European Commission
Information Society and Media

SPOCS:
A European project to ease the administrative burden of businesses

Simple Procedures Online for Cross-border Services (SPOCS) is a pilot project launched by the European Commission which aims to remove the administrative barriers European businesses face in offering their services abroad. SPOCS is expected to further enhance the quality of electronic procedures completion and has been designed for businesses that have an interest in cross-border activities. It will allow them to meet all the administrative obligations through a single contact point that will be available online.

Providing companies with a single contact point

An innovative completion system will be implemented through a network of Points of Single Contact (PoSC), which is going to be set up in all EU Member States by the end of 2009.

The PoSC will be acting as intermediaries between service providers and the national public administrations. These single intermediaries are designed to allow businesses to complete electronically all the relevant administrative procedures, such as obtaining authorisations to start an activity, which are necessary for providing their services in another EU country.

> *For example, a company based in Belgium and willing to provide catering services in Italy will be able to ensure that all the administrative procedures are filled in online through the Italian single contact point.*

At a Glance

Project
Simple Procedures Online for Cross-border Services (SPOCS)

Project Coordinator
Capgemini Netherlands (CNB)

Partners
Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland

Duration
3 years (2009-2012)

Total cost
€14 million (€7 million funded by the European Commission)

Programme
ICT Policy Support Programme under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)

Setting the scene - removing administrative burdens from services

While the EU internal market for goods is already effective, the internal market for services is not yet functioning to its full potential. Nevertheless, services are the main drivers for growth and jobs in Europe, and represent around 70% of GDP and employment in the EU. They were the source of 95% new jobs created in Europe in recent years.

An effective single market for services is necessary and the red tape burden that hinders service providers from establishing themselves in other countries or from trading across borders must be removed. For this reason the European Parliament and the Council adopted the **Services Directive** in December 2006. This instrument covers a wide range of services activities such as consultancy and legal advice, construction business, retail, restaurant and hotels, tourism services, etc. It sets

out an ambitious programme for administrative simplification.

Allowing businesses to complete administrative procedures online is an idea that lies besides the Service Directive. Each EU Member State is going to set up a **Point of Single Contact (PoSC)** which is expected to play a major role in **removing the obstacles to trade in services** and **making public administrations more efficient and modern**.

SPOCS: A tailor-made implementation

The Simple Procedures Online for Cross-border Services is a pilot project that will run for three years (2009-2012) and that will receive €14 million in funding, shared between the European Commission and the participating partners. It will initially involve at least two professional categories of service providers and its **results will be freely available and widely promoted to raise awareness and to encourage innovative solutions for administrative simplification.** A special effort will be placed on the dissemination of open specifications, the sharing of knowledge and best practices, as well as the encouragement for further cooperation. A wide range of organisations is represented among the partners from decision makers to service providers and IT solutions.

Developing new electronic tools and common specifications

SPOCS will have the advantage to already benefit from the results achieved by its sister projects, STORK (on electronic identity) and PEPPOL (on electronic procurement), in relation to mutual recognition for the use of electronic identity and signatures.

The pilot project will be implemented in different phases and a special emphasis will be drawn on the development of common specifications and tools for electronic services, such as technical and semantic interoperability, the promotion of electronic documents (eDocuments) and the creation of a services directory.

At all stages, SPOCS will be carried out openly to facilitate consensus by public administrations, their suppliers and partners, industry and standardisation bodies. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the national systems will not be replaced, but will only take into account common specifications to ensure cross border interoperability.

SPOCS is expected to...

...**improve the efficiency of cross-border cooperation** by making the different approaches that are currently used in the EU countries compatible;

...**support service innovations for businesses by reducing time and energy loss**, and by enabling them to provide services anywhere in the EU, which is particularly useful for SMEs;

...**increase cross border activities** – the access to new markets and generate benefits for the overall economic growth and job creation;

...**reinforce competitiveness and contribute to the development of trade**, which benefits already from electronic services, such as electronic procurement and online company registration;

...**accelerate the development of common technology requirements** that will foster interoperability, efficiency and the quality of services; and,

...foster innovative technical solutions, enhanced cooperation and system interoperability that will be useful to **modernise the services offered by the public administrations.**

Further information

SPOCS website: http://www.eu-spocs.eu
Services Directive: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/index_en.htm
eGovernment: http://ec.europa.eu/egovernment
ICT PSP: http://ec.europa.eu/ict_psp
CIP: http://ec.europa.eu/cip/index_en.htm
Information Society Thematic Portal: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/index_en.htm

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SPOCS Project Factsheet