

Towards a Successful Dialogue on RFID

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is a key sector of technology for Europe. It is used for a large number of applications in retail, manufacturing, services, and research across various sectors. The RFID industry is expected to show rapid growth over the next years, which directly affects the competitiveness of the European Single Market. In this context, 2006 will become a decisive year for the further development and deployment of RFID technology. Both the upcoming consultation process of the European Commission on RFID and the key issues within the 7th EU Research Framework Programme show the significance of RFID for EU public policy.

The economic potential and the social benefits of RFID are generally acknowledged by experts from academia, business, and politics. However, at the same time there is growing concern regarding a wide-spread use of RFID on consumer products. Against the backdrop of this discussion, the UK RFID Centre, the RFID Platform Nederland and the Informationsforum RFID e.V. jointly issue the following statement:

1. RFID Supports Important European Public Policy Issues

RFID has the potential to enhance Europe's competitiveness as it strives to fulfil the goals of the Lisbon Agenda for positioning the EU as a global, competitive, dynamic, and knowledge-driven economy. Furthermore, RFID can aid in the protection of public health, safety, and security. Therefore, it is essential to create a suitable framework that serves to understand and successfully implement RFID throughout Europe. This will also support European efforts in the worldwide process regarding standardization and frequency management.

2. RFID Needs Public Acceptance

No technology can be implemented successfully without the acceptance of its users. Ensuring the protection of privacy and a secure use of the technology has great significance in this context as do transparency and consumer education. Hence, the national RFID platforms believe in strengthening a general consumer acceptance by offering information on RFID technology and applications and by demonstrating the individual benefits for consumers. Increasing food safety through tracking and tracing of livestock, providing easy access to product information, and fighting

counterfeit pharmaceutical products are only some of the many improvements RFID technology can provide to consumers.

3. National Governments Should Support RFID at the European Level

Many technical and regulatory issues pertaining to RFID cannot be treated solely at the national level. On the European level, the debate among policymakers and the discussions with relevant stakeholders have intensified over the last months. However, it is necessary for European national governments to become actively involved in this discussion and to ensure a dialogue with stakeholders on the national level.

4. Research and Development for EU Competitiveness

RFID is an evolving competitive platform for industry, business and supply chain development. Such developments include important technology prospects, but also key issues such as the socio-economic implications of exploiting the technology. Other important issues are the integration of RFID with communications, network, and positioning technologies as well as other technologies with sensory and security capabilities. These factors relating to RFID demonstrate wide ranging opportunities for research and associated developments. These developments are important to the EU in achieving and maintaining a competitive stance in this highly significant sector of information and communications technology (ICT). There is an urgent need for an EU program of research and development specifically concerned with RFID.

The RFID platforms from the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany welcome the discussion process, both within the EU and their own National Governments. They will promote the progress of RFID technology in their respective countries at the same time as they jointly contribute to a European discussion on RFID and the ongoing development of a competitive environment for RFID in Europe.

UK RFID Centre

The UK RFID Centre has been co-sponsored by AIM UK, the non-commercial industry association for the automatic identification and data capture (AIDC) technologies, the British Government and the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire and the Humber. Its objectives are to stimulate enterprise generation and promote the successful introduction of RFID and AIDC to all sectors in the UK, enabling them to compete in the global economy and to develop a self-sustaining centre for these technologies. This Centre will act as a central resource for information and training. It will include a 10,000sq ft demonstration area showing the technologies in use across many industrial and commercial sectors, a benchmarking laboratory and incubator units. It will contribute to the development of standards and regulations and ensure that the requirements of the UK are properly represented in the development of international standards.

www.rfiduk.org

RFID Platform Netherlands

The RFID Platform Netherlands is a foundation made up of over 30 participating organisations from business and research. The goal of the Platform is to stimulate the uptake of RFID in the Netherlands and ensure its responsible use. It does so by providing a neutral platform for all stakeholders where they can share knowledge and co-operate on the business, technical, and policy issues of RFID.

www.rfidnederland.nl

Informationsforum RFID e.V.

The Informationsforum RFID e.V. is a joint initiative of companies from the retail, consumer goods, automotive, IT, and services sectors. It cooperates closely with the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics. The Informationsforum RFID is a platform for dialogue and information regarding all issues relevant to RFID. Its objectives are to increase awareness of the innovative potential of RFID technology and its applications and to establish an open dialogue on key policy issues concerning RFID between all relevant stakeholders.

www.info-rfid.de