global situation, war in Ukraine and sanctions on Russia.



In total VAT, compared to the twelve months of 2021, has generated about 24 **billion ALL more**, mainly stimulated from the:

- **5,3 billion ALL** increase in the price of fuel and its direct impact on VAT.
- **5,1 billion ALL** increase in import of electricity.
- **3,7 billion ALL** increase in consumption of daily consumer goods, etc.
- **3,1 billion ALL** increase from import of base metals
- **1,5 billion ALL** increase from import of liquefied gas
- **800 billion ALL** resulting from an increase in import of cigarettes etc.



Royalties +1,8 billion ALL due to increase of the Exchange price with about +70%. The increase amounts to 1,1 billion for crude oil and 600 million for other minerals, even though 20,000 tonnes less of crude oil and 410,000 tonnes less of other minerals have been exported.



V. Law enforcement



Fight against illegal trafficking

As a result of the increased controls in order to prevent, detect and crack down on narcotics trafficking, based on risk analysis, 3 cases including seizure of cocaine in the port of Durrës, originating from South America, have been identified. At the border crossing points of Rinas and Kakavija, 2 firearms and 625 pieces of ammunition have been found and seized during second line checks.




Cocaine	Cannabis	Guns	Illegal residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 139 kg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 193 kg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 guns • 625 ammunitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99 persons

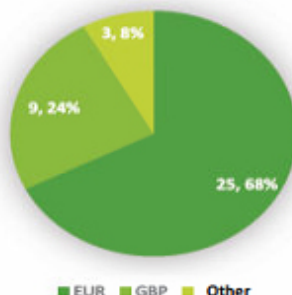


Cases of Cash seizures/non-declarations at B.C.P

In 2022, during the controls exercised by the Customs Administration at the Border Crossing Points, a total of **37** cases of seizures/non-declaration of monetary values were ascertained. Out of these, the largest number of cash seizures/ non-declarations took place at “Mother Teresa International Airport” (14 cases), with amounts ranging from GBP 14,000 to EUR 25,000.

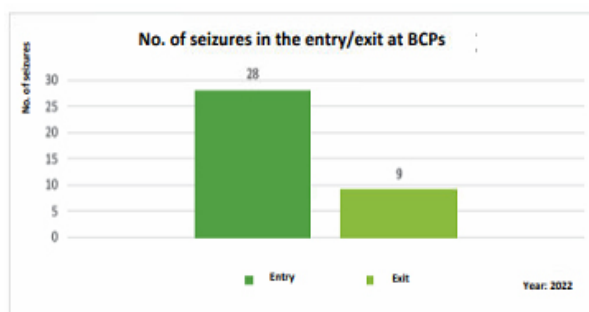
Below, they are divided by Land/Sea/Air border crossing points:

2022			
Cases	14	6	17
Amount	98.475GBP EUR 175,830	GBP 14,915 EUR 801,010	ALL 1,850,600 GBP 51,400 EUR 324,509

Number of seizures by currency

Cases of Cash seizure in entry/exit

The largest number of cases for 2022 is that of cash seizures on entry of the BCPs with 28 cases, and seizures on exit with 9 cases.



Intellectual Property Protection

The General Directorate of Industrial Property (GDIP) has processed 147 applications for action by the holders of intellectual property rights.

During 2022, the Customs Administration as a law-enforcing institution with regards to the intellectual property rights protection has suspended the release for free circulation on the following goods:

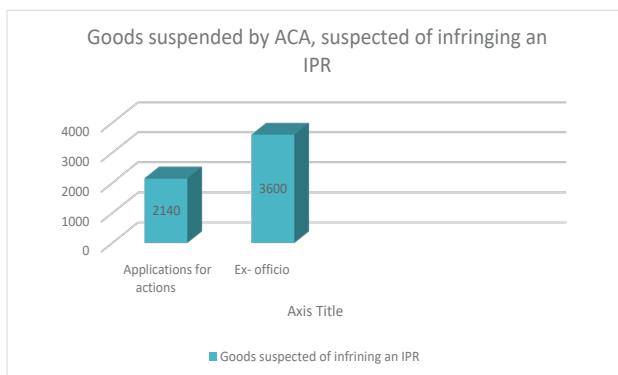
- According to the ex-officio procedure

Item	TRADEMARK	Quantity (pieces/ml)
Shoe uppers	Timberland	3600

The goods were released by the Customs Administration due to rightholders failure to respond within the legal deadlines set forth in the DCM No. 651, dated 10/11/2017, of the Council of Ministers, "On the implementing provisions of the Law No. 102/2014, "Customs Code of the Republic of Albania"

- Through an application for action approved with the General Directorate of Customs

Item	TRADEMARK	Quantity (pieces/ml)
Wallets	LV	500
Wallets	Gucci	400
Wallets	Tommy Hilfiger	100
Insect repellent	H10	1140



Exchange of information and customs intelligence

There has been an increase in cooperation and exchange of information aimed at cracking down on customs violations, pursuant to bilateral agreements with all counterpart customs, particularly with neighbouring Customs. In the framework of the international cooperation, the successful coordination and cooperation with the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), has continued in the joint fight against cross-border crime.

