



Brussels, 23.3.2017
SWD(2017) 113 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT

**Revision of the European Interoperability Framework - Synopsis report of the
consultation activities**

Accompanying the document

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

European Interoperability Framework – Implementation Strategy

{COM(2017) 134 final}

{SWD(2017) 112 final}

Contents

1.	Scope and purpose of the consultation activities	3
2.	Respondents' profile	4
3.	Results of the consultation activities.....	5

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Number of answers received (per stakeholder group)	4
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'The information and views set out in this section are those of the stakeholders consulted during the different consultation activities and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Commission and its services.

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This report aims to present the key findings of the European Commission's consultation to assess the impact of revising the **European Interoperability Framework (EIF)** including the need to develop a strategy/action plan similar to the current **European Interoperability Strategy (EIS)**. More specifically, it explains the scope and purpose of the consultation process, describes respondents' profiles and presents the results of the consultation activities.

The details of the received contributions can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/consultations/results/result_impact-assessment-for-the-revision-of-the-eis-eifl_en.

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

The Commission ran a 12-week open public consultation on the revision of the EIF from 6 April 2016 to 29 June 2016. The consultation, translated into three languages,¹ targeted i) citizens, ii) businesses and private organisations, iii) public administrations, and iv) what is collectively referred to as 'academia' in the remainder of the report (research centres academic institutions, standardisation organisations and businesses supplying services to public administrations).

The consultation process also included three targeted consultations, namely:

- targeted consultation with the ISA/ISA² Committee/Coordination Group members² – referred in this document as 'Member States' or 'Member State representatives' (21 December 2015 – 18 January 2016);
- targeted consultation with Commission departments (31 March 2016 – 9 May 2016);
- targeted consultation with EU institutions/agencies (18 April 2016 – 27 May 2016).

In addition to these, stakeholders were consulted through:

- dedicated workshops/webinars;
- meetings with:

¹ English, French and German.

² ISA and its successor ISA² are Commission programmes dedicated to interoperability in the public sector.

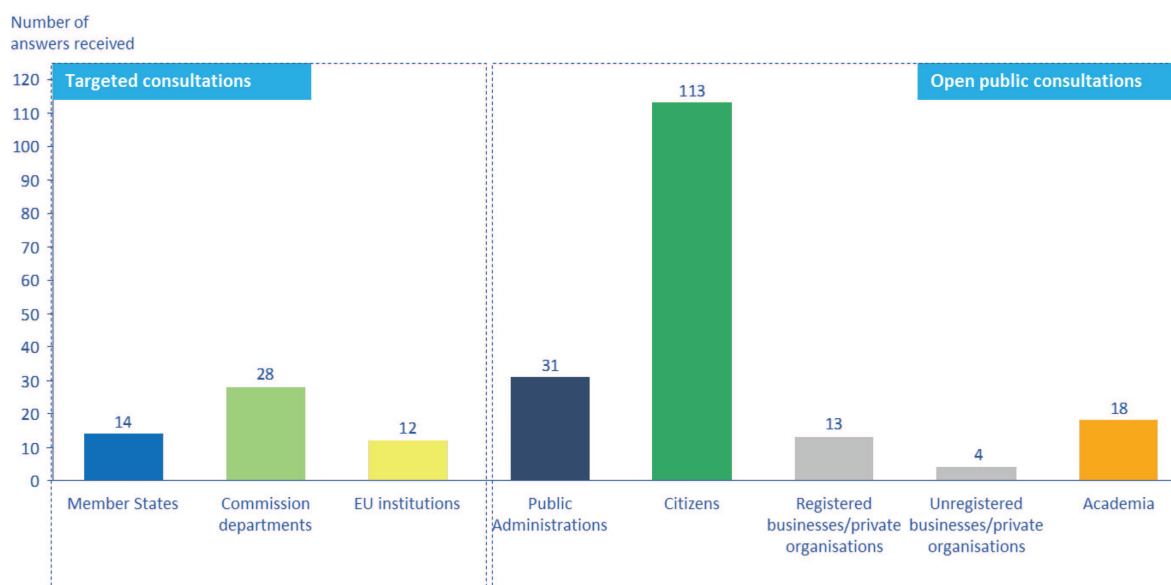
- the Member States’ representatives to ISA/ISA² (including as part of the ISA/ISA² Committee and Coordination group meetings);
- international standardisation bodies (OMG, W3C, ETSI, IEEE);
- targeted experts.

