

## Delays to clearance formalities in Belgium

As part of the Customs Modernised code currently in implementation, all Member States are in the process of automating and harmonising the C88 document. The UK undertook a similar change which became mandatory on 21 January 2008.

The Belgium authorities 'went live' in December, but from Friday 1 February 2008, the electronic option was mandatory and no fall-back manual method was available.

We have had electronic systems in the UK for many years and although delays and problems are being experienced here due to the C88 harmonisation, the impact in Belgium is far greater. This is simply because Customs automation is a 'new experience' in Belgium, leading to inevitable initial teething problems with the system. This is both in terms of Customs messaging systems and actual capacity of servers etc.

In the wake of these issues, all trade in Belgium is currently being affected. We would however like to reassure our customers that the SDV Bernard team in Antwerp is processing and expediting clearances as quickly and as efficiently as possible under the circumstances.

It is expected to be 7 - 10 days before processing times are returned to normal. Once the automation is complete, you can expect quicker, more efficient clearance times.

We are in close liaison with our Antwerp office and will keep you apprised of the situation.

For more details, please contact your regional representative.