
Guide: How to Prevent Customs Delays with ICS2

Starting August 12, 2025, the new customs security system ICS2 will be fully operational. This system requires all goods entering or transiting the EU to be checked digitally in advance. A crucial part of this check is the goods description on the commercial invoice.

The Problem: Vague Descriptions Are a 'Red Flag'

The automated customs systems are programmed to automatically flag shipments with general or vague goods descriptions. These shipments are immediately stopped for a manual inspection.

Descriptions to Avoid (Stop Phrases):

- Gift
- Samples
- Parts
- Electronics
- Apparel
- Textiles
- Consumer goods
- Cargo
- Household goods

The Consequences: Costs and Unhappy Customers

A vague description can lead to a frustrating chain of events:

1. **Immediate Delay:** Your shipment is held by customs for a manual check.
2. **Storage Costs:** While your shipment awaits inspection, storage fees may be charged by customs or the handling agent.
3. **Dissatisfied Customer:** The end recipient has to wait longer for their package, which can lead to frustration and complaints.

These costs and delays are entirely avoidable with a small adjustment to your process.

The Solution: Be Specific!

Fortunately, the solution is simple: ensure an accurate and detailed description for **every** item in your shipment on the (commercial) invoice. A good description answers the following questions:

- **What is it?** (e.g., Men's T-shirt)
- **What is it made of?** (e.g., 100% cotton)
- **What is its purpose/function?** (e.g., Clothing item)
- **Extra details:** (e.g., Size L, brand, type or model number)

This applies not only to the goods you send but also to the goods you receive from suppliers outside the EU. Please forward these instructions to your suppliers to prevent import issues.

Practical Examples: Good vs. Bad

Vague (DO NOT USE)	Specific (DO USE)
Parts	2x steel screws for a Dell XPS 15 laptop (model 9520)
Electronics	1x Samsung Galaxy S25 smartphone, 256GB
Apparel	5x Men's T-shirt, 100% cotton, size L, brand: Gildan
Car parts	1x set of front brake pads for a Volkswagen Golf 8 (2022 model)
Gift	1x women's wool scarf, 1x bottle of red wine (750ml, Merlot)
Samples	3x sample of cotton fabric, 10x10cm, for textile production
Phone accessories	1x plastic phone case for iPhone 16, 2x glass screen protectors
Books	1x cookbook "Simple" by Yotam Ottolenghi, 1x novel "The Midnight Library"

Checklist for a Perfect Description

Use this checklist to ensure your invoice meets the new requirements:

[] Is every item described separately?

- Avoid collective terms. Not 2x office supplies, but 1x Parker ballpoint pen, 1x Moleskine notebook.

[] Is the description specific?

- Does it answer the questions: What is it? What is it made of?

[] Is the quantity per item correct?

- 3x T-shirts, 1x laptop, etc.

[] Does each item have a 6-digit HS code?

- In addition to a good description, a correct [HS code](#) (Harmonized System code) for each item is mandatory. This helps customs classify the goods quickly.

[] Are the consignee's details complete?

- For business recipients, always provide an EORI number.

By following these guidelines, together we can ensure that your shipments arrive at their destination quickly and efficiently. At Parcel International, we continuously invest in our systems and knowledge to make things easier for you. With your help in providing the correct information, we can prevent delays caused by ICS2 and keep your supply chain – just like my sailing trips – smooth and on course.

If you have any questions after reading this guide, please do not hesitate to contact our customer service team. We are here to help. (help@parcelinternational.com)