

SOLVIT, a solution-oriented service for businesses

SOLVIT facilitates entrepreneurship in the EU by helping companies take full advantage of the European market and develop their business



The EU has made trade easier between European countries. Any European company can trade its services, sell its products and set up new businesses in any of the EU countries on a non-discriminatory basis. As a result, trade between EU countries today accounts for two-thirds of all EU trade.



However, national public authorities do not always apply EU rules correctly, which can lead to obstacles that hinder businesses in the exercise of their fundamental EU freedoms. SOLVIT was created by the EU in 2002 to address such problems.



SOLVIT is a user-friendly **service, free of charge**, designed to **help companies** find fast and pragmatic solutions to their internal market problems. To achieve this, 28 SOLVIT centres, all part of their national administrations, work together to convince national, regional or local authorities to **find concrete solutions that comply with**

EU regulations. In 2005, SOLVIT dealt with 465 cases, of which 78% were successfully resolved.

For example, SOLVIT helped a German architectural office that had applied as part of an invitation to tender in Spain. The project organised by the Town Council of Granada was only open to architects who were registered members of Spain's Colleges of Architects, which made it impossible for the German company to apply. Following SOLVIT's intervention, the rules were changed to allow foreign architects to participate.

SOLVIT can be helpful to enterprises in many areas, e.g. with difficulties in obtaining **VAT reimbursement or market access for their products.**

SOLVIT was able help a Dutch and a French company that were experiencing problems and unreasonable delays in obtaining VAT reimbursement from the Spanish tax authorities. For more than two years both companies had been trying without success to obtain reimbursement. In the case of the French company this involved a payment of more than €300 000. Undoubtedly, such delays might have serious consequences for enterprises and are not acceptable, especially when EU law defines a six-month maximum deadline for VAT repayment. In both cases, SOLVIT's intervention resulted in payment of the due amount plus interest in less than 30 days.

SOLVIT also managed to help a Dutch importer of orange juice to sell its products in Cyprus. The Dutch company was shipping concentrated orange juice from Brazil to the Netherlands, with a view to selling it to various other EU countries.



Practical information on EU rights and opportunities: <http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/>

Personalised information, advice and assistance for businesses:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/networks/eic/eic.html>

Contrary to EU rules, the Cypriot authorities requested a health certificate before it could access the Cypriot market. The case was solved in less than 20 days.

In today's competitive environment time is often crucial. SOLVIT understands the need to act quickly and efficiently and has set itself a target deadline of 10 weeks for resolving the problems referred to it. Moreover, as illustrated by the above examples, SOLVIT often manages to solve the cases within shorter deadlines. In fact, if the companies in our examples had chosen to settle their differences in court, they would have spent much more time and money.

The **added value of SOLVIT is its network**. SOLVIT has established a centre in all EU countries. Usually two SOLVIT centres are involved in the handling of a problem, the centre which receives the request for help and the centre located in the country where the problem has occurred. This latter centre liaises with the relevant administrations in that country and informs the other centre, which in turn keeps applicants informed of the progress made in the case. Good cooperation always plays a crucial role in solving the problem.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SOLVIT

SOLVIT IS FREE OF CHARGE

SOLVIT IS WITHIN REACH

SOLVIT centres are located in every EU country, including Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

TURN TO SOLVIT IF

Faced with a cross-border problem caused by incorrect application of EU law by a national public authority

SOLVIT CANNOT HELP IN ...

Business-to-business or consumer-to-business problems

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/>

While in most cases SOLVIT solves problems of EU companies originating in a country other than their own, it can also offer assistance to companies **facing problems with their own countries**, where national authorities infringe EU laws. This was the case with a Portuguese fishing company that had problems with the Portuguese insurance and visa authorities.

One of its boats was denied the right to dock in Lisbon for repairs. The crew was composed of non-EU citizens, who were considered 'illegal workers' by the Portuguese

authorities. Because of this status, they were also refused insurance coverage.

The international agreements signed by the EU to have access to fishing zones of a non-EU country include the obligation on the part of EU companies to hire crew from the relevant third country. This obligation means that non-EU crew members are entitled to all the social benefits associated with the employment contract.

SOLVIT Portugal was able to clarify the legal position of these workers, who were eventually granted transit visas. In addition, the Portuguese authorities agreed to issue instructions clarifying the procedure in such situations, including insurance for non-EU crew members.

SOLVIT can make a difference!

Practical information on EU rights and opportunities: <http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/>

Personalised information, advice and assistance for businesses:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/networks/eic/eic.html>