The success of the Operative-Investigative Department at the ACA has been reflected even in the first page of the World Customs Organization RILO ECE - HERALD magazine publication for 2022. In the framework of its work and high results of the Operative-Investigative Department, the ACA was selected as participant of the “Hot Zone Prioritization Forum” organized at the WCO in order to share its experience in the fight against illegal trafficking.

For this year, one of the novelties consisted in obtaining access to the Secure Information Exchange Network Application (SIENA), as a way for exchange of information with other international law-enforcement agencies. Five officials of the customs authorities were certified as users and trainers of this platform by EUROPOL.

Another valuable system for ACA is the nCEN (National Customs Enforcement Network). The smooth functioning of this database of the national customs enforcement network

resulted in an increase in the registration of seizures, supporting the conduct of analyses and reporting.

In the framework of fulfilling the mission of the department, access to systems such as SEED+ and the creation of joint regional risk profiles have helped in maintaining the balance between the facilitation of free trade and customs controls of goods. Following such an initiative, an important step worthy of mentioning is the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on the electronic data exchange with the Italian Customs Administration, in September 2022.

Fight against smuggling:

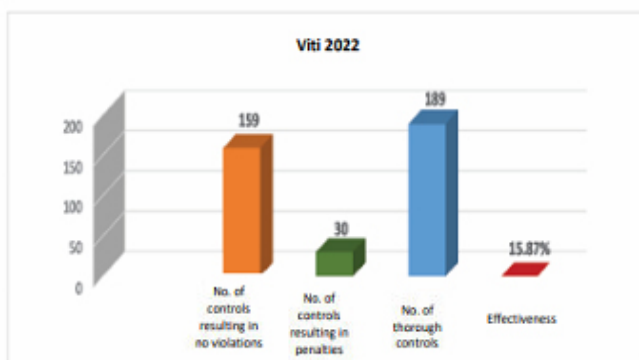
The Anti-Smuggling Directorate, as a constitutive part of the Operative-Investigative Department cooperates with all structures within ACA and other law-enforcement bodies to identify individuals, natural or legal persons, that carry out illegal activities, aiming at detecting, hindering smuggling, informality and administrative violations.

During **2022**, the Anti-Smuggling Directorate performed **2324** controls, of which **189** or about 8.13% have been thorough. During the controls carried out, **30** cases of customs violations were found, reaching a total amount of: ALL **6,268,265** Effectiveness of the controls resulting in the detection of violations for the period January - December 2022 was at 15.87%.

Thorough controls, penalties and effectiveness for January - December 2022, are illustrated in the following

Year	No. of controls resulting in no violations	No. of controls resulting in penalties	No. of thorough controls	Effectiveness
2022	159	30	189	15.87%

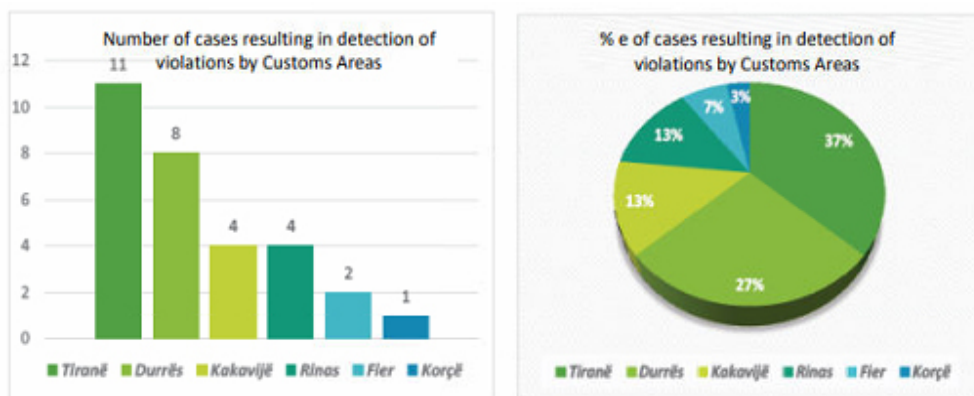
Data shown:



The Anti-smuggling/Land control groups have carried out inspections in the entire customs territory and road axes, focusing mainly in cargoes with “risk goods”, leveraging information gathered on the ground, as well as the available information, based on the type of goods, entities, tariff classification, origin, including controls against illegal trafficking.

During the exercised controls, the highest number of cases resulting in the detection of violations by the Directorate of Anti-Smuggling, in cooperation with other structures, appears to be in the customs areas of: Tiranë and Durrës.

Number of cases resulting in detection of violations and their % by Customs Areas 2022:



January - December 2022	
Commercial ships (control of goods)	1.878
Supply of goods on board ships (in vessels)	1.368

As a result of joint controls in the Port of Durrës, the Unit of Anti-Smuggling by Maritime Routes, in cooperation with customs structures, Border Police, Coast Guard, and other law-enforcement bodies, have discovered: 1 case of narcotics smuggling and 2 cases of fuel smuggling, which were seized and transferred for other procedures to the respective authorities.

