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**Compliance Package**

**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

*Accompanying the document*

**Proposal for a regulation of the European parliament and of the Council**

**on establishing a single digital gateway to provide information, procedures, assistance  
and problem solving services and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012**

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## 1. CONTEXT AND SCOPE

### 1.1.1.1. Current situation

Although the Single Market is the core of the European Union, in reality it can be challenging for EU citizens and businesses to exercise their Single Market rights. Businesses need to know and understand the rules and regulations that apply when they sell products and services in other Member States. These include issues such as product requirements, authorisations, taxes, and registrations.

Likewise, citizens need information about practical formalities when moving to another Member State to live, work or study. In particular, there is a need for information on practical issues concerning the destination country, such as information on how to register as a resident, register in electoral rolls, set up a business, take up a job, have qualifications recognised, enrol children at school, register a car, retire, etc. Consumers need information about their rights when shopping online (within the Single Market), and how to claim and enforce them.

Various portals and contact points both at European and national level have been created over the past decades (see Annex 8 for a detailed description) with the aim to address these needs. Several EU initiatives have been adopted or are in the pipeline to facilitate foreign users' access to e-procedures in specific sectors. However, the main finding of the evaluation is that currently available EU and national level information and assistance services, and online procedures are very fragmented, with varying levels of coverage and differences in quality. It is also not user centred, difficult to find and to use, especially for foreign users.<sup>1</sup> This will be explained more in detail in section 1.5 and Annex 3.

### 1.2.1.2. Calls for an initiative

This assessment is very widely shared and has led to a whole range of calls on the Commission to take action:

- A 2014 Report of the High Level Group on Business Services called for a more comprehensive and user-friendly interface for information and assistance so businesses can easily navigate the requirements of the Single Market. Setting up a business from another Member State should also be made easier.
- The March 2015 Competitiveness Council conclusions on Single Market policy called for a political commitment 'to strengthen and streamline Single Market tools [...] in order to better meet the needs of businesses and citizens in their cross-border activities'. This was repeated by the Competitiveness Council of February 2016, which, in addition, welcomed 'the concept of a single digital gateway, which would in particular address the needs of start-ups'.
- In September 2015, seventeen Member States called for an initiative enabling every business to succeed in the single market, by 'setting up a network of digital single gateways (fully functioning e-government portals) to help businesses to start-up, scale-up and trade across borders by providing all the information needed to operate in a Member State'. Full digitalisation should ensure that businesses only have to go through one digital process to set up and operate anywhere in the EU.
- In January 2016, the European Parliament<sup>2</sup> called for the development of a comprehensive single digital gateway as a single end-to-end digital process for businesses to set up and operate across the EU, from the online set up of the business, domain names, the exchange of compliance information, recognition of e-invoices, filing taxes, a simplified online VAT

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign users: EU citizens and businesses operating in another MS than the one from which they originate, are resident or established

<sup>2</sup> European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2016 on Towards a Digital Single Market Act (2015/2147(INI)).

scheme, online information on product compliance, posting of workers, consumer rights, access to consumer and business networks, notification procedures and dispute settlement mechanisms.

- In June 2016, the REFIT Platform (consisting of business stakeholders and Member States representatives) issued an opinion recommending the establishment of a single entry point with clear information and coordinated services for businesses in each Member State to assist companies operating in the Single Market, and the definition of minimum common quality criteria for the content, functioning and level of integration of each portal with the single digital gateway.
- In January 2017, the EU Citizenship report 2017 was published, which mentions the single digital gateway as a priority for EU Citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

In response to these calls for action and to the problems raised on many occasions by stakeholders<sup>4</sup>, the Commission communication 'A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe' of May 2015 proposed the creation of a single digital gateway, which was included as part of the E-government Action Plan 2016-2020. The single digital gateway would expand, improve and streamline all information, assistance and problem solving services needed to operate efficiently across borders, enabling users to complete the most frequently used national procedures online. The Single Market Strategy of October 2015 mentioned the single digital gateway as a means of addressing the specific requirements of start-ups.

### **1.3.1.3. Trends and good practices**

The basic principle for the single digital gateway is not to start from scratch, but to build on the existing information and assistance services at EU and national level in order to make the Single Market work better. Furthermore, many Member States have made excellent progress in rolling out e-government programmes and developed very good practices in the process that should be used as a model for the development of the single digital gateway.

For instance, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Cyprus and Malta have managed to overcome administrative silos and have developed fully integrated citizens and business portals. France and the UK manage the quality of the content on their government portals with an elaborate set of quality criteria and performance indicators. User feedback mechanisms are in place in most of the best performing platforms. Austria, Denmark, France, the UK and Sweden are showing that it is possible to guide users through the complex area of product rules online (see Annex 13 for additional examples of good national practices).

However, this basic positive trend of e-government rollout ensures much less the inclusion of non-national users – even for the best performing Member States. This will be further elaborated on, in the problem description.

### **1.4.1.4. Scope of the initiative**

The main aim of the single digital gateway is to reduce as much as possible the additional administrative burden that EU citizens and businesses face when they expand their activities in other Member States. To achieve this, the single digital gateway needs to provide access to national rules, requirements and procedures that citizens and businesses from other Member States need to know about and comply with. To assist the user with this journey, the gateway should cover three layers, namely information, procedures and assistance services. The importance of a user journey approach has also been confirmed by the REFIT Platform Government Group. The scope of each of these layers has been defined as described below.

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<sup>3</sup> COM (2017) 30/2

<sup>4</sup> In particular: the main EU umbrella business organisations Eurochambres, EuroCommerce, Business Europe, but also Danish Business Forum (submission to REFIT platform), through various position papers and surveys of their members.

### 1.4.1. Information

The issues to be covered are based on the existing Your Europe portal (see Annex 14). These were defined in 2009 and adjusted over the years (based on regular Your Europe user exit surveys) to meet the needs of EU citizens and businesses operating in other Member States. A currently ongoing Commission study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU has also confirmed the relevance of the business topics for the target group<sup>5</sup>.

In May 2014, in the context of the digital transformation of its web presence, the Commission carried out a major and representative user poll in 24 languages, receiving 106,792 valid responses, and the result of which was further refined by subsequent in-depth user research<sup>6</sup>. "Business, Economy" and "Live, Work, Travel in EU" were the top two of the identified 15 top-level information classes of the Commission's Europa website architecture. Each class gives access to a number of tasks. All information areas for citizens listed in Table 1.1 below are included in the "Live, Work Travel in EU" class and covered by the Your Europe Citizens Portal. Likewise, all information areas for businesses as listed in Table 1.1 are included in the "Business, Economy" class and covered by the Your Europe Business Portal. Thus, very broad and representative user research is behind these topics.

There is a broad consensus between the Commission, the Member States and the stakeholder organisations about the importance of these information areas. A similar approach is widely used in portals at national level. Commission-internal desk research (see table 2.5 in Annex 4) has shown that most Member States cover the below business topics on their portals and websites.

**Table 1.1: Most important information areas for businesses and citizens in the Single Market**

<b>Citizens</b>	<b>Businesses</b>
Travelling	Starting a business
Working and retiring	Adhering to employment rules
Using transportation	Adhering to taxation rules
Adhering to residence formalities	Selling goods
Accessing education and youth services	Providing services
Accessing health services	Adhering to product requirements
Adhering to family law	Accessing finance
Buying goods and services	Adhering to environmental rules

### 1.4.2. Procedures

The single digital gateway will only require full digitalisation of the most important (especially for the cross-border user), most frequently used or cumbersome procedures in order to decrease the administrative burden for citizens and businesses very significantly. For the public consultation we selected an initial list of 31 procedures, (15 for businesses, 16 for citizens) based on existing studies, experiences in the Member States and input from stakeholder organisations. On the basis of the outcome, this impact assessment and its annexes have been drafted assuming 20 key online procedures based on the priorities expressed by the respondents. We also examined the current state of digitalisation of all these procedures in the different Member States (see results in Annex 4) to assess whether the aim to get them all online would be realistic and we have questioned Member States about their on-going e-government programmes. The resulting list is ambitious but feasible, especially in

<sup>5</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest & Young, Draft Final Report, January 2017

<sup>6</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/docs/digital\\_transformation/report\\_on\\_common\\_architecture\\_level\\_1\\_-\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/docs/digital_transformation/report_on_common_architecture_level_1_-_executive_summary.pdf)

view of ESIF funding that is available for Member States that still have important gaps to fill (see table 6.5 in section 6.2.3).

