



EU funds RFID research

A three-year initiative dedicated to research, development, training and demonstration in the effective use of RFID based on EPCglobal standards was launched in Brussels in July. The BRIDGE (Building RFID solutions for the Global Environment) project is being supported by the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP6) with €7.5 million (£5.1m) funding.

Coordinated by global data standards body GS1, the BRIDGE project brings together a consortium of 31 global organisations.

Participants in the programme include universities in Europe and China, who host three of the Auto-ID Labs, as well as large and small solutions providers, together with large-scale retailers, manufacturers and SMEs.

Henri Barthel, EPCglobal technical director and BRIDGE project co-ordinator said: "Since its inception, RFID has been hailed as the panacea for a more sophisticated and efficient global supply chain, but there are many questions to answer before this is realised. Cross-industry participation in such a large-scale project is a key to its success. The BRIDGE project will

transform RFID from being an identification technology into providing an EPC-global based product information network."

The BRIDGE project will focus on business-based research, provision of information services, and hardware (including sensors and tags) and software development. This will result in the development of comprehensive training materials in the use of RFID, increased pilots and deployment for a

variety of business areas and sectors including: Anti-counterfeiting, healthcare, the textile industry, drug traceability, improved fulfilment of customer demand, food manufacturing process management, re-useable assets, products in service, and the retail environment.

BRIDGE will look at how the development of new services in the EPCGlobal network will reduce the level of piracy of goods, which is a serious problem in Europe; increase patient safety by improving traceability, and certifying the pedigree of pharmaceutical products as they move from the manufacturer to the final user; and achieve better fulfilment of customers needs through increasing the flow and accuracy of information through a global supply chain.

The reduction of waste and stock holding, and improving visibility and traceability of both products and equipment, will thereby enhance food safety. While the information exchange and asset management between supply chain partners to reduce losses and costs of re-useable assets such as kegs, milk cages and trolleys will also be addressed. It will develop systems and processes to increase the reliability of upgrades, repair and replacement processes throughout the life of many products, and look at how optimising processes in retail stores can increase service to the customer by using RFID on consumer sale units.

CONTACT

GS1 UK
www.gs1uk.org