

## "Sähköinen Intrastat-lomake": The Intrastat web-form in Finland

(Extract from 'Web-forms for Intrastat', Eurostat, March 2000)

### Overview

The web-form for Intrastat in Finland is a new service which started on 22 March 1999. This system is produced in co-operation between Finnish Customs and Finland Post Ltd. The Intrastat web-form is one part of a larger web-form service provided by Finland Post Ltd. The address of the service is <https://intrastat.finpost.net/>.

**TUONTI-ILMOITUKSET**

Tiedonantovelvollinen: 99999990  
Jakso (vvvvkk): 200001  
Nollailmoitus: ☐ Valuutta: FIM ☒ EUR ☐  
Viite nro:   
Status: KESKEN  
Ilmoitus nro: 00-11-033-FP6-158  
Eriä yht.: 3  
Laskutusarvo: FIM 24491 EUR 4119  
Lähetysspm: 02/02/00

Buttons: Uusi ilmoitus, Lähetä ilmoitus, Tallenna ilmoitus, Poista ilmoitus, Rivit, Edellinen, Paluu valikkoon, Seuraava, Selaa

Rivi	tavaranimike	lähetys	alkuperä	kaup.	kulj.	nettopaino	2.paljous	yksikkö	lask.arvo	til.arvo
1	87032211	NL	NL	11	1	1365	0	NAR	24491	
2				11	1	0	0		0	
3		GB	NL	11	1	0	0		0	

**Ilmoitusten lähettäminen Tulliin tapahtuu seuraavasti:**

- 1) **Syötä ja tallenna** sekä rivi että *otsikkotiedot*
- 2) **Lähetä** ilmoitus painamalla "Lähetä ilmoitus" -näppäintä
- 3) **Vahvistuksen** ilmoitukselle saat noin 2 tunnin kuluessa. Vahvistus näkyy näytön oikeassa yläkulmassa status -kentässä tekstinä **Kuitattu**

**TULOSTUSOHJE!** Muuta tulostuksen asetus vaakatulosteeksi niin ilmoituksen tiedot tulevat kokonaisuudessaan paperille.  
**Vinkki** näppäinyhdistelmä **ctrl** ja **p** yhtäaikaisesti painettuna avaa tulostusikkunan.

Figure 4: Input page of the Intrastat web-form in Finland

Companies providing statistical information which declare fewer than 30 lines can fill in this Intrastat web-form, which requires only a small infrastructure and an internet connection, and pay only the costs of telecommunications. The declaration is completed on-line by the declarant on the Finland Post web server, is afterwards translated into the EDIFACT message CUSDEC/INSTAT and is then transmitted from Finland Post to Finnish Customs.

This system is cheaper and faster for making declarations, and is a great success for companies which are currently providing Intrastat declarations on paper. In December 1999, 14 % of Finnish providers used this system to report 1.2 % of the declarations. Finnish Customs finance the system

(excluding the declarant's telecoms costs) and derive benefit from the improved quality of the received data and a decrease in the costs of data processing.

## **Functionality**

The main functions offered are:

- on-line registration,
- user authentication,
- arrivals declaration form,
- dispatches declaration form,
- management of the declarations,
- user feedback function,
- management of a list of clients (for agents),
- management of company information (address, contact person, password),
- multilingual support (Finnish, Swedish).

A more detailed description of these features is given below.

## **The user's view**

The system is targeted at third declaring parties or companies providing statistical information, who have fewer than thirty lines per declaration and used paper forms or had recourse to an agent before. This system is free of charge, but the users pay the costs of telecommunications.

A company which wants to use this system has to register with the administration. The user has to fill in a form on the Finland Post web server to request access rights to the Intrastat web-form. This is then sent to Finnish Customs who have the authority to grant access. Finnish Customs send back their acceptance of access rights to the web server of Finland Post Ltd. This server automatically prints an e-letter which is sent by conventional mail to the user, containing his user ID and password.

To use the system the user has to give his user ID and password on the access screen. The user authentication control is executed on the web server. At present the web-form is only offered in Finnish, but after March 2000, the user will be able to select his preferred working language (Finnish or Swedish).

