

Editorial

Dear reader,

In our last Newsletter, we announced that we would from now on inform you regularly on issues related to the EU trade and development agenda. This Newsletter will today bring to your attention further news having an impact on trade from developing countries.

As Director for Development and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) at the Directorate-General for Trade of the European Commission, I am particularly pleased to publish this editorial. Indeed, as recently as last October, 14 States of the Caribbean region signed a full-fledged Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union, thus sealing a comprehensive North-South trade and development agreement. Though at the time this newsletter is going to press, the EPA with the CARIFORUM States has not entered into application yet, we consider worth sharing this timely ground-breaking news with our readers, including the changes that this new EPA will bring for the Export Helpdesk website. In the meantime, good news also came from Africa where Côte d'Ivoire also signed an EPA, although an "interim" one, goods-only for the time being, but this shows the West African region is willing to go ahead in the EPA process. And as of 9 December 2008 Zambia became beneficiary of the EPA Market Access Regulation.

This Newsletter will also inform you about the adoption in July 2008 of a new scheme under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which will enter into force on 1st January 2009. Though the main features of the scheme remain unchanged, so as to ensure stability, predictability and transparency in its operation, there are some technical changes that we briefly outline in this issue. You will also find information on this week's update of the Trade and Development webpage of the website of the Directorate-General for Trade of the European Commission, which provides you with useful information on a series of trade-related issues with developing countries.

In addition, as now customary with our newsletters, we inform you about our awareness-raising activities aiming at increasing the visibility of the Export Helpdesk both in third countries and in Europe.

Last but not least, this time, we have the pleasure to share with you the Voice of the Delegation in Vietnam. As you will see, our colleagues in Hanoi have undertaken a series of impressive initiatives to increase the visibility and user-friendliness of the Export Helpdesk for Vietnamese users. Not surprising therefore that Vietnam ranks constantly in the top five users of the Export Helpdesk in Asia. We hope these best practices will inspire others!



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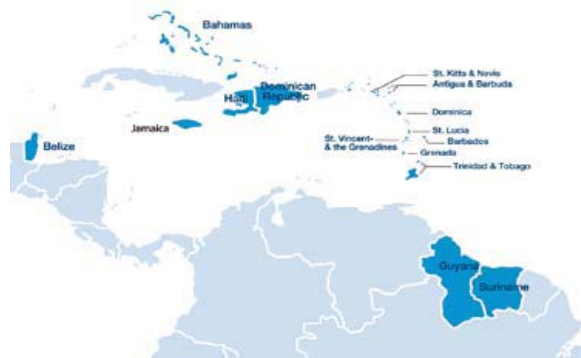
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EU AND THE CARIBBEAN SEAL AN ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP WITH A GROUND-BREAKING TRADE DEAL

In October 2008, the European Union and **14 States of the Caribbean region** signed an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA),



which will strengthen ties between the two regions and promote regional integration in the Caribbean.

Despite having initialled the agreement at the end of last year, **Haiti** has not signed the EPA yet, due to specific difficulties in that country. The EU has pledged to work with the Haitian government and other Caribbean partners to ensure that the conditions for Haiti to join the EPA are in place soon. In the meantime, Haiti will continue to benefit from free access to European markets as a Least Developed Country (LDC) under the EPA Market Access Regulation.

These 15 Caribbean countries form part of the regional grouping called **CARIFORUM**. Cuba is also a member of CARIFORUM but did not participate in negotiations.

Today's signatories of the agreement are therefore:

Antigua and Barbuda	Guyana
Bahamas	Jamaica
Barbados	Saint Lucia
Belize	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Dominica	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Dominican Republic	Suriname
Grenada	Trinidad and Tobago

The CARIFORUM EPA ...

... is a comprehensive North-South trade and development agreement, which includes a package of measures to stimulate trade, investment and innovation, and to promote sustainable development, build a regional market among Caribbean countries and help eliminate poverty.

Some **key benefits** of the EPA are:

- Offers up front access to EU markets for Caribbean exports;
- Allows Caribbean markets to open gradually over 25 years with extensive safeguards to protect local jobs and sensitive sectors;
- Frees up trade in the services sector to promote growth and investment;
- Promotes cooperation in innovation programmes;
- Protects labour and environment standards in the Caribbean;
- Helps Caribbean exporters meet EU and international standards.

