

Editorial

Dear reader,

The Export Helpdesk (EH) team in Trade G1 provides an important and valuable assistance for exporters looking for support on how to access the European Market. We know this from the questions and the feedback received in our mailbox and from the number of daily visits on the website. Most of these visits come from Developing Countries and we see by the steadily increasing number of hits that the information contained in the database is a useful service.

The EH team intends to widen and to deepen the communication with our clients and proposes to share some of the experiences gained with our users. We intend to report regularly about our activities, new developments in the database, responsibilities and matters concerning the team, special features and success stories with the view to best organise the feedback to our clients and the interested public. A regular Newsletter appears to be a good and flexible format, which allows everybody to join in and to provide suggestions on how to make the product even more user-friendly.

The attached first edition of our "Export Helpdesk Newsletter" is the prototype of a series of further issues which might change slightly in form and lay-out but which should always be of use for those looking for further information on the EH database.

We are grateful for comments and suggestions on how to improve and we are also looking for contributions and special cases the reader would like to share with us. In any case, we want to keep you informed about what is going on and we are looking forward to work with all of you.

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On behalf of the Export Helpdesk team

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The Export Helpdesk for developing countries: a free service to facilitate market access for developing countries to the European Union

The European Union is by far the most important trading partner for developing countries. The EU provides a wide range of preferential and bilateral trade agreements which are further improved and progressively extended. Despite these efforts and even under the provision of a largely tariff and quota free access for most of the developing countries, many technical and very specific obstacles remain for exporters to fully benefit from the export opportunities provided.

We know that most of these obstacles are of a technical nature and they can be overcome when the information on how to access our market is more widely spread. Building on these considerations, the Export Helpdesk was created to enhance and spread more widely the information on how to sell in Europe.

The Export Helpdesk for developing countries (EH) is a free of charge on-line instrument aiming at enhancing the economic growth of developing countries by facilitating the access of their exporters to the EU market.

The EH underlines the EU's commitment to assist developing countries and provides a long list of useful and practical information on what should be done and what are the conditions when entering the EU market from different regions in the world. The EH is mainly targeted to help developing countries exporters who benefit from the EC preferential trade arrangements.

A development in several steps...

The EH was launched in February 2004 by the Market Access Unit of DG Trade with the objective to give an operational character to the development dimension of EU trade policy.

It has been built in different phases:

► at its launch, the database covered the following sections: Import Tariffs, Customs Documents, Rules of Origin, Trade Statistics, Trade Forum and Links.

► in 2005, the content of the database was largely reorganised and extended. The following developments were undertaken: multilingual version (English, French, Spanish and

Portuguese); additional information provided in the Customs Documents and Rules of Origin sections, completion of the Trade Statistics section; replacement of the Trade Forum by a real "Market Place" and reorganisation of the Links section. A contact section was also created so as to allow the users to lodge an information request.

► in June 2005, a new section on the EU and Member State's import requirements and internal taxes was created. This section is highly appreciated and we noticed a large increase of the use of the EH since then.



What does the service provide?

The EH service provides free and comprehensive information on-line to exporters, importers, trade associations and governments, in four languages (English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese):

- Information on EU and Member States' import requirements as well as internal taxes applicable to products (**Requirements and Taxes** section: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/taxes/MSServlet?languageId=EN>)
- Information on EU preferential import regimes benefiting developing countries (**Import Tariffs**: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/taric/TaricServlet?languageId=EN>, **Customs Documents**: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/hdlinks/customs.cfm?languageId=EN> and **Rules of Origin**: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/rulesoo/inputform.jsp?languageId=EN>)
- Trade data for the EU and its individual Member States (**Trade Statistics** section: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/comext/ComextServlet?languageId=EN>)
- A Market Place where exporters in developing countries can establish contacts with importers from the EU (**Market Place** Section: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/hdmarket/index.cfm?languageId=EN>)
- Links to other authorities and international organisations involved in practical trade

operations and trade promotion (*Links* Section: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/hdlinks/links.cfm?languageId=EN>)

- The possibility to lodge detailed information requests about real-life situations encountered by
- exporters (*Contact* Section: <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/hdinforequest/index.cfm?languageId=EN>)
- A calendar of trade events (<http://exporthelp.europa.eu/agenda/index.cfm?languageId=EN>) and a Frequently Asked Questions (http://exporthelp.europa.eu/faqs/faq_en.pdf)

Free of charge and user-friendliness

The service provided to developing countries is totally free of charge. Everybody has access to it, no password is required. It includes accessing the on-line database, posting offers for products on the Market Place and using the Contact section.

User-friendliness is a key aim. To this end, a user guide and a list of Frequently Asked Questions

(FAQ) have been established to offer guidance on the use of the service. The user guide is available for download in four languages, introducing the reader to the use of each section, while the FAQ provides standardised answers to the questions most often raised.

A service which is increasingly used

The Export Helpdesk team analyses the statistics of the use of the EH on a monthly basis. The importance of this service for developing country exporters is illustrated by the following statistics: From its launch to December 2004, it received an average of nearly 1500 hits per day. This usage substantially increased to an average of well over 3500 hits per day in 2005 and has now reached 6000 hits per day in 2007.

