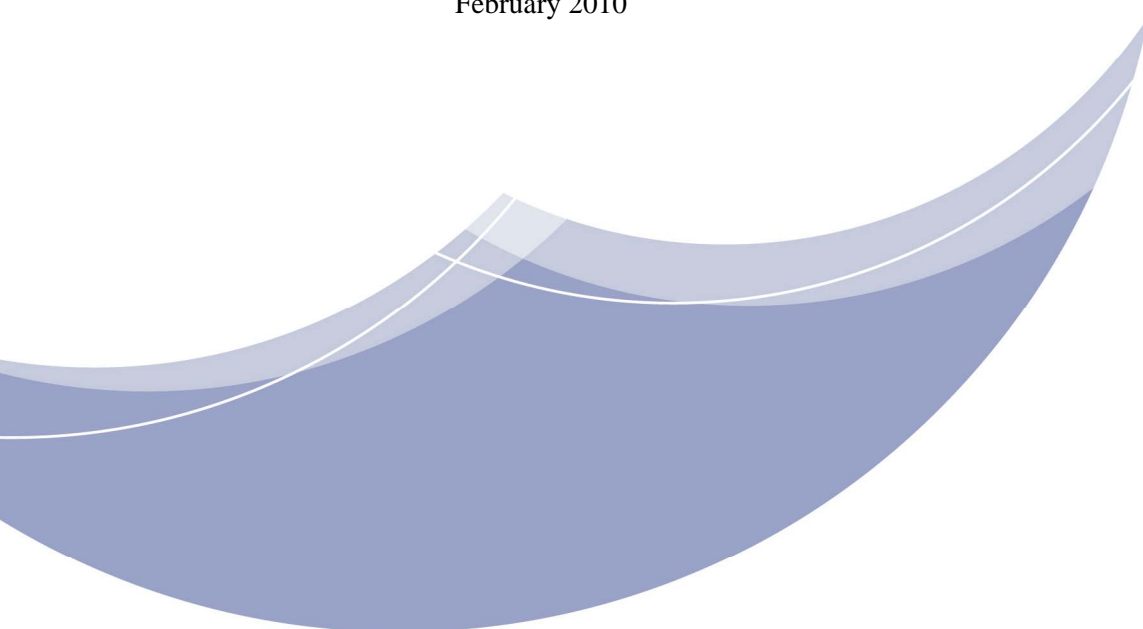




European Interoperability Strategy (EIS)