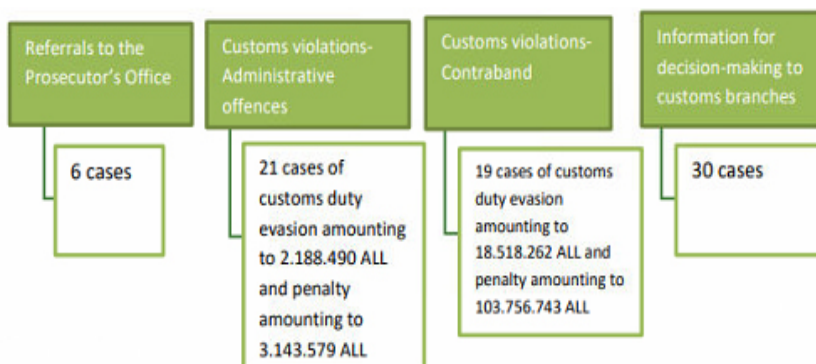
Customs Investigation

During January - December 2022, several sensitive cases or requests for verification have been subject to an investigation process, of which **4094** cases have been handled, whereas **242** cases have been concluded.

Description of the most important cases:

1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022

The **Directorate of Investigation** maintains even the correspondence with State Police Structures and Prosecutor's Offices of Judicial Districts, which seek information about commercial entities or natural persons, which are subject to Law No. **10192**, dated **03/12/2009** "On the prevention and fight against organized crime, trafficking, corruption and other crimes through preventive measures against criminal assets", as amended.



Verifications/investigations are under way for **250** vehicles, which are part of the **2214** vehicles manufactured during 1997- 2003, which have received customs clearance, but were not issued license plates due to failure to satisfy the environmental requirements as required by the Anti-Corruption Network Coordinator with the General Directorate of Customs.

VI Facilitation of customs procedures

The Customs Administration has been operating paperless for several years, reducing costs and service times for citizens and businesses. The "Digital Customs" concept is the main objective of the General Directorate of Customs for the use of digital systems in the collection of customs duties, the control of the inflow and outflow of goods, people, the movement of money and to ensure cross-border trade.

Currently, citizens and businesses can benefit by online processes through the e-Albania portal, with services offered by Customs, hence:

- "Digitalization" has modernized the Albanian customs system;
- "Digitalization" has provided more service quality and reduced costs and time of customs procedures for businesses;
- "Digitalization" has enabled the approximation of Albanian standards with those of the European Union;
- "Digitalization" in the Customs Administration has brought about a novelty by reducing the time and cost of processing of the customs

During 2022, the Albanian Customs Administration provided 43 online services, as well as 4 applications. During 2022, 10,055 applications for favourable decisions were submitted via the portal e-Albania.

The Technical Directorate of Excise has been engaged in the following:

- It has issued **114 authorizations for a differentiated rate of excise duty.**

It has issued 44 authorizations for exemptions from excise duty for Diplomatic Corps based on the approved quota by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the exemptions from excise duty for the Diplomatic Corps.

- It has **established an additional code for 1241** exemptions from excise duty for fuel used by fishing

• **727 guarantees have been registered** in the customs electronic system, submitted by customs branches for authorized warehousekeepers, as well as guarantees for tax stamps.

There have been several applications in the system of production and distribution of stamps SICPATRACE:

Orders for tax stamps – 2256 approved orders

SKU- 204 applications

Additional supplier - 237 applications

Creation of profile - 149 applications



VI.1. Digitalization of customs procedures

For the January-December 2022 period, via the e-Albania platform:

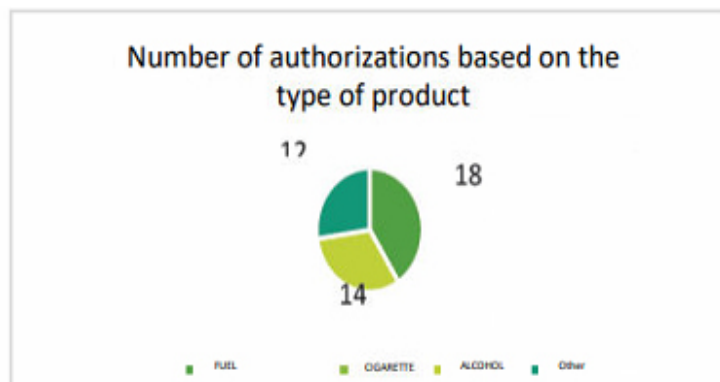
644 applications were made

Applications for machinery and equipment, in view of the performance of investment agreements, with a value equal to or greater than 500 (five hundred) million ALL, which are not intended for sale	73
Applications for machinery and equipment, in view of the performance of investment agreement in the sector of agribusinesses, regardless of the investment value	83
Applications for Favourable Tax Treatment: industrial goods	9
Authorization for Mandatory Tariff Information	6 and 4 under examination
Authorization for relief from custom duties	473

About 180 cases related to reconstruction entities have been managed in the computerized customs system AW.

VI.2. Authorizations for tax warehouses

In total, during 2022 the General Directorate of Customs has issued 43 authorizations for tax warehouses..



