# [GB] New E-Commerce Bill Open to Public Discussion

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On 23 July 1999 the British Government published the draft of the Electronic Communications Bill. The first proposal relating to this Bill gave rise to a substantial amount of criticism by some members of the Government. Because of this, the British Department of Trade and Industry has departed from the previous proposal on a number of relevant issues, ranging from the originally envisaged system of mandatory controls on the use of encryption, to the extremely strict regulation on the matter of unsolicited e-mails. The original proposal concerning the possibility for law-enforcement bodies to obtain access to keys to encrypted data by "trusted third parties" has also been eliminated. Some of the most salient aspects covered by the draft envisage proposals for a voluntary licensing scheme to be set up in order to enhance the secure transfer of data, in a structure that would ensure the legal recognition and validity of electronic signatures. The Bill, formerly known as the "Secure Electronic Commerce Bill", is expected to be receive its first reading in the House of Commons next November.

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