INFO SHEET IMPORT (FROM UK TO EU)
RETURNING EMPTY (TRANSIT) PACKAGING

Due to the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union (EU), all goods traffic to and from the UK has been subject to customs formalities since the 1st of January 2021. A customs declaration is always required prior to transport. The customs document in question must next be digitally pre-notified at the ferry and shortsea terminals in the Dutch ports through Portbase's Port Community System. **If this document pre-notification is not or incorrectly performed, the cargo will come to a standstill.**

In the vast majority of cases, the customs formalities are handled without any issues. In practice, questions however regularly arise about a number of frequently occurring situations. We provide additional information on these subjects through data sheets.

RETURNING EMPTY (TRANSIT) PACKAGING

A common situation regarding the export of cargo to the UK is that empty (transit) packaging and packaging materials (hereinafter: packaging) are returned to the EU for reuse. Think of (beer) kegs, flower boxes, crates, carts, roll containers, euro pallets, etc.

The (filled) transit packaging loses the customs status of Union goods the moment it departs the territory of the EU. If the (empty) packaging subsequently returns to the EU, it will not automatically regain the customs status of Union goods. Such packaging cannot continue its transport or be reused without customs formalities.

Please note:
1. This means a container or trailer is consequently **not empty** if it is used to transport returning empty packaging. These are goods with an economic value.
2. Both the UK and the EU require that only dunnage and wooden packaging (such as pallets) be used that are treated and marked according to the international ISPM 15 standard.

HOW CAN THE CUSTOMS FORMALITIES FOR EMPTY TRANSIT PACKAGING BE MET?

Before returning empty packaging can be reused in the EU, it must be released for free circulation (hereinafter: import declaration). The import declaration can be made with a declaration in the normal procedure (as for all goods), a simplified declaration or by entry in the declarant's records.

Alternative procedure for ferry transport
For the transport of empty packaging by ferry, Dutch Customs will, under certain conditions, permit an alternative (simplified) procedure, based on the so-called 'oral' declaration. Only a ferry company (on behalf of the stakeholder) can make this declaration.

For the cargo stakeholder, the alternative procedure that is available for ferry transport offers great advantages. For example, the ferry company takes care of the customs declaration and the stakeholder does not need to pre-notify the customs documents at the ferry terminal through the Portbase service Notification Import Documentation (hereinafter: NID). In this case, the packaging can be collected from the terminal immediately upon arrival.

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WHAT DOES THE FERRY BOOKING REQUIRE IN ORDER TO USE THE ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE?

In order to make use of the alternative procedure for returning empty packaging, the booking party must instruct the ferry company to do so and provide the correct information in a timely manner. **This is only possible through the booking system of the ferry company in question.**

The information below must be entered when booking the ferry crossing:

All ferries	For goods description: <**general description of the goods**> (e.g., cask, flower boxes, crates, carts, roll containers, euro pallets)
CLdN	For goods description: start with the word "*RETURN*". Next complete the general description of the goods here.
DFDS	Select the option *"contains empty packaging"*
P&O Ferries	For goods description: "**empty return packaging**"
Stena Line	For customs states: the code '*RP*' (= return packaging)

Please note: The alternative procedure can only be used by submitting the required information directly to the ferry company when booking the crossing. It is not possible to make changes afterwards. The stakeholder will have to complete the entire standard customs process.

MUST THE CUSTOMS DOCUMENT BE PRE-NOTIFIED AT PORTBASE?

If the **alternative procedure** for returning empty packaging via ferry transport is applied correctly, the stakeholder does not need to submit a pre-notification via the Portbase service NID. The ferry company ensures proper handling. After arrival, the packaging can be immediately collected from the terminal.

If the alternative procedure is not applied (as is standard for shortsea transport) or if the conditions are not met (for ferry transport), the cargo stakeholder must submit a **'regular' customs declaration**. Next, the customs documents must be pre-notified at the ferry terminal through the Portbase service NID (request service NID / user instruction).

Tip: Before the carrier starts driving, they can check whether all the customs formalities have been met through the free Portbase service Import Status. Only then will they have permission to remove the packaging from the terminal (request Import Status / user instruction).

ALSO CHECK OUT GET READY FOR BREXIT

Do you have a Brexit question on another specific topic? Visit www.getreadyforbrexit.eu for more information in our knowledge center. Here, you will find all the details about the consequences of Brexit for your transport via the Dutch ports as well as tips from our partners.

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