

Mr. Jose Manuel BARROSO
President of the EU Commission
Rue de la Loi
B-1049 Brussels

Copy to:
Mr. László KOVÁCS
Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union
Rue de la Loi
B-1049 Bruxelles

The Council of the EU Union;
The German Presidency;
The incoming Presidencies of Portugal and Slovenia;
The European Parliament

Brussels, June 8th 2007

RE: Political statement with regard to Customs representation in the European Union.

Dear President Barroso,

CLECAT is the European level representation of logistics, freight forwarding and Customs services, an activity worth between 5 and 12% of Member States' GDP. Our companies supply services to over two thirds of the EU external trade.

The vital importance for our continent being able to count on the availability of reliable and quality services is not in question. However, international transactions and high level negotiations with important – sometimes challenging – international counterparts, such as the US, Russia, China and others, suggest that our trade needs qualified and certain references, which can provide expert information and adamantly reliable support when needed. More often than people may think, such expert guidance has been provided by our companies both in traders' and public interests.

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The EU has decided to review its Customs rules in a comprehensive manner and this occasion has been understood by EU traders – and our Members in particular – as a unique opportunity to create a harmonised single EU Customs area, mirroring the single EU internal market. Starting from noticeable and understandable differences, our national federations managed to come to a constructive common position. The hard work done in the approximation of the existing differences has remarkable value. For this reason Clecat made its views very clear over two years ago on this topic.

In the meantime, a complex system of legal provisions has been prepared and tabled. EU institutions are actively engaged in the process of their approval and implementation. CLECAT has been invited to follow this process at all levels and has provided its expertise, wherever appropriate.

Much to our concern, the proposal of a pan-EU simple and robust accreditation system for the role of Customs representative was not embraced by the EU Commission in the early stages of the process. In the co-decision procedure however both the Parliament and the Council have proposed to significantly modify the original text in a way which we daresay contains now in principle the very concepts which we hoped to see adopted.

The Commission did not see fit to agree with those proposals thus far, but we believe this attitude needs some further elaboration. The clear compromise solution which would provide for a “win-win” political settlement, in favour of EU trade without creating excessive bureaucracy, is before our eyes. We are sure an expert politician cannot fail to see the advantages of a historical step in the direction of EU cohesion and integration, which would be welcomed by 100% of the represented industry.

For the above reasons our policy making structure has decided to produce the attached public statement and to offer it for public deliberation. We sincerely hope the Commission, in concert with the other EU institutions, will find our suggestions constructive. We thought it was appropriate, in line with our statutory remit and helpful to provide you with the opportunity to receive the attached information first hand.

Next year CLECAT will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. We hope we can do so “together” in finding a harmonious framework for EU trade to successfully compete in global markets with sustainable and orderly paradigms and methods.

Yours sincerely.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jean Claude Delen', enclosed within a faint circular outline.

Jean Claude Delen
President of CLECAT