

Action Plan on eSignature: Chambers ask Commission to set an example

EUROCHAMBRES welcomes the European Commission' Action Plan on e-Signature presented today, in the sense that this will contribute to revitalise electronic signature in Europe. After the failure of the 1999 e-Signature Directive to boost the market and encourage interoperability, it is high time for positive action.

“Every week, Chambers of Commerce receive requests from companies seeking an e-Signature to carry out cross-border electronic public procurement. Unfortunately, we are unable to answer the demands because of the lack of recognition of a Europe-wide electronic signature. We strongly hope that this Action Plan will help open up this significant aspect of the internal market,” said Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES.

EUROCHAMBRES also hopes for further progress on e-Signature thanks to the Services Directive, which foresees the establishment of interoperable Points of Single Contact operating electronically.

But Commission should practice what it preaches

Yet, EUROCHAMBRES remains disappointed and surprised that the European Commission does not practice what it preaches on this topic, continuing to reject the validity of electronically signed documents received by its own services.

EUR 2.5 billions could be saved by the EU each year if there were more e-Government applications. A simple reason for this is that documents signed electronically, can also be archived electronically, thus reducing filing and management costs.

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.

Since 1999, the use of e-Signature and other electronic certificates has been 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. So far, ChamberSign members have 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 electronic procurement.

Further information: Mr Vincent Tilman, Tel. +32 2 282 08 67, tilman@eurochambres.eu
Press contact: Ms Guendalina Cominotti, Tel. +32 2 282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu
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