**Table 1.2: Procedures, 10+10 most important procedures based on the outcome of the online public consultation**

<i>For businesses:</i>	<i>For citizens</i>
Registration of business activity	Registering a change of address
VAT registration	Requesting or renewing ID card or passport
VAT return	Request a birth certificate
Corporate/business tax declaration	Request recognition of diploma from a foreign EU national
Recognition of professional qualification	Apply for a study grant
Registration for income tax	Enrol in university
Registration with national insurance scheme as employer	Declaring income taxes
Notification of cessation of activity subject to VAT	Register for social security benefits
Payment of social contributions for employees and payroll withholding tax	Register a car
Registration of employees with pension schemes	Register for a pension

#### 1.4.3. Assistance services

The assistance services to be included in the single digital gateway are those created under EU law or co-funded through the EU budget (see Annex 8 for a detailed explanation of their purpose and legal or other basis). The reason for their inclusion in the gateway is that they all have a clear Single Market mandate because they specifically cater to the Single Market needs of the cross-border user. However, Member States may voluntarily include other national assistance services (such as chambers of commerce) if they meet the quality conditions (see section 5.2.2 and Annex 6).

**Table 1.3: Assistance and problem solving services to be included in the gateway<sup>7</sup>**

<b>With binding EU legal basis</b>	<b>Without binding EU legal basis</b>
Points of Single Contact	SOLVIT
Product Contact Points	Your Europe Advice
Construction Product Contact Points	Enterprise Europe Network <sup>8</sup>
National Assistance for Professional Qualifications	European Consumer Centres
National Contact Points for cross-border healthcare	Europe Direct
The European Job Mobility Portal EURES <sup>9</sup>	Intellectual Property Rights Helpdesk
Online Dispute Resolution	
<b>National services (voluntary)</b>	

#### 1.5.1.5. Consistency with other initiatives<sup>10</sup>

The single digital gateway is part of the E-government Action Plan.<sup>11</sup> It supports the Commission's digital transformation objective, creating a streamlined web presence and avoiding further fragmentation caused by new portals and contact points.

<sup>7</sup> For an extended list of other relevant services and initiatives, see Annex 9.

<sup>8</sup> The Enterprise Europe Network has a wider mandate: helping SMEs to become more competitive and take advantage of business opportunities, not only in the single market, but also beyond. The Network also delivers important services in the area of innovation, including services co-financed under the Horizon 2020 programme. The SDG will only apply to the network's single market advisory services.

<sup>9</sup> EURES has a wider mandate: helping jobseekers, workers and employers in realising mobility opportunities (matching jobs and people cross-border). The SDG will only apply to the information and assistance services of EURES.

<sup>10</sup> For a full list of related and linked initiatives, see Annex 9.

<sup>11</sup> EU e-government Action Plan, COM(2016) 179. See also EU-wide digital once-only principle for citizens and businesses: Policy options and their impacts, SMART 2015/0062, GNK Consult et al. 2016.

The actions concerning the once-only principle that are included in the same action plan will contribute to the success of the single digital gateway. These actions will facilitate the sharing of information between Member State administrations. Work towards achieving this is based on a large-scale pilot project on business cases and an assessment of its feasibility for citizens.

The Public Document Regulation<sup>12</sup> is also relevant in this context, as it will require Member States to accept a series of documents from citizens without further verification and translation by the end of 2018. Other actions of the plan that are complementary and directly relevant for the single digital gateway are the take-up of eID and e-signature through the eIDAS Regulation; the E-justice Portal (including the Business Registry Interconnection System BRIS), the VAT information portal, the interconnection of insolvency registers, and a planned company law initiative to facilitate digital solutions throughout a company lifecycle. Furthermore, the gateway is consistent with the revision of the European Interoperability Framework.<sup>13</sup>

The single digital gateway is fully compatible with these initiatives that seek to improve the provision of information online and digitalise procedures at EU and national level. The information and assistance services in Annex 8 will be covered by the legal instrument for the single digital gateway which means that they would need to meet the quality criteria, be part of coordinated promotion actions, integrate the user feedback mechanism and link up to the user search interface of the single digital gateway. The other initiatives provide input for joint reporting on single market obstacles included in Annex 9 are not as such covered by the single digital gateway, but they are complementary and contribute to achieving a seamless online environment for EU citizens and businesses. Furthermore, the single digital gateway will *link* to the services and procedures in Annex 9 (parts A and B).

#### **1.6.1.6. Conclusions of the evaluation of existing policies**

The evaluation (see Annex 3) has pointed to a number of problems, including a lack of effectiveness, efficiency and coherence both for the individual services and for them as a package for citizens and businesses. The REFIT Platform opinion further testifies to the fact that the current range of different portals makes it too time consuming and difficult to search for information and complete necessary procedures. Both the REFIT Government and the Business Stakeholder Groups agree that this constitutes a barrier to doing business in the Single Market which should be addressed.

##### *1.6.1. Effectiveness of existing services*

As far as the effectiveness of individual services is concerned, recurring and cross-cutting problems pointed out are: lack of visibility and findability online, lack of quality and under-use. In addition, gaps exist with regard to national-level information, which is either not online or only in national language, and procedures can often not be carried out online by foreign users – even where this is possible for domestic users. Cross-border accessibility remains one of the key development points in order for contact points and other portals to fully support the Single Market.

Nevertheless, the level of quality, user-centricity and accessibility for foreign users is quite divergent for the different services.

For services funded by the EU, quality criteria have been included in contracts (Enterprise Europe Network, Your Europe Advice). These services are contractually obliged to cater for foreign users.

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<sup>12</sup> Public Document Regulation (EU) 2016/1191.

<sup>13</sup> The specific interaction of these initiatives with the single digital gateway will be described more in detail in the legal instrument proposal.



For services created through binding EU law, quality criteria have proven to be too general (Points of Single Contact) or hardly exist (Products Contact Points). Additional voluntary quality criteria (Charter for PSCs) have had limited success.<sup>14</sup> Access for foreign users is still limited.

For services created through non-binding EU law and managed by the Commission (SOLVIT, Your Europe<sup>15</sup>) quality criteria have been agreed, and access for foreign citizens is foreseen, but due to their voluntary nature some Member States are fully on board, others are not. Access for foreign citizens is guaranteed for these services.

### *1.6.2. Efficiency of existing services*

The efficiency part of the evaluation produces a mixed picture. The EU-level assistance services are considered cost efficient when taking into account the savings and other benefits these services provide to businesses and citizens compared to much more costly private alternative services. However, the national-level assistance services (PSCs, PCPs and PCPCs) can only be considered as partially efficient. The cost effectiveness aspect is difficult to assess, as data are missing, but they are under-performing for businesses as far as their effectiveness is concerned. Moreover, the low quality of their websites represents a missed opportunity to reduce the number of requests through providing better online up-front information, and thus improving cost-efficiency<sup>16</sup>.

There is scope for more efficiency and easier findability online if the individual services promoted their services under a common brand name. The EU could create added value here, as one recognizable brand, backed up by a common brand search engine. This could only be set up at the EU level.

### *1.6.3. Coherence of existing services*

The lack of coherence refers to the fact that all the instruments that were evaluated were created by EU level action, but do not operate as a whole: they are dispersed, incomplete, not sufficiently linked up and not sufficiently user-friendly. A common approach to ensuring quality through minimum quality standards is missing. There is no overall EU-Member States governance structure to ensure consistency of all the instruments. Whilst the legal framework promotes synergies, these have not been sufficiently exploited by the Member States (in the absence of binding obligations). In particular, contact points for goods and services are distinct for most Member States, whilst businesses tend to demand them as a package. On the European level, the problem lies primarily with duplicating content on Commission websites. Successful sign-posting policy is, however, in place.

## **2. PROBLEM DEFINITION**

### **1.7.2.1. Problem drivers - reasons for the under-performance of existing services**

The underlying reasons for the under-performance of the existing services are:

- Silo based, administration-centred approaches, leading to fragmentation.