Working groups of Commission departments were also established early in the process and have been regularly consulted.

2. RESPONDENTS’ PROFILE

In total, 233 replies were received during the consultations, as displayed in in the figure below.

Figure 1 Number of answers received (per stakeholder group)³



54 stakeholders from 3 different target groups replied to the **targeted consultations**:

- Representatives from 14 EU and EEA Member States (AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, EL, HR, IS, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK, UK);
- 28 Commission officials, representing 28 units from 17 different Commission directorates-general (AGRI, CNECT, COMP, DEVCO, DGT, ECHO, EMPL, ENV, FISMA, HOME, JUST, MARE, MOVE, OLAF, OP, RTD and TAXUD);
- 12 other EU institutions/agencies: the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the European Banking Authority (EBA), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), the European Court of

³ The stakeholder group ‘businesses and private organisations’ has been split to distinguish between those which have been registered in the Transparency Register and those which have not, in accordance with the Better Regulation Guidelines.

Justice (CJEU), the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the European Parliament, Eurojust, Frontex, the European Railway Agency (ERA) and Europol.

179 stakeholders from 4 different target groups replied to **the open public consultations**:

- 31 public administrations from 16 Member States: BE (1), CZ (2), DE (1), EE (1), EL (2), ES (4), FR (2), HR (1), HU (2), IT (1), NL (4), PT (1), SK (2), SE (3), SI (1), UK (1), plus 1 from Norway and 1 from Turkey;
- 113 citizens from 19 Member States: AT (4), BE (4), DE (6), EL (3), ES (11), FI (2), FR (21), HR (1), IE (3), IT (13), LU (1), NL (7), PL (8), PT (2), RO (2), SE (4), SI (1), SK (1), UK (17), plus 1 citizen from Norway and 1 from Moldova;
- 13 businesses/private organisations established in 9 Member States, registered in the Transparency register: AT (1), BE (3), DE (2), ES (1), FR (2), HU (1), IT (1), SE (1), UK (1);
- 4 businesses/private organisations established in 4 Member States, not registered in the Transparency register: AT (1), BG (1), DE (1), IT (1);
- 18 answers from academia based in 13 Member States: AT (3), BE (1), BG (1), DE (2), EL (1), FR (1), HU (1), IT (1), NL (1), PT(1), SE (1), SK (1), UK (1), plus 1 from Iceland and 1 international organisation (OECD).

Most of the stakeholders consulted (148 respondents, 77 %) tended to consider themselves as aware of the EIS, EIF and their respective content, at least partially.⁴

3. RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

The remainder of this section summarises the findings of the consultations for each stakeholder group,⁵ starting with the overall needs and problems faced by stakeholders over interoperability, and then focusing more specifically on the EIF and EIS.

Assessment of needs and problems over interoperability

Answers show a real need for digital public services at national level and, to a lesser extent, across borders. When available, digital public services are not always user-centric, interoperable or fully digitised.

Most citizens⁶ use the digital public services provided by their country's administrations and tend to prefer using these over other means⁷ (e.g. post, phone calls or physical presence).

⁴ The question was not addressed during the targeted consultation to Member States. This target group is therefore not included in the results displayed.

⁵ The results from the consultation targeted at Commission departments are excluded from this report.

Similarly, the majority of businesses/private organisations considered interoperability with public administrations at national level to be ‘very important’ or ‘rather important’.⁸

By contrast, most respondents from the citizens group (72 respondents, 64 %) declared not having had the need to interact with public administration of a country other than their own in the last year and a majority (64 respondents, 57 %) never used cross-border public services during that period.

In any case, improvements are required in order for digital public services, whether available at national level or across borders, to better meet citizens’ and businesses’ expectations. For instance, 43 citizens (38 %), 13 members of academia⁹ (72 %) and 10¹⁰ businesses/private organisations (59 %) agreed that public services should become fully digitised, so that citizens and businesses can interact with the public administration electronically instead of using other channels. Businesses/private organisations (10¹¹ respondents, 59 %) and academia (11 respondents, 61 %) also highlighted the need for common standards and specification to better access public services.

