

Port of Antwerp launches breakbulk application for more efficient freight handling

Antwerp has long been the breakbulk port par excellence in Europe. This status finds expression each day a new in a flexible range of high-quality services tailored to the requirements of the customer. Already several years ago the sector pointed out the need to automate the breakbulk process in order to provide customers with even better service. The **Antwerp Port Community System (APCS)** has now met this requirement with a new breakbulk application that will make today's copying and re-copying of data a thing of the past. The result is more transparent, faster communication concerning cargoes, enabling them to be handled even more efficiently, the company said in its press release.

How does it work? The forwarder who initiates the transport makes a single declaration concerning the consignment in the breakbulk application. The application issues a unique reference for the consignment which is then used by all subsequent parties. All further instructions are given via the application. The forwarder is able to see the status of the consignment in the system at all times, in full transparency. After this first step in the process, a declaration of full or partial delivery on the quay is made. The terminal operator then has to confirm that it in turn has completed its task. "The application affords great administrative simplification that benefits all users of the port," says John Kerkhof, manager of the Antwerp Port Community System that developed it in collaboration with Antwerp Port Authority.

How much does it cost? The business model behind Cubix is based on the principle that all parties who participate in the application also share in the cost. "We work on the basis of 10 euro-cents per tonne, shared between the forwarder, the ship's agent and the terminal operator," Kerkhof explains. "The intention is not to get rich from it: the proceeds must be returned to the community," he concludes.

When will it be operational? At the moment a pilot project is running with ArcelorMittal Logistics, FEDNAV and NHS. This will be followed by a more general roll-out in the near future. Frank De Fyn, vice-president operations at ArcelorMittal, is already enthusiastic about Cubix: "Using the application affords greater transparency for the customer. You can see immediately where your consignment is located in the chain. Another advantage is that you can provide your own customers with evidence of Customs clearance." John Kerkhof of APCS adds: "The intention is to go into production with several parties this summer, and by the end of the year we hope to achieve fairly wide coverage." After the full roll-out of the breakbulk application various other new projects for APCS are in the pipeline. "We want to further develop the Antwerp community platform so as to achieve far-reaching digitisation of the port processes, giving port users maximum transparency regarding their freight flows. The focus will be on integrating Customs applications and hinterland connections," Kerkhof concludes.

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