



Brussels, 2 February 2010

EFBS: No force on the SEPA-implementation

- Deadline for direct debit transfers totally inapplicable -

Brussels – On the occasion of the hearings at the European Parliament the commissioner designate for the internal market, Michel Barnier, announced the intention of a deadline concerning national direct debit transfers which should be replaced by a European direct debit transfer SEPA-procedure. This proposition is not conform to the European Commission's commitment to allow stakeholders to introduce the SEPA-procedure voluntarily. "This change is not comprehensible", explains the **Managing Director of the European Federation of Building Societies, Andreas J. Zehnder**. Obviously, the European Commission has no trust in the attractiveness of the SEPA-procedure. Important German industry and social organisations, companies, charity organisations, consumer groups and public authorities had already rejected such a deadline within a official consultation in 2009. Rather, the European Commission was called to keep consumer friendly and efficient national direct debit transfers and integrate them carefully into the SEPA-system.

In the opinion of the European Federation of Building Societies the European Payment Services Directive allows the general compatibility of both systems. **Zehnder**: A premature abolition of proven national direct debit transfers which are legally compliant and are highly accepted by the consumers would lead to significant costs and fuels uncertainty." There are no obvious reasons that could justify a deadline. It is totally unclear how the stock of millions direct debit authorisations might be transferred in SEPA-mandates. Open questions like this should be sorted out beforehand. Therefore, the commissioner designate for the internal market might be well advised to leave the way open for a pragmatic and cost saving implementation.