Public administrations consider interoperability at national level, and, to a lesser extent, cross-border interoperability as a priority. However, because of certain problems interoperability is not being properly implemented.

Interoperability at national level appears to be a priority for the vast majority of Member State representatives, EU institutions/agencies¹² and public administrations¹³ (94 %). Cross-border interoperability is also a priority for the majority of those target groups (70 %). However, 7 Member States (50 %) and 10 public administrations (42 %¹⁴) considered that citizens, businesses and/or administrations in their country have a limited need for digital cross-border public services. In addition, 13 public administrations (54 %¹⁴) mentioned that cross-border interoperability was not a priority in their country’s political agenda. This was assessed as one of the main problems impeding interoperability in 14 of the answers provided by academia (78 %).

⁶ In this section, ‘Citizens’ refers to the 113 citizens who replied to the open public consultation.

⁷ A total of 48 citizens (42 %) declared that they ‘occasionally’ used the digital public services provided by their country’s administrations, 43 respondents (38 %) did so ‘frequently’ and 8 respondents (7 %) ‘always’ used them during the last year.

⁸ In this report, ‘businesses/private organisations’ refers to all 17 businesses/private organisations who replied to the open public consultation. The views of the registered and unregistered businesses/private organisations will be presented separately when applicable.

⁹ In this section, ‘academia’ refers to the 18 academics who replied to the open public consultation.

¹⁰ This number includes eight businesses/private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as two unregistered businesses/private organisations.

¹¹ This number includes seven businesses/private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as three unregistered businesses/private organisations.

¹² In this section, ‘EU institutions/agencies’ refers to the 12 EU institutions/agencies who replied to the targeted consultation.

¹³ In this section, ‘public administrations’ refers to the 31 public administrations who replied to the open public consultation.

¹⁴ This question was addressed to public administrations who had not replied to the targeted consultation (24).

Stakeholders identified additional problems on interoperability at national level and/or across borders. The following were mentioned by the majority of at least one target group:

- the lack of resources (financial and human) for implementing interoperability;
- the absence of a single binding policy on interoperability across sectors;
- the lack of a consolidated view on all the existing interoperability initiatives;
- the lack of standards to sufficiently ensure interoperability, or the fact that standards, even if available, are not sufficiently integrated in the various solutions;
- the fact that the costs and benefits of interoperability are not assessed when developing national legislation;
- the lack of monitoring of how interoperability initiatives are implemented;
- the use of proprietary IT solutions by public administrations, often creating a situation of vendor lock-in; and
- the tendency for national portals to be fragmented and not sufficiently integrated with EU portals.

The lack of collaboration between public administrations was also mentioned by Member States and public administrations as impeding interoperability at:

- national level¹⁵ (5 Member States (36 %) and 2 public administrations (8 %)); and
- EU level (3 Member States (21 %) and 5 public administrations (21 %)).

Assessment of needs and problems related to the EIF

Answers show that a new EIF is needed to align with the new technological trends and EU strategies and provide more practical and targeted guidance on how to implement interoperability requirements. The new EIF should be considered and implemented when a new ICT project is launched or legislation is proposed or reviewed across EU public administrations.

Most Member States and EU institutions mentioned the need for a new EIF to:

- i. take account of new technological trends (19 respondents, 73 %);
- ii. provide practical and more targeted guidance on how to implement interoperability requirements (19 respondents, 73 %);
- iii. align with the evolution of EU strategies, in particular the Digital Single Market Strategy (17 respondents, 65 %).

¹⁵ While the other problems were mentioned based on a list of problems, the lack of collaboration between public administrations was mentioned in an open question.

The need to clarify and adapt the existing EIF principles and recommendations was also cited by 14 respondents (54 %).

Most stakeholders consider the principles, recommendations and interoperability requirements contained in the existing EIF when a new ICT project is launched, either fully (17 respondents, 22 %) or partially (32 respondents, 41 %).

