



Cabinet Office

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Title: Note of meeting

Subject: UK / Belgium Border Industry Facilitation Committee (BIFCom)

Date: 25 October 2021

Presentation: British Embassy Belgium and the Belgian administrations

Background: The 3rd joint UK / Belgium BIFCom was held 25 October 2021 to discuss technical issues arising from goods moving between GB and Belgium and plan ahead for the implementation of phased controls for GB imports into 2022.

Executive summary- BPDG reflections:

- To investigate whether the transaction code RRE can still go ahead from 1 Jan instead of C21. **Action: HMRC to investigate.**
- “Government will publish details on the border locations that wish to use pre-lodgement where it is mandatory to use GVMS in due course” - **Action: HMRC to publish details by 2nd December at the very latest and keep this group informed of any earlier changes.**
- Issue with enabling use of GVMS/temporary storage and unaccompanied movements - **Action: HMRC holding meetings with externals w/c 25 Oct, with a formal announcement to be made in the coming weeks.**
- Staffing at new UK infrastructure/UK Inland Border Locations is a concern (e.g. public officials undertaking port health duties)
- Confusion between arrived / standards model - a lot of traders do not understand the difference between the two. **Action: HMRC to provide clear guidance on the difference between arrived / standards models.**
- Seeing significant increase in diversion rejections for export docs in the EU - causing delays for traders. **Action: Belgian administration will raise this with IT and the Commission to highlight the problem with exit confirmations.**

- The Ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge joint inward mission to UK from 21– 26 November. (Edinburgh - Liverpool - Hull - London) in November. **Action: National Forum to circulate a timetable of roadshow to BIFCom members.**
- Groupage: Trials for GB-EU in place. Details covered on Microsites - gives consolidated information on hub/linear model. **Action: DEFRA to circulate microsites link to BIFCom members.**
- **Action: ECS2XL to send on full details of 'Fish' issue to DEFRA. Contact details were shared between both during the call.**

Full meeting minutes

Part 1 - customs and logistics

HMRC - Publishing information on border locations (pre lodgement) in due course. Hauliers will need to familiarise themselves.

It is possible for ports to operate a mixed model. Need to ensure goods arriving under temp storage are approved by NFU and gone through full temp storage procedure.

1.1 Imports EU-GB

Essenscia - GVMS and the prelodged model may not be applicable in all ports. Need information for hauliers upfront (currently hard to organise). Typically cargo is going through an EU port and point of departure can change at the last moment

Serious concerns for cargo declared as pre lodged through a GVMS port which may be rerouted to an inventory port. Things will need to be corrected which delays basic clearance of goods.

Sioen Industries - It is the haulier's decision to choose the port so this causes issues for us too. We ask HMRC to investigate whether RRE instead of a full C21 declaration is feasible.

RRE is easy enough to manage, but C21 involves submissions to customs clearance hub so this is much more difficult.

IMTA - Government will publish details on the border locations that wish to use pre-lodgement where it is mandatory to use GVMS in due course. "Is it possible to pin down what timeframe 'in due course' means?"

HMRC - In response to IMTA, details will be published by 2nd of December.

ECS - Why Dec 2nd? 3 weeks before Christmas. No way to push forward?

HMRC - 2nd Dec is the very latest. Working to get an earlier deadline.

Forward Belgium - We represent a huge volume of shipments - facing uncertainty/concerns on what will impact procedures within companies and choice of Ports. Need to make sure we obtain a level playing field. Lack of clarity will have an impact on deviations to other ports. We would like the hybrid model to be possible and we are pushing for a flexible approach from the UK Government.

BIFA - Members not raising specific concerns beyond operational concerns. Port model policy is still confusing, but in reality freight with Belgium is flowing smoothly. No serious issues raised by BIFA.

C.Ro Ports - Half of current sales booked through staged customs controls - suggests intending to use pre-lodgement and GVMS. (Half prelodgement half inventory linked) - Spread picture and don't anticipate smooth approach.

BIFA - There isn't a full understanding of how border operation should work - but more experienced traders don't raise any serious concerns. Procedures however can be raised as a concern (booking system).

Essenscia - Opted for pre lodged model - when seeing a deviation of transport we can use RRE process which is easy. But it seems that the RRE process won't be available after 1 Jan and it'll be C21 which is a lot more burdensome.

BIFA - Need to keep two separate (Customs process / operational process). Traders can determine which procedure they are using and can handle diversion. There is nuisance with the process of diversion, but the process is well known.

Forward Belgium - Part of the reason there's currently fewer issues is that at present the choice exists - we are anticipating future issues post Jan 1st when new controls come in.

BIFA - Can't predict what will happen on 1 Jan - we know EIDR without authorisation will disappear. A lot of people complained about hybrid model earlier in the year. Boils down to the user's experience. BIFA see issues raised by Belgium equivalents but don't feel it's linked to process itself, more the understanding of the process.

BPA - Flavour of view on preparedness? Any wider gov views on how industry will be ready?

BIFA - There is a demographic of traders who are not our members - they are learning on the job and we don't have visibility. HMRC may give graphics on it, but we don't have sight. Part of the problem.