Fuel

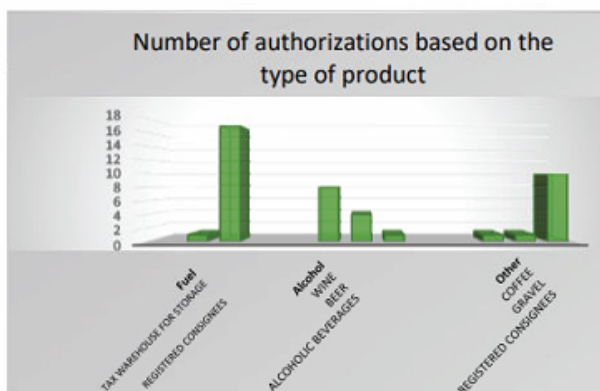
- During 2022, the General Directorate of Customs has issued one authorization for a tax warehouse for the storage of fuel.
- 17 authorizations have been issued for tax warehouses for storage to registered consignees for fishing vessels..

Alcohol

- During 2022, the General Directorate of Customs has issued one authorization for a tax warehouse for the storage of fuel..
- 8 authorizations have been issued for a tax warehouse for the production of wine.
- 3 other authorizations have been granted for tax warehouses for the production of beer.
- 1 authorization for a tax warehouse for the production of gin has been issued.

Other

- 1 authorization for a tax warehouse for the production of coffee has been issued.
- 1 other authorization has been granted for a tax warehouse for the production of gravel.
- 10 authorizations have been issued for tax warehouses to registered consignees for coffee.



VI.3. Technological innovation

ACA in cooperation with National Agency on Information Society (NAIS) and UNCTAD has tested and implemented the recent upgrade of the Asycuda World system.

The Customs Administration, starting from March 2022, has offered new services for businesses via the E-Albania application, such as the “Simplified declaration”, “Status of transit declaration”, “Status of import-export declaration”, “Prepaid account balance” and the “Confirmation of payments made by entities to the accounts of Customs”;

VI.4. 9 Economic operators receive authorization (AEO)

The General Directorate of Customs, with the aim of modernizing services through digitalization, within the framework of simplifying procedures and providing customs facilitations, provides the service for granting the status of the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO). The status and benefits of authorized economic operators are granted based on their appropriate level of credibility towards the fiscal authorities, financial solvency, efficient management systems, security, auditing, clear personnel policies and if they operate with trustworthy partners in the entire chain of their activity.

The benefits of this status bring about a favourable and priority treatment in risk assessment and customs controls, as well as access to the use of all simplifications and facilitations provided by the customs legislation.

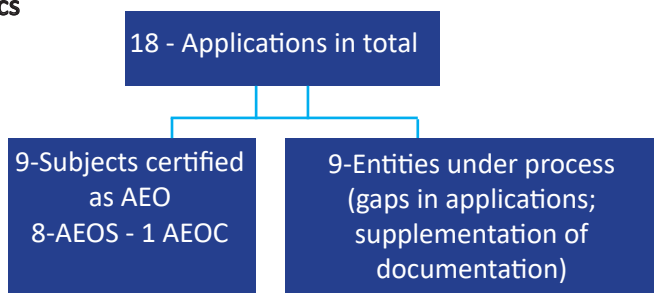
The mutual recognition of the Authorized Economic Operators by the customs authorities in all the countries of the region (CEFTA) is deemed as a great opportunity for business development in the regional market and to a wider extent in the future, to the European market.

In a market open to international trade, this status is a dignified introduction of your businesses and enables the holders (beneficiaries) to use the logo (AEO) in commercial documentation, providing a dignified representation to international business partners, or granting an international advantage.

Information and awareness-raising for the subjects has been in the focus of the sector, in order to make them aware of the benefits that AEO status brings, which resulted in an increase of the number of applications and issued certificates.

- Information meetings with businesses that potentially meet the required criteria;
- Notifications of Chambers of Commerce (central and local) and business associations;
- Individual invitations to businesses;
- Meetings with business representatives.

AEO Statistics



VI.5. Tariff

Drafting, adoption and implementation of amendments to the Harmonized System of the World Customs Organization in the framework of the standardization of the Combined Nomenclature 2023.

The Integrated Tariff Management System, in the framework of the National Plan for Trade Policy Coordination and Trade Facilitation 2021 – 2023.

1. ITMS implementation is in the stage of module creation in the System, which is being carried out by the SIVCO Company in cooperation with experts of NAIS.

Currently, 6 modules have been implemented and work is under way for the last two modules.

Modules are expected to be ready for testing by the end of January 2023.

2. Interaction with ASYCUDA for the implementation of ITMS in cooperation with UNCTAD experts, conducting system testing and staff training.

VI.6. Origin

Economic operators and businesses may choose to apply the new transitional rules of origin during trade with some countries adhering to the pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) Convention on preferential rules of origin. This is a new set of rules temporarily adopted by some countries, pending the adoption of the revision of the PEM Convention. They are currently applicable on a bilateral and voluntary basis in the trade relationships between EU and Albania (starting from 1 September 2022) and since 2022 even with EFTA states, such as Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The new rules offer business opportunities, as they make the management of rules of origin and access to tariff preferences more simple and flexible. Albania and EFTA states have agreed upon to extend the cumulation of origin even for textiles.

During 2022, 7 requests of Economic Operators have been approved for the simplified procedure for issuing proofs of origin, granting them the “Approved Exporter” status authorization.