Document for public consultation

February 2010



European Commission
Directorate-General for Informatics

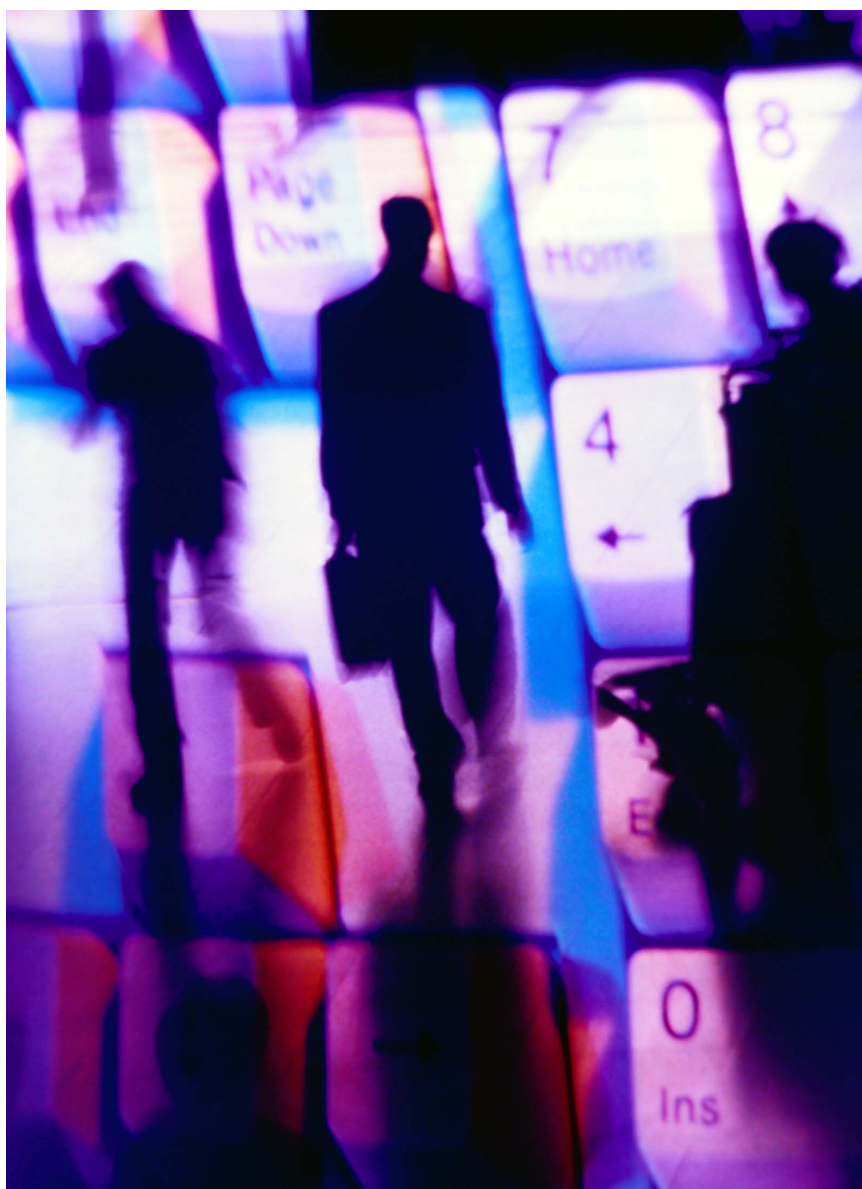
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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. This document, intended for external consultation, provides an overview of the European Interoperability¹ Strategy (EIS) elaborated by the European eGovernment services unit at the Directorate General for Informatics of the European Commission. The EIS aims to provide direction and to prioritise the undertaking of actions to achieve improved interaction, exchange and cooperation among European public administrations across borders and across sectors in the framework of European Public Service² delivery. This action has been started during the IDABC³ programme and will be finalised after the public consultation under the new ISA⁴ programme.
2. The goal of this document is to:
 - Provide a brief overview of the approach and methodology used for the EIS elaboration to capture Member State priorities;
 - Present the recommendations made on basis of the two reports issued during the EIS elaboration:
 - a. The final report of the first phase, issued in May 2009, presented at the Member State Chief Information Officers (CIOs) meeting on 26 June, summarised the conclusions reached at the end of this first phase: a common vision, the problem statements, focus areas, priorities and objectives for interoperability, and a possible methodology for developing scenarios during the second phase of the project;
 - b. The second phase final report, draft version issued in October 2009, focused on the EIS itself and presented the different levels of the EIS (global, cluster and focus area levels) as well as a set of actions derived from the assessment of scenarios which together form the basis of the future strategy;
 - Present the EIS overall strategic approach proposed by the Commission and agreed by the Member State CIOs;
 - Trigger a consultation process by reaching out to a wide audience of stakeholders having an interest in interoperability in the framework of public services delivery.
3. Interoperability between public administrations is crucial in achieving European integration and pertains to core aims of the European Union. The importance of interoperability is hard to overstate and the interests of the Member States and end users are high to overcome barriers to the easy delivery of services across borders and sectors. End users are the final recipients of these services; however, the prime partners in interoperability for the EIS are the European public administrations. Increased cooperation and commitment of these actors is therefore essential in the development of the EIS.
4. Interoperability issues are not only technological, but cover a wide range of aspects, such as: inexistence of cross borders and cross sectors legal basis for interoperability, insufficient awareness and political will or lack of agreements on the governance structures required.

¹ Interoperability, within the context of European Public Services delivery, is the ability of disparate and diverse organisations to interact towards mutually beneficial and agreed common goals, involving the sharing of information and knowledge between the organisations, through the business processes they support, by means of the exchange of data between their respective ICT systems.

² European Public Service means "a cross-border public sector service supplied by public administrations, either to one another or to European businesses and citizens."

