

Brexit-ready tax refund kiosks primed at Paris Gare du Nord Eurostar terminal

Tax refund kiosks installed at Gare du Nord railway station in Paris are ready to begin functioning at the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December, French customs have confirmed to TRBusiness.

The new PABLO units, located at the Eurostar terminal after the customs security control zone before the boarding gates, will serve travellers between Paris and London.

British travellers will be able to claim a refund on VAT (known as TVA in France) on purchases made in France over the value of €175/\$207 (inclusive of taxes).

Customs agents will be on hand to verify, as necessary, any merchandise and have received specific 'Brexit training'.



Britons travelling from France will be able to use new tax refund kiosks at Gare du Nord. Source: Eurostar.

HOW THE INTERACTIVE PABLO BARCODE READER WORKS

- 1 SELECT YOUR LANGUAGE**
Select one of the nine languages proposed on the touch screen.
- 2 SCAN THE BAR CODE**
Scan the bar code on your form using the reader.
- 3 OBTAIN CUSTOMS APPROVAL**
A green screen will appear with the message «OK, form valid»: this electronic approval is exactly the same as a Customs stamp. The approval process is complete.
If a red screen appears, follow the instructions on screen.



Source: douane.gouv.fr.

SIGNAGE PREPARED

Shoppers buying items that are eligible for a tax refund receive a tax refund slip from the merchant.

The slip is then validated by a kiosk equipped with an optical reader prior to departure to confirm the export of the goods in the same way as a customs stamp, with a log sent to the tax refund operator.

Signage dedicated to the benefit of travellers has already been prepared and will be installed in the days leading up to the implementation of Brexit, said a spokesperson from the General Directorate of Customs.

The equipment will be functional by the date of the Brexit implementation.

Under current rules, non-EU travellers can make unrestricted tax-free purchases (including electronic cigarettes and e-liquids) during their stay in France subject to certain conditions: the purchaser is at least 16 years old, they usually live outside the EU or in a tax-related territory, and are staying in France or the EU for a period longer than six months.

In a related development, it is gathered that Gare du Nord is implementing extra passport and customs checks necessary to welcome UK arrivals from 2021.

France's Secretary of State to the Ministry of Public Action and Accounts Olivier Dussopt visited the facility at the end of July to check on progress being made to infrastructure developments in preparation for

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Brexit.

NEW CUSTOMS CONTROLS

Arrivals to France from the UK who exceed certain value thresholds for goods will be subject to fines dependent on the mode of transport: Air or sea (€430), others (€300), those under 15 years of age (€150).

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been adamant he will not extend the Brexit deadline past 31 December and in any case the chance to agree such an arrangement passed in June.

As a result, the installation of the kiosks is not entirely surprising according to one travel retail lobby source.

Should a Brexit deal fail to be negotiated, the UK would be classed as a third country effective 1 January 2021.

This would in theory trigger the restoration of duty free sales between the UK and EU. The UK's current subscription to the Single Market and Customs Union means no duty free sales between both countries.

In September last year, the UK Treasury announced that in the event of a hard Brexit, EU-bound travellers would be able to purchase alcohol and tobacco exempt of excise duty and taxes (*as a potential non-EU country*), but **VAT would apply on all other airside products.**

As outlined in some detail by *TRBusiness*, a confusing set of scenarios **emerged late last year** offering EU travellers the chance to carry duty free and tax free shopping and duty and tax paid goods into Britain in the event of a hard Brexit – but not both without possibly incurring fees.

In March, the UK's HM Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs launched an **open consultation** seeking evidence and views on the potential return of tax and duty free sales between the UK and EU. This closed in May and *TRBusiness* understands an announcement on the outcome could be made very soon.



Olivier Dussopt, France's Secretary of State to the Ministry of Public Action and Accounts, recently visited Gare du Nord to check on Brexit preparedness operations.
Source: Wikimedia Commons/Pierre Antoine.