HMRC - Extensive target of traders - we have over 77k businesses engaged through HMRC customs webinars. Traders we have targeted are definitely the novice end of scale for

knowledge. Confident they are learning and have a prepared understanding, but all will be tested come 1 Jan.

BPA - Infrastructure being built / government inland infrastructure will be ready. Staffing is a concern (public officials undertaking port health etc). Approvals process is beginning over the next month - frustration from operators but not right forum for those issues. Some concerns around inconsistencies on treatment of accompanied/unaccompanied freight and how goods are cleared through these.

1.2 Exports GB-EU

C.RO Ports - Key issue remains enabling use of GVMS/temporary storage and unaccompanied movements. Understand there are meetings this week from HMRC to address this but this is our main concern. Large amount of confusion on the arrived / standards model - a lot of traders do not understand the difference between the two. Seeing significant increase in diversion rejections for export docs - not functioning and causing delays for exporters.

HMRC - Exports - Something we're looking at - HMRC are addressing the difference between both models and making guidance more clear.

HMRC - Transit - Aware of diversions from UK - BE/FR/NL. The issue is regarding the format of messaging from the UK. This format has been changed and was updated early Oct, but not really a specific issue for Zeebrugge etc.

BE Officials - Aware of issues regarding exit confirmation. Through diversions the issue is a lot bigger - something that is a concern. **Action: National Forum will need to raise this with IT and the Commission.**

1.3 Roadshow

The Ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge - Organising a roadshow in the UK. From Edinburgh - Liverpool - Hull - London. Opportunity for live talk about key issues. Information about timetable is available and can be circulated. **Action: National Forum to circulate timetable of roadshow to BIFCom members.**

Part 2 - SPS

DEFRA presentation

2.1 Reasoning for delay - Businesses have faced a range of issues (agrifood sector especially). Wider operating landscape is haulier and labour shortages in hospitality / food sector - bringing in controls not the right thing to do for businesses this side of Christmas.

Recognising the impact that introducing all certification and physical checks on one day would have, we will be taking a pragmatic approach initially to documentary checks as long as it doesn't pose a biosecurity threat.

2.2 Prenotification - Requirement is for 24hrs notice but can take be taken down as low as 4hrs. From 1 Jan - 1 July, applying blanket derogation of 4hrs. Cannot promise this from 1 July. By applying GB-wide, DEFRA will be able to examine volumes / pressure on port health authorities and then review what will be reasonable to apply from 1 July.

2.3 Operating times at Border Control Posts - For Short Straits it's 24/7, but DEFRA reviewing various models for each port. Some ports will have extended hours to match port operators. We are encouraging BCPs to publish operating hours early to allow businesses time to prepare.

2.4 Port Charges - Will ensure that information on these are published so businesses have enough time to prepare before 1 July. Expect no later than 1 Jan for information to be published. Inspection fees are set out in OCR. Ancillary charges are a commercial issue. Government is looking at what this means for inland border sites.

2.5 Wine: VI1 documents - Subject to parliament approval, intending to legislate in December to remove requirement for VI1 certificate. Wine from EU/non EU won't require VI1 certification from this date.

2.6 Electronic/paper documentation - Delay of certification to July has allowed digitisation programme to be accelerated. We will commence rollout of e-phyto and e-EHCs.

Need to ensure TRACES is able to send relevant e-certs, but confident this is deliverable. We are working with Dutch authorities for e-phyto and expect this to come in early.

2.7 Groupage - Trials and pilots for GB-NI were successful and we are extending similar capability for GB-EU and EU-GB. Details are covered on our microsites - gives consolidated hub/linear model. Read first and then come to DEFRA if you require further detail. Action: Circulate microsites link

Responses and discussion

ECS - Fish - To send on full lines of the issue to DEFRA.

ECS - Intention to be ready for July or later in the year?

DEFRA - Expectation is DEFRA will be ready but making sure TRACES will be ready too.

Annex A: Questions from chat

"Government will publish details on the border locations that wish to use pre-lodgement where it is mandatory to use GVMS in due course." Is it possible to pin down what timeframe 'in due course' means? Thanks - **IMTA**

Do you mind sending us the fish question in writing please so that we can come back with a full response? Many thanks - **DEFRA**

Annex C: Issues / Actions table

ID	Description	Follow up	Owner	Priority
Actions				
A-1	UK Government to investigate whether 'RRE' can still go ahead from 1 Jan instead of C21.			Normal
A-2	UK Government to publish details on the border locations that wish to use pre-lodgement where it is mandatory to use GVMS by 2 Dec			Normal
A-3	UK Government to provide clear guidance on the difference between arrived / standards models			Normal
A-4	Belgian administration to escalate issue around exit confirmations to IT and the Commission			Urgent
A-5	National Forum to circulate a timetable of the planned UK roadshow			Urgent
A-6	DEFRA to circulate Microsites link to BIFCom members to provide detail on groupage.			Normal
A-7	ECS to forward on their 'fish issue' to DEFRA			Normal
Issues				
I-1	Key issue remains enabling use of GVMS/temporary storage and unaccompanied movements.	HMRC are holding meetings w/c 25 October to address concerns,		Urgent

		with expectation of an announcement in the coming weeks		
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