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VISIT TO BRUSSELS FEBRUARY 2019

Newly-elected ECASBA Chair Marco Tak (VNC, Netherlands), and General Manager Jonathan C. Williams FICS visited Brussels on 13th to 15th February for meetings with the European Commission.

The meetings primarily focused on the European Maritime Single Window Environment proposal, the EU Single Window for Customs project, other customs issues such as the use of HS Codes in transit declarations, the inspection regime for transshipment cargoes of animal origin and the new IMSOC proposal. The opportunity was also taken to catch up with colleagues from the European Community Shipowners Association and freight forwarders body CLECAT. Please find below a summary of the meetings:

13th February: DG-MOVE Unit D1, Maritime Transport & Logistics (Sandro Santamato (HofU), Jukka Savo, Roberto Alongi). The meeting concentrated on the ongoing development of the European Maritime Single Window Environment and the opportunity was taken to reiterate ECASBA's views that harmonization of data, elimination of unnecessary data and the retention of existing data entry systems and processes (graphical user interfaces and machine to machine, both via port community systems if appropriate) were key to the success of the project. The importance of alignment of EU datasets with those being developed internationally by IMO was also restated. It is good to report that these primary objectives are shared by DG-MOVE. It is expected the data harmonization phase will be completed in two years and full implementation of the EMSWE is expected by 2025.

14th February: DG-TAXUD Unit B1, Processes & Data, Customer Relationship & Planning (Zahouani Saadaoui (HofU), Milagros Calvo Vergez, Marco Masili). Saadaoui gave a detailed presentation on the EU Single Window Environment for Customs. In addition to customs reporting, it is intended the single window will encompass other reporting obligations such as plant and animal health (see below). Confirmation that DG-TAXUD is working closely with DG-MOVE on data harmonization was very welcome, as was the news that it too is looking closely at the IMO/WCO single window developments with a view to aligning data sets.

14th February: DG-SANTE Unit D2, International Relations (Bruno Saimour (Seconded National Expert)). The intention of this meeting was to once again reiterate ECASBA's calls for the inspection-free dwell time for transshipment containers of animal origin to be increased from the present 7 days to at least 30 or longer and that copy certificates, not originals, be used when assessing cargo for inspection.

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It was therefore extremely encouraging that Saimour confirmed that both requests were currently under consideration by SANTE's legal advisers. When pressed, he was cautiously hopeful that both provisions would be implemented towards the end of 2019. As both items have been on ECASBA's wish list for many years, it is hoped they will indeed be introduced in order that one "open ECASBA file" can be closed.

On the subject of the new IMSOC initiative, Saimour was able to confirm our suspicions that this was not a new single window (or additional reporting obligation for carriers and agents) but instead a data collection and harmonisation project at Member State level and above. He also reaffirmed that plant and animal health reporting would eventually be covered in the Customs Single Window project (see above).

15th February: DG-TAXUD, Unit A2, Customs Legislation (Luc Goorman (Team Leader), Agnes Nagy). The meeting discussed a number of outstanding items that had been the subject of communication between ECASBA and Susanne Aigner, (HofU A2), including the use of HS-Codes in transit declarations, the responsibility of the agent for customs declarations, the e-Manifest project and ICS 2.0. Unfortunately Aigner was overseas but these issues were discussed in detail with Goorman and Nagy. On the specific issue of the use of HS-Codes, it appears that they are already in common use in some MS whilst not in others. Goorman and Nagy confirmed Aigner's previous advice that NCTS will make the use of HS Codes, (probably HS6), mandatory but this is not expected to be operational until at least 2021 or 2023, so there is time to adapt current practices. A transit simplification for maritime and air transport known as the ETD ("electronic transport document as a transit declaration used for maritime and air transit") allows a waiver from that obligation and is suitable for use by ship agents. ECASBA associations are therefore recommended to discuss this simplification with their national customs contacts.

The opportunity was also taken to meet with colleagues from ECSA, (Martin Doorsman (Secretary General) and Lieselot Marinus (Director, Shipping & Trade Policy)) and CLECAT (Dominique Willems (Senior Manager - Customs and Indirect Taxation, Digitalisation and IT)). ECSA also supported ECASBA on transshipment of cargoes of animal origin and was pleased to note the positive outcome of the action. They are also resurrecting European Shipping Week in 2020 and ECASBA is once again represented on the Steering Committee. ECASBA has recently been in close cooperation with Willems on various customs issues including the "Box 18" issue in transit documents. The ECASBA Chair has also worked closely with him in his past role as a Dutch customs expert. The opportunity to meet with colleagues from other associations was very useful and added to the positive outcome of this visit.

ECASBA will continue to monitor all relevant matters in relation to EU maritime policy and to fully represent the views of its members as, where, and at whatever level, is necessary.