



Customs Administration of the
Netherlands
Ministry of Finance

Products and Services catalogue

For developers of Dutch Customs or 'Single Window'¹ related software

Version 1.05 January 2022

Colofon

This brochure is from:
Douane Centrale Processen (DCP)

Postadres
Postbus 9050
7300 GM Apeldoorn

¹ At first Single Window (SW) was developed for the exchange of maritime notifications, as prescribed in the [European directive 2010/65](#). Nowadays this applies to both Maritime and Air. Through SW all notifications are passed on for Customs and the Royal Marechaussee/Sea harbour police and Rijkswaterstaat(NCA SafeSeaNet). [See here for more information.](#)

Index

1	Introduction 3
2	Products and services 4
2.1	General communication regarding software development. 4
2.2	Publications of specifications of message flows 5
	2.2.1 <i>Specifications of the designated communication channel</i> 5
	2.2.2 <i>Specifications of the dialogue and the containing messages (MIG's)</i> 5
	2.2.3 <i>Planning aspects</i> 5
2.3	Validation test service for individual messages. 6
2.4	Test environment for testing message dialogues BTO 6
	2.4.1 <i>The BTO environment</i> 6
	2.4.2 <i>Requirements</i> 7
	2.4.3 <i>Availability and Support</i> 7
2.5	Other matters 7
	2.5.1 <i>Meetings</i> 7
	2.5.2 <i>Publication on Customs site (www.douane.nl)</i> 8
	2.5.3 <i>Account Management</i> 8

1 Introduction

In addition to the legislation and regulations the Tax and Customs Administration provides process descriptions and tools for companies on the site of [Dutch Customs](http://douane.nl) (douane.nl).

Customs has [several counters for questions](#) from business clients. One of those counters is the [National Customs Helpdesk](#) (NHD) which has its [own website](#) freely accessible to everyone. The task of the NHD, which is part of the Customs Central Processes unit (DCP), consists mainly of supporting declarants in electronic messaging. The NHD answers the questions related to message processing in the production environment. An overview of the availability of Customs and "Single Window" processes can therefore be found on that website.

In addition, Customs\ DCP has a website specifically aimed at developers of software for Customs or "Single Window" related processes. This "Support Center for Software Developers" is a private community, accessible only to subscribers.

Previously, both counters could be found on one website.

This products- and service catalogue describes all products and services offered to the developers through this community.

2 Products and services

The following products and services are available for developers:

1. General communication regarding software development;
2. Publications of specifications of message flows;
3. The Validation Test Service Customs (VTS-D) for testing individual messages;
4. A testing environment (BTO or OSWO-D) for testing message flows;
5. Other matters (meetings and so on).

To use products and services one has to sign up as a subscriber of the community. A [questionnaire](#) has been included with a number of short questions.

Depending on the answers you could be contacted by an account manager to determine which (free) subscription is best suited: 'active subscription' or 'information subscription'.

Active subscribers are companies that actually proceed to development. These subscribers are automatically provided with the accounts necessary for testing facilities.

Subscriptions for 'information subscribers' only give access to publications. Obviously these subscriptions can be converted into 'active subscriptions'

Any company that develops (parts of) software or configures for, or makes it available to companies that use this to realise electronic message exchange with Customs or 'Single Window' processes can be considered as a **developer**. This applies to both the commercial software suppliers as well as the builders under own management, the so-called self-builders.

2.1 **General communication regarding software development.**

The 'Latest Announcements' tool is used for general communication.

Messages from that category are automatically sent via e-mail to the subscribers (community members). Of **all** the publications regarding a product or a service, a notification is made.

Other messages relevant to developers can also be placed in that category. All these messages are also available in an RSS feed.

In addition subscribers can use the service '[Ask service desk](#)'.

Developers are able to ask questions concerning the products and services in this catalogue *for which there is no separate counter*.

Questions and answers are transparent for **all** subscribers of the company who's asking the questions, but not for subscribers from other companies.

When a question is posted it is provided with a ticket number and progress is monitored.

An up-to-date 5 quarters planning from the consultation ODB-IT (Consultation Customs Business regarding IT) will be published in the ODB-IT release calendar so that developers are notified of the developments in a timely manner.

2.2 **Publications of specifications of message flows**

Dutch Customs has divided her internal production processes for providing information into three chains. In line with these chains external developers are working on facilities that are outside the Customs domain.

All agreements regarding the exchange of electronic messages (messaging) are recorded in the so-called interface specifications.

Those specifications mostly consist of the following items:

1. Specifications of the designated communication channel;
2. Specifications of the dialogue and the containing messages (Message Implementation Guidelines also known as MIG's);
3. Planning aspects.

Every developer is expected to know the interface specifications.

Needless to say for the message flows for which he develops.

2.2.1 ***Specifications of the designated communication channel***

Dutch Customs mainly uses "Trade and Transport Gateway" (HTG) as communication channel for message exchanging.

Documentation about applying for connections and connection documentation can be found via the subject HTG on the [site of the NHD](#).

In addition to the Trade and Transport Gateway, Customs sometimes uses other services. This includes for example the 'Communications Web Service' and EU interfaces.

