Bulka Dziyana Ramanauna, Smaliakova Katsiaryna Yuryevna

Belarusian State University of Transport

The research Advisor: Kolesnikov Andrei Aleksandrovich, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor

MECHANISM FOR IMPROVING CUSTOMS CLEARANCE OF INTERNATIONAL POSTAL ITEMS

Research Field:
Innovative technologies in international trade

Today, the development of online shopping is gaining momentum and, accordingly, the volume of international mail items (hereinafter referred to as IPIs) will increase as well. At the moment, IPIs are the best way for a buyer in one country to receive goods from a seller in another country without any effort. After all, the seller stays in his country and does not accompany the goods to the buyer. This minimizes the cost of goods, because it does not imply additional costs to the seller for travel and accommodation.

The more customers will purchase goods in foreign online stores, the more the volume of IPIs and, consequently, the volume of violations caused by their movement will increase. To minimize risks, particularly in the area of prohibitions and restrictions, exceeding value and weight limits on goods for personal use, and to ensure the payment of all customs duties, customs authorities resort to the help of legislative acts and technical means of customs control.

Despite the strengthening of customs control by customs officials, the probability of importation of counterfeit goods remains high.

There are three places (institutions) of international postal exchange established in the Republic of Belarus[1]. Minsk Regional Customs is the only customs office in the Republic of Belarus, which clears IPIs coming into the country, as well as ensures the release of IPIs going for export.

Customs clearance offices of Minsk Regional Customs are located at the following places of international postal exchange:

➢ CCO № 06505 «Minsk Pochta»;
➢ CCO № 06536 «Airport Minsk-2»;
➢ CCO № 06604 «Kolyadichi».

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[1] Общий перечень мест (учреждений) международного почтового обмена, опубликованный ЕЭК 14.03.2023 [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://eec.eaeunion.org/upload/files/dep_tamoj_infr/0i191/RLC191_GPU0_PINPE_Places_of_InterNational_Postal_Exchange.pdf. - Дата доступа: 25.04.2023.

The average daily issue of international postal items is more than 35 thousand items. In this regard, it is advisable to highlight a number of problems related to their forwarding:

Problems related to customs operations;

Problems related to customs control.

One of the main problems is the problem of illegal importation of prohibited goods. Individuals who purchase goods through Internet commerce may have problems already when receiving goods on the customs territory of the Union, since prohibitions and restrictions may be imposed on such goods on the customs territory. Such problems often arise due to insufficient knowledge of prohibitions and restrictions imposed on goods transported in IPIs, as well as the norms of customs legislation governing relations arising during the transfer of goods in IPIs.

Since May 13, 1947 the Republic of Belarus has been a member of the Universal Postal Union (hereinafter referred to as the UPU)[1]. Within the structure of the UPU there is the Postal Technology Centre, which is an operational unit of telecommunication cooperation. The main task of the Postal Technology Center is the development and implementation of technological activities and projects of the Universal Postal Union[3].

Over the past few years, the postal sector has faced far-reaching changes. It has become important for the Post to apply the latest technology to respond effectively to the changing needs of its customers. In this respect, the center acts as a bridge between technology and the needs of the postal industry, becoming the first choice in providing IT solutions, applications and services that deliver international and national postal services[2].

This is accomplished through global communications networks, mail and financial services, a center of excellence, postal cooperation, support and technical services.

The main focus of the Postal Technology Centre is the development, deployment and support of UPU applications. One of such apps is the EAD customs declaration application[3].

The EAD application for customs declarations collects electronic data on postal items, transmitting it to postal operators and Customs. By replacing paper CN 22 and CN 23 forms, it allows Customs to use electronic information to expedite processing in accordance with their national laws[3].

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[1] Международные организации, размещённые на сайте Министерства связи и информатизации Республики Беларусь [Электронный ресурс]. – Режим доступа: https://mpt.gov.by/en/node/218. - Дата доступа: 26.04.2023.

[2] Postal Technology Centre [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: https://www.upu.int/en/Postal-Solutions/Technical-Solutions/Postal-Technology-Centre. – Date of access: 26.04.2023.

[3] EAD Customs Declarations app [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: https://www.upu.int/en/Postal-Solutions/Technical-Solutions/Products/EAD-Customs-Declarations-app#. – Date of access: 26.04.2023.

Thus, in case individuals go to their local post office to have their mail sent abroad, front office staff can quickly retrieve the declaration data that has already been entered by the user. In other words, front office staff won't have to enter the information manually, as this can be done directly by the sender remotely.

So how does the information from the application get to the postal operator? Once the data entry process is complete, individuals receive a temporary number or digital barcode that serves as a link to the declaration. At the point when individuals are ready to send their item overseas, this temporary number or digital barcode will be required by front-office staff to process the data[4].

The main advantages of the postal application include:

- speeding up customs clearance;
- facilitation of e-commerce;
- control over the movement of prohibited goods.

Based on the existing UPU software product, let us consider developing a similar mobile application in the Republic of Belarus. Therefore, in order to actively inform individuals about the customs rules for sending goods for personal use in IPIs, it is necessary to create a certain platform on mobile and other electronic devices.

In this case, we are talking about an application called "Customs and IGOs". Every new user will have the opportunity to find out or remind himself of the current rules, duty-free norms applied to goods for personal use when moved across the customs border in IPIs.

This suggestion is relevant, as within the scope of use, an individual will be able not only to see the actual information in the form of news sources, but also to check their desired parcels for safety and permissibility of import into the territory of Belarus in the online format. If necessary, it would also be possible to exchange documents on the part of both customs authorities and post offices.

This application could be an analogue of electronic declaring, which is widely used in the movement of goods via road or rail. It will enable quick interaction with the declarant in order to clarify information and make adjustments to the completed customs declaration for goods sent in IPIs.

It may also contain a section called "Submitting a declaration". There, a natural person may use the attached sample of the completed customs declaration to fill out his own declaration of goods, if this is required.

Incorrectly filled in information will be highlighted with a red frame and, in case of any questions, a person may additionally use the available leaflet for filling in the declaration, as well

as enter a forum with frequent questions from natural persons and answers from specialists in this field, in particular from customs officials. If the user could not find the information he needed, he will be able to consult with the supervisory authority online. And in the future his question and the answer of the specialist will also be added to the Q&A forum.

The software product can include a section on customs payments. After the declarant's confirmation with a bank card entered into the system, customs payments will be made automatically.

Thus, the functionality of this application includes:

- Creation of customs declarations (CN 22 or CN 23);
- Ability to make adjustments to the customs declaration;
- Presentation of accompanying documents at the request of customs authorities;
- Search for classification codes;
- Notification of restrictions and/or prohibitions;
- Tracking of declaration review process.

The customs services of the Republic of Belarus are among the recognized leaders in terms of the level of automatization, degree and number of technologies implemented with the use of information systems. The development of a new application for improving the customs clearance of international postal items will solve the problem of the long customs formalities, caused by violations of the filling order of the postal customs declaration, the lack of a mechanism for making adjustments, not complying with the prohibitions and restrictions.