

EDITORIAL

Editorial

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At the WCO Capacity Building Conference held in Brussels in February this year, I highlighted the need to review the WCO Professional Standards. These Standards define the knowledge, skills and competencies required of customs professionals and serve as a framework for the design and formal recognition of academic programs by the WCO.

While the Standards were last updated in 2019 to reflect the dynamic environment in which Customs operates, the pace and breadth of change since then have been substantial. To remain relevant and effective, both the Standards and the associated academic programs must evolve accordingly.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the critical need for improved emergency preparedness and disaster management, significantly disrupting cross-border movements. Yet, this is only one of many developments that have shaped the WCO agenda over the past six years. The digital transformation of global trade has been particularly pronounced, with technologies such as big data, data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, the Internet of Things, blockchain and biometrics revolutionising the way information is generated, shared, and applied – much like containerisation reshaped logistics in the 1960s and 1970s.

As the principal regulatory interface for international trade, Customs must assess and adopt these technologies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of both trade and its regulation. Other significant shifts have occurred in areas such as e-commerce and its business models, environmental sustainability and the Green Customs agenda, gender equality and diversity, transnational organised crime and strategic export controls. These developments also demand new capabilities and perspectives from customs professionals across the public and private sectors. It is clear that the current Professional Standards no longer fully reflect the competencies required to navigate this rapidly evolving landscape. A comprehensive review is therefore essential – a need now acknowledged by

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the WCO and its member administrations. The editorial board of the World Customs Journal, together with the INCU management team, looks forward to collaborating closely with the WCO on this important initiative.

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