

**79th Plenary Session
21–22 April 2009**

**OPINION
of the
Committee of the Regions
on
INTEROPERABILITY SOLUTIONS
FOR EUROPEAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS (ISA)**

- The CoR welcomes the European Commission's initiative to continue the previous programmes through the follow-up programme on Interoperability Solutions for Public Administrations (ISA).
- The CoR takes the view that local and regional authorities should participate in wide-ranging cooperation to improve interoperability in public administration and the effectiveness of public service delivery.
- The CoR stresses that the programme must not isolate European public administrations from the outside world and suggests that interoperability standards should be developed on the basis of extensive international cooperation.
- The CoR notes that the exchange of best practice between regions and local authorities would not only be useful but should in fact be an essential part of the ISA programme.

Rapporteur

Veronica Ionita (RO/EPP), Mayor of Gorgota

Reference documents

Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on interoperability solutions for European public administrations (ISA)
COM(2008) 583 final

I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. welcomes the European Commission's initiative to continue the previous IDA (Interchange of Data between Administrations) and IDABC (Interoperable Delivery of European eGovernment Services to public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens) programmes, through the follow-up programme on Interoperability Solutions for Public Administrations (ISA). The two initial programmes have clearly provided added value to the exchange of information between administrations, and the new programme will definitely contribute to local and regional development by facilitating the exchange of ideas and experiences in various fields such as employment, fisheries, agriculture, health, consumer protection and justice and home affairs;
2. underlines the importance of local and regional administrations, in line with the i2010 strategy for a European information society, as these authorities are the motor of economic growth at local level;
3. considers that local and regional authorities should not be regarded only as users of pan-European eServices, but also as major providers of services in the context of the proposal;
4. feels that the European Commission should focus more on the networking process between European public administrations at all levels, which should be recognised at the national level by the Member States, given the difficulties that have arisen in the past due to differences of cultural and political approaches, language barriers or budgetary issues;
5. therefore takes the view that local and regional authorities should participate in wide-ranging cooperation to improve interoperability in public administration and the effectiveness of public service delivery;
6. stresses that the programme must not isolate European public administrations from the outside world and suggests that interoperability standards should be developed on the basis of extensive international cooperation;
7. points out that various community programmes (IST, eTEN, eContent) have been linked to the former version of IDABC. Collaboration with current programmes (FP7, CIP, Structural Funds) might yield valuable resources;
8. notes that the exchange of best practice between regions and local authorities would not only be useful but should in fact be an essential part of the ISA programme;
9. calls on the European Commission to better evaluate the relevance of the ISA programme's objectives and measures to local and regional authorities;

10. urges the European Commission and the Member States to earmark the allocation of funds for the central, regional and local authorities responsible for the implementation of ISA, comprising the funding of training activities for public servants. This way, the programme will better address the needs of European citizens.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1

Recital (11)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
The ISA programme should be based on the experience from the IDA and IDABC programmes which have demonstrated that a co-ordinated approach can contribute to delivering results faster, with higher quality and meeting business requirements, by means of common and shared solutions established and operated in cooperation with Member States. These activities have already delivered important contributions to ensuring interoperability in support of electronic exchange of information between European public administrations and are continuing to do so.	The ISA programme should be based on the experience from the IDA and IDABC programmes. <u>The findings drawn from the mid-term review of the implementation of the IDABC programme, addressing the issues of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, utility and coherence of that programme, should also be taken into account; particular attention should be paid to the needs expressed by the users of that programme. It has been</u> which have demonstrated that a co-ordinated approach can contribute to delivering results faster, with higher quality and meeting business requirements, by means of common and shared solutions established and operated in cooperation with Member States. These activities have already delivered important contributions to ensuring interoperability in support of electronic exchange of information between European public administrations and are continuing to do so.

Reason

Since the ISA programme follows on from the previous IDA programme and from the current IDABC, which will conclude at the end of 2009, it would be both helpful and recommended to take into consideration the results of both programmes in order to create a basis for the ISA's future implementation. The European Commission's evaluation and implementation reports should, therefore, be made available for assessment.

Amendment 2

Recital (27a)

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	<u>It would be useful to explore further the possibility of compatibility with the Structural Funds and co-financing from those funds for users, to make use of common frameworks and generic tools established or improved by the ISA programme.</u>

Reason

Establishing and improving common framework and generic tools will be funded by the ISA programme, while the use of these frameworks and tools is to be financed by the users. The possibility of making use of co-financing from the Structural Funds should be therefore further explored.