In the absence of a coordinated, holistic approach from the perspective of the user, national and EU administrations have acted as "silos", dealing with related but different topics on a multitude of single topic portals that are not inter-linked, and only covering the policy areas within their mandates. This has led to complexity, lack of coherence and restricted online findability.

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<sup>14</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/services/docs/services-dir/psc-charter\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/psc-charter_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> For the content that Your Europe aims at, see Annex 14.

<sup>16</sup> On the premise that personalised assistance is always more expensive than online information.

- Administration-centred design.

EU and national administrations design services from their perspective, not that of the user. Both at EU and national level, administration-centred service design has traditionally produced public services that accommodated the needs of the administration than more that of the user in terms of clear and easy-to-understand online explanations. It is easier for the administration to 'launch and leave' a new webportal than to organise for regular and systematic updates of its content.

Digitalising public services eventually generates substantial benefits in administrative efficiency. But it also requires considerable upfront investments, which can be an obstacle to the fast roll-out of e-government.

- National administrations' neglect of the non-national user.

National administrations concentrate on national digital solutions; accessibility for foreign users is at best an afterthought. Foreign users have little or no voice in decision-making, and their needs in terms of language coverage and access to procedures are generally not taken into account. This leads to various problems, such as form fields of procedures only accepting national data, foreign evidence (e.g. documents) not being accepted as part of the online procedure, payment possibilities only being accessible to nationals, foreign eIDs not being accepted and procedures only in the national language(s).

**Table 2.1: Problem tree - four main problem drivers and the problems they have caused – as resulting from the evaluation**

Problem drivers <sup>17</sup>	Problems	Consequences
Silo-based approach	Lack of online information	Difficult and time-consuming to find out what is needed for expanding operations or moving to another Member State, discouraging such actions.
	Lack of awareness and findability	No awareness of the possibilities that the Single Market provides, leading to missed opportunities More time and money must be spent on finding information.
Administration-centred design	Lack of quality	Available information is not clear, comprehensive or up to date so that extra time and resources must be spent on verifying its reliability.
First generation drawbacks	Lack of online procedures	Extra time and money is spent on less transparent, slower, paper-based procedures.
Neglect of foreign users	Lack of accessibility for foreign users	Where national information is not available in another language or users from another Member State cannot complete online procedures, it is much more difficult for foreign users to operate in a Member States than for domestic users.
	Lack of overview of single market problems	Priority setting and policy design risks not addressing the problems that are most important for citizens and businesses

### 1.8.2.2. The problem that requires action and its size

Not finding, not being able to use or not being aware of the right services, experiencing quality problems with them and, as a consequence, resorting to expensive private services leads to high transaction costs for citizens and businesses when engaging in cross-border activities.

**Box 1: Outcome of the study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses<sup>18</sup>:**

<sup>17</sup> For details of problem drivers, see Annex 5.

A business that establishes a cross-border subsidiary and hires employees, incurs an average cost of EUR 9 700. This consists of finding out about and carrying out eight common administrative procedures, and has been established by business and public administration surveys (see annex 19 for the methodology). This is 80% more than what a domestic business would have incurred for the same procedures (i.e. EUR 5 400).

The cost difference is mainly caused by the translation of documents, and by commercially purchased advice costs (partly to make up for the missing or bad quality information and foreign language problems) and costs of submitting documents (due to longer and costlier travel).

### 2.2.1. Estimated size of the target groups

In principle, all EU citizens and businesses are part of the target group for the single digital gateway. Even if a citizen has no intention to work or study in another Member State, they may still occasionally travel to or buy something online from another Member State, and want to find out about their rights and obligations in that context.

**Table 2.2: Target audiences of the single digital gateway**

Citizens active in another Member State as <sup>19</sup>	
Workers	7.1 million (2013)
Students	571 000 (2010)
Residents	18.5 million (2014)
Tourists	223 million visits (2015)
Consumers	19% of online shoppers (2015)
Migrants between the Member States	1.3 million (2014) intra-EU
SMEs active in another Member State as <sup>20</sup>	
Exporters	5.5 million (26 % of SMEs, 2009)
Investors	500 000 (2009)
Subcontractors	1.4 million (2009)

This also means that the impact of the problems described in the previous section is potentially very big. When looking for comprehensive online information on national rules that apply across the Single Market to help them to achieve tasks, foreign firms and citizens are at a disadvantage. Not being able to find or understand information about applicable rules in other Member States discourages citizens and businesses from exploring the Single Market and creates important additional costs.

By investigating the magnitude of cross-border population movement, the data collected points to an estimate of approximately 1.8m immigrants and commuters between EU Member States in 2009. This trend is likely to grow by over 400 000 people (23%) over the coming eight years, reaching 2.2 million individuals per annum by 2020. Looking at immigrants and commuters likely to use online cross-border services, this study estimates there would be a total current demand of 1.3m users for online cross-border services per annum.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017, for the European Commission, covering: general registration of economic activity, VAT registration, VAT return, requests for VAT refunds, registration of income tax, corporate/business tax declaration, registration with national social insurance scheme upon establishment, registration of employees with pension and insurance scheme, payment of social contributions and payroll withholding tax for employees, reporting end of contract of employee. (to be finalised in March 2017).

<sup>19</sup> Eurostat, Migration and migrant population statistics.

<sup>20</sup> Internationalisation of European SMEs, Final Report, European Commission 2010

<sup>21</sup> Study on the analysis of the needs for cross-border services and assessment of the organisational, legal, technical and semantic barriers., 2013

Moreover, a distribution of an estimate of 140,000 branches and immigrant business start-ups between Member States provides a useful approximation of the business population that could utilise cross-border business services.

### 2.2.2. *Costs for EU businesses and citizens*

Businesses need to find and comply with the rules, requirements and administrative procedures in Member States, such as the technical regulations for products sold across borders, or the rules affecting public calls for tender. In the public consultation<sup>22</sup>, 80% of businesses found complying with national requirements difficult. Other surveys have established inaccessibility of information on rules and requirements, and different national product and service rules, and complex administrative procedures causing difficulties.<sup>23</sup>

Finding relevant, accurate and understandable information online is not always straightforward, and firms commonly spend a considerable part of their human resources on familiarising themselves with relevant Single Market legislation and keeping track of changes.<sup>24</sup> Large firms often employ several members of staff, only to ensure regulatory compliance.<sup>25</sup> Such costs can constitute an important barrier especially for SMEs and start-ups.

According to the public consultation on the start-up and scale-up initiative, resources required to navigate the regulatory complexity is the third-biggest problem for SMEs.<sup>26</sup> More than half of SMEs say that national administrative procedures related to exporting to other Member States are too difficult to comply with and therefore deter many firms from exporting.<sup>27</sup> The smaller the company, the less likely it is to sell abroad due to the lack of knowledge of the rules in other Member States. This leads to less choice and higher prices for consumers. In a Single Market of 28 Member States, the costs of gathering information rise rapidly, in particular through legal advice fees needed to find and understand the relevant requirements.

Furthermore, according to the Commission's internal research, a minimum of 1.5 million hours are lost every year by citizens trying to find where information is available on their rights and obligations in order to live, study or retire in another Member State.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the information gathering process causes considerable hassle to citizens.

### 2.2.3. *Existing gaps in information coverage and online procedures*

Current coverage of information for businesses on national websites and portals within the eight areas set out in table 1 is 71%<sup>29</sup> on average, ranging from 38% up to 100% for the different Member States. These figures only concern presence of the relevant information on any website, but do not address findability, nor quality of the information. Moreover, the figures for accessibility of that same information for foreign users are much lower since only 57% of the information is available in a language other than the national language(s) of the country concerned. Accessibility of information for foreign users ranges from 17% for the lowest scoring countries to 96% for the best performer.

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<sup>22</sup> See Annex 16.

<sup>23</sup> Eurochambres survey of EU entrepreneurs; High-level Group on Business Services.

<sup>24</sup> Commission evaluation of the Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products, SWD(2014)23 final of 22/1/2014.

<sup>25</sup> Evaluation of Single Market Legislation for Industrial Products,  
<http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=9966151>

<sup>26</sup> Public consultation of the start-up and scale-up initiative.

