**Rules of origin questionnaire and test version of an online tool**

***Background information***

The European Commission is committed to ensure effective implementation of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) concluded by the EU and to facilitate that EU economic operators, in particular SMEs, take advantage of EU FTAs.

When the European Union concludes an FTA with a partner country, its exporters can benefit from reduced duty (or duty-free) treatment when exporting to that country. In order to qualify for this preferential treatment, the product must meet the rules of origin criteria set by that FTA.

Analysis of the preference utilisation rates of EU FTAs shows that there is room for improvement when it comes to the use of these preferences. The European Commission is analysing what could be the underlying reasons behind it. To that effect, a questionnaire has been prepared to gather more detailed information about possible issues having an impact on the preference utilisation rate in EU FTAs, related to rules of origin.

Better communication and further dissemination of information related to rules of origin could obviously help. In addition to the work of the European Commission, this would require stronger involvement of national actors, e.g. ministries, chambers of commerce, business associations and customs authorities.

This year the European Commission is assessing the feasibility of creating an online tool that could guide the economic operators to better understand the criteria that need to be met in order to benefit from preferential tariff treatment. The test version of this tool is accompanied by a questionnaire to better understand the rules of origin related questions exporters face.

**We would like to invite you to circulate the link to this questionnaire and the test version of the online tool as widely as possible to your contacts among economic operators, and to make the link available on your respective webpages, at those places where exporters would click to get information about rules of origin.**

**The questionnaire and the test version of the online tool are accessible via the Market Access Database:** [**http://madb.europa.eu/madb/indexPubli.htm**](http://madb.europa.eu/madb/indexPubli.htm)

The link will be publicly available until 31 July 2018.

Please help us reach out to exporters (to the people in the companies who really deal with the export transactions), to shipping companies handling import documentation and procedures in third countries and to EU economic operators with affiliates in third countries with whom we have FTAs.

We expect the following from individual operators by 31 July 2018:

* To complete the questionnaire; and
* To comment on whether the on-line tool would be helpful for their understanding of the applicable rules of origin and to receive comments on how the tool could be improved.