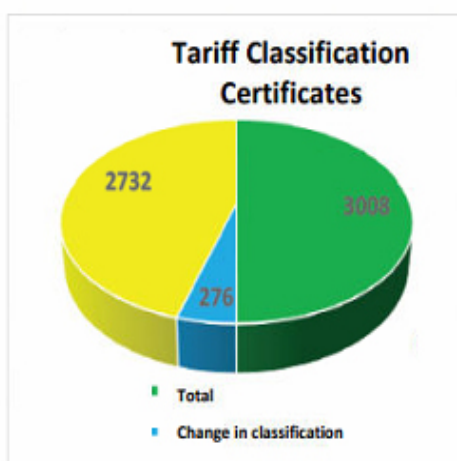
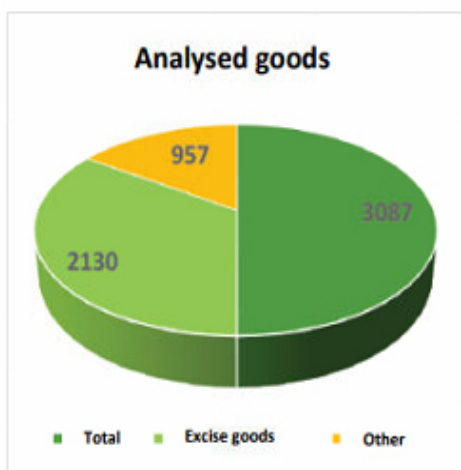
Participation in the meetings of the two Working Groups of the e-PoC Project, in relation to the electronic issuance of proofs of origin, EUR.1 certificates in the pan-Euro-Mediterranean (PEM) zone and the Joint Committee of PEM and the Working Groups of the PEM Convention.

Training on PEM preferential rules of origin and transitional rules with CEFTA countries, as well as rules of origin during trade with the United Kingdom.

Implementation of new transitional rules of origin even with CEFTA countries is one of our **priorities** for 2023.

VI.7. Customs Laboratory

During 2022, a total of 3087 goods or about 26,033 analytical indicators were analysed. Of these 2130 (70%) samples are excise goods (hydrocarbon and alcoholic products) or about 21,519 analytical indicators. 3008 Tariff Classification Certificates have been issued, of which 276 have changes in tariff classification and 101 analysis sheets.



Participation in 10 International Skills Tests, with very good results.

VIII. International cooperation

ACA, as part of the international customs network and law enforcement agencies, during 2022 has been intensively engaged in increasing its role and presence through international participation and representation of its structures in activities aimed at protecting economic interests and national security, as well as increasing technical and administrative capacities, mainly consisting of:

- Participation and management of activities and projects of administrative cooperation and technical assistance funded by the European Union (EU) and other international organizations; (EU Twinning, ITMS, Comobilion, Horizon 2020 + BB – SW, NCTS, Qafë-Thanë, Hunter – Border Force, EXBS)
- Participation in international initiatives (including regional ones) and cooperation programs with similar European and international structures (WCO, DG. TAXUD, SELEC, OLAF, CEFTA, Open Balkan);
- International representation of the institution (bi/ multilateral meetings, Turkey, Greece, Kosovo, Balkan 6, CEFTA Week);

VII.1. Projects with the European Union and the World Bank

The General Directorate of Customs (GDC) has participated in and/or benefited from the followin projects:

The “Western Balkans Trade and Transport Facilitation” (WBTTFP) (regional) project of the World Bank.

Under this Project worth EUR 17,600,000 (or USD 20,000,000) Customs benefits from components worth ~ 12 million USD, which include:

▪ National Single Window

Single Window is a government-mandated platform that allows the submission of information to meet regulatory requirements between economic operators and government authorities. Single Window enables electronic communication between the customs authorities and all national institutions that issue permits, licenses and authorizations, which are necessary for the performance of customs procedures, thus reducing customs clearance time, reducing costs for businesses, providing convenience and transparency.

▪ New Computerised Transit System – NCTS Platform

In this framework, the following have taken place:

- Analysis of Albanian Customs legislation and procedures related to NCTS.
- Analysis of the ACA information system for full interaction and interconnection with EU-NCTS.
- Drafting of the Terms of Reference for the development and implementation of the NCTS system, based on the best practices of the members of EU systems.

Construction of the Joint Border Crossing Point in Qafë-Thanë

The construction of the necessary infrastructure of the Joint Border Crossing Point in Qafë-Thanë is made possible by the World Bank Project. On 25 November 2021, the Albanian Parliament approved the Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. The two Customs Administrations will compile the protocols/manuals on the standard technical procedures, in compliance with the conditions provided for in the Agreement.

IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOL between the Ministry of Finance – Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Ministry of Finance and Economy – General Directorate of Customs of the Republic of Albania on the implementation of the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania “On the Establishment of Joint Border Crossing Points between the Republic of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia”, signed on 10 June 2021, in Tirana at the International Border Crossing Point of Kjafasan (Republic of North Macedonia) – Qafë-Thanë (Republic of Albania) signed on November 14, 2022 in Skopje, North Macedonia.

Project "Mobility in the Ionian Coast - COMOBILON"

Within the Interreg IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program "Greece-Albania 2014-2020", the Albanian party benefits from the sub-project 2: "Construction, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation of the BCP Qafë-Botë with an indicative budget ~ EUR 2.3 million. The implementation of this project has started in 2019 and is currently in the final stage of preparation of technical specifications for the equipment to be procured with the funds of this project.

