

Was that it???

Well, there we go, the euro's in place and despite the fears of the Vitalstatistix¹ tendency, the sky has not fallen. The majority of the financial centres on the continent seem to have come through the experience unscathed (with one exception, but then they invented the word Schadenfreude didn't they?).

So that must be the end of the story mustn't it?

Well, sadly (unless you are a consultant or in software), no.

The euro has not yet even begun to arrive in the majority of organisations. Let's leave aside the trainspotting types who want to be seen to be flaunting credit cards with euro statements (you can't tell by looking at the card of course). Let's also set aside the few companies with demented marketing departments which think that the sight of a euro symbol will overcome poor quality and a five percent price disadvantage. In most of Europe, the euro has landed with very little effect.

And of course, that is what we should have expected.

The business of most businesses is buying and selling *things*. What you get in exchange for the *things* (ie money) is only a temporary possession, since you use it to buy *pre-things* which you make into more *things* and sell them. Money, for most companies, is a bit of a nuisance and best left to a treasurer or similar wierdo whose real job is to insulate the rest of us from instabilities caused by the unpleasant tendency of money to change value while we hold it. If our treasurer is really smart, he (or, in the experience of the author, more probably she) may make a few bob on the way, for which thanks (and incomprehension). But their real job is to stop value being lost in the scary intermediate stage between receiving payment and spending it on nice solid things we can work on.

So, in truth, the vast majority of European economies is breathing a sigh of relief. Just because they hid their heads in the sand and played ostrich with the emu, they have not been swept away in a tide of bland banknotes with dreary bridges and windows on them. Indeed, it rather looks as though Antoine de Saint-Exupéry² and Carl Friedrich Gauß³ have survived and we can get on with proper business and pay each other in francs and marks.

Unfortunately, matters are not so simple. If organisations believe that, because they have survived 4 January 1999, they have nothing more to do, they will be unpleasantly overtaken by an increasing number of euro payments and receipts. The banks, (rich and powerful), dictated the change of their own market, and found it uncertain, costly and rather frightening.

¹ Chieftain of Asterix's clan of Gauls, Vitalstatistix believed that the sky would one day fall on his head.

² Appears on my favourite European banknote, the French 50F

³ Distributed on the Dm 10 note looking a bit grumpy.

Poorer organisations (comprising, say 85% of the European economies), are now faced with a set of complex, uncertain and potentially costly set of conversions, possibly even country by country.

They will also not have the advantage of an organisation like the Bank of England gathering and publishing industry guidelines, and will find it harder than ever to determine the best, (that is, cheapest) course from national currency, to dual currency, to euro.

Stand by for a tough time folks...

- 1 Vitalstatistix was the chieftain of Asterix's tribe who feared nothing but the sky falling on his head
2. St-Exupéry live on my favourite European note, the French 50F note, and Gauss is to be seen looking grumpy on the Dm 10.