



W-SPES

The objective of the W-SPES (Setting Processes for Electronic Signature) project is to accelerate the take-up by administrations of digital signatures. The project aims to build on the work carried out in the SPES project and to create guidelines and replication tools for the use of digital signatures throughout Europe.

When carrying out secure transactions online there is a necessity to identify and prove the identity of the user. By using 'digital certificates', citizens can prove who they are when dealing with a public administration or business just as well as if the parties were face to face in an office. The technology behind this is proven to work and is known as PKI (Public Key Infrastructure).

W-SPES will try to make its use more widespread by removing some of the existing obstacles and helping establish some common ways of working across the EU. There is a need for a certificate issued in one city to be recognisable in another. By setting processes for how these credentials should be issued to the citizen in a standardised way, and by working on the technical aspects needed for such mutual recognition, progress has been made.

The original partners were the cities of Prato, Saarbruecken and Sheffield. These have now been joined by the cities of Bremerhaven, Dundee, Koper and Sunderland along with participants from the provinces of Prato and Piacenza. A technical partner, Axetel, will provide valuable experience gained in the project EU-PKI.

The work of this project will enable many more kinds of transactions to be carried out online, confident that security and privacy are considered. We need to create a large number of uses for the digital signature so that it becomes common place, which will then encourage further applications to be developed. The main goals of W-SPES are:

- to extend the scope of SPES and pursue for improved and broader results across European countries;
- to encourage mutual co-operation and replication of experiences across the participating administrations;
- to consolidate the use of digital signature and strong authentication in services offered by European Public Administrations.

One of the main obstacles in the diffusion of digital signature is in fact the lack of a critical mass of users. The specific composition of the W-SPES consortium will therefore tackle this issue by helping to attract large numbers of users and strongly encourage them to introduce the digital signature technology.

EU Funding	€1.19 m
Duration	February 2006 – January 2008
Website	www.wspes.org
Contact	Paolo Boscolo, p.boscolo@comune.prato.it +39 0574 183 5242
Participating Countries	Germany, Italy, Slovenia, UK