



## PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN CUSTOMS DOMAIN

JEL Classification: A20, O15, O17, O18

# MODERNIZATION STRATEGY WITHIN THE GERMAN CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION: THE EXAMPLE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF CUSTOMS OFFICERS

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### *Abstract*

*The article is devoted to considering modernization processes within the German customs administration. The new tendencies of education and training of customs officers have been analysed.*

*Keywords: modernization, customs administration, education, training, customs officers.*

### **Introduction**

The role of customs administration has changed significantly within the recent 10 years. Threads which were rather unknown 10 years ago are now under discussion not only on a European level but worldwide wherever members of customs administrations come together on conferences and other meetings.

The role of customs has evolved in parallel with the evolution of the preoccupations of the world. From a traditional role of revenue collector, which goes back to the Middle Ages, customs have evolved into a powerful tool to implement measures developed by any other policy that need to be controlled at the border and has developed its own capacities to ensure security and safety of the EU, always based in its role of controlling all goods entering and leaving the territory.

Today customs is responsible both for:

Protecting against unfair and illegal trade while supporting legitimate business activity;

Ensuring the security and safety of the people, and the protection of the environment, where appropriate in close cooperation with other authorities;

Maintaining a proper balance between customs controls and facilitation of legitimate trade.

To fulfill the above mentioned requirements, it was found necessary

- a) to increase system based control,
- b) to modernize customs working methods and
- c) to develop staff competences and

In terms of a strategic framework Customs Administrations have to be aware that only continuous developments and strategic investments in skills, competences and resources can maintain customs efficiency and effectiveness.

One of the missions of the Customs Administrations for the future is the Security and Safety of international Supply Chain. A challenge within this mission is the need for Customs to invest in the Customs officers competences.

The German Customs Administration always being aware of this challenge has developed and introduced a system of education and training which gives a sound bases of knowledge of all customs related issues to young customs officers and to prepare them for their daily work WITH and FOR business in the local customs houses or on a higher level.

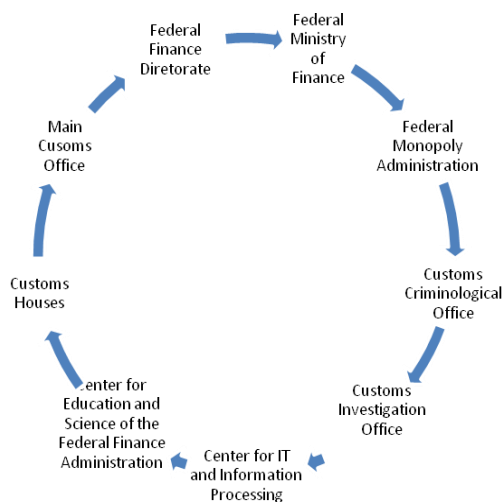
This system of education shall be described hereafter.

## 1. Who is the German Customs Administration?

Within the German Customs Administration 40.000 Customs officers are working in the different fields of customs work, such as

- collecting duties for the federal budget
- fighting against organized crime
- protecting the European industry and the domestic labour market
- caring for the public order and security
- guaranteeing the agricultural competitiveness
- standing for the protection of endangered specimen of flora and fauna, the environment and the consumer protection

Main areas of activity:



## 2. How to become a Customs Officer

Each year the recruitment of new customs officers take place on 1st of August. All applications have to be sent to one of the 5 Federal FinanceDirectorates, that is either in Neustadt/Weinstraße, Köln, Hamburg, Potsdam or Nürnberg.

The selection procedure consists of a written and an oral part. For some special services within the Customs Administration a test on physical fitness has to be made.

The application has to be accompanied by an extract from judicial records and a medical examination.

All applicants need to have the German nationality or the nationality of another EU -Member State.

They must possess the moral, mental and physical capability and they must be ready to wear a weapon and uniforms. Next to that they must accept working in shifts.

The conditions for the several services within the German Customs Administration are different:

#### 2.1 Middle Management:

- Secondary school diploma or an equivalent level of education
- physical conditions as minimum height of 165 cm, fitness and a certain minimum eyesight

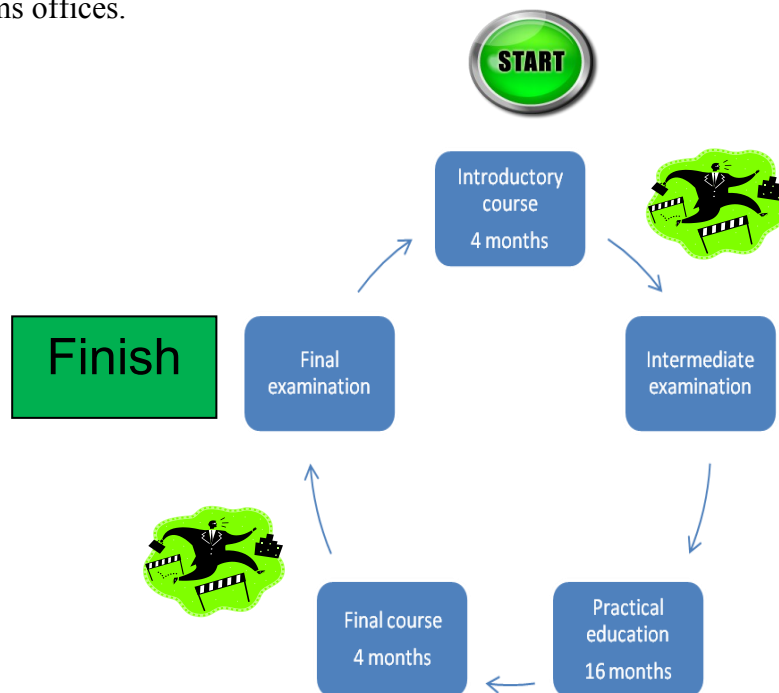
#### 2.2 Executive Rang

- Baccalaureate / entrance qualification for studies at universities of applied sciences or equivalent level of education
- sufficient eyesight

### 3. How is the education organized?

#### 3.1 Middle Management

The duration of the education is two year, of which 8 months are a real theoretical education in the premises of the Center for Education and Science of the Federal Finance Administration. Another 16 months are a practical education within the customs offices.



