

Editorial

Dear reader,

Since the last edition of our Newsletter in November 2007, the EU and a large number of States from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) have concluded negotiations for either a full Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) or respective interim agreements.

The various sections of our Export Helpdesk (Import Tariffs, Rules of Origin and Customs Documents) already reflect this new situation and this issue of the Newsletter provides more details about these important changes to the trade regime of the ACP countries. We are very grateful for the assistance received from our experts and many users which enabled us to assure that this information was available right from the start in early 2008.

This edition also contains a summary of daily visits to the database over the last couple of years. It shows a steady overall increase of use of the Export Helpdesk and a clear concentration in Latin America, Asia and Europe. But it also indicates that we must continue to closely monitor these statistics so as to constantly assess what our clients need in terms of input and targeted services to meet their specific export requirements.

All this is promising. The Export Helpdesk Team will continue to further improve the user-friendliness and content of the database, as well as to raise awareness for this instrument, in particular in regions where more visibility is needed.

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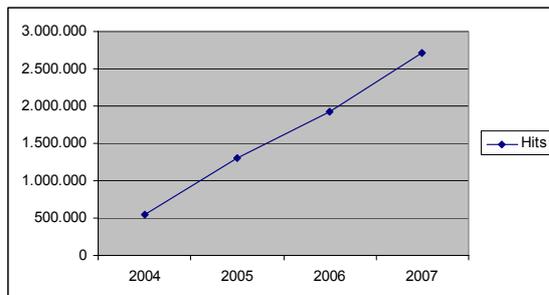
THE SUCCESS STORY OF THE EXPORT HELPDESK USER STATISTICS

With this 3rd issue of our Export Helpdesk Newsletter, we would like to share with our readers the user statistics for the Export Helpdesk. The data spans from its launch in 2004 and focuses in particular on 2007. Indeed, an indicator of the growing use and success of the Export Helpdesk is the figure showing its page requests, and as you will see, the figures speak for themselves...

A 500% increase of its use in 4 years ...

Indeed during the year of the Export Helpdesk launch, in 2004, the database received an average of 1500 hits per day. This increased to 3500 hits per day in 2005, 6000 hits in 2006 and has now reached an average of **7500 hits per day in 2007**.

Graph 1: Web statistics Evolution of use of Export Helpdesk 2004-2007

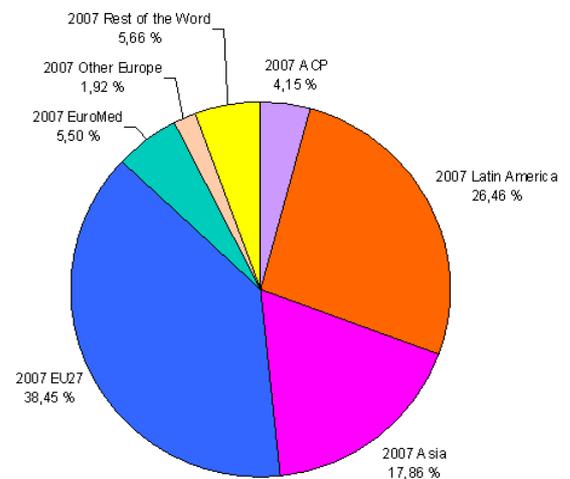


... with most users in Latin America and Asia, as well as Europe

As shown by the graph below, the **main users** of the Export Helpdesk in 2007 from the developing countries were: Latin America with 26% of total hits and Asia with 18% of total use. ACP countries account for 4% of users and the Euromed zone for 5.5%. It is interesting to note that in 2007, 38% of hits came from the

European Union, which indicates the importance of the Export Helpdesk also for EU importers.

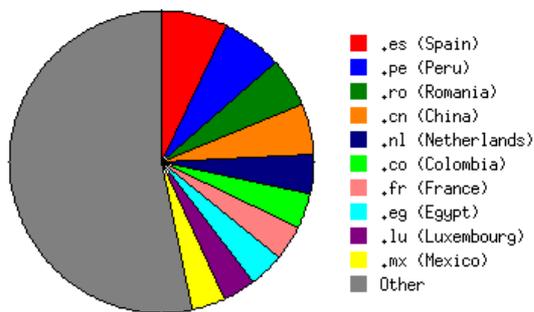
Graph 2: Web statistics: Use of Export Helpdesk per region



In each region, the use is divided as follows ...