To find the relevant information on the EPA (i.e. the text of the agreement, its annexes and its protocols, as well as some explanatory documents), please visit the following webpage:

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/regions/acp/pr220208_en.htm

Background

The EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) have been working to put in place new **Economic Partnership Agreements**. 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 freer trade in goods and services, and enhanced investment flows, thus increasing competitiveness of the ACP.

The ACP countries decided themselves on the **regional groupings** for EPA negotiations. There are 6 such groups, four in Africa, one in the Pacific and the one in the Caribbean:

- **West Africa**

- **Central Africa**
- **Eastern and Southern Africa**
- **Southern African Development Community**
- **Pacific**
- **Caribbean**

Negotiations of an Economic Partnership Agreement with the other regional groupings are under way.



The Export Helpdesk and the EPA with the Caribbean States

In order to ensure that the Export Helpdesk will be up-to-date with the new trade provisions applicable to the Caribbean States as a result of the signature of the Economic Partnership Agreement, the Export Helpdesk

Team has revised the Customs Documents and Rules of Origin Sections, to ensure that our website will be up to date at the same time as the EPA enters into provisional application.

This will allow economic operators to be aware of the change and have access to the most accurate possible information, so as to avoid any disruptions in trade operations.



**FROM 1ST JANUARY 2009
A NEW GENERAL PREFERENCES SCHEME WILL ENTER INTO FORCE**

Background

The European Community was the first to implement a Generalised Tariff Preferences (GSP) scheme in 1971. The primary objective of the GSP is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development and good governance. Tariff preferences on the EU market enable Developing Countries to participate more fully in international trade and generate additional export revenue to support implementation of their own sustainable development and poverty reduction policy strategies.

The EU's GSP grants products imported from **176 developing countries and territories** either duty-free access or a tariff reduction, depending on the GSP arrangement a country enjoys:

- the **general GSP arrangement**, which provides autonomous preferences to 176 Developing Countries and Territories;
- the **Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance** (known as the GSP+), which offers additional preferences to support vulnerable developing countries while assuming the special burdens and responsibilities resulting from the ratification and implementation of international conventions on human and labour rights, environmental protection and good governance; and
- the **Everything But Arms** arrangement, which provides Duty-Free, Quota-Free access for the 50 Least-Developed Countries (LDCs).

The current GSP scheme, entered into force on 1 January 2006, expires on 31st December 2008. A successor GSP regulation applying a new GSP scheme for the period from 1st January 2009 to 31st December 2011 was adopted in July 2008.

The new regime from 1st January 2009

The new Regulation ensures that the **substance of the scheme remains unchanged**. This also responds to desires expressed by users of the

scheme to ensure continued stability, predictability and transparency in the operation of the scheme. Nevertheless, while maintaining substantive continuity, the new Regulation implements a number of **technical changes** in the scheme, either to simplify the language or to take account of evolutions in relevant trade data over the most recent period.

One of the most relevant changes ...

... that will apply from January 2009 result from the operation of the **graduation mechanism**, which triggers either a **suspension of preferences** (graduation) or their **re-establishment** (de-graduation) whenever an individual country's performance on the EU market over three years exceeds or falls below a set threshold. These calculations are made by reference to the Sections in the Combined Nomenclature. The graduation mechanism is only relevant for beneficiaries of the GSP general scheme and GSP+. Least Developed Countries' access under EBA is not at all affected.

As a result of the calculations made on trade data for the period 2004-06, GSP preferences will be re-established for six countries (de-graduation):

- **Algeria**, Section V (*Mineral products*)
- **India**, Section XIV (*Jewellery, pearls, precious metals and stones*)
- **Indonesia**, Section IX (*Wood and articles of wood*)
- **Russia**, Section VI (*Products of the chemical or allied industries*) and Section XV (*Base metals*)
- **South Africa**, Section XVII (*Transport equipment*)
- **Thailand**, Section XVII (*Transport equipment*)

GSP preferences will be suspended (graduation) for one country:

- **Vietnam**, Section XII (*Footwear, headgear, umbrellas, sun umbrellas, artificial flowers, etc...*).

The net effect of these adjustments represents additional preferences to developing countries of an approximate net value of at least €160 million in terms of nominal duty loss to the EU.

