

Importing and exporting regulations post Brexit

The UK has now left the EU and the process of importing and exporting will change significantly. We explain the changes that businesses must know about.

The UK left the EU VAT regime and customs union on 1st January 2021. The UK has introduced its new Border Operating Model for the control of imports and exports of goods between the EU and UK (excluding Northern Ireland as this has a different VAT and customs regime).

There is certain information that a business will need to know, or systems it will need to set up, before importing and exporting goods to and from the EU.

So, what steps does a business need to consider when importing and exporting?

1. Determine the Importer/Exporter of Record

The business needs to agree which side will be responsible for the clearance requirements. This includes customs declarations, duties or tariffs (if payable) and VAT. The elected party is known as the Importer or Exporter of Record.

Import goods into the UK: step by step process - [Click here](#)
Export goods from the UK: step by step process - [Click here](#)

2. Get a UK EORI number

An Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) number is a way of identifying businesses or operators who export to or import from the EU. It is now needed for both the customs and VAT documentation a business will complete.

UK businesses must have one or more of three different types of EORI number, depending on where they import from and export to. For businesses in Great Britain to trade goods with EU countries, they will need an EORI number that starts with GB. Businesses moving goods to or from Northern Ireland (outside of moving goods to and from the EU) will need a second EORI number that starts with XI. Businesses making declarations or getting customs decisions in EU countries will need to get an EORI from the customs authority in the EU country where it submits its first declaration. To get an EORI [click here](#).

3. Check if an import or export licence is needed

Certain goods require the [importer](#) or [exporter](#) to obtain a licence or certificate from various UK government departments. These include animals, plants, foodstuffs, agricultural products, medicines, chemicals and weapons.

4. Decide if you wish to defer your customs declarations to 1st July 2021

The UK will let importers defer the completion of customs declarations for most imports until 1st July 2021. This is one of the biggest measures the government has introduced for businesses importing from the EU. A business can defer declarations for up to six months, up to and including 30th June 2021.

If a business makes use of it there is, for most goods, no need to make immediate import declarations for goods at the UK border, or get authorisation in advance. Instead, you can wait six months; this also means you can delay any customs payments for the same period.

The exceptions to this are if the goods are controlled (such as alcohol, tobacco and hydrocarbon products), or if HMRC explicitly says you cannot use vital elements of the scheme when you apply. This might be the case if your business has a poor record in other areas of compliance. Find out if you can delay paying duty [here](#).

If the UK has a trade agreement with the country you're importing from, you may be able to pay less duty or no duty on the goods (known as a 'preferential rate'). Find out if you can claim a preferential rate of duty [here](#).

5. Apply to use simplified declarations for imports

To use delayed customs declarations, businesses in England, Wales and Scotland must use the Simplified Customs Declaration process, also known as the Customs Freight

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Simplified Procedure (CFSP). This procedure allows a business to omit some particulars and supporting documents of a standard declaration at the time of customs clearance. However, to use this procedure it does have to be authorised by HMRC.

This authorisation can be held either by the importing trader or the logistics company, but a full declaration will be needed at a later date, no more than six months after the date of arrival and traders must enter all relevant information into their records to ensure an accurate and full customs declaration is made.

6. Apply for a Duty Deferment account

Regular importers might want to open a duty deferment account, rather than paying any taxes due immediately upon import. This will let you postpone any customs duty, excise duty and import VAT due if you do not qualify for the EU-UK zero tariffs. The duty is then settled by Direct Debit from your bank account at the end of the month instead of paying it on individual consignments.

A duty deferment account will be needed for the simplified declaration system, and the six-month window in which you can make deferred declarations is from 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. Find out how to use your duty deferment account so you can delay paying most duties and import VAT [here](#).

7. Decide whether to outsource import and export declarations

As an importer or exporter, you will complete customs declarations and processes yourself, or appoint an intermediary. You can purchase commercial declarations software which will enable you to complete your declarations and file with the UK [National Export System \(NES\)](#). You will need to apply to HMRC to register for NES and for a 'badge' for HMRC's online customs systems, the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) and the Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF). If you use customs intermediaries such as freight forwarders, customs agents, customs brokers or fast parcel operators, they are usually approved by HMRC to represent importers and exporters.

For Importers: Most businesses that import goods use a transporter or customs agent. Find out how to hire someone to deal with customs for you [here](#).

For Exporters: You can hire someone to deal with customs and transport the goods for you, or you can do it yourself.

You can find more information through the following links:

[Find out how to hire someone to deal with customs for you](#)
[Find out how to make export declarations yourself](#)

You may need other documentation to get your goods into the destination country. Ask the person or business buying your goods what information you need to provide.

8. Prepare UK Intrastat declarations

The UK requires VAT registered businesses to complete monthly reports (Intrastat) on the movement of goods, 'arrivals', into the UK from the EU. Despite the UK leaving the EU VAT regime, HMRC has indicated that it will still require these submissions on imports from the EU.

HMRC is no longer expecting monthly Intrastat declarations for the export of goods from GB to EU from 2021, but movements between NI and EU will require Intrastat and imports from EU to GB.

More information

HMRC's Customs & International Trade Helpline which you can call and speak to an advisor on **0300 322 9434**. The helpline is open from 8am to 10pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 4pm at weekends. Or you can send HMRC your questions or use their [webchat service](#).



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