- In **Latin America**, the country with the highest number of hits is Peru, followed by Colombia, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil.
- In **Asia**, China is the main user, followed by India, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.
- For the **ACP countries**, in the first place we find the Ivory Coast, followed by Ghana, South Africa, Dominican Republic and Mauritius.
- In the **Euromed zone**, Egypt ranks first, followed by Tunisia, Morocco, Israel and Algeria.
- Finally, for the **European Union**, the main users are Spain, Romania, the Netherlands, France and Luxembourg.

In 2007 the top 10 countries were ...



In terms of sections, the Statistics, Import tariffs and Requirements & Taxes receive most visits ...

Of all sections, the Statistics section (49%) is most used, followed by the Tariffs Section (36%) and then Requirements and Taxes (15%).

The **Market Place**, which is a business-to-business platform to facilitate contacts between exporters in developing countries and EU importers, or between developing countries' exporters and importers thus facilitating South-South trade, also continues to be popular among our users. Statistics indicate that it is mostly used to post offers rather than demands. Indeed, in 2007, 695 offers were published alongside 27 requests. Most active users of this platform are: India, Bolivia, Turkey, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, China, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Uruguay.

And last but not least, our **Contact section**

<http://exporthelp.europa.eu/hdinforequest/index.cfm?languageId=EN> is a very valuable tool, allowing us to identify and understand any problems encountered by users of the Export Helpdesk, as well as learning about real-life situations encountered in their export activities. In 2007, we received an average of **100 detailed requests each month**. Most questions came from Asia (26%) and Latin America (25%), followed by Europe (20%), ACP countries (10%) and Euromed with 8%. Since August 2007, the EH team has outsourced the Contact section to the Europe Direct Contact Centre which is a specialised service of the European Commission dedicated to responding to citizens' questions about all matters relating to the European Union. The EH Team and Europe Direct work closely together to respond to the questions within the shortest possible timeframe.

In conclusion, by monitoring closely the website's user statistics, the Export Helpdesk team ensures it stays as close as possible to its users and their needs. When presentations are made in one country or another, the monitoring of statistics allows us to assess the impact these presentations have on the use of the Export Helpdesk in that country, and how sustainable that impact was. It also helps us adjust our communication strategy. Based on the experience gained so far, for 2008, the Export Helpdesk team has identified regions and countries where awareness-raising efforts need to be undertaken.

UPDATING THE EXPORT HELPDESK TO REFLECT THE NEW TRADE REGIME OF THE AFRICA, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES (ACP)

Since 1st January 2008, there have been important changes to the trade regime applicable to the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP countries) following the expiry of the trade provisions of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed in Cotonou in 2000. In order to reflect these changes, the Export Helpdesk has been adjusted accordingly, so as to ensure that our users continue to rely on the most updated and accurate information.

With the WTO waiver covering the Cotonou tariff preferences due to expire on 1st January 2008, the EU and the ACP countries worked together to put in place new Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) by the end of 2007. Such agreements aim at progressively removing barriers to trade and enhancing cooperation in all areas related to trade. They are also aimed at providing an open, transparent and predictable framework for goods and services trade, thus increasing the competitiveness of the ACP.

Late in December 2007, the 15 CARIFORUM Countries and the EU completed the negotiations for the EPA. As it did not prove possible to complete the negotiations for full EPAs with the other regions, in order to avoid a disruption of trade as of 1st January 2008, the EU and the majority of the non-LDCs ACP countries concluded in 2007 stepping-stone

agreements, which will be developed into full EPAs in the next months.

As a result, by the end of December 2007, **35 ACP countries** have been able to conclude negotiations for either a full EPA or interim agreements and, hence, have been able to benefit as of 1st January 2008 from the new trade regime, laid out in Council Regulation (EC) 1528/2007 (the so-called **Market Access Regulation**). Under this Regulation, the EU has offered duty free market access and improved rules of origin. This means that since January the EU has removed all remaining tariffs and quotas for all exports from those 35 ACP countries, with a short transition period for sugar and rice.