<sup>27</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 421: Internationalisation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises  
[https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2090\\_421\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2090_421_ENG)

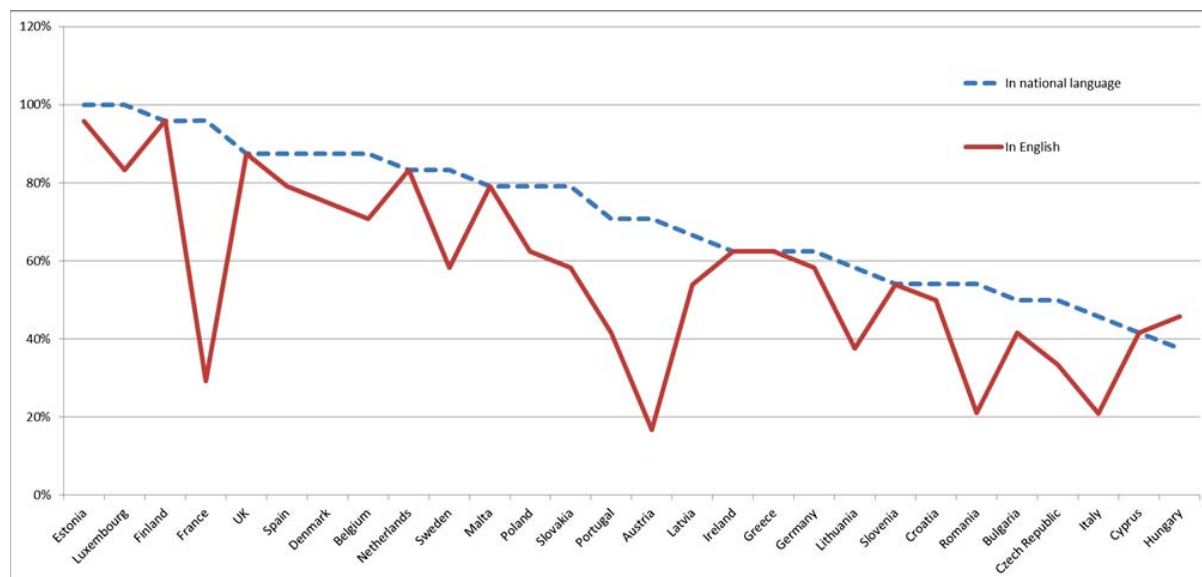
Flash Eurobarometer 413: Companies engaged in online activities.

[https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2058\\_413\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2058_413_ENG)

<sup>28</sup> See Annex 4 and 19 for the methodology. The methodology takes into account intra-EU migratory flows.

<sup>29</sup> EC own research January 2017, see Annex 4 for details.

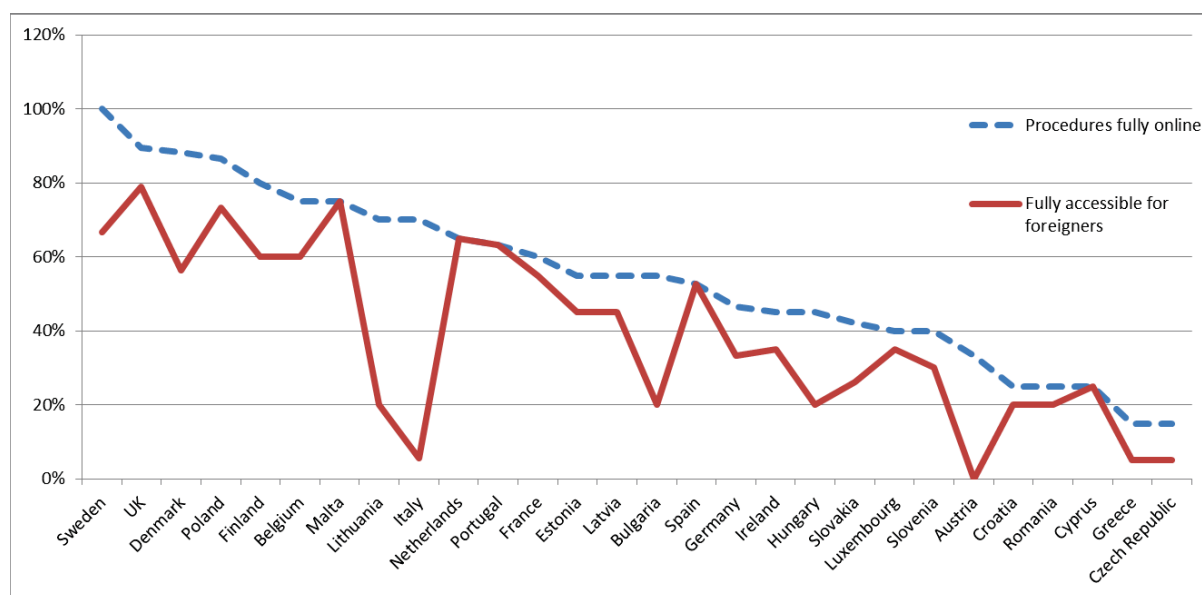
**Table 2.3: Information provided on current national websites (% of information to be required)<sup>30</sup>**



With regard to procedures, research<sup>31</sup> shows that of the 20 procedures selected following the public consultation, around 55% are already available fully and an additional 26% partly online, see Annex 4).

The figure below also clearly shows the problem regarding accessibility of foreign users.

**Table 2.4: Procedures accessible fully online (% of the core procedures to be required)**



### 1.9.2.3. Problem details<sup>32</sup>

#### **Problem 1: Lack of online information**

Information on national rules applicable in the country of destination is essential for citizens and businesses who want to expand their activities to other Member States. When this information is not accessible online, it is an obstacle for the exercise of Single Market rights.<sup>33</sup> For domestic firms and citizens the lack of online information may be compensated

<sup>30</sup> Figure 2.3. and 2.4: EC own research, December 2017, see Annex 4 for details

<sup>31</sup> EC own research, December 2017, see Annex 4 for details.

<sup>32</sup> For additional evidence, see Annex 5.

<sup>33</sup> According to a 2015 Eurobarometer survey on European businesses and public administration, only four in ten companies are satisfied with the ease of obtaining reliable information from public authorities in their country, just 3%

by a visit to a local administrative office, but this option creates a substantial hurdle for users in other Member States.<sup>34</sup>

**Businesses** often have to rely on intermediaries in order to find and digest the information needed to start or expand cross-border activities,<sup>35</sup> as confirmed by a recent study on administrative formalities.<sup>36</sup> Large companies typically employ several people who are specialised in regulatory compliance. Smaller firms deal with the problem by using external service providers like chambers of commerce, industry associations, lawyers and consultants.<sup>37</sup> Paying for such services makes the costs of regulatory compliance proportionately higher for them.<sup>38</sup> For self-employed or start-ups the costs of cross-border regulatory compliance could be prohibitive.

In 2010, there were almost 21 million SMEs in the EU, representing over 99.8% of EU companies and other undertakings. More than 44% of them are involved in some form of international contact. Nearly 30% of SMEs are engaged in import and export activities and 2% have foreign direct investments abroad. Moreover, about 7% (more than 1.4 million) of EU SMEs are involved in international subcontracting. While most of these operate with client enterprises located within their own Member State, about 26% also have clients in other Member States (about 383 000 SMEs).<sup>39</sup>

In the public consultation for the single digital gateway, 93% of businesses considered it very important or important to have online access to information about products and services in other EU countries.

The Services Directive has obliged Member States to set up Points of Single Contact that provide information about rules and procedures for the provision of services, for both temporary and permanent establishment. However, the Services Directive does not cover all services (financial, transport and health services are excluded), nor does it cover taxation, social security or other regulatory areas of relevance for businesses. Member States' implementation of the Points of Single Contact has been uneven<sup>40</sup> and only in eight countries out of 31 are these contact points performing well.<sup>41</sup> Stakeholders also find<sup>42</sup> that the scope of the Points of Single Contact is not sufficient to cover the actual needs of businesses. This is confirmed by the Stakeholder Group of the REFIT Platform.

