



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM ON ELECTRONIC INVOICING

24 September 2015

Centre Albert Borschette (Room 0C), Rue Froissart 36, 1040 Brussels

GENERAL

On 24 September 2015 the ninth meeting of the European Multi-Stakeholder Forum on e-Invoicing ('the Forum') was organised by the Commission. The meeting was chaired by Mr Joaquim Nunes de Almeida, Director of the Directorate G Public Procurement and subsequently by Mr Ivo Locatelli, from the DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW).

Delegates from most Member States attended the meeting (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, UK). Just over half of the stakeholder associations and organisations attended the meeting (Business Europe, CEN, EACT, EACB, ECB, EESPA, Open PEPPOL and UN/CEFACT). Representatives from Liechtenstein and Norway participated as observers.

1. INTRODUCTION AND ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

The meeting started with the adoption of the agenda, where Mr. Nunes de Almeida mentioned the very busy period for e-invoicing, which was reflected in the diversity of the agenda points. It was mentioned that the break-out sessions were an important part of the day, but also the discussions on the status and progress of the draft EN (the European Standard) under development in CEN/PC 434 and the sharing of several Member States experiences were of the highest interest. It was also shared with the group that the AGR Sub-Group had a full day meeting the day before.

The agenda was then approved.

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted, with remarks from Peter Potgieser¹, after a mention by the FR representative of a need for more timely sharing of the minutes. These need also to be made public.

¹ Peter raised the point that he sent some comments on the Draft March minutes, to be further discussed.

2. UPDATE FROM CEN/PC 434 ON PROGRESS IN STANDARDISATION WORK

Andrea Caccia, the chair of CEN/PC 434, presented the status of their work. He informed that CEN/PC 434 will submit in November the draft EN to the enquiry stage².

During the subsequent debate some delegates (Denmark, Spain, Ireland) addressed various issues related to the upcoming consultation and the related work on the list of syntaxes complying with the EN.

Several delegations supported the principle that the list of syntaxes should be short in order to reduce the implementation costs of the contracting administrations and entities. XML was mentioned as a modern solution by Denmark. Spain pointed out that only one syntax was used when they introduced the mandatory use of eInvoicing. Ireland and Italy supported again the idea of a limited list of syntaxes. Business Europe flagged the issue of multiple order / multiple invoices, and underlined that the interests of SMEs should be born in mind in the further deployment of e-invoicing. Andrea Caccia clarified that the public enquiry may deliver some feed-back on the multiple order / multiple invoices issue.

3. PROGRESS REPORT BY THE ACTIVITY GROUPS

The Activity Group leaders presented the progress of the respective activities and the outcome of the discussions during the break-out sessions. The main elements are summarised below:

AG 'Connections' (AGC) – Charles Bryant

The Activity Group produced the Guidance Document for Public Administrations that have to implement e-invoicing, i.e. on the practical aspects that make e-invoicing happen bearing in mind the implications of the Directive 2014/55/EU.

AGC is asking the Forum for any remaining comments. The consistency between the document and the AGS "Background document" will have to be checked. Carmen Ciciriello, from CELERIS, helped in finalizing the draft.

The issue of "hybrid invoices", touched upon in the Guidance document was discussed. It was not considered that this is the appropriate space for this discussion.

AG 'Regulation' (AGR) – Stefan Engel-Flehsig

The Activity Group is working on a document which is "Visions 2020". The day before, the group consolidated the analysis of the 15 replies to the two questionnaires that were sent to all Forum members, on VAT practices, new areas (e.g. archiving), core invoice and country extensions.

AGR discussed the progress on the questionnaires work. The sub-group will continue to work through conference calls. It was agreed that three individual members of the group will take the leadership of one topic and send contributions in order to achieve the drafting of the sub-group's output. It would be desirable that another face-to-face meeting is organized in order to finalize the Vision 2020 document, but nothing was decided yet.

² CEN successively communicated that the enquiry will start on the 3/12/2015 and will close on the 3/3/2016.

The Activity Group is further reviewing and developing the 'Background Document' as per its 'Scope and Activities' document. A draft version, including several questions, has been addressed to the Forum a month in advance of the September meeting as to ensure that their views were duly reflected.

Concerning future work, AGS leader reminded that several requests for comments were sent in the previous weeks and that another request to the Forum for their comments will be sent again.³

The Activity Group proposed next steps for its work to the Forum; based on the Background Document a small number of proposed Recommendations to the Commission, in line with the remit and scope of the Forum, will be drafted. The Forum agreed⁴ with this approach.

4. B2G E-INVOICING IN EUROPE: EXPERIENCES OF FI, NO, ES, AT

Finland, Norway, Spain and Austria represent a fairly varied sample of cases in terms of the level of experience, the size of the Member State, the governmental structure (centralised vs. federal). They provided a number of interesting learnings which can serve in the country transitions to e-invoicing.

Finland has an extremely interesting experience in e-invoicing, because they integrate a workflow of e-invoice processing which allows at the same time companies to accomplish their tax obligations, in an automated manner. The benefit is twofold in terms of economies and also environmental.

B2G e-invoicing is mandatory in Spain since this year and applies to all levels of the public institutions (i.e. national and local bodies) and to all types of companies 3.858.646 e-invoices have been received so far. An important legislative package accompanied the eInvoicing policy. According to the national legislation, the e-invoices have to comply with the "Facturae" format, a national specification.

B2G e-invoicing is mandatory in Austria to the federal level since the 2014. The preparation phase, since 2007, ensured a successful process (more than 1.300.00 invoices received).

Since 2012, in Norway public authorities must demand e-invoices (figures are up to 98,4% of public authorities). The PEPPOL-based approach helped to solve some of the issues present in 2012. New issues in 2015 are related to the use of e-signatures, or the question of management support to handle the change of routines and procedures.

5. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF CEF DEVELOPMENTS

Mr Nunes de Almeida underlined that this agenda item addressed 2 points concerning the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF): the update on the CEF grants for e-invoicing, the

³ This was done on 19 October 2015.

⁴ a summary has been made available in CIRCABC

Work Programmes for 2015 and 2016, as well as the governance role of the Forum to which the match-making website project was presented.

The objective of this agenda item was twofold:

1. To continue to explain and clarify the scope and activities of CEF to get them broadly understood.
2. To contribute to involving the Forum in its consultative role, as specified in its mandate. While the adoption of the Work Programme is a prerogative of the Commission supported by the CEF Telecom Committee, the Forum's role is related to the implementation of the Work Programme. Therefore, the proposal for the creation of the Match-making website was presented by the external contractor, Everis.

Irena Rivière-Osipov (DG GROW) provided an update on changes made to the 2015 Work Programme, the decision process for the 2016 Work Programme and recalled the main conditions of the upcoming call for proposals (to be issued at the end of October 2015). The main modification was the changing of the financing mechanism under grants, from the system of lump sums to eligible costs.

6. FORUM - EXEP

Mr Hoddevik provided an overview on the EXEP objectives and progress of the work. EXEP is due to hold a meeting on 6 and 7 October.

Mr Hoddevik underlined that the Forum and EXEP address topics of common interest and should exploit their synergies.

7. AOB

The ECB was due to make a presentation to the Group on its European Retail Payments Board and the relationship with eInvoicing, as the ECB sees it. More details in the document attached.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Mr Locatelli thanked the Forum members for their participation and for the work undertaken and announced that the next meeting is scheduled for 16 March 2016.