The main problem impeding the implementation of the current EIF in Europe remains the cross-organisation barriers among public administrations at EU and national level. This was mentioned by a majority of Member States, public administrations and EU institutions/agencies (28 respondents, 56 %). The lack of centralised interoperability governance and coordination at national level was also mentioned by 13 public administrations (54 %) and 8 Member States (57 %).

Future development of the EIF

The new EIF seems to be aligned with stakeholders' expectations since all recommendations are considered as important for stakeholders and offering benefits, including time and cost savings, transparency, reduced administrative burdens and improved data quality.

The EIF recommendations most costly and complex to implement, as identified by public administrations and EU institutions, are once-only submission, administrative simplification, organisational interoperability, security and privacy and governance and legal interoperability.

The target groups were asked about the EIF recommendations that should be implemented as a priority. The differences in the target groups' answers reflect their particular context.

Globally, the priorities are (i) security and privacy, (ii) technological neutrality and data transferability and (iii) administrative simplification. Public administrations said that besides security and privacy, the priority should be on once-only submission, administrative simplification and user centricity.

All EIF recommendations were rated between 'rather important' and 'very important' by public administrations, EU institutions/agencies and academia. Also, all new EIF recommendations are also in line with the expectations from businesses/private organisations in general.

More than half of the respondents in each of the four target groups expect the new EIF to i) contribute to time savings (57 respondents, 73 %), ii) contribute to increased transparency (53 respondents, 68 %), iii) contribute to cost savings and better data availability (52 respondents,

67 %), and iv) facilitate reuse, sharing and adoption of future solutions (48 respondents, 62 %).

More than half of the total number of respondents overall also expect the new EIF to contribute to supporting innovation (43 respondents, 55 %) and better data quality (40 respondents, 51 %).

Respondents¹⁶ similarly agree/fully agree that the EIF will specifically benefit citizens (51 respondents, 84 %) and businesses (54 respondents, 89 %), e.g. by reducing their administrative burden.

Comments by citizens, businesses/private organisations and academia on the future development of the EIF mainly concerned openness, transparency and standardisation.

Most of the comments by citizens for the draft revised EIF were on the need for openness (i.e. open data, open standards, open file formats, open source projects) and transparency. Three businesses/private organisations (18 %), two public administrations (6 %) and two members of academia (11 %) also mentioned the importance of referring to open standards, in line with the definition in the current EIF.

One business/private organisation (6 %) and one public administration (3 %) believed that further inputs could be added on standardisation, e.g. by making a reference to the European Catalogue of ICT Standards or encouraging public administrations to adopt best practices on standards.

Assessment of needs and problems related to the EIS

All Member States agreed that the current interoperability strategy (EIS) needs to be reviewed.

Member States were questioned about their country's implementation of the actions proposed in the current EIS. The majority of respondents answered positively (10 respondents, 71 %). By contrast, 1 respondent answered negatively (7 %) and 3 respondents (21 %) had no opinion on the matter. The lack of resources (financial, human) and the lack of strategy were pointed out as the main problems faced by Member States while implementing the actions proposed by the current EIS were cited by 4 (29 %) and 2 respondents (14 %) respectively.

All Member States (14) agreed that a revision of the EIS is needed, mostly to:

- i. align with the technological environment and political priorities set since 2010, in particular the Digital Single Market (5 respondents, 36 %);

¹⁶ Public administrations (31 respondents), EU institutions/agencies (12 respondents) and academia (18 respondents) were asked whether the EIF will also benefit citizens and businesses.

- ii. put a stronger focus on implementation (2 respondents, 14 %);
- iii. focus on users' needs; including those of citizens and businesses (2 respondents, 14 %).

Future development of the EIS

The 'vision' proposed by the EIS is valid for most stakeholders. The proposed 'focus areas' also seem to cover most of the priorities to achieve interoperability. As for the concrete actions listed, they are generally well accepted by stakeholders, with some additional ones proposed in the answers.

When presented with the vision for the new EIS, the large majority of the stakeholders consulted¹⁷ (65 respondents, 87 %) agreed that the EIS should ensure that '*By 2020, citizens and businesses should benefit by interoperable user-centric digital public services, at national and EU levels, which support the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons throughout the Union*'. The Member States who disagreed with this vision considered that more emphasis should be given to users' needs and that the timeframe is too ambitious.