IPA 2013 – “Development of Integrated Tariff Management System Modules” (ITMS)

In the framework of this project with a total fund €2,400,000, the establishment of an Integrated Tariff Management System fully compatible with the EU ITMS is expected within 2023. Currently, in cooperation with ACA and NAIS, the EU subcontractors have developed the software for the various ITMS modules, as well as the servers to be used for the full implementation of the System have been provided.

Project “Pan-European Network of Customs Practitioners” (PEN-CP)

The PEN-CP is a five-year project funded by the European Union (EU) under Horizon 2020 (H2020), about the network of security practitioners with a total of 13 (EU and non-EU) customs administrations - ACA being among the active partners as well. The PEN-CP program can be described as “a new network for promoting customs innovation and an on-line platform, providing valuable innovation mediation services”.

The aim of PEN-CP is to establish a network of customs practitioners, which facilitates the translation of research and innovative ideas and requirements for customs security into practical solutions, technologies and process improvements, which would help customs administrations overcome the challenges of modern customs management. customs and border security.

This year, the Albanian Customs will be the host country for the event on the 4th year of PEN-CP, which will take place on 25- 28 April 2023, in Tirana.

DG TAXUD “Customs Programme” for 2021- 2027

The overall objective of the Programme is to support the functioning and modernization of the Customs Union in order to strengthen the internal market through cooperation between the participating countries, their Customs Authorities and their officials.

Participation in the “Customs Programme” for 2021- 2027 will continue to affect the reinforcement of cooperation with other participating EU countries in this Programme. It serves as an important instrument for creating a network of professionals from different EU countries, which will equip our administration with specific technical knowledge and exchange of expertise in identifying, developing and implementing best practices in all areas of customs processes.

Open Balkan

Open Balkan is a political and economic initiative through which the three member countries (Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia) aim to increase trade and cooperation, as well as to improve bilateral relations. Open Balkan aims also to provide greater opportunities for student exchanges and to encourage the integration of the member states to the EU. In the framework of facilitating/ eliminating barriers in trade between the parties, ACA has participated and played an active role in a series of meetings and activities held for this purpose, at the end of which two agreements for mutual recognition of the programmes of authorized economic operators (AEOs) were signed between the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia with the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania.

On November 25, 2021, the Albanian Parliament approved the law "On the ratification of the Agreement on the establishment of joint border crossing points between the Republic of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia", in implementation of which, the work will continue for the drafting of technical protocols for the implementation of

the agreement for the border crossing point of Qafë Thanë, which will be restructured in the framework of the (regional) Project of the World Bank (WB) “Western Balkans Trade and Transport Facilitation”.

In the framework of this initiative, during 2022 the following have been signed:

- Protocol between the Ministry of Finance and Economy – General Directorate of Customs of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Finance - Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia for the implementation of the Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and for the establishment of joint border points between the Republic of Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia, at the international border point Kjafasan (Republic of North Macedonia) – Qafë-Thanë (Republic of Albania).
- Protocol between the Ministry of Finance and Economy – General Directorate of Customs of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Finance – Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia regarding the implementation of the Agreement on mutual recognition of authorized economic operators – Authorizations for Security and Safety (AEOS) between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.
- Protocol between the Ministry of Finance and Economy – General Directorate of Customs of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Finance – Customs Administration of the Republic of Serbia regarding the implementation of the Agreement for mutual recognition of authorized economic operators – Authorizations for Security and Safety (AEOS) between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of Serbia.

EXBS Project

The General Directorate of Customs has a good cooperation even with the EXBS Program (Export Control and Related Border Security). In the framework of this cooperation in November 2022, the Albanian Customs participated in the Fifteenth (XV) POC Meeting of the Southern Border Initiative, in Pristina, Kosovo, with the attendance of two EXBS Regional Advisors, Dawn Verdugo and Rossitza Petrov. Delegations from Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Montenegro took part in the meeting. In addition to the improvement of the business and trade climate, the security of the countries should also be taken account of, and the trade facilitation goes hand in hand with the strengthening of security. Cyberattacks are and remain a problem, hence the possibility of assistance from the EXBS program of the U.S. embassies in the respective countries and from the State Department will be taken into consideration.

Exchange of information between the countries is considered pivotal. It has been suggested to offer training on ManPad and ATGM (anti tank guided missiles). The Albanian party has requested training for ManPad and ATGM, as well as the possibility of having equipment to detect these weapons.

Meanwhile, the one-week course of the Trafficking of Small Arms ended in October. The course focused on areas related to the trafficking of firearms, including firearms identification, firearms tracing, identification of homemade and counterfeit firearms, 3D printing of firearms, use of social media, online firearms investigation techniques, operational security and operational planning, as well as techniques of interviews and fraud detection.

The course was attended by delegations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Slovakia.

VII.2. Cooperation with international organisations

Albania is a member of the WCO since August 1992 and since that time has been actively participating in meetings of the WCO Board, Committees and Subcommittees, benefiting from the best experiences of developed countries and implementing them in our customs system.

