

Building Trust in Digital Formalities and Documentation Requirements through the EU Customs Single Window & electronic IDentification, Authentication and trust Services (eIDAS)

WTO TFA Committee

4 June 2025

Zahouani SAADAOU

*European Commission
DG TAXUD*

Introduction: Building trust in digital trade

The EU contribution to WTO TFA implementation



Trust is the foundation of modern digital trade. The EU's contribution to WTO TFA implementation builds on three core pillars: transparency (Art. 1), simplified formalities (Art. 10.4) and secure cooperation between authorities (Art. 12).

Pillars that enable trust

Transparency & information access

WTO TFA Art. 1

Publication and availability of information

Simplified digital formalities

WTO TFA Art. 10.4

Single Window

Documentation integrity

WTO TFA Art. 12

Customs cooperation





EU Customs Single Window

Purpose and framework

The EU Customs Single Window: Digital trust in action



A framework for reinforcing and streamlining digital policies at EU borders, managed by Directorate B of DG TAXUD.

Sectoral legislation

Prohibitions and restrictions (P&R) on international trade

Customs legislation

Enforcement of P&R

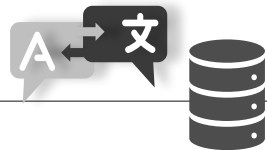
EU Single Window Environment for Customs Regulation (EU) 2022/2399

Formalities

- ✓ Certificates
- ✓ Licenses
- ✓ Permits
- ✓ Authorisations
- ✓ Self-declarations
- ✓ Quotas/exemptions



*Translation of
procedures + terminologies*



EU CSW-CERTEX







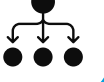
*Fully automated controls
on all consignments*



A blueprint for digital trust: Policy, legal, digital and data alignment

The EU CSW is legally grounded, scalable and interoperable across systems, serving as a digital-ready policy framework relevant to any policy area requiring customs controls.

Key features

-  Legal basis established (Regulation (EU) 2022/2399)
- 
 - Interoperability
 - Data reuse
 - Once-only submission
-  Real-time G2G checks (Launched in March 2025)
-  Scalable across multiple regulatory domains
-  Fully aligned with WTO TFA principles

Key achievements



22 Member States connected



14 policy domains integrated



150+ experts from **10** Commission services

Key benefits

 Clearance times reduced to seconds

 30-50% admin burden reduction

 EUR 300M in annual business savings

 Stronger protection from unsafe imports



Trust in digital systems – EU's approach

E-IDAS Regulation and EU blockchain initiatives

eIDAS 1.0: Strengthening digital trust across EU borders

Regulation (EU) No 910/2014



Electronic identification (eID)

- Cross-border use of national eID schemes
- Access to public services across EU Member States
- Streamlined access for businesses



Trust services

- eSignature/ eSeal/ eTimestamp
- Secure electronic delivery services
- Website authentication certificates



Mutual recognition

- EU-wide acceptance of recognised digital credentials
- Facilitates cross-border interoperability and cooperation



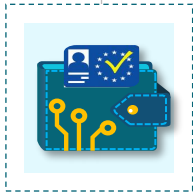
Legal certainty

- Legal validity of digital submissions and authorisations
- Supports trust in cross-border processes

eIDAS 2.0: Trusted identity and documentation for the digital era



Regulation (EU) 2024/1183



EU Digital Identity Wallet

- Secure personal mobile app for storing and using digital identity and official credentials.
- User-controlled and privacy focused.



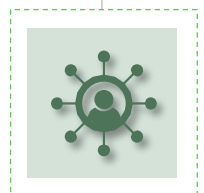
Expanded trust services

- New services, such as electronic archiving and secure ledgers, expanding the legal framework for trusted digital tools.



Stronger security standards

- Enhanced technical and security requirements ensure trusted services meet EU-wide certification and assurance levels.



Interoperability & cross-border use

- Digital identities and trust services are recognised and usable across all EU Member States.



EU Blockchain infrastructure for trusted digital services

European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (ESBI)

Pan-European blockchain infrastructure launched in 2020 by the European Blockchain Partnership (EBP) – 27 EU Member States, Lichtenstein and Norway

Business applications layer

- Apps developed by public bodies and institutions using ESBI tools
- End-user digital services build on ESBI trust and identity components

Use cases (pilots & service reusability layer)



Diploma recognition



Social security & benefits



Trusted data sharing



SME financing



Core services layer (enablers for all applications)



Digital identity integration



eIDAS signing services



Document notarisation



Verifiable credentials



Infrastructure (Blockchain layer)

Distributed blockchain node network

- Operated by Member States to support cross-border digital services
- Enables decentralisation, data integrity & auditability
- Designed for compliance with eIDAS & GDPR requirements

Other key highlights

EUROPEUM-EDIC

The first **European Digital Infrastructure Consortium** (EDIC) in the context of blockchain, established in 2024 by 10 Member States to deploy and scale ESBI services.

