

Competitive digital single market - eGovernment as a spearhead

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This Communication introduces the European Interoperability Strategy (EIS) and the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) for European public services, two key elements in the Digital Agenda, which stresses the need for European public administrations to provide efficient, effective cross-border eGovernment services. Together, the Framework and the Strategy promote interoperability among public administrations.

The Communication lays out the **challenges to be met**, noting that Member States setting up ICT-supported national public services need to be more aware of the risk of creating new electronic barriers if they opt for solutions that are not interoperable. Such ebarriers fragment the internal market and hinder it from functioning properly. Without ICT-supported European public services and collaboration among public administrations, citizens are obliged to contact, or even to travel to, public administrations abroad to deliver or collect information or documents they need to work, study or travel within the EU. The same applies to businesses that want to establish themselves in more than one Member State. Delivering European public services to European citizens and businesses will be difficult, if not impossible, without interoperability among European public administrations.

The Interoperable Delivery of European eGovernment Services to public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens (IDABC) established by Decision No 2004/387/EC, has achieved significant results. The [final evaluation of the IDABC programme](#) concluded that a coordinated approach can contribute to delivering better results by means of shared solutions operated in cooperation with Member States. The Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations (ISA) programme ([Decision No 922/2009/EC](#)), which succeeds the IDABC programme that came to an end in 2009, lays even more emphasis on the relevance of interoperability and collaboration to implement EU legislation successfully.

Proposed Actions

The European Interoperability Strategy (EIS) for European public services sets out a common approach to interoperability, aiming to foster European public service delivery by 2015 through:

- appropriate governance organisation and processes in line with EU policies and objectives;
- trusted information exchange enabled by commonly agreed interoperability initiatives, including completion of the legal environment, development of interoperability frameworks, and agreements on interoperability standards and rules.

To achieve this, activities at EU and Member State level should be coordinated and interoperability governance at EU level should be established.

The strategy clusters future interoperability activities under three headings: (i) trusted information exchange; (ii) interoperability architecture; (iii) assessment of the ICT implications of new EU legislation.

These activities are to be supported by **accompanying measures** on awareness-raising and sharing of best practice.

The European Interoperability Framework (EIF) for European public services specifies common elements such as vocabulary, concepts, principles, policies, guidelines, recommendations, standards,

specifications and practices. It is conceptual model for developing European public services, presenting a building block approach to constructing them, allowing service components to be interconnected, and promoting the reuse of information, concepts, patterns, solutions, and specifications in Member States and at European level. It introduces:

- 12 underlying principles summarising the expectations of public administrations, business and citizens regarding the delivery of public services;
- a conceptual model for public services, structuring the design of European public services and highlighting why and where interoperability is necessary;
- four levels of interoperability: legal, organisational, semantic and technical;
- the concept of interoperability agreements, based on standards and open platforms.

Lastly, the EIF stresses the importance of interoperability governance and the need for coordination across administrative levels.

The EIS and the EIF will be maintained under the ISA Programme and kept in line with the results of other relevant Digital Agenda actions on interoperability.

In parallel, the Commission is preparing the eCommission 2011-2015 initiative. Its overarching objective is to evolve from today's Integrated Commission to tomorrow's Transformed Commission.

Planned actions: the Commission will implement the EIS through the ISA programme and through activities planned in the ICT-PSP programme, which is part of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), established by Decision No 1639/2006/EC. The CIP ICT-PSP programme supports a multitude of policy areas, but a number of its large-scale projects are directly linked to improving interoperability for delivering European public services.

Member State administrations and Commission services are encouraged to take the EIF into account in all activities related to setting up European public services.

Implementing the EIS

- **Trusted Information Exchange:** Member States taking part in large-scale pilots supported by the CIP ICT-PSP programme are gaining experience in cross-border interactions. Other Member States are invited to join existing pilots, and new pilots are being proposed. The first large-scale pilots will end in 2011. Reflections are already underway on how best to give further support to the results, and on how the ISA programme can help to convert results into operational services. Where relevant, the Commission takes part in ongoing pilots, such as those on eProcurement and on interoperable eIdentities. This ensures that the Commission's infrastructure is interoperable with the results of these pilots.
- **Interoperability Architecture:** the Commission will work with Member States towards a common vision for European interoperability architecture and, if needed, will support such architecture by setting up common infrastructures and by developing common services.
- **Assessment of the ICT implications of new EU legislation:** the Commission is developing a method that could be used in preparing legislative acts with a view to achieving a better understanding of how ICT can support the effective implementation of such legislation.

The EIF should be taken into account when public administrations set up European public services and during the development of ICT systems to support the implementation of EU policy.

In summary, the Commission will:

- implement the EIS through appropriate instruments such as the ISA programme and the CIP ICT-PSP programme, in close cooperation with Member States and other stakeholders;
- align its internal interoperability strategy with the EIS through the eCommission initiative;
- ensure that the EIF is applied when implementing new legislation and establishing new European public services;
- ensure the governance of the EIS and related global and sectoral interoperability activities, in close coordination with Member States.

Member States should:

- align national interoperability strategies with the EIS and national initiatives and actions with corresponding initiatives and actions at EU level;
- work with each other and with the Commission on implementing the EIS, while monitoring the progress and impact of related actions at national level;
- align their national interoperability frameworks with the EIF;
- take into account the European dimension at an early stage in the development of any public service that might become part of European public services in future;

Lastly, they should contribute to the governance of the EIS and related interoperability activities.