³ IDABC decision adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 21 April 2004.

⁴ Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 16 September 2009.

5. Without a comprehensive approach to interoperability, there is a risk that Member States might opt for mutually incompatible solutions that, rather than boosting efficiency and savings, will only build new barriers to the delivery of European Public Services in the internal market.
6. In order to overcome these challenges, it was agreed in June 2008 during the second annual meeting of the Member State CIOs and the European Commission representatives that, in the framework of the IDABC programme, a European Interoperability Strategy would be developed in order to address the drive needed for improving European Public Services' interoperability.
7. Once fully adopted, the EIS will become the key driving force of the EU's new programme ISA from 2010 to 2015 and possibly of other EU initiatives. The EIS will also have an impact on Member State interoperability activities.
8. The first phase final report (referred to under point 2) presented the vision statement, approved by the Member State CIOs, and which reads as follows:

In 2015, interoperability has significantly fostered European Public Services delivery through:

- Appropriate governance organisation and processes in line with European Union policies and objectives;
 - Trusted information exchange enabled by commonly agreed, cohesive and coordinated interoperability initiatives, including completion of the legal environment, elaboration of interoperability frameworks and agreements on interoperability standards and rules.
9. As a result of the third Member State CIO meeting held in June 2009, this vision was refined in a set of objectives for nine focus areas identified during the first project phase. Also as an outcome of the CIO meeting and based on a Commission proposal, it was decided to further regroup the nine focus areas under three different clusters: *Trusted Information Exchange*, *Interoperability Architecture*, *ICT Implications of the Implementation of new Legislations*, and two Accompanying Measures: *Raising Interoperability Awareness* and *Sharing Best Practices*.
 10. The second phase final report (referred to under point 2) proposed for each cluster and each accompanying measure an action plan organised in a set of scenarios, or concrete actions.
 11. The Commission made a synthesis focusing on the main strategic directions in order to steer the clusters activities and the accompanying measures. Out of this synthesis, the Commission proposed an EIS overall strategic approach completed by specific strategic directions at cluster and accompanying measure level.
 12. The Commission proposed to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches, with the aim to generate cross-fertilisation by testing and continuously improving existing frameworks and guidelines against concrete needs and by developing additional services and tools based on clearly defined needs.
 13. During the fourth CIO meeting held in November, 2009, Member States CIOs expressed their agreement with the approach and methodology adopted for the second phase of the EIS project as well as with the proposal made by the Commission.

14. The proposal made by the Commission and the conclusions reached at 4th CIO meeting constitute the overall strategic approach on which the ISA Programme - and possibly other EU initiatives - will base its work programme for the coming years.

EIS OVERALL STRATEGIC APPROACH

14.1. The top-down approach:

- The political context and its evolution need to be taken into account: the post Lisbon strategy (eu2020), the post i2010 and the overall policy priorities of the Commission work programme that are currently being defined;
- The development of various frameworks such as the EIS, the EIF, architecture guidelines and other methodologies and guidelines;
- The assessment of ICT implications of new EU legislation proposed.

14.2. The bottom-up approach:

- To work via sectoral projects on relevant specific topics (i.e. semantic, trust and privacy, architecture ...) providing the opportunity to tackle real interoperability challenges. This approach will allow existing frameworks and guidelines to be tested against concrete needs and furthermore, ensure that new services and tools are developed based on clearly defined needs;
- When developing new services and tools in a specific sector, the potential for reusing such solutions in other sectors should be kept in mind.

After applying this combined approach to the objectives under each cluster, the Commission proposed to focus on the following activities:

14.3. For the cluster "Trusted Information Exchange":

- To work via a limited number of politically relevant and concrete sectoral projects at EU and Member State levels;
- To continue supporting at Community level the efforts on interoperability of key enablers such as: eID, eSignature, etc;
- To continue the SEMIC approach and its methodology;
- To work towards the opening up of base registers, taking into account the associated best practices, the possible related risks and opportunities, as well as the various needs and expectations of the main stakeholders;

Some challenges identified for this cluster are:

Firstly, how to involve the industry, the standardisation organisations and other stakeholders in the related activities?