Unlike for services, there is no obligation for Member States to provide online information on products. Several sets of rules can apply to one product, resulting from both EU and national legislation. Product legislation is mostly drafted for a generic group of products like toys and chemicals, or from a risk or health and safety angle, e.g. with regard to products using low voltage electricity. This makes it difficult for a producer or exporter to find out the exact legislation that applies to a specific product. As an example of the complexity of product

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being 'very satisfied'. Most companies (55%) are dissatisfied, and almost one in five (17%) say they are 'very dissatisfied'. Given the extra difficulties (language, lack of familiarity) for companies established in other Member States, scores for cross-border situations can be expected to be even lower.

<sup>34</sup> An expanded argumentation of this problem is in the evaluation – see Annex 3.

<sup>35</sup> As an example, in a stakeholder meeting a Romanian firm starting operation in Luxembourg informed the Commission that it had paid €3000 in consultancy fees.

<sup>36</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017, for the European Commission, to be finalised in March 2017

<sup>37</sup> Evaluation of the Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products (2014), <http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=9966151>, pp. 93-94, 105.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, p. 102, 138.

<sup>39</sup> Impact assessment for the Proposal for a Regulation on promoting the free movement of citizens and businesses by simplifying the acceptance of certain public documents in the European Union and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> See Annex 3; in particular The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

<sup>41</sup> The reviewed countries were EU28 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

<sup>42</sup> High-Level Group on Business Services, Final Report April 2014.

requirements, a set of applicable EU and national rules for paper cups is included as Annex 15.

**Box 2: The costs of complying with technical requirements**

Compliance with technical rules in different countries and keeping track of their evolution is no easy task. For example, one sizable furniture company selling products in most EU countries employs about 200 people to ensure that all their products meet the legal and technical requirements of each Member State. This translates into 120 consultants in its headquarters plus 1 to 4 correspondents per country. When planning to enter a new market within the EU, the company starts to research the legal and technical requirements that apply to their products at least two to three years prior to starting operations. The company found the most difficult categories of products are the non-harmonised ones. In addition, national interpretations for harmonised rules as well as the tests used to prove compliance and the reporting systems can differ, posing a further challenge to businesses.

The company clarified that having access to reliable and detailed information about product rules, as well as an easy way to find the relevant authorities to contact at different stages of the planning, production and marketing processes would be highly beneficial to their business.<sup>43</sup>

In 2009, a network of Product Contact Points was set up to facilitate access to specific technical rules for non-harmonised products, based on user request.<sup>44</sup> The contact points have to respond within 15 working days to a request and provide complete information about national technical rules affecting a product along with the contact details of the relevant national public authorities. The contact points are encouraged to provide their services in several languages and to provide personalised advice to users.<sup>45</sup>

In principle, there should be no problem to obtain information on rules applying to harmonised goods (where products are covered by requirements set in EU legislation), as all EU rules are published online.<sup>46</sup> Information on European legislation is available online through the EUR-lex<sup>47</sup> and EU Export Helpdesk<sup>48</sup> databases. In addition, the Your Europe business portal explains EU law in understandable language. However, gaps exist with regard to national-level information, also for Your Europe.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, while the Technical Regulation Information System (TRIS) database gives access to any national legislation on product rules that has been notified, it is not organised in a way that would make it easy for firms to find all the relevant information and understand what applies to a specific product.<sup>50</sup>

In practice, the interplay of EU and national rules makes it very difficult for a producer to find out about the exact rules applying to his product. And this does not even include the – much broader - issue of whether a producer would indeed need to comply with another Member State's technical rules, or whether he could export his products in conformity with his own country's national rules, based on the mutual recognition principle.<sup>51</sup>

**For citizens** there are even fewer EU requirements to provide information than for businesses. In the single digital gateway public consultation, 60% of citizens who have tried to find which national requirements they should fulfil when moving to another Member State found this difficult or somewhat difficult to do. The main reasons were that websites were hard to find or understand, and that they contained inaccurate or outdated information. A

<sup>43</sup> Information received at a bilateral meeting with the European Commission in August 2016.

<sup>44</sup> The Product Contact Points were set up following a provision (Art. 9) in the Mutual Recognition Regulation (764/2008).

<sup>45</sup> Mutual Recognition Regulation (764/2008), Art. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Industry stakeholders have indicated that even for harmonised products the practical implementation of the rules varies between Member States.

<sup>47</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

<sup>48</sup> <http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/index.htm?newLanguageId=EN>

<sup>49</sup> See Annex 3.

<sup>50</sup> The problem of legal complexity of the substance of product legislation is outside the scope of this initiative. The issue of lack of (good quality) online information about such legislation is within its scope.

<sup>51</sup> This is outside the scope of this initiative.

further problem was that of understanding the language.<sup>52</sup> According to the same consultation, 81% of citizens would like the authorities to have an obligation to provide minimum information for carrying out cross-border activities, and 72% would like to see this in at least one other EU language.

In the last ten years, the movement of EU citizens across Member States has increased steadily as more and more citizens move within the EU to live, work or study. Around 2.5% of the EU population is residing in a Member State other than their Member State of origin. Increasing numbers of EU-28 citizens have taken advantage of free movement. In 2011, around 12 million EU citizens resided in a Member State other than the Member State of origin; 1 million more than in 2009 and 24% more than in 2007. There are multiple reasons for this, although work is one of the most driving forces. Out of the 12 million, 6.3 million are employed in the host Member State. Marriages also motivate intra-EU mobility, as 13% of all marriages were international in 2007.<sup>53</sup>

**Table 2.5: Current availability of information for businesses in all Member States<sup>54</sup>**

Area	Availability of information in the national language (%)	Availability of information in English (%)
Starting, running and closing a business	90%	80%
Paying taxes	86%	73%
Getting funds	86%	70%
Hiring staff	79%	60%
Providing services	68%	50%
Complying with health and safety conditions	62%	33%
Complying with environmental rules (certification and labels)	58%	39%
Selling goods	40%	27%
<b>Average EU</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>54%</b>

**Table 2.6: The burden of navigating regulatory complexity in the absence of online information**

Finding	Figures	Source
Not knowing the rules is a barrier to export within the EU	1/3 of exporting SMEs 2/3 of SMEs interested in exporting	Flash Eurobarometers 421 and 413
Resources spent on familiarisation and compliance with applicable rules in other Member States	15-20% of human resources 200 FTEs, large EU wide home decoration retailer	Evaluation of Internal Market legislation for industrial products; Bilateral meeting with Commission services
Resources required to navigate overall regulatory complexity	61% of start-ups mention this as an obstacle, the third biggest problem overall	EC public consultation on starting up and scaling-up, 2016
Not knowing where to get consumer information and advice	79% of EU citizens	Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net), report by CPEC for DG SANTE, 2011
Not knowing where to get consumer information and advice on cross-border shopping in the EU	68% of EU citizens	Consumers Conditions Scoreboard, CCS, 2013

<sup>52</sup> See the consultation in Annex 16; but also the EU citizenship consultation 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2016-flash-eurobarometer-430-citizenship\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2016-flash-eurobarometer-430-citizenship_en.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Impact assessment for the Proposal for a Regulation on promoting the free movement of citizens and businesses by simplifying the acceptance of certain public documents in the European Union and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012, 2013.

<sup>54</sup> See Annex 4 for more details.



Identified inaccessibility of information on rules and requirements as the main internal market obstacle	81% of businesses	2016 survey by Eurochambres <sup>55</sup>
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**Problem 2: Lack of quality of information and of assistance services**

Regardless of the amount of information made available online, or the number of assistance services created, if their quality is low, none of these will really help citizens and businesses. Information may be inaccurate, incomplete, outdated, not user-friendly or only available in a single language not accessible for cross-border users. Contact points may take far too long to respond or provide information that is not operational.

The REFIT Platform Opinion<sup>56</sup> confirms this, with the business stakeholder group recommending a Commission initiative to establish minimum quality criteria for the performance of points of single contact, and most members of the Government Group recommending that the Commission introduce common quality criteria for the content, functioning and level of integration of each portal with the single digital gateway.

**Box 3: Information only available in a single language**

The study about administrative formalities indicated that no online information could be found in 21% of the relevant combinations of countries and procedures investigated. Where online information was available, the handling deadline of the authority was missing in 60% of the cases, accepted languages for the procedure in 56% and whether a delivery notice would be sent in 50%.<sup>57</sup>

Evidence shows that almost half of the information supplied by the Points of Single Contact is still structured according to the logic of the administration and not according to the logic of the business user.<sup>58</sup> Only half of the contact points have interactive services, and these are less usable for foreigners. Similarly, the evaluation of the European Consumer Centres<sup>59</sup> recommended making the informatics tool more user-friendly and enhancing its functionality with respect to statistical analysis.

