



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Digital Agenda: new Regulation to enable cross-border electronic signatures and to get more value out of electronic identification in Digital Single Market

The European Commission has proposed new rules to enable cross-border and secure electronic transactions in Europe. The proposed Regulation will ensure people and businesses can use their own national electronic identification schemes (e-IDs) to access public services in other EU countries where e-IDs are available. It also creates an internal market for e-Signatures and related online trust services across borders, by ensuring these services will work across borders and have the same legal status as traditional paper based processes. This will give full effect to the major potential savings of eProcurement.

The proposal fully respects both existing national ID systems and the preferences of those Member States without national ID schemes. It allows countries with e-ID to opt-in or to remain outside of the European scheme. Once a Member State notifies that they wish to join the pan-European scheme, they must offer the same access to public services via e-ID that they offer to their own citizens.

European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes said *"People and businesses should be able to transact within a borderless Digital Single Market, that is the value of Internet. Legal certainty and trust is also essential, so a more comprehensive eSignatures and eIdentification Regulation is needed."*

"This proposal will mean you can make the most of your e-ID, if you have one. With mutual recognition of national e-IDs and common standards for trust services and eSignatures, we can prevent a national carve-up of the Internet and online public services and make life easier for millions of businesses and even more citizens. "

The proposed Regulation will **not**:

- oblige EU Member States to introduce, or individuals to obtain, national identity cards, electronic identity cards or other eID solutions,
- introduce a European eID or any kind of European database,
- enable or require the sharing of personal information with other parties.

Key beneficiaries of the various aspects of the Regulation will include:

- Students who could register for a foreign university online, rather than having to travel abroad to complete the paper work in person.
- Citizens arranging a move to another EU country or a marriage abroad or filing multiple tax returns.
- Patients needing medical assistance abroad could securely check or authorise a doctor to access their online medical records.
- Companies could tender online for public sector contracts anywhere in the EU. They could sign, time stamp and seal their bids electronically instead of printing and sending multiple paper copies of the bids by courier.
- People wanting to do business in another EU country could set up a company through the Internet and submit annual reports online, with ease.
- Governments could reduce administrative burdens and increase efficiency, better serving their citizens and saving taxpayers' money.

Background

Both elements of the Regulation – e-ID and eSignatures - will create a predictable regulatory environment to enable secure and seamless electronic interactions between businesses, citizens and public authorities. This will increase the effectiveness of public and private online services, eBusiness and electronic commerce in the EU.

The approach to eSignatures, which builds on the current eSignature Directive ([Directive 1999/93/EC](#)), has brought a degree of harmonisation to practices across Europe. All countries in the EU have legal frameworks for eSignatures, however these diverge and make it de facto impossible to conduct cross border electronic transactions. The same holds true for trust services like time stamping, electronic seals and delivery, and website authentication, which lack European interoperability. Therefore, this Regulation proposes common rules and practices for these services.

For e-ID the Regulation provides for the legal certainty by the mutual recognition and acceptance principle in which Member States accept national e-IDs which have been officially notified to the Commission. It is not obligatory for Member States to register their national eIDs, but the Commission hopes that many Member States will chose to do this.

The Commission and EU Member States have proven that cross border mutual recognition of eIdentification works, through the [STORK](#) project involving 17 Member States

Today's draft Regulation is the last of 12 key actions proposed in the Single Market Act (see [IP/11/469](#)). These proposals are also flagged in the eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015 (see [IP/10/1718](#)) and the EU's Roadmap to Stability and Growth (see [IP/11/1180](#)); and [Digital Agenda for Europe](#) (see [IP/10/581](#), [MEMO/10/199](#) and [MEMO/10/200](#)).

Useful Links

[MEMO/12/403](#) Electronic identification, signatures and trust services: Questions & Answers

Link to the draft Regulation:

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/policy/esignature/eu_legislation/regulation/index_en.htm

More about pilots in [cross-border public services](#)

[Digital Agenda website](#)

Neelie Kroes' [website](#)

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Contacts :

[Ryan Heath](#) (+32 2 296 17 16)

[Linda Cain](#) (+32 2 299 90 19)