Our country also contributes with providing information in the preparation of annual reports and valuable and comprehensive semi-annual analyses of the WCO on the implementation of various laws and agreements on customs violations.

During the last years, Albanian Customs has been intensively involved in different WCO training programs that aim to invest in high-potential middle-management staff, and to expand their capabilities, skills and knowledge in order to participate actively in the reforming and modernizing process of their administration.

VII.2.3. Bilateral Meetings

In the function of bilateral and multilateral relations or international relations, foreign customs delegations have conducted visits to the Republic of Albania and vice-versa. In this framework, the work on the organization of high-level/bilateral/multilateral meetings with the customs administrations of neighbouring countries has been coordinated as follows:

- The Directors of Border Police and Customs agencies of the Balkan countries (15-17 March 2022, Ohrid, North Macedonia);
- High Level Informal Regional Meeting of the General Directors of Customs Administrations of Western Balkan Countries,(WB6), Budva, Montenegro, (22 - 23 March 2022);
- Informal High Level Meeting of Customs Administrations of Western Balkan Countries (WB6), (24- 26 October 2022);
- Meeting on IT systems, Istanbul , Turkey

- Meeting of Albania, Serbia and North Macedonia representatives;
- Working visit to the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkey
- Bilateral Meeting of the Albanian Customs Administration with the Kosovo Customs Administration - On the implementation of the Agreement
- SEED + Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (Blue Line)
- Connectivity Forum - The Economic and Investment Plan of EU for the Western Balkans
- Regional AEO Conference - Advancement of the AEO programmes in the region.

VII.3. Upcoming International Agreements

- The Draft Agreement with Israel, “Mutual administrative assistance in the field of customs between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Government of Israel” is currently under way and we are waiting on its conclusion.
- The draft-decision “On the approval of the agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania on cooperation and mutual assistance concerning customs matters” is currently under way.
- The “Draft-Agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance in customs matters” with Saudi Arabia, is currently under way.

VII.4 European Integration Process

The process of Albania’s integration into the European Union (EU) has been considered the most strategic national priority, leading the country’s governing agenda. In June 2006, Albania signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU, which entered fully into force in April of 2009. Since June 2014, Albania enjoys EU candidate status. Receiving candidate status marks a very important step in Albania’s EU integration process, as it reflects the progress of reforms undertaken and paves the way for the country’s full EU accession process.

Currently, the EU accession negotiations with Albania have officially started, and in continuation of fulfilling its accession obligations, even the General Directorate of Customs as an institution, is not only directly involved in making its contribution to Chapter 29 “Customs Union”, but is also a contributing institution to the Chapter 1 “Free Movement of Goods”, Chapter 7 “Intellectual Property Law”, Chapter 16 “Taxation”, Chapter 24 “Justice, Freedom and Security”, Chapter 30 “External Relations” and Chapter 33 “Financial and Budgetary Provisions”.

In this framework, the ACA has fulfilled its obligations related to:

- Contribution about the Progress Report for Chapter 29 “Customs Union”;
- EU-Albania Subcommittee “On Trade, Industry, Customs and Taxation”, and Subcommittee “On Justice, Freedom and Security”; (29 June 2022) for European Integration (NPEI) 2023 – 2025.
- European Integration Partnership Platform on Chapter 29;
- Preparation of the Draft Negotiating Position for Chapter 29 “Customs Union”;
- Monitoring for the fulfilment of the European Commission recommendations for 2021, for Chapter 29 “Customs Union”.

In the framework of EU membership, the General Directorate of Customs participated in the explanatory “Screening” meetings on the acquis, regarding the chapters wherein the General Directorate of Customs is contributing to, including Chapter 1 “Free movement of goods” which took place on 10 October 2022, Chapter 7 “Intellectual Property Law” which was held on 12 October 2022, Chapter 16 “Taxation” organized on 21 October 2022 and Chapter 29 “Customs Union” which took place on 20 October 2022)

Explanatory meetings for Chapter 30 “External Relations” and Chapter 33 “Financial and Budgetary Provisions” are expected to take place on 26 September 2023 and 20 July 2023, respectively.

As regards the bilateral meetings, the one for Chapter 24 “Justice, Freedom and Security” (8- 10 November 2022) and the bilateral meeting for Chapter 7 “Intellectual Property Law” (18- 19 January 2023) have already been organized.

Meanwhile, preparations have kicked off for the bilateral meeting for Chapter 29 “Customs Union”, which is expected to take place on 5-6 June, 2023, whereas the bilateral meeting for Chapter 1 “Free Movement of Goods” was held on January 30 - February 2, 2023, the meeting for Chapter 16 “Taxation” is expected to take place on 29- 30 March 2023, and the meeting for Chapter 30 “External Relations” is expected to take place on 23 November 2023 and the meeting for Chapter 33 “Financial and Budgetary Provisions” is forecast to be held on 25 October 2023.

With a view to increase transparency with the general public and to provide an accurate and clear reflection of ACA's activities and work achievements for 2022, on the social networks and official website (www.dogana.gov.al) of the institution, its various activities are regularly published, including seizures and detections in the framework of the fight against smuggling and illegal activities (trafficking of narcotics, monetary values, illegal residents, excise goods etc.), as well as announcements for economic operators and individuals on innovations and facilitations of customs procedures, improvement of IT systems, employment in the customs administration etc.

