

The World Customs Organization (WCO), in collaboration with the Universal Postal Union (UPU) - a specialized agency of the United Nations whose aim is to secure the organization and improvement of postal services and to promote the development of international collaboration in this sphere - has recently published the [Guidelines on the exchange of electronic advance data between postal operators and Customs](#) administration staff dealing with postal customs clearance. Such guidelines were adopted in the [last meeting of the WCO Council](#) (the WCO highest decision-making body, made up of the Directors General of the 183 WCO Member Customs administrations), held at the end of June 2019.

The exchange of electronic advance data between postal operators and Customs is considered by the WCO essential for effective risk management and enhanced facilitation of legitimate parcels, especially in today's context, where postal and courier shipments continue to grow as a consequence of the diffusion of e-commerce (the buying and selling of products and services via computer networks), which raises the risk that such services are used for illicit trade and terrorist purposes. In order to facilitate such exchange of data in advance, postal operators and customs administrations must interconnect their respective IT systems, so that they can be able to effectively communicate with each other. This interconnection can enable Customs to achieve greater efficiencies in data analysis, by better targeting suspected items and applying accurate duty and tax calculations related to item content.

The [WCO SAFE Framework of Standards, 2018 edition](#) (Chapter 2.1.3, paragraph V - Advance data submission on postal items), establishes that electronic information on all postal items must be submitted to Customs administrations in advance of the arrival/pre-loading of the items. In addition, Customs can require entities in the air cargo supply chain (e.g. carriers, freight forwarders, integrators, postal operators or their agents), to submit a pre-loading data set (Chapter 2.1.3, paragraph IV), as soon as the information becomes available, but no later than prior to loading onto the aircraft. Such a pre-loading advance data set essentially consists of the details of the consignor and the consignee (their names and addresses), the number of packages, the total gross weight and a brief description of the cargo (SAFE, Annex III).

Many countries and customs territories have today introduced specific legal/regulatory provisions for the mandatory submission of advance electronic information in respect of postal

shipments. In the European Union (EU), for instance, the new Union Customs Code (UCC) legal package stipulates that a particular customs declaration form (CN23) must be provided by postal operators for postal items before loading (art. 144 of the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/2446 of 28 July 2015). A similar provision is contained in the United States' Synthetic Trafficking and Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act, that came into effect in October 2018 (Sec. 3, Mandatory advance electronic information for postal shipments).

The joint guidelines on the exchange of electronic advance data between postal operators and Customs aim at offering guidance on methods for exchanging electronic advance data between postal operators and Customs administrations, and on how they can work collaboratively for the purposes of safety and security.