

Each year, during the International Customs Day, the WCO Secretariat dedicates a theme that is pertinent to the challenges facing the global Customs community. The slogan chosen for 2019 is “SMART borders for seamless Trade, Travel and Transport”, which encourages Customs to reengineer their business processes (mainly by applying new technologies), so to work “smartly” to ensure a swift and smooth cross-border movement of goods, people and means of transport through international borders.

The “SMART borders” concept calls on WCO Members to exploit the latest technologies available today in order to find solutions to facilitate the flow of people, goods and conveyances at borders, while following the guiding principles for SMART borders, namely: (S)ecure, (M)easurable, (A)utomated, (R)isk Management-based and (T)echnology-driven.

“Secure” refers to the need for Customs to work with other border agencies as a means to strengthen mutual trust and transparency in the effort to secure and facilitate legitimate trade. A rapid and safe movement of people and goods across borders encourages trade, travel and transport, and Customs have the task of facilitating this flow, while securing it by effectively combatting terrorism and other security threats at borders. Alongside security, Customs needs to develop performance-measurement tools to assess the border control and trade facilitation measures implemented, going beyond the scope of the Time Release Study (TRS).

"Automation" is a powerful tool which allows Customs to improve processes, services and overall performance, while "risk management" means that Customs should use as much as possible an approach based on the use of intelligence data to detect and address potential risks, such as predictive analytics, profiling techniques, use of biometrics, etc.

Last, but not least, “Technology” means that Customs should relentlessly pursue further studies and carry out further proof of concept exercises to explore the use of emerging technologies (such as cargo tracking, blockchain, cloud computing, use of geo-spatial data, artificial intelligence, robotics, and drones) in order to stay in the lead, by applying them in areas such as border monitoring.