### 3.2. Executive Rang

The study takes place at the Federal University of Applied Administrative Sciences - Departmental Branch of Financial Administration.

This University is an interdepartmental administrative institute which trains new Personal Membership for the intermediate non-technical management level of the customs service.

At the time when the young people come to us to the university to start with their studies, they already have the temporary legal status of civil servants.



The study as such are organized on an interval basis with alternating theoretical and practical segments. The study in total has duration of three years, of which 18 months of take place within the Departmental Branch of Financial Administration.

It all starts with the basic study of 6 months which ends with an intermediate examination.

After having passed this exam the customs officers return back to their customs offices for a practical segment of 5 months.

Then they come back to the University for the so called Main Study I which last as well 5 months followed by another practical segment of 3 months.

Having undergone this practical segment another part of the study takes place within the University and it is called Main Study II with duration of 4 months.

At the end of this term the civil servants go back for another 10-month-practical segment.

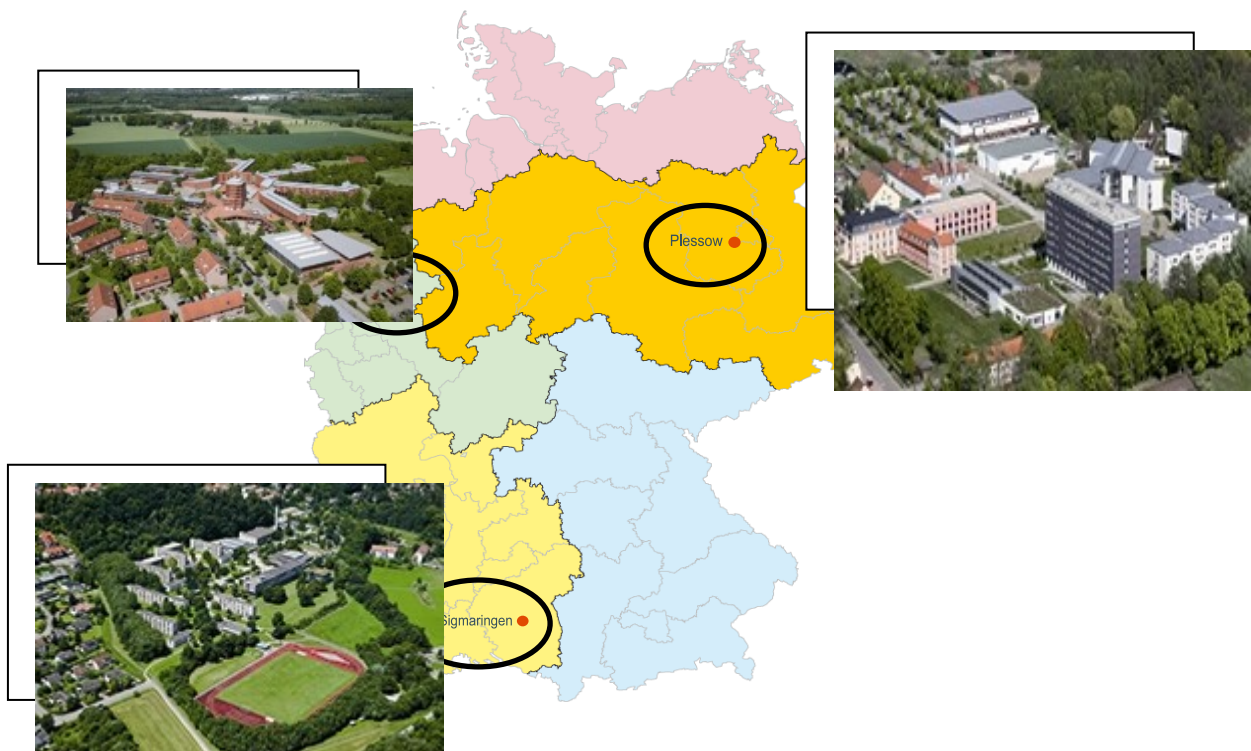
After that they continue their studies within the University for another 3 months (Main Study III) before they have to pass a university-level career examination. This examination consists of a written and oral examination and the civil servants get an academic degree in financial administration.

Apart from the European and German Customs Law, the theoretical parts of the studies within our University consist of the following matters:

- Constitutional Law
- Administrative Law
- Civil Law
- Economics and public finance
- Business Management, organization and information processing
- Social sciences
- Special career topics.

#### 4. Places of education

The education takes place for the executive rang in Münster and for the middle management in Plessow and Sigmaringen.



#### Summary and concluding remarks

By this system of education the German Customs Administration has fulfilled its Modernization Strategy towards an up-to-date-administration which fulfills all the new existing needs and can fight successfully against new threads.