

## **Action Plan Taking the Customs Union to the Next Level**

### **Remarks (Feedback)**

AVE and its Members appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback to the initiative “Action Plan Taking the Customs Union to the Next Level”. We thank you for considering the following:

As highlighted in the area of the problem this initiative aims to tackle, sharing information and pooling of risk analysis expertise between Member States’ Customs are key to further develop the UCC. While IT-Systems will facilitate the such until 2025 in full effect, just as measures such as the introduction of the OCR, an individual interpretation of the respective regulation by different custom authorities will however remain. Determining risk parameters will vary between customs offices during the importation process, still enabling the possibility of import point shopping (and may be even the economic necessity thereof) on the side of companies. Under the current Implementation, flexibility therefore might contradict to some extent uniformity and predictability, which are key for facilitating importing processes activities. The developments with regard to the Coronavirus have demonstrated that such flexibility among member states create a bias for importing companies in the EU, as for instance the Customs Guidance of the Commission resulted in different temporary facilitations among its member states; clear centralized and uniform decisions applicable to all member states simultaneously would have been a more than reasonable alternative in this case, as they would be in general when implementing the Customs Code and creating a level playing field among European Custom Authorities, which despite all the formality that the Code apparently provides does not exist.

Hence, when further developing the UCC, focusing solely on risk analysis with regard to the ambition of reaching some level of protection in the European Market, to prevent fraud and to maintain a certain safety level for EU-Consumers should therefore not harm import processes and procedures respectively their facilitation for companies.

We will gladly remain at EC disposal for any further inquiries, as well as to deliver further input to this initiative.

AVE (Foreign Trade Association of German Retailers) is the voice of retail importers in Germany. Since its foundation in 1952, it has represented the external economic interests of the German retail trade which needs friction-free import of all nature of consumer goods in the framework of its global purchasing policy. In addition, AVE is committed to strict observance of social and environmental standards in supplier countries. Taken together, AVE members have a total annual turnover of around 200 billion Euros.