In addition, an average of 150 requests is received monthly by the Contact section and 100 offers and demands are published monthly in the Market Place section.

A EH Team ready to help you!

Within the Market Access Unit (G1) of DG Trade, a team of 5 people is working on this service (Maryse Coutsouradis, Karine Olislagers, Virginie Cossoul, Catarina De Barros Coelho and Alda Rabottini).

The responsibilities of the Helpdesk team include the development, maintenance, promotion and information management of the database. The tasks of the team members are allocated as follows:

- **Maryse COUTSOURADIS:** general coordination of the team; strategic development and evaluation of the EH; communication and promotion of the EH; building networking with EC services as well as with multilateral and international organisations.
- **Karine OLISLAGERS:** strategic development and evaluation of the EH; communication and promotion of the EH; building cooperation and networking with EC services; management of the Requirements & Taxes section.
- **Virginie COSSOUL:** update and quality control of the Customs Documents and Rules of Origin sections; coordination of contracts for promotional items; communication and promotion of the EH; supervision of the Contact section.



- **Catarina DE BARROS COELHO:** Responsible for the Trade Statistics, Market Place and Links sections; management of the EH information provided to the EC Delegations; coordination of activities aiming at greater visibility of the EH.
- **Alda RABOTTINI:** management and distribution of the promotional material.

In addition, the EH team work with a network of Directorates General (DG Taxation & Customs Union, DG Enterprise, DG Health & Consumer protection, DG Agriculture etc...), providing their expertise and input for the continuous

improvement of the service.

If you have any suggestions as to ways in which the Export Helpdesk can better meet your needs, please let us know!

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A continuous improvement of our promotional activities

The Export Helpdesk (EH) team has embarked on a strong promotion strategy in order to enhance the visibility of the Export Helpdesk and increase awareness of exporters in developing countries as well as European importers to the information available.

Promotional activities such as presentations, stands, provision of material are undertaken on an on-going basis to ensure that exporters are informed about the EH and its advantages. In particular, missions are organized in developing countries, through the assistance and expertise of our EC Delegations on the spot (*see the article below*). Promotional material (posters, pens, stickers, mouse pads, lanyards, shopping bags etc...) is also distributed, mainly through our EC



Delegations. In addition to this, the EH team ensures the promotion of the EH through several regional co-operation programmes (AI-Invest, Pro-Invest, Asia-Invest, ESIPP etc...) and consolidates or initiates co-operation with business entities as well as multilateral and regional organisations, such as the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). In this regard, direct links and articles on the EH have been included in those organisations' websites. Cooperation is also encouraged through exchange of logo and presentations of the EH.

The EH team is investing much effort to increase the level of use of the service. It will continue to further develop synergies with those organisations and will enhance the networking with the private sector through the EC programmes in Asia, Latin America and Africa.

Our commitment to present the tool

The EH team regularly participates in events organised in Brussels and abroad. Some of our last missions are presented below:

- **On 4 June and 13 July 2007**, the trade and cooperation officers of our EC Delegations (http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/delegations/intro/web.htm) were present in Brussels for two seminars dedicated to trade policy. The EC staff were trained on the EH to make sure they will relay the information in situ to our potential users (intermediary organisations, developing countries' industries etc...).
- **On 26 June 2007**, the EH team was present at the EU seminar on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) issues for senior administrators from the Caribbean and Pacific countries organised by DG TRADE in cooperation with DG Health and Consumer Protection. The 35 participants were highly interested in the information provided by the database and several officials requested enhanced cooperation between the EH and their own organisations to make the tool known in their respective countries. Contacts are currently maintained in this regard.
- **On 20 June 2007**, the EH was presented to business associations and industries invited to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) information seminar organised by DG TRADE in Namibia (Windhoek). Around 70 participants from the private sector, research foundations etc...from the SADC region participated in the seminar. The EH was presented broadly during the first part of the seminar and, during the rest of the day, many participants from different business associations visited the EH's stand requesting online presentations of the tool with specific examples related to their activity. These B2B meetings enhanced a lot our cooperation with several African associations. Visitors were particularly interested in our "Requirements and Taxes" and "Trade Statistics" sections. We are continuing our effort to make the instrument known to our potential users in the SADC region. More information on the EPA negotiations can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/regions/acp/regneg_en.htm

- **On 24 & 25 April 2007**, the EH team participated in the Brussels Seafood Exhibition, one of the biggest events for the sea-food industry professionals, with buyers and sellers coming from all over Europe and the world. The EH team was present at the stand of the European Commission, together with other services (Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection and Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs) and had the opportunity to inform participants about the EH service.
- **On 20 April 2007**, the EH was presented at a DG TRADE seminar on beef traceability and bovine identification for administrators from Developing Countries and some umbrella organisations. About 43 persons attended this seminar and had the chance to learn about the EH. The "Requirements and Taxes" section allowed participants to consult the applicable EU legislation on beef traceability and to obtain contacts of each Member State's competent authority.

