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Partnerships in Customs Academic Research (PICARD)



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The World Customs Organization (WCO) has long adopted a strategy of partnership with the myriad of stakeholders that it has been engaged with throughout its existence. The most conventional approach has been in the form of public private partnerships (PPP) where the majority of focus has been geared towards improving relations between Customs and the business community.

A deliberate shift towards working together for the common good has been undertaken, burying the misconceived notion of predator and prey, that previously marred

relations between customs and the trading community. Gone are the days of 100 % physical inspections which has been replaced by targeted risk assessment strategies, leading to greater efficiencies in customs processes.

Recognizing that a more collaborative governance framework is central to customs modernization and reform, the WCO has been pursuing a partnership approach to other facets of stakeholder engagement, which was subsequently extended to the field of customs education. This new paradigm demands innovative

management techniques and a greater understanding of the geopolitical, economic and trading environment in which Customs operates. The importance of building capacity in the field of Customs education was recognized by the WCO and a commitment was made to ensure and maintain such activities to the highest professional standards. In 2005 the WCO initiated a series of meetings with universities and academic institutions, laying the foundation for Partnerships in Customs Academic Research (PICARD).

International Network of Customs Universities (INCU)

In May 2005, the WCO Secretariat initiated informal meetings with various universities and research institutes at their headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. Discussions were held around the possibilities of co-operation between Customs and the academic community within the context of capacity building. The meeting announced the establishment of the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU).

Established to promote the academic standing of the Customs profession across the world, the INCU is committed to progressively expanding its global network and advancing the collective interests of its members and affiliates. The INCU is regarded as the WCO's conduit to academia and is managed by a group of academic stalwarts, comprising the Management Committee. The Management Committee is supported by the INCU Secretariat and is provided with strategic and advisory support by the INCU Advisory Board.

The INCU serves as a single contact point for the WCO and other international organizations to engage with universities and research institutes that are active in the field of Customs research, education and training.



Designed to provide a global resource for governments and the private sector, the INCU is also considered as an educational source for students wishing to further their knowledge in the field of Customs management and administration, and international trade and logistics management.

As an international not-for-profit organization, the INCU is currently comprised of over 200 members and affiliates, with eligibility criteria extending to any natural person or organisation with an active interest in Customs-related activities. The eligibility criteria for the INCU varies according to defined categories, that grant certain benefits and attract different annual fees for each membership category.

Membership to the INCU is based on the following categories:

Affiliate Academic Institution; Affiliate Non-Academic Institution; Institutional Member; Individual Member and Young/Student Member.

By categorizing and targeting specific interest groups, the INCU aims to raise the academic profile of the customs profession through a comprehensive strategy. Through the development and promotion of educational programs, the INCU combines academic and applied research, with intellectual input from this network to advance its strategic decision making, ensuring relevance and continuity.

PICARD Professional Standards

In collaboration with the INCU, the WCO has developed first draft international standards of recognition for Customs related education. The Picard Professional Standards are intended to provide WCO recognition to qualifying curricula and graduates from a cross-section of participating academia.

The **INCU Management Committee** works in close cooperation with the **WCO Capacity Building Directorate** and **WCO Research Unit** to promote the academic standing of the Customs profession.

PICARD Conferences

The annual Picard Conference is a joint initiative of the WCO and the INCU, which had its inaugural in 2006 in Brussels, Belgium. Since inception, there has been a total of 14 PICARD Conferences that have been successfully staged in major cities across the globe. The Picard Conference provides an international platform where participants can share their research and interact with their governments, as well as commercial and academic counterparts from around the world.

This annual event has been previously held in:

- 2006 – Brussels, Belgium
- 2007 – Brussels, Belgium
- 2008 – Shanghai, China
- 2009 – San Jose, Costa Rica
- 2010 – Abu Dhabi, UAE
- 2011 – Geneva, Switzerland
- 2012 – Marrakesh, Morocco
- 2013 – St. Petersburg, Russia
- 2014 – Puebla, Mexico



- 2015 – Baku, Azerbaijan
- 2016 – Manila, Philippines
- 2017 – Hammamet, Tunisia
- 2018 – Malatya, Turkey
- 2019 – Skopje, North Macedonia

The 14th annual WCO PICARD Conference

The 14th staging of the annual WCO PICARD Conference took place from 22 to 24 October 2019 in Skopje, North Macedonia and was organised by the WCO and hosted by the Customs Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia.

In response to the Call for Papers, over 80 papers were submitted for an opportunity to present at the Picard Conference, which welcomed some 240 participants from approximately 50 countries across the globe. The Conference saw more than 40 presentations by high-level speakers from academic, governmental, and private sector entities, including think-tanks. The 2019 Picard Conference largely focused on Big Data analytics and emphasized its potential use by Customs, particularly noting cross-border e-commerce. The opportunities and challenges surrounding Big Data were discussed, looking at strategies for coordination and cooperation among customs and all its stakeholders at borders, based on their abilities to foster connectivity.

Dr. Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the WCO, noted that “there is a need for cooperation between business and academia on Big Data supported by a dialogue with the global Customs community.” In his address to the Conference, Dr. Mikuriya also outlined his reflections on how Customs, with its long-standing experience of a computerized approach to risk analysis, is a prime domain for the Big Data Revolution.

The three (3) day Conference saw presentations on various topics from successfully selected submissions from a wide cross section of entities, as well as a Youth Forum which facilitated discussions on topics pertaining to Customs, including future career possibilities in Customs and the International Trade Arena.

Of significant importance was the meritorious research paper submitted by the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA)’s **Troy Thomas, Customs Supervisor**, on the topic

The Jamaica Customs Agency's PICARD Conference submission was successfully presented in Skopje, North Macedonia in 2019 and was recognized as Meritorious by the PICARD Scientific Board

'Assessing the Development, Risk and Opportunities of Cross Border E-Commerce in Developing Countries'.

Mrs. Velma Ricketts Walker, CEO/Commissioner of the Jamaica Customs Agency, being a proud participant, took the opportunity to officially announce that the JCA would host the next PICARD Conference and would be pleased to welcome participants to Jamaica in 2020. The JCA has since taken steps to foster a research driven culture through capacity building, which will serve to support the policy and strategic direction of the Customs administration.

International Liaison's TradeBeat

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The International and Industry Liaison Unit is committed to raising the level of awareness on topics relating to the Caribbean Community, as well as issues concerning the wider topic of international trade, to both our internal and external stakeholders. Our monthly newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administrations worldwide and specifically how they affect the Jamaica Customs Agency. As we realize our vision of becoming a modern Customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as our way of contributing to the vision of the JCA. The International Liaison Unit is located at the Myers Wharf head office and our officers are available to respond to your queries and clarify any points of concern.

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