

Registered E-Mail (REM) Project Overview

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The European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) technical committee of Electronic Signatures and Infrastructures has set up a study into requirements for registered e-mail leading to standardisation in this area. ETSI is an independent, non-profit organization, whose mission is to produce electronic communications standards for today and for the future.

Business and administrative relationships among companies, public administrations and private citizens, are now more and more implemented electronically. Trust is becoming essential for their success and continued development of electronic services. It is therefore important that any entity using electronic services have suitable security controls and mechanisms in place to protect their transactions and to ensure trust and confidence with their partners. In this respect the electronic signature is an important security component that can be used to protect information and provide trust in electronic business.

Electronic mail is one of the major tools for electronic business and administration. It has been recognised that additional security services are necessary for e-mail to be trusted. In some European Union Member States (Italy, Belgium, Germany, etc.) regulation(s) and application(s) are in place on e-mails (including Internet mail & web mail) providing origin authentication and proof of delivery. Such security services may be used to provide trusted delivery of e-mail equivalent to the existing physical registered postal service. Several approaches are possible in order to realize the goal of trusted "Registered E-Mail" services. This may be enhanced, for example, by other facilities such as the "Digital Postmark" (as specified by the Universal Postal Union) to provide further electronic evidence about the handling of messages. In order to ensure the interoperability of the trusted email services, it is necessary to specify technical formats, as well as procedures and practices for handling registered e-mail and the ways the electronic signatures are applied to it.

ETSI will first verify among the European Union Member States competent bodies (state authorities, standardisation bodies, e-mail providers, local experts, etc.), as well as with other independent organisations and non EUMS bodies, which current and prospective implementations exist of registered e-mail mechanisms. A Technical Report will be produced to summarize the results of this survey.

Based on this survey outcome, a number of Technical Specifications (TSs) will be produced. These are currently envisaged as follows:

- A TS defining format of the signatures to be applied on registered emails;
- A TS defining the policies of Trusted Service Providers (TSP) applying signatures on registered emails.