GSP+ (Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance)

We are pleased to announce with this Newsletter that the European Commission adopted on 9 December 2008 a decision on the countries who meet the criteria to qualify for GSP+ benefits from January 2009. GSP+ preferences will therefore apply for imports from the following **16 countries from 1 January 2009** normally until the end of 2011: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

Compared to the present list of GSP+ beneficiaries (under the GSP Regulation which expires at the end of this year), three additional countries have qualified for GSP+ preferences, namely **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Paraguay**. Imports from these countries will therefore start to receive improved preferential access compared to the standard GSP regime already next month. One present GSP+ beneficiary (Panama) did not reapply by the date set in the relevant EU legislation, so will therefore revert to standard GSP preferences at the same time. The new GSP Regulation provides an additional opportunity for **applications in mid-2010**, half-way through the life of the Regulation. This is a change from the current Regulation, where unsuccessful applicants were obliged to wait three years before being

able to re-apply. Countries interested to apply during that application window will need to do so by the end of April 2010.

Everything But Arms arrangement - A small adjustment for sugar

A small adjustment is made in the liberalisation timetable for sugar under the Everything But Arms initiative. In order to ensure coherence with the EU marketing year (which now begins on 1 October every year rather than 1 July) and the liberalisation of sugar under the recent Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) negotiations with ACP countries, the full liberalisation of sugar imports from LDCs will now take place on 1 October 2009 instead of 1 July as previously intended. The new Regulation also incorporates a minimum price arrangement for sugar under the Everything but Arms initiative that will apply from 1st October 2009 to 30 September 2012.

Beneficiary countries list

Two countries (**Myanmar** and **Belarus**) remain temporarily withdrawn from GSP preferences. **Moldova** was already removed from the beneficiary list of the current GSP Regulation at the same time as the EC granted it more far-reaching autonomous preferences under a separate legal instrument in March 2008.

For further information on the GSP, please consult the following pages of the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission:

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/global/gsp/index_en.htm



THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT WEBPAGE OF EU TRADE WEBSITE HAS A NEW LOOK...

This week, the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission has just put on line a revised and updated version of its **Trade and Development** webpage.

Besides the new look, these pages provide the most recent information, as well as new links, on a series of trade and development issues, such as: the WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA), the **regional and bilateral trade relations and negotiations**, the **Economic Partnership Agreements**, the Preferential

Access to the EU market for developing countries or **GSP**, as well as the **Aid for Trade** initiative (including the Enhanced Integrated Framework).

We hope that you will find this new layout more user-friendly, and that the information provided responds to your question. Obviously any comments are most welcome.

Here is the link to the new layout is: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/global/development/index_en.htm

The screenshot shows the 'Trade and Development' webpage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'HOME', 'Site map', 'Contact', 'Register', 'Search', and 'Print Page'. The main heading is 'Trade and development' with a sub-heading 'UPDATED 12-08'. The content is organized into several sections:

- Overview - Legislation, reports and texts - Ongoing WTO negotiations - TRA**
- Trade and development**: Making sure trade benefits the poorest. This section discusses the relationship between trade and development, stating that while trade is not a guaranteed route to economic growth, it plays an important role in creating jobs and prosperity. It also mentions the EU's trade policy aims to ensure developing countries benefit from access to its markets.
- The WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA)**: The EU has been a strong advocate of pro-development measures in the World Trade Organisation's 'Doha Round' of world trade negotiations.
- Regional and bilateral trade relations and negotiations**: The EU takes account of the needs of developing countries in all its bilateral trade negotiations, working to ensure they can benefit from greater engagement with the global economy.
- Economic Partnership Agreements**: The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are agreements that the EU is currently negotiating with five African and Pacific regions. The EU and the Caribbean signed an EPA in 2008.

On the left sidebar, there are links for 'WTO', 'AND GLOBAL ADE', 'Trade and development', 'Generalised System of Preference (GSP)', 'Access to essential medicines', 'Trade and environment', 'Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA)', 'Trade and social', 'Corporate Social Responsibility', and 'Civil Society Dialogue'. The right sidebar features 'RELATED items' including 'EXPORT HELPDESK for developing countries', 'links', 'Fact sheet on Aid for Trade', 'To the DEVELOPMENT website', 'Trade with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries', and 'The Economic Partnership Agreements'. At the bottom of the page, there is a decorative graphic of five stylized figures.

THE MARKET PLACE OF THE EXPORT HELPDESK IS BEING PHASED OUT ...