The communication channel to be used is specified in the specification of a message stream.

2.2.2 ***Specifications of the dialogue and the containing messages (MIG's)***

Specifications are categorised per message flow in accordance with the (major) release of a Message Implementation Guidelines (MIG).

In general the MIG consists of the structure and consistency (rules and conditions) of (response) messages that are laid down in umbrella dialogue models.

MIG's describe the messages to be exchanged on the basis of data models, which are developed into EDIFACT and/ or XML messages. Frequent references are also made to the tables from the Customs [current Code book](#) (NL link).

Apart from the 'release notes' which often contains a table of contents of the MIG, there are also references made to documents in which relevant test facilities are specified (Service documents).

2.2.3 ***Planning aspects***

At the time of publishing or as soon as possible thereafter, the data relevant for the developers will be made known. These include: the date of production and the date on which test facilities become available.

2.3 **Validation test service for individual messages.**

The Validation Test Service Customs (VTS-D) is an online service that is made available by the Tax & Customs administration to the developers of Customs or 'Single Window' related software.

This service offers the possibility to a developer to check whether the software generated XML- and / or EDIFACT messages comply with the applicable (MIG) (Validate, in Dutch: 'Valideren'). Furthermore it is usually possible to make a functional representation of the data in the message, in order to detect permutations of elements. (Mirroring, in Dutch 'Spiegelen')

On the whole it can be said that provided there is no error message during the validation of a message in the VTS-D, taking into account the limitations of the VTS-D, it can be assumed that a similar message in the testing- or production environment should not amount to a failure.

An 'Active subscriber' in the community is automatically provided with an account for VTS-D. Only one account per company.

VTS-D is an application in the Dutch language. However, error notifications with respect to message content is displayed in the English language as much as possible.

VTS-D works without using prescribed communication protocols so that content can be developed independently from the designated communication channel.

In principle, VTS-D is available 24/7, with support via 'Ask service desk'. More information is available on the site.

2.4 **Test environment for testing message dialogues BTO**

Dutch Customs provides a virtually 'production-like' environment to 'active subscribers', the Companies Test Environment. (in Dutch: Bedrijven Test Omgeving or abbreviated BTO).

In this environment we support all the Customs processes that as described in section 2.2 publications.

With this facility, a developer should be deemed to be able to simulate full dialogues and set up its software accordingly.

The exact capabilities for a particular message flow are also shown described in (service) documents, which are published at the MIG.

EU provisions may deviate, but these are also documented.

In contrast to the VTS-D: dialogue test facilities for 'Single Window' processes not belonging to Customs are offered by Rijkswaterstaat and/or Border Control itself.

2.4.1 **The BTO environment**

Dutch Customs has designed the BTO environment production-like but not exactly the same as the production environment. The differences include company critical information, like selections for control and parameters relating to time limits.

In general this environment anticipates the production environment (+1). This enables the developers to test their modified software well in time (well before the production date) against a version that still has to be put into production. A

developer can also test an implementation with a maximum of 2 end users at the same time.

The environment has been adjusted in such a way that certain dialogues are automatically generated as a result of the data included in the declaration. Other dialogues are manually triggered by the BTO support team.

2.4.2 Requirements

To use the BTO you will need a test EORI number. This number is provided when a developer becomes an 'active subscriber'.

1. The developer is presumed to have knowledge about the messages to be exchanged on MIG level;
2. The developer is deemed to first validate the in the BTO sent messages in the VTS-D;
3. The developer is also deemed to be aware of the parameters included in the BTO service documents, such as initial test data. These can be found in the specifications of the release of a process.
4. Obviously, the developer must have an HTG pre-production account. See the [website of the NHD](#).

2.4.3 Availability and Support

In principle, the environment is available for 24/7 hours. Support, however, only during business hours (CET). If (parts) of the BTO are not available this will be communicated via 'Announcements BTO' on the community.

You can subscribe to receive an email when posting an announcement. An RSS feed is also provided.

The BTO is available from a moment (well) before being put into production up to the moment when a next release is necessary.

If manual intervention by the support team is necessary (this is indicated in the service documents) it is strongly recommended to schedule this in a timely manner.

All questions regarding the execution of tests in the BTO can be sent to the support team in the specially designed mailbox:
oswo-douane-support@belastingdienst.nl.

2.5 Other matters

The support of the developers has a number of specific elements.

2.5.1 Meetings

Customs regularly organises (physical) meetings with developers. Every subscriber may participate.

Depending on the need, a theme or a general meeting is organised. Subscribers can also express their needs. This is largely dependent on the current developments.

The meeting will be announced on the community and, if necessary, registration via a form is possible.

You can always report your needs via the button 'Ask service desk'.

2.5.2 Publication on Customs site (www.douane.nl)

An '[Overview software developers Customs](#)' (NL Link) has been published on the site of Dutch Customs. This is a list of companies that support the electronic messaging of a declarant.

Included in that list are the contact details and a short description of the services. If you think that you belong on that list, please contact us via 'Ask service desk'.

2.5.3 Account Management

The Account Management advises, supports, and, guides ((inter)national) developers. If you have any questions or comments, please make them known via 'Ask service desk'.