Mr. Kjeldahl

Introduction: The launch of SEPA today is not as tangible to citizens, as the launch of euro notes and coins. The reason being that the main focus until now has been to harmonise the payment process between banks. In addition, the Regulation 2560/2001 has already anticipated some of the SEPA benefits on cross-border credit transfer and card payments. However, the heart of SEPA is all about greater efficiency, increased competition and more product innovation. We expect that consumers stand to gain greatly from SEPA.

Question: How should we “sell” SEPA to the ordinary citizens? What would make SEPA attractive to them?

Answer: If we are convinced that SEPA will bring benefits, SEPA will sell itself but it will be challenging since many Member States do dispose of very efficient and reasonably cheap payment.

Economies of scale play an important role in the debate about “selling” SEPA. But, if SEPA is only efficient at a European level, where as national payment systems are efficient on a much smaller scale, there is room to improve the working of SEPA. In our view, there is a lack of competition in the market for payment cards. We therefore are not supporting cut off days of national payment schemes, but we think market logic should apply: SEPA payment products – which we don’t know yet - will have to prove they are more efficient and more reliable. Once SEPA products have gained a market share of 60-70% the national non-SEPA schemes can be phased out.

SEPA, in my view, will have become a reality once I can pay with my debit card in a taxi in Brussels.

Thank you very much.