European public administrations ISA: interoperability solutions

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The Commission presented a report on the main results of the final evaluation of the ISA programme, the six year programme on interoperability solutions for European public administrations) which was launched on 1 January 2010.

The ISA programme was established building on progress under its predecessor (IDA and IDABC) programmes. As the ISA Decision3 made clear, the main objective of the ISA programme was to **support cooperation between European public administrations** with a view to enabling the delivery of electronic public services supporting the implementation of EU policies and activities.

The final evaluation of the ISA programme was based on quantitative and qualitative data collected in a variety of ways, involving a broad range of representatives from Member State and EU services, and a limited number of stakeholders from civil society and private organisations with which the programme interacted. It focused on the following **seven main criteria**: (i) relevance; (ii) efficiency; (iii) effectiveness; (iv) utility; (v) sustainability; (vi) coherence; (vii) coordination of activities.

Conclusions and final evaluation: the final evaluation was **largely positive**, concluding that the ISA programme was aligned with the Union policy priorities and Member States' needs. It found that:

- **it was implemented efficiently and coherently**, delivering results that are re-used by both Commission services and Member States;
- **it has been effective in achieving its objectives and delivering operational solutions** facilitating effective collaboration between European public administrations, including the assessment of ICT implications of new EU legislation.

The achieved and anticipated results and impacts of the ISA programme **largely address the business needs identified**. The programme sufficiently addressed that on improving interaction with stakeholders, and made consistent progress in addressing the others.

However, the evaluation concluded that the following areas require ongoing effort under the new ISA2 programme:

- communication with public administrations and raising their awareness on interoperability;
- enhancing the holistic approach and horizontal cross-cutting view of interoperability;
- cooperation with other EU policies and initiatives.

Recommendations: the Commission noted that the ISA Decision did not provide for action to address the needs of end-users, but experience of implementing the programme and consultation with action 'owners' and Member States made it clear that this was necessary. This limitation is addressed in the recommendation to **extend the scope of the new ISA2 programme to businesses and citizens**.

The evaluation found that the ISA² programme should develop a **more systematic 'business-case' approach**, which would also serve to highlight further the role of interoperability in producing economic and societal benefits.

In addition, the Commission should **endeavour to respect its staffing targets**, particularly as the actual allocation of human resources was always lower than that originally envisaged in the programme.

The evaluation concluded that concerted efforts should be continued in the following areas under the new ISA2 programme:

1) Communication with public administrations and raising their awareness on interoperability: between 2010 and 2015, approximately two thirds of the events that the ISA programme organised and held with Member State representatives, and 63 % (25) of the 40 events organised by Member States in which the ISA programme participated, were held after 2013, i.e. after the interim evaluation.

The ISA2 programme should update and implement a communication strategy, with a focus on targeted engagement, including with sector-specific stakeholders.

2) Develop the holistic approach and cross-cutting view of interoperability: the European Interoperability Reference Architecture (EIRA) and the European Interoperability Cartography (EICart) have a vital role in the dissemination of results and better identification of needs.

Now that the assessment of the ICT implications of new EU legislation has been included in the impact assessment process, the ISA2 programme should continue to play its intended role and deploy its expertise to promote this exercise and support the DGs and services undertaking such assessments.

The ISA2 programme should develop a more systematic approach to supporting and monitoring the use of common services and generic tools, but also the application and implementation of common frameworks.

3) Cooperation with other EU policies and initiatives: the ISA programme should build on the clear improvements in the coordination of activities relating to interoperability and e-government across the Commission that the ISA programme has brought about since the interim evaluation. This includes:

- the ongoing cooperation with DG CNECT (communication networks) on the CEF and the new 2016-2020 e-Government Action Plan;
- plans to cooperate with DG EMPL and DG REGIO to identify existing or new ISA/ISA2 actions that have the potential to contribute to the ESIF thematic objectives 2, (‘enhancing access to, and use and quality of ICT’), and 11, (‘enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration’). This is in addition to work on evaluating national operational programmes and identifying conditions;
- the ISA programme has shown strong potential for greater cooperation with, inter alia, DG HOME (Migration and Home Affairs), DG JUST (Justice and Consumers), DG MARE (Maritime Affairs and Fisheries), DG FISMA (Financial services), DG GROW (Internal market) and the Joint Research Centre.

The final evaluation sees the new **Inter-service Group on Public Administration Quality and Innovation** as the main driver to achieve consistent cooperation and coherence among EU policies and initiatives contributing to public sector modernisation.