Secondly, before taking any initiatives related to the development of a catalogue of services, the Commission proposes to assess the Member States readiness to engage in such direction and the extent to which such a catalogue would support increased interoperability between Member States. Furthermore existing best practices cases in this area needs to be identified and studied.

14.4. For the cluster "Interoperability Architecture":

- To elaborate a joint vision on interoperability architecture by defining in the first place its scope as well as the needs for common infrastructure services and common interface standards;
- To provide guidance on architecture domains where Member States share a common interest;
- To organise the systematic reuse of architectural building blocks by the Commission services when developing Member States oriented services. In this area, existing infrastructure service components (EIIIS)⁵ as well as generic applications (IMI⁶, early alert systems, grant management ...) could be reused and rationalised. Additionally, a catalogue of architectural building blocks available for reuse by the Member States and the Commission services could be set up with EU and MS contributions.

14.5. For the cluster "Assessment of ICT implications of EU legislation":

- To develop guidelines and methodologies at EC level (and Member States level);
- To test the usefulness of these guidelines via their application to concrete cases involving policy makers as well as legislative and ICT experts;
- To ensure continuous improvement of the guidelines and methodologies with the lessons learnt from experience;
- To generalise the practice of assessing ICT implications towards a more systematic approach whenever changes occur in the legislation (e.g. modifications or additions to ICT-related pieces of legislations).

14.6. For the accompanying measure "Raising Interoperability Awareness":

- To develop an overall communication approach;
- To organise communication campaigns, in a first instance targeting decision-makers but then gradually shifting to more operational and technical levels;
- To develop an interoperability maturity level self-assessment tool/model for public administrations.

14.7. For the accompanying measure "Sharing Best Practices":

- To work towards the convergence of existing EU collaborative platforms and to ensure the sustainability of the platforms used;
- To maintain, where relevant, the existing communities at EU level around the sharing of best practices and the re-use of common solutions;
- To support the creation of potential new communities resulting from other interoperability activities;

One challenge identified for this accompanying measure is: how to collaborate with similar initiatives elsewhere?

⁵ EIIIS stands for European Interoperability Infrastructure Services.

⁶ IMI stands for Internal Market Information system.

14.8. Potential risks and opportunities identified so far are:

- The political context is not entirely defined yet, i.e. the post Lisbon agenda (EU2020) and the post i2010 agenda;
- Stakeholders' support, commitment and buy-in are essential when following a project-based approach to interoperability. In order to successfully realise the EIS, sectoral experts and interoperability experts will have to work together, both at EU and Member State level;
- Setting up a fruitful collaboration with the industry and other stakeholders;
- The effect of disruptive technologies (e.g. cloud computing ...) on the EIS and its implementation.

NEXT STEPS

15. The next challenge is to translate the outcomes of the EIS study in a set of concrete projects and results. The projects will constitute for their greater part the ISA portfolio of actions, or ISA work programme.
16. During the establishment of the ISA work programme, various actions will be defined and initiated to execute the interoperability strategy. Project managers will be identified and individual action objectives will be drawn up to make significant progress in reaching the objectives set forth in each interoperability focus area.
17. Adequate project monitoring and reporting will support the execution of the interoperability initiatives, which will entail defining for each action suitable metrics, e.g. key performance indicators (KPIs). Monitoring and reporting will allow tracking performance against targets and will allow estimating if actions are on track to meet their objectives.
18. A comprehensive portfolio management framework will be used to generate a common view and to produce a roadmap of every action under way or planned. Portfolio management will produce a multidimensional view of the project portfolio, which assesses each action in light of the European Interoperability Strategy, and will clearly highlight which actions are adding value to the interoperability vision. Based on the overall picture, a balance can be made between action's relative cost and potential to create value. For example, some actions may have high potential value but prohibitive risk. Other actions might be redefined to modify their risk profiles.
19. Adequate portfolio management will ensure the necessary tradeoffs between finite resources, risks, action scopes and timing against expected outcomes as the environment changes (including political and other stakeholder priorities reflected in updated strategy objectives). Another key action related to project management governance will be communication about the portfolio of projects towards stakeholders.