When creating a new declaration the user selects either the arrival or dispatch function and is presented with the appropriate input form. Then he must input header information such as his VAT number, the period of reference and the currency used before filling in the lines. The user can save the declaration when it is partially complete, in which case it is stored in a declarations database on the server. The user can manage his temporary stored declarations by listing, modifying or deleting them. All these actions including filling in the web-form are carried out on-line, the user PC remaining connected to the web server during the entire transaction.

The necessary code lists and validation criteria are integrated into the HTML page and each item is displayed with its self-explanatory text. To look up a CN8 code, the user has to type the complete code or part of it or to select the code from the CN8 table. When it exists the code of the supplementary units is automatically displayed. This system permits only simple searches of CN8 codes in order to avoid time consuming complex routines.

When his declaration is completed, the user can submit it to the Finland Post web server. If he wishes to contact the system administrator at Finland Post Ltd., the system includes a feedback function which permits him to send an e-mail.

If the user is an agent making declarations for a number of traders, there is a facility to allow him to manage his list of clients. The agent has to know the VAT registration number and password of the company to be added to the list of his customers.

From the user point of view, the system reduces the number of errors and is cheaper because they can make faster declarations and do not need to use an agent anymore for filling in their declarations. Users requested improved on-line help and a way to correct previously sent declarations. The improved on-line help was provided in October 1999, and the correction function is being tested and is scheduled for implementation in March 2000. Until then, corrections have to be sent by fax to Finnish Customs.

The system can be seen and tested by visiting <https://intrastat.finpost.net/> and using "demo" for both the user name and the password. For those not able to understand Finnish, tables 2 and 3 give a brief glossary of the key terms in the dialogues.

Finnish	English
<b><i>Tullin päävalikko</i></b>	<b><i>Main menu of Customs</i></b>
Kirjautuminen	Login
Käyttöoikeuden haku	Access Rights
Paluu pääsivulle	Return to main menu
<b><i>Sisäänkirjautuminen</i></b>	<b><i>Login menu</i></b>
Käyttäjätunnus	User name (Write "demo")
Salasana	Password (Write "demo")
<b><i>Toimintovalikko</i></b>	<b><i>Function menu</i></b>
Ilmoitustoiminnot	Declaration functions
Tuonti-ilmoitus	Import Declaration
Vienti-ilmoitus	Export Declaration
Ylläpitotoiminnot	Maintain functions

Table 2: Glossary of the key Finnish terms – First screens

Finnish	English
<i>Tuonti-ilmoitukset</i>	<i>Import declaration</i>
	<b>Return header</b>
Tiedonantovelvollinen	Statistical provider (VAT registration number)
Jakso (vvkk)	Period (YYMM)
Nollailmoitus	Nil declaration
Valuutta	Currency, FIM or EUR
Viite nro	Reference
Status=Kesken, Lähetetty, Kuitattu	Status="Under modification", "Sent", "Received"
Ilmoitus nro	Return number
Eriä yht	Sum of lines
Laskutusarvo	Total invoice value
Lähetyspvm	Date of sending
	<b>Function keys</b>
Uusi ilmoitus	New Return
Lähetä ilmoitus	Send the return
Tallenna ilmoitus	Save the return
Poista ilmoitus	Delete return
Korjaa tämä	Correct this return
Korjaa muu	Correct another return
Rivit	Return lines
Edellinen	Previous
Paluu valikkoon	Return
Seuraava	Next
Selaa	Scan
	<b>Return lines</b>
Rivi	Row
Tavaranimike	CN8 code
Lähetys	Country of consignment
Alkuperä	Country of origin
Kaup.	Nature of transaction
Kulj.	Mode of transport
Nettopaino	Weight in kilos
2.paljous	Quantity in supplementary units
yksikkö	Supplementary unit
lask.arvo	Invoice value
til.arvo	Statistical value

Table 3: Glossary of the key Finnish terms – Import declaration

## The administration's view

The service is provided by Finland Post Ltd., who take care of the technical environment and day-to-day operation of the service. Finnish Customs pay all expenses and the service is supplied free of charge to the agents and declarants. The benefits to Finnish Customs are:

- a decrease in the number of paper declarations, and therefore a reduction in the cost of data capture,
- faster collection and processing of the declarations,
- a reduction in the number of corrections of errors due to paper declarations, and therefore an improvement in the quality of the data sent by the SMEs still working on paper forms,
- an improved customer service for companies providing statistical information, especially for small companies.