Other presentations were given during the first semester of 2007 on an ad hoc basis and on request from interested people. We therefore invite you to contact us if you are interested in having a particular training on the EH!

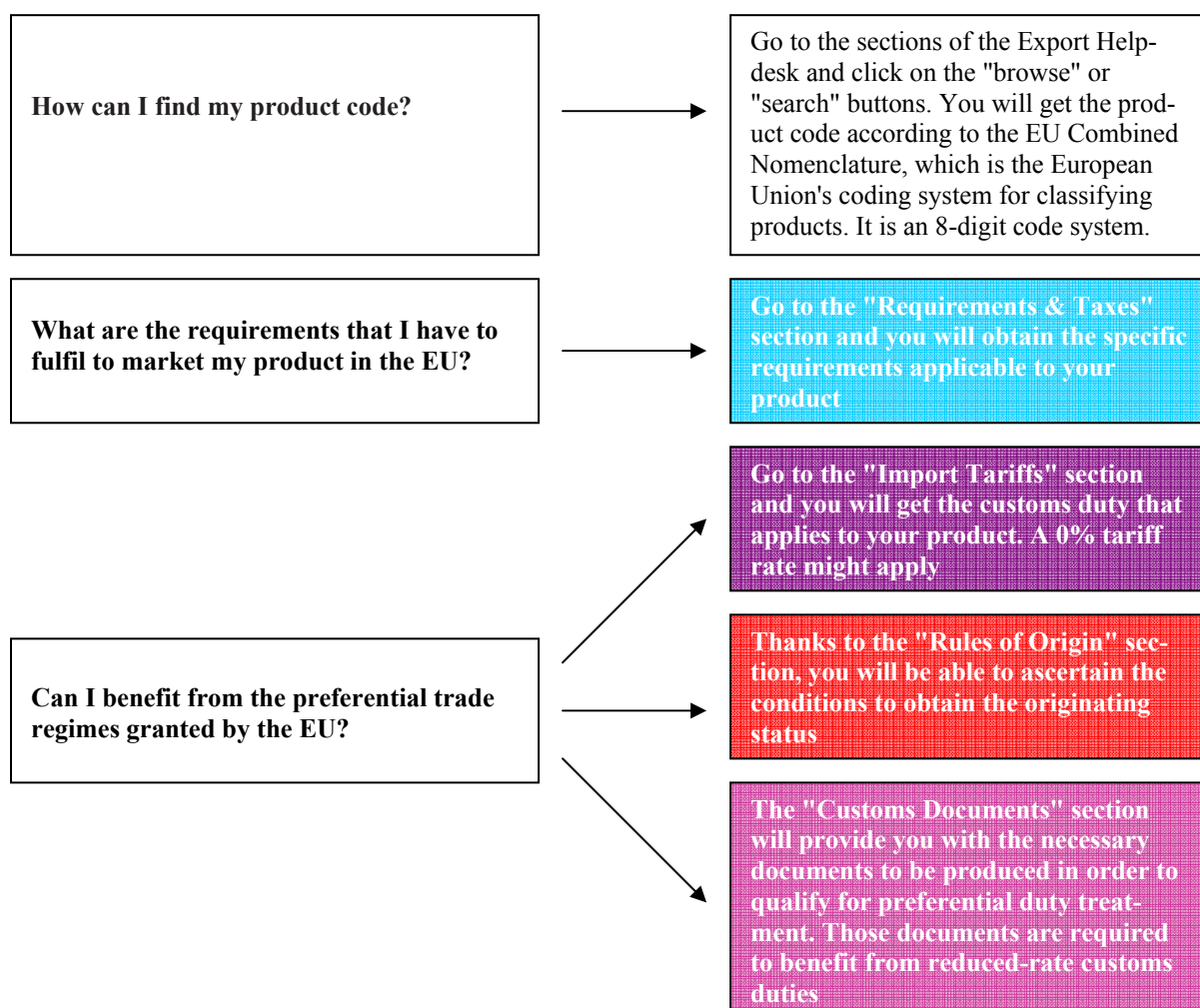
Next planned events:

- On 26 September 2007, the EH team will present the online service at a lunch-time conference given at the External Cooperation Info Point. For registration, consult: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/frontoffice/conferences_fr.html
- In March 2008, the EH team will participate in a "Best EU market access practices" seminar to be held in Jamaica and organised within the TACARI project. For more information consult: <http://www.tacari.eu/index.html>
- On 6-8 May 2008, the EU-SADC Agro-Industry 2008 Sector Partnership Meeting will take place in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania. The EH will be presented during this event. For registration consult: <http://www.agro-ind2008.com/en/default.aspx>

Wishing to export your product to the EU? The Export Helpdesk is your first port of call!

I would like to export a specific product from my country to the European Union. How can the Export Helpdesk help me?

The following chart gives you an example of the way the Export Helpdesk database can help you. The different sections provide all the information you need if you wish to export your product to the EU. This chart is not exhaustive and only focuses on some sections of the database. For a complete picture of the information offered by the Export Helpdesk, we advise you to consult the [user guide](#) and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).



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