European Blockchain Sandbox (EBS)

Launched in 2023, it supports 20 innovative blockchain projects per year, allowing public and private actors to test blockchain solutions in cooperation with national and EU regulators.

Funding

The **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)** initially supported ESBI deployment.

Horizon Europe programmes allocated ~ €700 million to blockchain research and pilots (2016-2024).

The **Digital Europe Programme** (2021-2027) now supports ESBI expansion and operation.

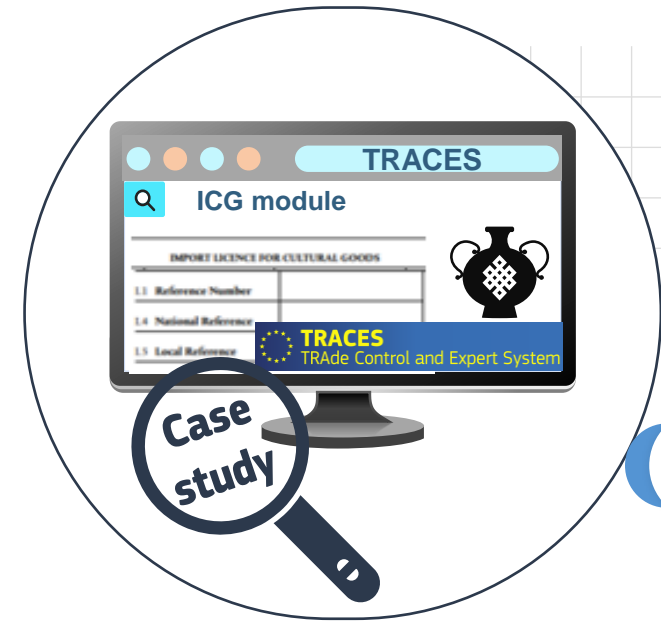




Case study: Import of cultural goods

Use of electronic seals for the import of cultural goods

Building trust with electronic seals in the Import of Cultural Goods (ICG) system



Purpose

Ensure the authenticity, legal validity and EU-wide recognition of import licences for cultural goods by applying trusted electronic seals to digital PDF documents

How it works



A national authority nominates an Authorized Seal Requester (ASR) and a Legal Representative to manage seal requests in TNT.



The legal representative's identity is verified by a certified EU trust service provider who then issues a secure digital seal.



The seal is registered and activated in the ICG system (hosted in TNT) making it ready for official use.



Authorities can issue import licences as digitally sealed PDF documents -- tamper-proof and legally recognised across the EU.

Outcome

Trusted official documents

Faster clearance process

Cross-border digital cooperation

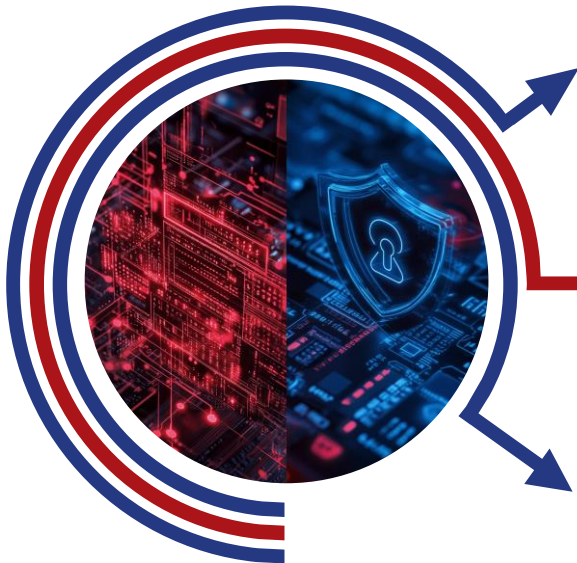





Conclusion

Role of digitalisation in enhancing documentation efficiency and compliance

Building trust in digital trade through streamlined formalities and secure documentation




 **Efficiency and simplification**

- The EU Customs Single Window streamlines digital policies at EU borders, reducing paperwork and delays and enabling closer cooperation between authorities.

 **Trusted and legally recognised documentation**

- eIDAS services and electronic Seals secure the authenticity, integrity and EU-wide acceptance of digital documents.

 **Cross-border cooperation**

- Blockchain infrastructure enables secure document exchange between Member States, strengthening cooperation and compliance.



Digitalisation enhances documentation efficiency and compliance by supporting trusted, paperless processes that align with the WTO TFA principles and improve trade facilitation across the EU.



Further information and e-learning



[Multi-Annual Strategic Plan for Customs 2023 Revision](#)



[EU Single Window Environment for Customs website](#)



[Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 establishing the European Union Single Window Environment for Customs and amending Regulation \(EU\) No 952/2013](#)

e - Learning

[The ABCs of the EU Single Window Environment for Customs](#)





Zahouani SAADAoui
Head of Sector, Electronic customs
European Commission
DG TAXUD, Unit B1

Zahouani.SAADAoui@ec.europa.eu

© European Union 2024

Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.