**Table 2.7: The fragmentation of information and assistance services**

Finding	Figures	Source
Users are dissatisfied with user-friendliness of the information they find	51%	Report on 2015 public consultation on EU Citizenship
When moving to another country, users prefer to find information and assistance through one-stop-shop websites	87%	Report on 2015 public consultation on EU Citizenship
Digital public services not being user-friendly is an obstacle to using them	73%	Report on the public consultation and other activities of the European Commission for the preparation of the EU E-government Action Plan 2016-2020, European Commission 2016
The need to provide the same information more than once is an obstacle to using digital public services	66%	Report on the public consultation and other activities of the European Commission for the preparation of the EU E-government Action Plan 2016-2020, European Commission 2016

The report on the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation<sup>60</sup> lists the following deficiencies of the national contact points: (a) slow response times to requests for

<sup>55</sup> Eurochambres survey "EU Internal Market Barriers and Solutions: The Business Perspective", 23 September 2015.

<sup>56</sup> REFIT Platform Opinion on the submission by the Danish Business forum and Businesseurope on the Point of Single Contact, adopted 27/28 June 2016.

<sup>57</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017

<sup>58</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net), report by CPEC for DG SANTE, 2011.

<sup>60</sup> Analysis on the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation, 2015.

information; (b) poor quality of replies (provided in legal language that is difficult to comprehend, or queries that were not fully answered); and (c) the language barrier.

**Problem 3: Lack of fully online procedures**

Even where information about applicable rules is available and clear, the next hurdle is to comply with them by completing the relevant administrative procedures. The Services Directive obliged Member States to ensure that businesses can complete the necessary procedures and formalities to start or carry out their activities with Member States’ administrations via Points of Single Contact and by electronic means, including across borders.

The Points of Single Contacts have achieved limited success in introducing online procedures, especially regarding the accessibility for non-national users, and there are large variations between Member States.<sup>61</sup>

There are more online services for businesses than for citizens, and an increasing number of business procedures are only delivered online.<sup>62</sup> For many citizen ‘life events’ (finding a job, moving, starting a small claims procedure, changing civil status, owning a car or studying) procedures are not available online. Three out of four citizens would welcome the availability of online services. In particular, the measures rated as highly important are: making all online public services inclusive and accessible to all (64%); giving users access to public services online (63%); and making online public services more trustworthy and secure.<sup>63</sup> The most common language for surfing online is English.<sup>64</sup>

**Problem 4: Lack of awareness and online findability**

The fourth identified problem is that even in an ideal situation where information is complete and of good quality, where assistance services are responsive to user needs, and procedures can be completed online by all, citizens and businesses still need to be able to *find* them easily. However, evidence shows that they are often unaware of the existence of the various portals and support services. This is largely due to the high level of fragmentation of the services on offer, their many different brand names and the confusion about what can and cannot be expected from each of them.

**Table 2.8: The lack of awareness of the services**

Finding	Figures	Source
Consumers and businesses are unaware of any online services at European level that they could turn to in case of problems	92% of consumers and businesses	European Parliament, "A European Single Point of Contact", 2013.
European Consumer Centres are not known	85% of citizens and 80% of cross-border shoppers have heard of them	Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network, report by CPEC for DG SANTE, 2011.
National online services in the area of social security do not refer to the existence of corresponding EU-level services	87% of services do not refer to EU level	EMPSS Study interim report

<sup>61</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015. The Services Directive sets out a list of obligatory features of the Points of Single Contact that the Member States need to implement. The PSCs also provide a framework for more advanced e-government services aimed at creating a more business-friendly environment.

<sup>62</sup> The e-government benchmark report 2015, 2016  
[https://www.capgemini.com/resource-file-access/resource/pdf/egovernment\\_benchmark\\_2016.pdf](https://www.capgemini.com/resource-file-access/resource/pdf/egovernment_benchmark_2016.pdf)  
<https://www.capgemini.com/news/the-european-commission-egovernment-benchmark-2015-more-digital-transformation-of-european>

<sup>63</sup> EU citizenship consultation 2015.

<sup>64</sup> YourEurope Business Exit Survey. It consisted of +/- 1600 results between December 2015 and January 2016, and draft final report of European Commission study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest and Young, 2017 (forthcoming).

At European level, no less than 44 online services for businesses and citizens were identified in 2013. Of these, 48% targeted citizens, 34% business and 18% provided services across these groups.<sup>65</sup> Combined with an extensive range of service providers at national level, it is difficult to understand who is responsible for what, and to identify the most appropriate service. In a recent survey, one third of Dutch entrepreneurs who are active in the Single Market cite "poor findability of information on applicable rules" as one of the main obstacles.<sup>66</sup>

**Box 4: Difficulty to find information online:**

A company mentioned that in order to handle VAT return, it had to spend 20 hours to collect the required documents and carry out the procedure, even with the help of a consultant because it was difficult to find information online on this procedure<sup>67</sup>.

The various contact points are not well known and enhanced cooperation could help.<sup>68</sup> The Member States have been encouraged<sup>69</sup> to combine the various contact points, but most have not followed this recommendation. Most national contact points are not even inter-linked on the national level, let alone across borders.<sup>70</sup>

**Problem 5: Lack of accessibility for foreign users**

The lack of access of foreign users to online procedures (and information) is a recurring problem due to problems of language,<sup>71</sup> national form fields only accepting national data, acceptance of only national means of identification<sup>72</sup>, need for the foreign user to provide certified and translated copies of original documents as evidence<sup>73</sup>, and offering only national means of payment. On average, domestic EU businesses spend EUR 1423 to register their economic activity. Businesses from another Member State (excluding sole traders) spend almost double this amount, i.e. on average EUR 2799.

**Table 2.9: Obstacles to cross-border use of common procedures by businesses<sup>74</sup>**

Extra burden /Obstacle	Occurrence in procedures examined
Information about the procedure not available in EN	43%
Forms are not available in EN	54%
Submission of foreign data not possible	22%
Assistance services not available in EN	40%
Translations required for evidence to be submitted	47%
Obligatory use of translator established in the host country	25%
Certified translation required from any translator in the EU	17%
Online identification possible for domestic users but not possible for foreign users	8%

<sup>65</sup> A European Single Point of Contact, European Parliament 2013.

<sup>66</sup> KvK Ondernemerspanel, Panel survey on the European Internal Market [Link to kvk.nl](http://kvk.nl)

<sup>67</sup> Feedback received in the context of the (Commission-financed) study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017

<sup>68</sup> Analysis on the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Mutual Recognition Regulation 764/2008; Construction Products Regulation.

<sup>70</sup> Outcome of the Commission study Screening Report on Member States' Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction, Ecorys, forthcoming, 2017.

<sup>71</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

<sup>72</sup> Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-Border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers, Final Report, European Commission 2013. The full implementation of the eIDAS regulation should address the acceptance of eIDs and e-signatures across borders; [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2014.257.01.0073.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.257.01.0073.01.ENG).

<sup>73</sup> For citizens, 14 often used documents are covered by the Public Documents Regulation (EU) 2016/1191 that dispenses with authorisations and translations.

<sup>74</sup> Outcome of European Commission study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, forthcoming, 2017. See Annex 19 for methodology.

Section 2.2.3 further illustrates the gap in online services for national and foreign users concerning electronic procedures. Although high-volume transactions, such as company or tax registrations, are frequently provided online, sector-specific procedures are still widely unavailable.<sup>75</sup>

The public consultation for the single digital gateway also demonstrated that one out of three citizens who have tried cross-border procedures either found them difficult or gave up. The most important issues are the requirement for offline steps, the procedure not being online at all, or users not finding the information online. Issues relating to languages, including document translations or recognition of certification were also important obstacles.<sup>76</sup>

Concerning specific difficulties in transferring information, documents or data between the public authorities of the home country and those of another<sup>77</sup>, the most difficult for citizens was when the receiving administration did not accept nationally recognised information, documents or data from the citizen's home country.<sup>78</sup> The public consultation on the e-government plan showed that more than 40% of authorities very often require original paper document or certified copies as part of procedures.