In this system, the role of Finnish Customs is to maintain the database of users, update exchange rates and accept new users. They can also control the status of a declaration by listing all returns on the server and their status ('under modification', 'sent' and 'received'). In the case of returns which have been entered but not yet sent Finnish Customs advise the user by phone on how to correct the return.

Finnish Customs receive the EDIFACT CUSDEC/INSTAT message from the web server, and therefore have not needed to change the existing system of collection of Intrastat declarations.

The Help Desk Service has been combined with the IDEP/CN8 Help Desk in Turku, and is responsible for some of the maintenance tasks in addition to normal help desk functions, such as acceptance of new users and updating of exchange rates. The two help desks share some of the same staff. In August the Help Desk Service received 10 to 15 phone calls per week, but by December this had risen to about 75 calls per week.

No special training has been offered, but some presentations of this system were made in order to promote it.

## **Technical view**

The system architecture has two main parts:

- front office – the part between the user and the Finland Post web server, in which the Intrastat web-form is filled in on-line via the internet. Security is achieved by SSL.
- back office – the part between the Finland Post web server and Finnish Customs, in which for each completed declaration, the web server generates the EDIFACT message CUSDEC/INSTAT and sends it to the Finnish Customs, via X.400. The system does not use XML currently.

The basic architecture is shown in figure 5.