The **Import tariffs section** of the Export Helpdesk website has immediately reflected these changes, thus allowing operators to know exactly what their new trade opportunities are. Therefore there is now a new mention of "Economic Partnership Agreements" next to the new tariff preferences, replacing the previous "ACP AFRIC. CARIB. PACIFIC." wording.

Subsequently, the **Customs Documents** section of the Export Helpdesk website has also been updated, by adding an important note informing users of the change of regime.

CUSTOMS DOCUMENTS

2 . Preferential duty regime for ACP countries

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please note that **concerning ACP countries**, there are important changes since **1 January 2008**, following the expiry of the trade provisions of the Cotonou Agreement.

Those ACP countries, which have concluded negotiations on an agreement establishing or leading to the establishment of an **Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)** are listed in Annex 1 of Council Regulation 1528/2007 (EPA Market Access Regulation). Products originating in those countries will benefit from the trade regime set out in that Regulation until further notice.

Products originating in **ACP countries who have not yet concluded the relevant negotiations** and are not listed in Annex 1 of Regulation 1528/2007 of 20 December 2007 (EPA Market Access Regulation), will benefit from the trade regime established by the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Regulation, including the specific regime "Everything But Arms" for the Least Developed Countries. So **please refer to the GSP section**.

[EPA Market Access Regulation](#)

[List of the beneficiary countries of the EPA Market Access Regulation](#)

[Documentary requirements under the Market Access Regulation](#)

The **Rules of Origin** section has also been adjusted and updated.

RULES OF ORIGIN

This section provides information concerning preferential origin rules. It lays down the specific conditions that need to be met if goods are to qualify for advantageous tariff treatment, otherwise the full duties are applicable.

Input Form

Select a regime EPA Market Access Regulation ▼

Introductory Notes View

Enter a product code (2,4 digits) Browse or Search View

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please note that concerning **ACP countries**, there are important changes since **1 January 2008**, following the expiry of the trade provisions of the Cotonou Agreement.

Those ACP countries, which have concluded negotiations on an agreement establishing or leading to the establishment of an **Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)** are listed in **Annex I** of Council Regulation 1528/2007 of 20 December 2007 (**EPA Market Access Regulation**). Products originating in those countries will benefit from the trade regime set out in that Regulation until further notice. The **rules of origin** applicable to imports made under this Regulation should for a transitional period be those **laid down in Annex II to this Regulation**.

Products originating in **ACP countries, who have not yet concluded the relevant negotiations** and are not listed in Annex 1 of Regulation 1528/2007 (EPA Market Access Regulation), will benefit from the trade regime established by the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Regulation. So **please refer to the GSP rules**.

As regards the **other ACP countries**, with whom negotiations are still ongoing and therefore are not (yet) benefiting from the above mentioned Market Access Regulation, they receive the tariff regime

established under the **Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)** Regulation. Actually, 32 of these GSP beneficiary countries already are able to receive full access to European markets (with a short

transition period for sugar and rice) as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), thanks to the "Everything But Arms" initiative.

For those countries who have changed regime and are now benefiting from the GSP, the Export Helpdesk is a very valuable instrument allowing them to get a clear overview of all GSP requirements.

In the months ahead, as negotiations on the Economic Partnership Agreements

proceed, the EH team will make the necessary changes to the Export Helpdesk website so as to ensure that the database is always up-to-date and provides the most reliable information to its users.

In this respect the next step will be the inclusion of the new provisions of the **EU-CARIFORM Economic Partnership Agreement**, initialled in December 2007, and whose application is foreseen later this year.

OUR ACTIVITIES TO REACH OUT TO MORE AND NEW USERS

Meeting of the Eurochambers Academy

On 30 January 2008, the Export Helpdesk for Developing Countries was presented (by Maryse Coutsouradis, team coordinator) to a group of Eurochambers' representatives, during the fifth edition of their International Trade Academy Forum. During this session, the Market Access Database was also introduced. This allowed participants to get a full overview of the two instruments developed by the Directorate General for External Trade of the European Commission to contribute to open markets worldwide.

