Logistics business documents not only support the movement of goods, but also provide proof of ownership and chain of custody from manufacturing through delivery. One such logistics document, the freight invoice, is important for compliance under different types of law and is considered to be key accounting material. As such, freight invoices can be audited for tax purposes, and may also be regulated or serve as documentary evidence in commercial disputes. The processing of invoices can also play a role from a corporate governance and ‘internal control’ perspective. Electronic invoices, in particular, are viewed by the European Commission as an important driver of economic competitiveness and environmental protection. Also, commercial documents supporting freight invoices can be audited due to the VAT and Customs requirements and, therefore, authentication and proof of original data is dictated by regulatory bodies.

Each country, including European Union (EU) Member States, has its own regulatory framework governing legal archiving and the retention of electronic records. At the same time, there are sustainability initiatives to reduce paperwork and improve processes through automation. The EU Directive has established guidelines for electronic archiving of invoices in a way that safeguards their integrity and authenticity throughout the designated storage period. Among other stipulations, invoices must remain legible throughout this storage period. Member States for their part can impose extra conditions on electronic archiving. This has led to considerable differences in archiving requirements between the individual Member States.

The Descartes eArchiving solution leverages the power of the Descartes Global Logistics Network (GLN) to remove the complexities surrounding the legal framework and compliance guidelines relating to invoice and Customs documentation archiving. The Descartes GLN enables supply chain partners to electronically connect with brokers, shippers and regulatory authorities around the world.

With the Descartes GLN, users can connect to a community of over 35,000 trading partners worldwide, allowing them to collaborate in a cost effective way and maximize productivity and efficiency. Trading partners can transmit documents, as well as share connections and platforms to streamline eInvoicing, digital signature capture and archiving in keeping with each Member State’s compliance requirements and guidelines.
Features

As a trusted supplier to the logistics industry, Descartes has the operational, project management and regional expertise to help customers satisfy their electronic invoicing and archiving requirements. Descartes’ longstanding relationships with governments around the world also ensure that customers are prepared for new regulations as they are mandated.

Descartes eArchiving features include:

Online Accessibility and Search Functions – Users can search, retrieve, and download copies of electronic invoices and declarations in their original form (i.e. the way it was sent or received) during the entire storage period.

Integrity and Authenticity Protection for Electronic Archiving – eArchiving software and hardware components are specifically designed to optimize electronic archive functions, including adaptability to local requirements and digital signature tracking, verification and storage. Each document carries a digital fingerprint to ensure authenticity and can be stored to meet specific Member State retention guidelines.

Operational Security – Measurement and documentation features enable authentication, authorization, integrity, audit trails, emergency response and disaster recovery. Role-based access control and user management functions ensure optimum security and control.

Flexible Retention Periods – Archiving services store all messages for the legally required or product specific period. Terms can also be adjusted based on a company’s unique requirement.

Message Content Checking and Reporting – Parameters include details on senders, recipients, format codes, message type and dates and reference numbers.

Legibility/human Readability – eInvoices and declarations can be presented in a format that is easy to read during a tax audit, for the full storage period.

Customs Messages and Documents Storage – Information exchanges with customs authorities can be stored, along with digital signatures where applicable. It also allows for the migration of historical data from clearing, trading hub and local customers.

Portal-based Access to Electronic Archives – The electronic archive is accessible online using standard search functionality, including download and audit features for tax authorities. Auditors can easily check message content and details in a variety of formats, including original and/or human-readable.

Multi-datacenter Architecture – Descartes enhances security through a multi-datacenter architecture located within Europe and in keeping with EU archiving requirements.

Proactive GLN On-boarding Service – Descartes enhances security through a global multi-datacenter architecture including multiple data centers within Europe.

Message Storage – All messages and documents for a single shipment or declaration are stored in a single folder, including a full event journal.

Single Sign On – Single Sign On with other Descartes GLN services.

Ease of Export – Software allows bulk exports from the archive to a zip file.

Potential Benefits

Reduced Risk, Improved Compliance – Descartes enables partners to comply with current legislative requirements while minimizing the risk of errors, delays and penalties.

Lower Cost – Descartes eArchiving reduces the cost of document storage and delivers a clearly defined return on investment through reduced overhead.

Full Traceability and Auditability of Electronic Invoicing and Archiving – Auditors can use the portal to access historical electronic invoices, digital signatures and other required data.

Improved Efficiency and Productivity – Users can leverage a single point of access to manage all their electronic filing functions, regardless of the designated EU destination. They can also meet the various eArchiving compliance requirements associated with each Member State.

Flexibility – Users can choose from an extensive choice of connection options based on their technology environment, including a direct connection, as well as a choice of locally deployed or hosted solutions backed by quality service and support. Users can also archive electronic invoices within their own application and/or in multiple archives.

Rapid Deployment, Reduced Cost – Descartes’ modular solutions can be deployed quickly to deliver rapid returns on investment using a proven phased approach supported by value-based metrics and validation.