When interacting online with a public authority in another EU country, many citizens expect to be able to access all relevant information and start the procedure online using a 'one-stop' shop (43%) and that the information would be provided in a language they understand (40%).

Stakeholders have indicated that interaction and language functionalities can drive usage. In the public consultation, it was noted by citizens that full online transactionality (72%), easy navigation (72%), the possibility to use a known language (67%) and the availability of a helpdesk (63%) are the most important quality aspects of online procedures.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, providing information and procedures in a wider range of languages – and allowing information input in at least one widely used foreign language – would be essential components for easier access to the Single Market.

#### ***Problem 6: Lack of overview of Single Market problems***

Finally, the overall objective of making the Single Market work better for all can only be achieved if we have a clear view of the remaining obstacles and of their relative importance for citizens and businesses. Most of the assistance and problem solving services within the scope of this project collect some statistics about problems and queries submitted to them. Where available, a yearly overview of such data is published in the Single Market Scoreboard. However, there are many gaps in this overview and the fact and figures collected are often difficult to compare.

Current complaint mechanisms focus on breaches of existing EU law, and on deficiencies in its application, but not on obstacles that are not infringements. The lack of evidence and subsequent analysis makes it more difficult for EU policy-makers to reliably identify the most

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<sup>75</sup> The e-government benchmark reports confirm these findings. Cross-border transactional services are only possible in very few cases, causing unnecessary burdens – compared to what is possible with digital technologies – for citizens and businesses wanting to move, work or start-up in another EU country. e-Government services are not available in 35% to 63% of the steps involved in seven key life events (such as starting a business, starting a small claims procedure, changing civil status, moving and studying). For further details about evaluations of existing instruments see Annex 3.

<sup>76</sup> See the stakeholder consultation results in Annex 16.

<sup>77</sup> EU-wide digital once-only principle for citizens and businesses: Policy options and their impacts, SMART 2015/0062, GNK Consult et al. 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Report on the public consultation and other activities of the European Commission for the preparation of the EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020, European Commission 2016, and the Public Documents Regulation (EU) 2016/1191.

<sup>79</sup> Public consultation results in Annex 16; also the Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-Border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers, Final Report, European Commission 2013.

troublesome obstacles hampering the functioning of the Single Market.<sup>80</sup> Surveys and consultations can only provide a partial answer and are only a snapshot of the situation without describing the evolution of the problem over time. Moreover, it seems that especially businesses are very reluctant to complain about Single market obstacles.

The lack of a more systematic approach to comprehensive analysis and evidence about the state of the Single Market or obstacles faced citizens and businesses means that policy-makers do not have a clear picture of the real state of the Single Market as experienced and perceived by its real users.

#### **1.10.2.4. Who is affected and how?**

##### *2.4.1. Citizens and businesses*

Citizens and businesses find it difficult, especially from abroad, to tap the full benefits of the Single Market. They need comprehensible information about applicable rules and the ability to complete procedures online, but these are available only to a limited extent, if at all. Moreover, if problems arise or publicly available information is not clear or not specific enough, the person or company also needs personalised assistance. Currently finding good information or assistance is unnecessarily cumbersome and time consuming.

However, the use of online sources has radically increased the potential to shorten the time and lower the cost of obtaining information. The expectation of firms and citizens is that such improvements should also be available when dealing with public administrations, including from other countries.

Obstacles that make it difficult for firms to export goods and services to other Member States have an effect on general welfare as they reduce competition, prevent efficiency gains and renewal of the economic fabric, thus lowering growth.

##### *2.4.2. Public administrations*

Public administrations (EU and national) are affected as they should respond to the expectations of citizens and businesses, but are not always in a position to do so. Although online services provide opportunities to increase efficiency by cutting costs and improving quality, the need to change the behaviour of a multitude of actors, and the limited means at the disposal of administrations constrain their ability to modernise quickly. A silo based approach still makes for an administrative working culture that does not exploit synergies, but rather creates fragmentation in a user-unfriendly way.

Moving online requires an upfront investment that can be substantial and payback times can be several years. However, good practices that focus on reusable software and centrally located software as service provision can substantially lower the upfront investment.

##### *2.4.3. EU policy makers*

A representative overview of the real problems faced by businesses and citizens in the Single Market is not readily available for policy making. Even though data are gathered through various mechanisms (including Your Europe Advice, SOLVIT, Enterprise Europe Network, Chambers of commerce, business organisations), it often focuses on specific cases and is not systematically combined and analysed at a central level to give a representative picture of the state of the Single Market as perceived by its users.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> This under-reporting of problems has also been confirmed by consultation results, e.g. at a Workshop on the Mutual Recognition Principle on 17/06/2016: "A representative of the Danish Ministry of Business and Growth reported about a recent study carried out among Danish companies and showing that, when facing a problem linked to mutual recognition, a vast majority of companies simply accept and comply since they consider that the cost of awaiting results of legal procedures is not worth; moreover, in most of the cases, they do not report the problem anywhere."

<sup>81</sup> European Parliament Report on Non-Tariff Barriers in the Single Market, 2016.

### 1.11.2.5. How would the problem evolve – what is the baseline case?

#### 2.5.1. Lack of online information

Without further action beyond that already agreed or ongoing, the provision of information for businesses and citizens is likely to improve at national level but mostly within the silos of specific policy areas, depending on the specific considerations of the information provider, with more information services available at national than at regional or local levels.

More Member States that seek to improve the efficiency of their information and assistance structures, will adopt a single citizens and business portal approach and a consolidation process for the various contact points may take place, although not very fast. The Commission has recommended that Member States create ‘Single Market Centres’ that coordinate information nationally, facilitating the access of citizens and businesses to information about rules and procedures.<sup>82</sup> However, only a few Member States have acted on this. In the absence of legal obligations, the application of the established PSC charter<sup>83</sup> (foreseeing turning the PSCs into e-government business portals providing everything that businesses need) is likely to continue to be uneven and not fully delivering for businesses. In particular, information about national rules for products would in many cases continue to be only available upon request since there is no legal obligation to provide it online.

Member States’ input to the Your Europe portal will continue to be uneven for nationally relevant information.

#### 2.5.2. Lack of quality

Improvements in the quality of online information and services depend largely on national agendas and priorities. EU-level action has played and will continue to play a nudging role, i.e. by continuing to push for the implementation of the Points of Single Contact Charter, and by exposing Member States’ weaknesses through the annual e-government benchmarking reports and the Single Market Scoreboard. However, progress has been slow and uneven.

In the absence of binding and across-the-board quality standards, Member States are likely to give priority to making information and services available online over creating high-quality online information and services. This is confirmed by the latest (2016) Commission e-government benchmarking report, which concludes that "governments have advanced in making public services digital, but focussed less on the quality of the delivery from the user’s perspective."<sup>84</sup>

More Member States could be encouraged to apply the quality provisions drafted for Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction.<sup>85</sup> A Commission-financed study<sup>86</sup> provides guidelines for improving consistency across PCPC and PCP websites, including minimum desirable web content, best practices and ideas for an integrated PCP/PCPC/PSC webpage. However, the low response rate of PCPs and PCPCs<sup>87</sup> to the questionnaire casts doubts on the willingness of Member States to take these on board.

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<sup>82</sup> Communication on the better governance for the Single Market  
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/strategy/docs/governance/20120608-communication-2012-259-2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/strategy/docs/governance/20120608-communication-2012-259-2_en.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> Charter for the Electronic Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive,  
<http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/14950/attachments/1/translations>

<sup>84</sup> "The ease of using and speed of using the services online – as perceived by the mystery shoppers - advanced poorly, increasing by only 1 percentage point since the first assessment in 2012." eGovernment Benchmark 2016, "A turning point for eGovernment development in Europe?", Cap Gemini, Sogeti, IDC, Politicnico di Milano, 2016, for the European Commission.

<sup>85</sup> As contained in Regulations 764/2008 and 305/2011.

<sup>86</sup> Inventory on Contact Points – Studies on Product Contact Points (PCP), Product Contact Points for Construction (PCPC) & Point of Single Contact (PSC), Ecorys, 2017, [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/construction/support-tools-studies\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/construction/support-tools-studies_en)

<sup>87</sup> 7 PCP out of 32 and 10 PCPC out of 28 replied.