Most participants already knew the Export Helpdesk and were actual users of it. They did however enjoy the opportunity to meet with the Export Helpdesk team and engage in a constructive discussion on its recent changes as well as future developments, in particular those that will result from the implementation of the Export Helpdesk evaluation by Adelphi Consult (see Issue #2 of the Newsletter).

Participation in the launch of the "Enterprise Europe Network"

On 7 February 2008, the Export Helpdesk team (Catarina de Barros Coelho) participated in the event launching the new "Enterprise Europe Network" in Brussels, Belgium.

The aim of "Enterprise Europe Network" (EEN) (http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm) is to help small and medium-sized enterprises to develop their innovative potential and to raise their awareness of EU policies. EEN is built on the strengths of the previous Euro Info Centre and the Innovation Relay Centre networks. It is under the responsibility of the Directorate General of Enterprise of the European Commission.



The launch event of the Enterprise Europe Network consisted of a kick-off conference in Brussels, attended by about 1000 participants. The Directorate General for External Trade organized a stand, where it promoted its business support activities for external trade, such as the Market Access Database and the Export Helpdesk for Developing Countries. The stand was visited by numerous participants from business organizations.

The Export Helpdesk (EH) attracted a lot of attention and interest. The majority of the participants already knew the EH database and were using it. Those who were less aware of the tool requested details about the information that it provides, and online presentations with practical cases were offered to them at the stand.

REGIONAL EU MARKET ACCESS SEMINAR IN JAMAICA

From 3 to 5 March 2008, Ms Coutsouradis attended the TACARI Regional EU Market Access Seminar in Kingston (Jamaica) <http://www.tacari.eu/Marketaccessseminarprogram.htm>. This seminar was part of the TACARI project ((Technical Assistance in the CARibbean for Intermediary Business Organisations) with the following partners:

- Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as lead partner,
- Suriname Trade and Industry Association,
- Employer's Consultative Association of Trinidad & Tobago,
- Jamaica Trade and Investment,
- Enterprise Europe Network of Boxtel (Netherlands).

This project, financed by Pro€Invest¹, aimed at providing technical assistance and training to Intermediary Business Organisations (IBOs) from these four countries and focused in particular on agriculture and fisheries, wood & furniture and manufacturing. Though the target was initially 12 IBOs, at the end of the project 18 had participated, including the Barbados Manufacturers Association, thus highlighting the success of this project.



This concluding meeting of the TACARI project in Jamaica was attended by about 50 participants and focused on three main EU market access related issues: international business cooperation, the Export Helpdesk, and EU food safety legislation. Participants were also briefed

about the recently concluded EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement.

With regards to the Export Helpdesk, a general presentation was made to the full audience in order to present our database, which also included an on-line demonstration to show the features offered by our website. On the second day of the seminar a practical workshop was organized for those participants who wished to benefit from some hands-on training. About 10 participants attended which allowed us to tailor the session to their needs. They were connected to two laptops so that they could perform the exercises themselves with the assistance of the Export Helpdesk trainer to guide them through the Export Helpdesk website to find the necessary information. Examples of interest for the participants were chosen so as to ensure the session would respond to their concrete needs. The positive feedback received from this workshop indicated that organising such hands-on workshops brings a real added value for the participants.

Next events

In our next issue we will report on a presentation of the Export Helpdesk in **Libya** (March 2008) organized jointly by our EC Delegation in Tunisia and the Export Promotion Board in Libya.

We will also inform you about the Export Helpdesk Team's participation in May in the **Agro-Industry 2008** Conference in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) <http://www.agro-ind2008.com/en/WhatIsAgroInd.aspx>

¹ *Pro€Invest is an EU-ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) partnership programme developed and undertaken by the European Commission on behalf of the ACP countries. Its objective is to promote investment and technology flows to enterprises operating within key sectors in the ACP States. This objective is achieved through a two dimensional approach: to support intermediary organisations and professional associations and to develop inter-enterprise partnerships.*

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