Since 1st November 2008, there is an important change to our website, as some of you may have already noticed. Indeed, the Export Helpdesk Team has decided to discontinue the Market Place section. As a consequence, since 1st November 2008, it is not possible anymore to submit any request for new offers or demands. The Market Place will however remain open until 30 April 2009, to allow for current advertisements to remain on line during their 6-month period as agreed.

This decision come as a result of a continuous evaluation of our service, and is motivated by

the continuous downwards trend in the number of entries. Indeed, from an average of 90 entries per month in 2006 and 2007, less than 50 entries were registered per month in 2008.

On the other hand, other trade portals offer similar but more comprehensive business-to-business platforms and therefore we have now included a Market Places subsection in our **Links** in the following address, where we have included reference of some business-to-business platforms:

<http://exporthelp.europa.eu/hdlinks/links.cfm?action=show&cat=45&languageId=EN>

EXPORT
HELPDESK
for developing countries

EN|ES|FR|PT

USER GUIDE | FAQ | WHAT'S NEW

Requirements & Taxes | Import Tariffs | Customs Documents | Rules of Origin | Trade Statistics | Market Place | Links

LINKS

[Click here to go back to the list of categories.](#)
Links will open in a new window.

MARKET PLACES (NEW !!!)

Center for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI)
Danish Import Promotion Programme (DIPP)
E-Trade Center - Business Contacts Worldwide
International Trade Center (ITC)
World Tradeport Federation International (WTPF)



*THE VOICE OF THE DELEGATIONS***Export Helpdesk in Vietnam under the auspices of local EC Delegation**

As a user-friendly online service aiming at facilitating market access for developing countries' exporters to the European Union (EU), the Export Helpdesk, for the last four years, has gained its initial success, serving as a reliable and effective tool for Vietnamese exporters to approach the EU's market in a much easier and more appropriate way.

Since its first launch in 2004, the Delegation of the European Commission to Vietnam has made much effort to raise awareness of Vietnamese exporters about the Export Helpdesk service. In 2007 alone, the Delegation itself organized three events to divulge the existence and promote the use of Export Helpdesk in different parts of Vietnam under the Delegation's press and visibility budget. The Delegation also coordinated with the European Chamber of Commerce (Eurocham) to organize four trade seminars financed by the Small Projects Facility budget, which drew a large participation of Vietnamese business community.



The dissemination of the Export Helpdesk leaflets and brochures is also considered by the Delegation as one of the best ways to increase the awareness amongst Vietnamese exporters about this effective tool. The Delegation always tries to distribute these promotional items in relevant events. One example can be seen at the Consultative Group Meeting for Foreign Donors held in Hanoi in December 2007, in which a European Union Visibility Stand was set up to deliver Export Helpdesk leaflets and brochures to participants. Similarly, Export Helpdesk brochures were distributed during the latest mid-term Vietnam Business Forum, in June 2008.

In response to some Vietnamese businesses' comments on language barriers they face when accessing to the Export Helpdesk database, thanks to the Multilateral Trade Assistance Project II (MUTRAP II), the Delegation has started translating the Export Helpdesk User Guide and its brochures into Vietnamese, getting it more accessible to Vietnamese

exporters. As a result, those materials, as well as a link to the Export Helpdesk website, now figure prominently in the website of Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade - http://www.thitruongnuocngoai.vn/?ssoft=2&newsID=4164&subid=2®ion_id=270&profile_id=3

Moreover, the Delegation, in close cooperation with Eurocham, will soon launch a webpage and information desk facilitating any enquiries from the local enterprises regarding market access to the European Union in the near future. All in all, links to the Export Helpdesk database feature in the websites of the Delegation at <http://www.delvnm.ec.europa.eu/>, Eurocham at <http://www.eurochamvn.org/>, Vietnam-EU Business Forum at <http://www.euvietnam.com/bizcenter/index.htm> and the website of Vietnamese Ministry of Industry and Trade at <http://www.moit.gov.vn/guest/home>. Those above efforts have resulted in Vietnamese exporters' increasing interest and confidence in choosing Export Helpdesk as a safe and fast bridge to reach the EU's market, which is well demonstrated by the surge in access to the Export Helpdesk database. Since 2005, Vietnam is steadily ranking third or fourth user in Asia in terms of total hits to Export Helpdesk. This position is yet again confirmed in 2008 with Vietnam coming just after China, Thailand and India. Also, seasonal peaks in use coincide with the celebration of different awareness raising events, as shown by the more than 6000 hits in May 2008, when the Delegation held the first awareness seminar in Ho Chi Minh City.