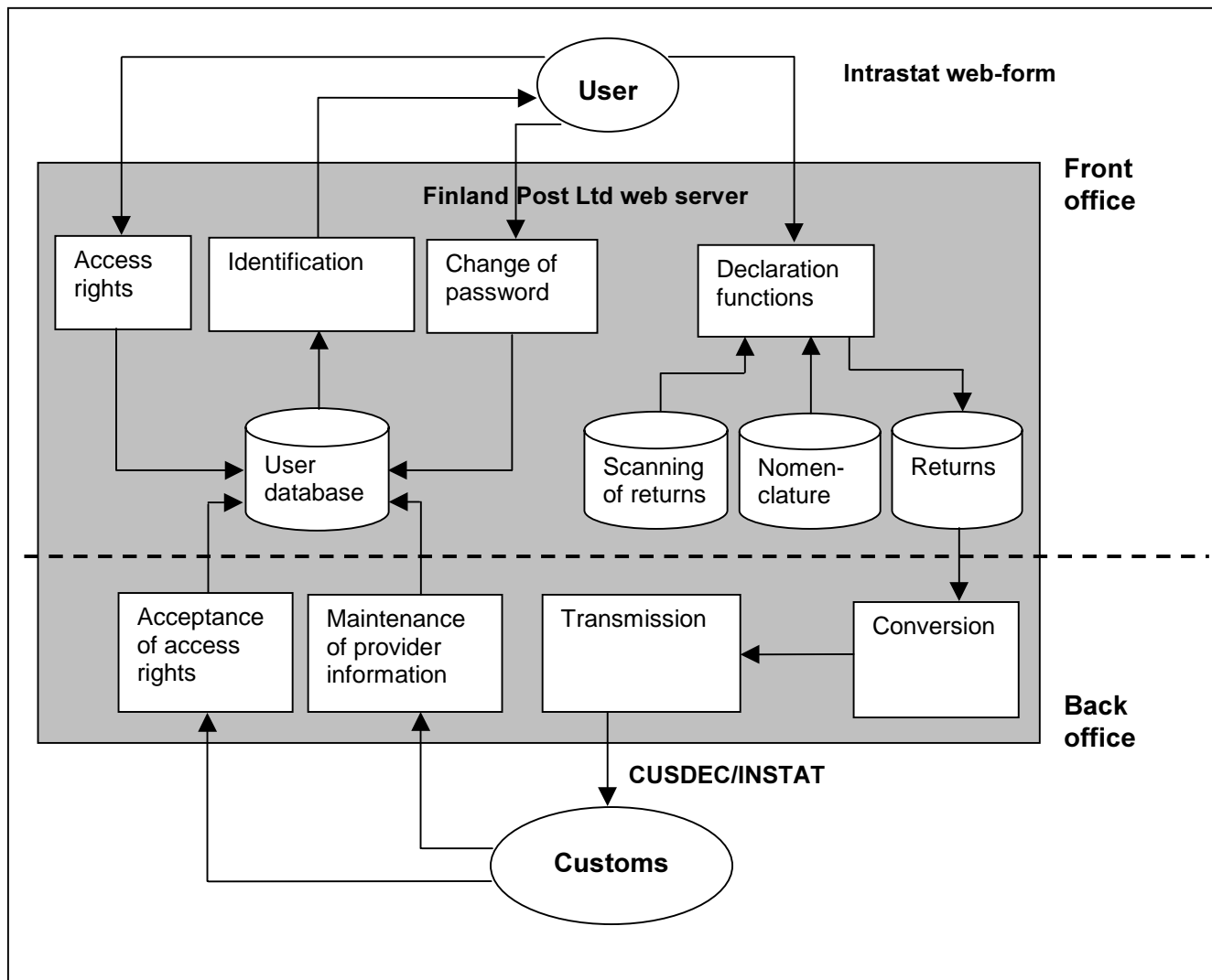


Figure 5: Technical architecture of the Finnish Intrastat web-form

The minimum system requirements for the user to work with the system are:

- 32-bit PC,
- Windows 95 (or above) or Windows NT,
- Internet access,
- Netscape Navigator version 4.04 (or above) or Internet Explorer version 4 (or above),
- screen resolution of 800 x 600 (recommended minimum).

The user interface or client side is composed of dynamic HTML pages associated with programs in Javascript for the input and the validation of the data. More complex functions like looking up the CN8 are executed on the web server. The placing of these functions on the web client or on the web server has been chosen to optimise performance, taking into account the speed of the user's modem of the client and the size of the web-form. Some difficulties were encountered in displaying all the data on 15-inch screens.

Decisions had to be taken to balance the functionality offered on the client side and the burden of supporting various web browsers. Web browsers are being developed very fast and there are several new releases by different software companies annually. This requires an ongoing testing of compatibility of service.

A 'Server Certificate' is used to enhance security by providing identification information about the service provider. A third company (certification authority) verifies the credentials of the service provider and generates the electronic certificate.

## **Project view**

This service is only part of a larger administrative service, which contains other administrative forms, such as the VAT declaration. Finland Post Ltd. is the owner of the service.

The project required a team of four people composed of one person from Customs for two months and three people from Finland Post Ltd for three months (i.e. a total of 14 staff.months). The project took 5 months, starting on the 4 November 1998 and ending on the 31 March 1999. The skills and the role of each participant were as follows:

- Project leader, planning and management – Finland Post Ltd.
- Technical expert, design and programs, help lists, testing – Finland Post Ltd.
- Marketing of service – Finland Post Ltd.
- System planner, specifications, lists of codes, nomenclature, tests – Finnish Customs.

## **Take-up**

80% of Finnish companies have an internet connection but most of the targeted companies using the Intrastat web-forms were in the remaining 20%. Difficulties were encountered with old versions of browsers or other incompatible web clients.

In June 1999, 4% of Finnish providers used this system for reporting 1% of the declarations. Promotion brochures were sent to all users towards the end of 1999 and this resulted in several hundred new users. By December 1999 the take-up had risen to 14% of Finnish providers using the system to report 1.2% of the declarations.

## **Lessons learnt**

Although the system was implemented very quickly, the conclusion in Finnish Customs is that such a system is not easy to build and test. Tests in particular must be done very carefully before release to avoid problems which result in rejection by the users.

Although presentations were given to promote the system, the users declared a need for training, courses and on-line help.

Companies providing statistical information want this kind of service because it is cheaper, statistical declarations are made faster and they do not have to rely on agents anymore.

## **Future plans**

The improvements scheduled for March 2000, are:

- to implement the correction function,
- to provide a copy function,
- to translate the system into Swedish (the second official language in Finland).

When this has been done there will be a special campaign to promote it to Swedish speaking users. In addition, an on-going programme of presentations and a marketing campaign are scheduled.