Amendment 3

Article 1

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(2) The objective of the ISA programme is to support the cooperation between European public administrations by facilitating the efficient and effective electronic cross-border and cross-sector interaction between such administrations enabling the delivery of electronic public services supporting the implementation of Community policies and activities	(2) The objective of the ISA programme is to support the cooperation between European public administrations, <u>including local and regional administrations</u> , by facilitating the efficient and effective electronic cross-border and cross-sector interaction between such administrations enabling the delivery of electronic public services supporting the implementation of Community policies and activities

Reason

According to the Lisbon Strategy, promoting an inclusive, regionally and socially equitable information society, which uses ICT to increase competitiveness and better public services is a key objective of EU policy and this can be best achieved through local and regional authorities. We therefore consider it important to emphasise the involvement of local and regional administrations.

Amendment 4

Article 2

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	(h) “European public administration” means all public bodies, at central, regional and local level, legally recognised by the national legislation of the EU Members States;

Reason

In addition to the definitions already set out in Article 2, we consider that it would be appropriate to insert a new definition of “European public administration”, given the role of public administrations under the present Decision.

Amendment 5

Article 3

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
	d) a multidimensional approach covering technical aspects that allow administrations to carry out this improvement

Reason

In addition to the proposed activities, standardising the technical issues would be beneficial if we take into account the various services provided by the administrations.

Amendment 6

Article 8

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(4) To avoid duplication and to speed up the establishment of solutions, results achieved by other relevant Community and Member States initiatives shall be taken into account, whenever appropriate. To maximise synergies and ensure complementary and combined efforts, actions shall, whenever appropriate, be coordinated with other relevant Community initiatives	(4) To avoid duplication and to speed up the establishment of solutions, results achieved by other relevant Community and Member States initiatives shall be taken into account, whenever appropriate. To maximise synergies and ensure complementary and combined efforts, actions shall, whenever appropriate, be coordinated with other relevant Community initiatives. <u>The exchange of best practice between public administrations should be encouraged by all possible means</u>

Reason

In order to achieve the best results and to be able to provide effective government services, local and regional authorities could learn from each other by sharing their most successful experiences, whilst at the same time improving the coordination mechanism and cross-border interoperability issues.

Amendment 7

Article 12

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(1) The Commission shall be assisted by a committee called the committee on Cross-border Interoperability (hereinafter "the CIO committee"), composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the Commission	(1) The Commission shall be assisted by a committee called the committee on Cross-border Interoperability (hereinafter "the CIO committee"), composed of representatives of the Member States, <u>including one representative of a regional government and one from local government</u> , and chaired by the Commission

Reason

The participation of local and regional government on the committee would benefit the implementation of the objectives mentioned in Article 1, because public services in Europe are provided mainly by local and regional authorities and it is these services that are important for the daily life and free movement of businesses and individuals.

Amendment 8

Article 14

<i>Text proposed by the Commission</i>	<i>CoR amendment</i>
(2) Cooperation with other third countries and international organisations or bodies shall be encouraged, notably within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and with neighbouring countries, in particular the Western Balkan countries. Related costs shall not be covered by the ISA programme	(2) Cooperation with other third countries and international organisations or bodies shall be encouraged, notably within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and with neighbouring countries, in particular the Western Balkan countries, <u>the countries of the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea regions</u> . Related costs shall not be covered by the ISA programme.

Reason

There should be no strict limitations regarding cooperation with partners beyond the borders of the European Union, although the costs generated by their involvement would be covered from their own resources.

Brussels, 21 April 2009

The President
of the
Committee of the Regions

Luc Van den Brande

The Secretary-General
of the
Committee of the Regions

Gerhard Stahl

III. PROCEDURE

Title	Draft opinion on interoperability solutions for European Public Administrations (ISA)
Reference(s)	COM(2008) 583 final
Legal basis	Art. 156
Procedural basis	
Date of Council referral/Date of Commission letter	14/10/2008
Date of Bureau/President's decision	
Commission responsible	Culture, Education and Research (EDUC)
Rapporteur	Veronica Ionita (RO/EPP)
Analysis	16/01/2009
Discussed in commission	04/03/2009
Date adopted by commission	04/03/2009
Result of the vote in commission	Adopted unanimously
Date adopted in plenary	21/04/2009
Previous Committee opinions	<p>Opinion on <i>Interoperable Delivery of pan-European eGovernment Services to Public Administrations, Businesses and Citizens (IDABC)</i>¹ CdR 247/2003 fin – COM(2003) 406 final</p> <p>Opinion on <i>media literacy and creative content online</i> CdR 94/2008 fin² – COM(2007) 833 final and COM(2007) 836 final</p> <p>Opinion on <i>Bridging the Broadband Gap and i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe for the Benefit of All</i> CdR 272/2006 fin³ – COM(2006) 129 final and COM(2006) 173 final</p> <p>Opinion on <i>i2010 - A European Information Society for Growth and Employment</i> CdR 252/2005 fin⁴ – COM(2005) 229 final</p>

¹ OJ C 73, 23 March 2004 p. 72.

² OJ C 325, 19 December 2008, p. 70–75.

³ OJ C 146, 30 June 2007, p. 63.

⁴ OJ C 192, 16.8.2006, p. 21.