Similarly, when asked how important it would be for businesses/private organisations to benefit from interoperable digital public services at national and EU levels by 2020, a majority of businesses/private organisations answered 'very important' (9¹⁸ respondents, 53 %) and 'rather important' (7¹⁹ respondents, 41 %). The remaining business/private organisation that answered the open public consultation (6 %)²⁰ considered it as 'neither important nor unimportant'.

Member States classified the top priority focus areas (highest average rating equal or higher to 5 on a 6-item scale²¹) as being, in descending order: user centricity, governance and coordination, key enablers and organisational interoperability. The other focus areas also received a relatively high score (comprised between 4 and 5).

Most the proposed EIS actions proposed for national implementation were rated by public administrations as between 'rather important' and 'very important'.

¹⁷ The target groups consulted on this question were the following: public administrations, Member States, EU institutions/agencies and academia.

¹⁸ This number includes eight businesses/private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as one unregistered business/private organisation.

¹⁹ This number includes five businesses/private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as two unregistered businesses/private organisations.

²⁰ This number refers to one unregistered business/private organisation.

²¹ Respondents were asked to rank each focus area from 1 to 6; '1' meaning that the item should not be covered by the EIS and '6' meaning that the item should be a top priority of the EIS'.

All of the proposed EIS actions proposed for implementation at EU level were rated by public administrations as between ‘rather important’ and ‘very important’, with security and privacy support activities receiving the highest score.

EU institutions/agencies and academia also considered most of the actions to be between ‘rather important’ and ‘very important’. EU institutions/agencies gave special emphasis to the actions to ‘define and promote governance structure/s for the interoperable management of digital public services at European level’ and to ‘develop tools and methods to allow public services to align their processes’.

As for academia, the highest scores were given for:

- actions to ensure that interoperability requirements and solutions are taken into account when preparing and evaluating legislation at EU and national level;
- actions to ensure that data are transferrable between the European public services without restrictions;
- activities related to access to European/national base registries;
- security and data protection issues of public services.

Businesses/private organisations were given a shorter list of actions,²² i.e. those considered as relevant for their target group. Out of this list, businesses/private organisations considered on average that the most important actions in terms of the benefits that would be generated, whether in their country or in the context of cross-border interoperability, were:

- actions related to security and data protection issues of public services; and
- activities that would facilitate the flow of information among national, regional and local administrations and between them and businesses and citizens.

Finally, the stakeholders suggested 10 additional actions to be included in the strategy:

- demonstrate the benefits of interoperability (via real-life examples and success stories) for public administrations, citizens and businesses;
- set measurable service targets and put in place the necessary organisation and legislation to reach them;
- include a reference to the EIS in every REFIT of EU legislation;
- promote the use of (true) open standards and support of standards in new technologies;
- improve and extend the use of common and shared services;
- align public procurement practice with the ICT projects’ needs;

²² The list included 6 actions applicable at national level and 7 in the context of cross-border interoperability.

- develop a monitoring and evaluation methodology for assessing published interoperability solutions available on Joinup²³;
- improve follow-up and accompanying initiatives during the implementation of interoperability solutions at national level;
- use user research to identify cases where interoperability is needed to deliver better, specific services that support delivery of the Digital Single Market Strategy and the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020;
- ensure that accessibility is a mandatory criterion when developing interoperability policies, legislation and solutions between public services, citizens and businesses.

Subsidiarity and consistency at EU level

The revision of the EIF/EIS is consistent with other EU initiatives and provides clear added value over action at Member State level.

Some 74 % of the respondents (10 Member States, 26 public administrations, 10 EU institutions/agencies, 11 members of academia and 11²⁴ businesses/private organisations) agreed that the revision of the EIS and the EIF provides clear added value over action at Member State level.

The consultation results have been taken into account in the Communication, the main text of which is dedicated to setting up the interoperability strategy and which contains two annexes: the interoperability action plan (Annex 1) and the revised European interoperability framework (Annex 2).

²³ <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/>

²⁴ This number includes nine businesses/private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as two unregistered businesses/private organisations.