

Businesses ask EU Commissioner to introduce e-Procurement

European businesses want to carry out a greater number of administrative formalities on-line. For this reason, during a EUROCHAMBRES/ChamberSign conference on e-Government in Brussels today, they asked Siim Kallas, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of Administrative affairs, to introduce the use of electronic applications, such as the e-Signature, in the European Commission's administrative procedures, especially to enable e-Procurement.

Alfonso Carcasona, President of ChamberSign, explained: *"Every year, thousands of businesses and other organisations submit to the European Commission tender applications, contracts or invoices, and are obliged to do so in paper because the Commission does not recognise the use of e-Signature. We call on the Commission to accept the use of this tool as soon as possible, since this would greatly increase the speed and transparency of e-Procurement formalities, and bring massive savings for both businesses and administrations."*

EUR 2.5 billions could be saved by the EU each year if there were more e-Government applications, according to a report sent by the UK government to Enterprise Commissioner Günter Verheugen in July 2008. A simple reason for this is that documents signed electronically, can also be archived electronically, thus reducing filing and management costs.

While the European Commission encourages electronic procedure for public procurement in an Action Plan published in 2004 and sets some objectives for Member States to be reached by 2010, no such objectives are set for itself.

e-Signature: promoted in Europe by ChamberSign

The electronic signature is a particular technology which binds together a document and a person's identity; it can be used to verify that a document was issued at a certain time by a given individual or organisation and was not modified.

The use of e-Signature and other electronic certificates is promoted among European businesses by ChamberSign, an Association – set up by EUROCHAMBRES – bringing together Chambers of Commerce and Industry from Austria, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Since 1999, ChamberSign members delivered over 3 million authentication certificates to companies, which use them for multiple purposes such as signing VAT declarations online, signing electronic invoices, securing email exchanges or doing electronic Procurement.

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