For the last four years, the Export Helpdesk has gradually affirmed its status as an important and valuable manual for Vietnamese exporters interested in exporting to the EU's market. It is expected that, with much greater effort in upcoming time, the Export Helpdesk service will soon become the first thing Vietnamese exporters think of, when export initiatives to European Union's market come across their minds.

To contact the EC Delegation in Vietnam, please visit their website at

<http://www.delvnm.ec.europa.eu/>

OUR ACTIVITIES TO REACH OUT TO MORE AND NEWS USERS

Since our last newsletter of July, the Export Helpdesk Team has concentrated its activities in the Headquarters in Brussels. In particular, over the past months, the Export Helpdesk Team has attended **Technical Assistance Seminars on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**.

These seminars are organised by the European Commission Directorate General for TRADE in cooperation with the Directorate General for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) and aim at improving mutual understanding and transparency of Sanitary and Phytosanitary issues and relevant legislation between the EU and food safety administrators from third countries and reducing difficulties being experienced by target countries in relation to export requirements.

Since July, the Export Helpdesk Team has participated in the following events:



Seminar on SPS issues for Indian administrators - June 2008 - www.sps-seminars.eu . Presentation by Mrs Catarina de Barros Coelho.

Seminar on meat traceability for administrators from Developing countries – November 2008 - www.trade-traceability-seminars.com.

This seminar included representatives from the following countries : Azerbaijan , Belarus, Chile, China, Cuba, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Moldova, Philippines, Russia, South -Korea, South-Africa, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela. Presentation by Mrs Catarina de Barros Coelho.



Seminar on fisheries for administrators from Developing countries - October 2008 - www.spsseminar.eu/ . Beneficiary countries for this activity were: Algeria, Azerbaijan, China, Cuba,

Ecuador, Egypt, Gambia, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Namibia, Senegal, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, Vietnam, Yemen. Presentation by Mrs Virginie Cossoul.

Seminar on SPS issues for ASEAN administrators - November 2008 - www.sps-seminars.eu . Presentation by



Mrs Maryse Coutsouradis (Programme Manager)

The presentation of the Export Helpdesk at these seminars allows us to show the different features offered by our instrument, in particular the Requirements and Taxes section, which contains a description of import requirements, including SPS, product per product. This practical tool proves to be of great interest for the participants, who see it as a one-stop-shop to get information about the EU legislation linked to their sector of interest. For an overview of all **SPS-related Technical Assistance activities for 2008** organised by DG TRADE, please visit the following page: http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/sectoral/agri_fish/sp_s/trta_en.htm

Other activities of the Export Helpdesk team during this period included:

On 28 October 2008, Catarina de Barros Coelho received a delegation of representatives from the **Reunión Especializada en Cooperativas del Mercosur (RECM)**, the MERCOSUR official agency for cooperatives, which comprises the national administration of control and promotion of cooperatives and the national confederations of cooperatives in each MERCOSUR member state (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay). Being Chile an associate member of MERCOSUR, a delegate from the Chilean cooperative state administration was also part of the study tour.

For the RECM website, visit <http://www.mercosur.coop/recm/spip.php?rubrique4>

This presentation was organized under the initiative of the **European Confederation of**

Cooperatives (CECOP-CICOPA) <http://www.coopseurope.coop/spip.php?article161> representing around 65 000 enterprises in the EU (mostly SMEs).



The discussion revealed a great interest in the EH database, and in particular on the preferential import tariffs, as well as on EU imports requirements relating to Plant Health Control as well as organic production.

The EH team continued to provide training on

the Export Helpdesk to the Newcomers of the **Enterprise Europe Network**. Two such training activities took place over the past months (July and October 2008).



Presentations of the Export Helpdesk allow the members of the network to inform their own members - EU SMEs and other associations-, and therefore to ensure that our instrument is known not only by third countries' exporters but also by EU importers.

CALENDAR OF TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

Event	Dates	Location
Doha Conference on Financing for Development	29 November – 2 December 2008	Doha
WTO Aid for Trade Regional Review for the Caribbean	11-12 December 2008	Barbados

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