

» The German Federal Ministry of Finance

Electronic Customs Handling



Federal Ministry of Finance in Germany

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Customer profile

The scope of functions of the Federal Customs Administration has changed dramatically in recent years. It has become a modern economic administration of the government, its activities ranging from services in the classic sense to sovereign preventive action.

As the Federal Ministry of Finance's central IT service provider, the Centre for Information Processing and Information Technology (ZIVIT) develops, runs and hosts a number of IT procedures for the Federal Customs Administration. It also offers comprehensive IT services at eight government offices, providing a highly accessible IT infrastructure nationwide. The ZIVIT represents a major shared service centre in public services and combines modern IT expertise with direct knowledge of the authorities. A growing number of institutions are turning to the ZIVIT as a competent one-stop partner, allowing their staff to concentrate on their core tasks.



Initial situation

With the rapid growth of imports, an IT-supported customs handling procedure had become a necessity. The Federal Ministry of Finance heralded the electronic era at the German Customs Administration when it introduced automated duties calculation in the form of ATLAS (Automated Tariff and Local Customs Handling System). This new procedure had to visualise every stage of the process involved in customs declarations, allowing a gapless tracking of goods from their source to their destination. Above all, the handling and processing of customs declarations had to be automated, accelerated and simplified. Ultimately, customs declarations, import duty assessment notices and administrative decisions in paper form would be replaced by electronic messages.

ATLAS relies on the Electronic Customs Tariff as its main source of information – a system of rules provided by the EU. In 1999 it replaced the German working tariff which had been available in printed form and was the first part of the ATLAS system to be put into operation.

Implementation

The ATLAS software combines the Electronic Customs Tariff, the master data and the authorisations with the actual customs procedures, including automated duty rate calculation. Many areas of Customs Administration are being automated, including the EU-wide New Computerised Transit System (NCTS), summary registration, customs treatment and the accounting of simplified procedures. Participating companies exchange messages with the Customs Administration in EDIFACT format or using modern internet technologies. Companies which integrate the ATLAS participant software into their merchandise management systems gain the most advantages from ATLAS.

ATLAS was developed by MATERNA in collaboration with the Centre for Information Processing and Information Technology (ZIVIT). During the software development, MATERNA worked out specialist and technical concepts, developed subcomponents and was responsible for integrating the complete system.

Advantages

- Automated customs handling and processing in accordance with the Electronic Customs Tariff
- All customs offices and inspectors have been equipped
- Central archiving of declaration data; provision of data for risk analysis, inspectors and customs investigation
- Cooperation between industry and the state has become quicker and quality has improved
- International IT projects can be integrated; collaboration with the customs agencies of other EU member states is possible
- Uniform and modern exchange of information with export industries (data communication with declarants, exchange of standardised EDIFACT messages, internet)
- Outmoded IT procedures have been replaced
- Centralised maintenance of software and master data