VIII. Building up of administrative capacities

The Customs Administration is responsible for ensuring that its employees have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil the strategic and operational objectives of the organization.

In order to increase professional training and in line with the needs of employees, 131 trainings were carried out during 2022, where 1144 employees of the Customs Administration were trained (this figure means that an employee was trained more than once).

In the training programs designed based on the needs, topics from various areas of customs and tax administration have been included for the professional training of personnel pursuant to legislative changes/procedures, etc., as well as the best practices in the service of business, aiming at covering all areas of activity of the Customs Administration, related to customs procedures and obligations, customs debt, customs value, excise products, free-trade agreements implemented by Albania, etc.

The experience of our employees who have in-depth knowledge and experience in the customs field is widely used in conducting the trainings. Trainings are held at the General Directorate of Customs, as well as in Customs Branches.

Trainings are carried out in cooperation with national and international institutions, including:

- TCTCA (Training Centre of the Tax and Customs Administration);
- ASPA (Albanian School of Public Administration);
- DPA (Department of Public Administration), Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Ministry of Defence;
- (HIDAACI) High Inspectorate of Declaration and Audit of Assets and Conflict of Interests
- WCO (World Customs Organization)
- EXBS (Export Control and Related Border Security)
- USAID (United States Agency for International Development);
- CEFTA (Central European Free Trade Agreement);
- IPA 2013;
- TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission European);
- GIZ (Open Regional Fund for Foreign Trade Promotion)
- UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime);
- UK Border Force;
- SEI, "Support to the EU Integration Process of Albania"

- (Centre For Security Cooperation);
- EUROPOL “The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation”
- EU4FOCAL;
- United States Department of Energy;
- AEC-Albania “Council of Europe Office in Tirana and Action against Economic Crime in;
- National Ozone Unit;
- U.S. Embassy;

a) Employment of Excellent Students

In cooperation with the Department of Public Administration, and pursuant to the Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 586, dated 30/08/2019 “On the provisional employment of excellent students in the State Administration Institutions”. During 2022, 4 excellent students were employed at the General Directorate of Customs and its Customs Branches.

This platform is an excellent employment opportunity for excellent students graduated within and outside the country, who want to gain experience in the field of public administration. The recently graduated students must have completed at least the first cycle of bachelor studies and/or obtained a Professional Master or Master of Science with an overall average of 9.00- 10.00 (or equivalent) in each of the study cycles.

Due to this opportunity, the excellent students will benefit from a qualifying work experience, which will help them develop their professional skills, looking at the public administration from another perspective, and gaining a better understanding of the continuity of their career journey.

b) National Internship Program

The Internship Program at the General Directorate of Customs is provided for young people aged 21- 26, who have completed the first cycle of Bachelor studies.

This is quite a good opportunity for young people to gain a **qualifying** experience for the further development of professional, academic and personal skills at our public institution.

In 2022, the General Directorate of Customs accepted 7 applicants to conduct internships, from a total of 25 applications. This program is based on the performance of tasks and commitments in the institution, based on a three-month work plan, led by a supervisor. Upon the successful completion of the first stage of the program, they will be provided with a certificate issued by the Ministry of State for Youth and Children and the Department of Public Administration.

IX. Priorities for 2023

Our objective for 2023 is the advancement towards digitalization and innovation via engagement in important projects with the support of DG Taxud and IMF, such as the project “Single Window” or the project “One-Stop-Shop” which will enable provision of services through a “single window” for businesses, the new international transit system, the integrated tariff management system, improvement of customs branches etc.

The Customs Administration’s main priorities for 2023 will be as follows:

1. **Modernization of the IT system for Customs** with online services and new applications in order to facilitate procedures. Identification of new projects/applications in cooperation with NAIS. Implementation of new applications for consumer/business users.
2. National Single Window refers to the drafting of the legal and regulatory framework, the governance and operational model, the revenue model and the structure of payments for the functioning of the NSW, the designing of the architecture and technical and functional Specifications for the NSW system, agreements on services for the participating institutions in the NSW.
3. Joint BCP of Qafë Thana (One Stop-Shop: **Joint Border Crossing Point Qafë-Thañë with North Macedonia**) Conclusion of the common protocol for standard operating procedures that enables the declaration of goods actions according to the “One Stop-Shop” principle.
4. NCTS _Common Transit (International Transit System) The architecture and establishment of the National Transit Application and Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) fully compliant with EU-NCTS, as well as the IT deployment of modules for NCTS implementation, including the national IT system that creates links to the common EU domain through “CCN/CSI”/“SPEED2”.
5. **Development and implementation of the Integrated Tariff Management System (ITMS)**: completion of software development by SIVECO experts and interaction with ASYCUDA for the implementation of ITMS in cooperation with UNCTAD experts.
6. Observation of the necessary procedures for the **re-accreditation of the Customs Laboratory**, in accordance with the requirements of the Standard ISO/IEC17025:2017.
7. **Improvement of the infrastructure and visibility of 6 border customs branches** in framework of the project “Entrance gates of Albania, rehabilitation of entry and exit gates in the Republic of Albania”, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, funded by the state budget.

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