### 2.5.3. *Lack of online procedures*

Through their e-government programmes, Member States will continue to make progress in digitalising their interaction with citizens and businesses.

Various Commission initiatives – already adopted by the co-legislators but not yet fully implemented, proposed but not yet adopted by the co-legislators or still under preparation by the Commission – aim to put in place online procedures in *certain sectors* under Single Market law, such as public procurement, company law and VAT. These always include cross-border access. If adopted and when implemented, these initiatives will mean progress.

### 2.5.4. *Lack of accessibility for foreign users*

With regard to the Points of Single Contact, the progress that Member States have made based on the charter requirements<sup>88</sup> has been limited and generally less advanced for cross-border users. The differences in the online availability of key procedures for national and non-national users can be considerable.<sup>89</sup> However, cross-border access to e-procedures will be greatly facilitated by the eIDAS Regulation. By the September 2018 implementation deadline, Member States will be required to recognise eIDs notified by other Member States. This will take away one of the current obstacles for users to access e-procedures in other Member States. Nevertheless, Member States are likely to focus on domestic users while neglecting the needs of users from other Member States. At EU level, a number of sector-specific initiatives are in the pipeline which, if adopted by the co-legislators, would mean progress with accessibility for foreign users (e.g. Services e-card for business and construction services providers and pilot project to test the once-only principle for businesses cross-border in a number of areas).

The Public Documents Regulation<sup>90</sup> obliges Member States to accept certain citizen documents issued by another Member State without requiring an apostille stamp to prove their authenticity or translation by mid-2018. This will help citizens in some of the most common cases where you need to provide supporting evidence, but there is no requirement to accept online documents, nor will the regulation address documents businesses need for procedures.

Overall these actions limit progress to specific sectors without making a big leap forward across the board.

### 2.5.5. *Lack of awareness and findability*

The level of knowledge about the existing services will remain low and promotion efforts for the portals, contact points and assistance services are likely to continue in a largely uncoordinated way between the national and EU level.

The potential gradual introduction of specialised web portals (such as a European Mobility Portal on Social Security, VAT Portal) would continue to make it easier to find information – but only in cases where the portal itself is findable. No major changes in the findability of the existing services would be foreseen. There would be no instrument to stop the trend of further duplication and fragmentation.

### 2.5.6. *Lack of overview of Single Market problems*

The assessment of the state of play of the implementation of the Single Market, and obstacles that firms and citizens encounter in their cross-border activities would continue to be based mostly on ad hoc studies, cases and surveys. Such surveys are regularly commissioned by the

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<sup>88</sup> Charter for the Electronic Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive.

<sup>89</sup> See Annex 3 of EU-wide digital once-only principle for citizens and businesses: Policy options and their impacts, SMART 2015/0062, GNK Consult et al. 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Public Documents Regulation (EU) 2016/1191.

European institutions, Member States and business stakeholders, implying limitations in terms of scope, focus, length and expected results.

#### 2.5.7. *Conclusion*

The provision of information about the requirements to operate in the Single Market is fragmented and not sufficiently accessible for foreign users. Current EU-level initiatives only seek to address the problem on a sector-by-sector basis. Especially for users from other Member States, access to the Single Market would remain fraught with problems. Without additional action, the base line scenario would still see improvements being made in the right direction. But it would miss the opportunity for the big leap ahead that is needed to offer citizens and businesses the real benefits of the Single Market through a responsive, modern, user-centric and joined up service from EU and national level administrations. The REFIT Platform also stated that this is needed and demanded by business stakeholders.

### **3. RIGHT OF EU TO ACT AND SUBSIDIARITY**

The main objective of the single digital gateway is to improve the functioning of the Single Market with an initiative based on articles 21(2), 48 and 114(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).

The Single Market is not an area with fully harmonised rules. Beyond the basic principles and the areas in which fully harmonised rules were agreed, citizens and businesses will still need to comply with national rules whenever they exercise their Single Market rights. Therefore it is essential for the functioning of the Single Market that citizens and businesses can easily find out what these rules in any of the Member States are. It is equally essential that the procedures for compliance with such rules should not entail a significant additional regulatory burden for foreign users compared to domestic users.

These objectives cannot be achieved sufficiently without action at EU level. As described above, the current system of information and assistance services lacks coherence since the instruments, which were created by EU level action, are not sufficiently linked up and not sufficiently user-friendly. A common approach to ensuring quality through minimum quality standards is missing. Whilst the legal framework promotes synergies, these have not been sufficiently exploited by the Member States (in the absence of binding obligations).

Moreover, so far individual actions by Member States have led to considerable differences in approach, and such differences impose additional costs on firms, in particular SMEs, when operating in cross-border situations and discourage many from scaling up internationally.

Within the single digital gateway, Member States would still be in charge of providing information about their specific national context. Coordination at EU level, an agreed set of common quality criteria and a requirement to ensure full accessibility for foreign users, would make sure that information, procedures and assistance services are of comparable quality and fully accessible for non-national EU citizens, leading to better enforcement of Single Market rights for citizens and businesses.

The type of provisions envisaged for the single digital gateway is not new either. Similar requirements were already included in sectorial instruments such as the Services Directive (including provisions on online information, quality, assistance and online procedures), Professional Qualifications Directive (with provisions on online information, assistance and online procedures), Cross-border Health Care Directive (with provisions on information and assistance), and the EURES Regulation (with provisions on information, assistance and quality).

The EU added value of the single digital gateway is that it will reduce fragmentation by expanding the good practices already established in many areas to the overall service package



to be provided to EU citizens and businesses. The initiative will not touch the substance of the policy areas for which information needs to be provided, it will only require MS to create full transparency about their applicable rules. This is an essential requirement for letting EU citizens and businesses do business, work, study and travel in the Single Market.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATIVE**

##### **1.12.4.1. General policy objectives**

The overall policy objective is to facilitate the efficient functioning of the Single Market by reducing or removing existing barriers to cross-border business activity and mobility of citizens. Helping citizens, SMEs and start-ups to benefit from the Single Market will boost competition, jobs and growth.

The initiative addresses the removal of obstacles in terms of information availability, access to e-procedures and use of assistance services cross-border and online. By reducing transaction costs for information gathering and administrative procedures, it will encourage citizens and businesses to exercise their Single Market rights.

##### **1.13.4.2. Specific policy objectives**

More specifically the single digital gateway aims to ensure that:

- Information about EU rights and national rules and procedures that citizens and businesses need to exercise their Single Market rights is available online;
- Information, assistance services and procedures meet minimum quality standards;
- Core national procedures are available online;
- Information and procedures are fully accessible for cross-border users;
- Awareness about the services on offer is increased and information and assistance services are easy to find and well-coordinated;
- Feedback from citizens and businesses is systematically gathered and analysed to improve service quality and to detect Single Market obstacles.

#### **5. OPTIONS TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES**

##### **1.14.5.1. Introduction**

###### *Options included in the analysis*

Apart from the baseline option of no further action as described in section 2.6, three option packages are included for analysis:

- Option 1: National centralised business and citizens portals, is based on the concept of a network of single digital gateways, as proposed by 17 Member States in a letter of September 2015 to the Commission;
- Option 2: EU coordinated approach, is based on a combination of best practices at EU and national level;
- Option 3: EU wide fully harmonised approach, based on a resolution of the European Parliament<sup>91</sup> calling for a single end-to-end digital process for businesses to set up and operate across the EU, covering many fields. This option would centralise information provision and harmonise procedures at EU level for foreign users.

Table 5.1 shows the three options and their various elements, and how they relate to the problem drivers, problems and objectives.

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<sup>91</sup> European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2016 on Towards a Digital Single Market Act (2015/2147(INI)).

All three options are structured to address each of the six problems identified. The description of the relevant elements within each of the options will be presented in line with that structure. Some elements are the same for two or all three of the options.

The preferred package of options will result from their comparison in Section 6 of this document.

**Table 5.1: Options for the single digital gateway**

	<b>1. Nationally centralised business and citizens' portals</b>	<b>2. EU coordinated approach</b>	<b>3. EU-wide fully centralised approach</b>
Lack of online information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– EC covers EU level information in Your Europe</li> <li>– MS cover agreed national information in <u>single national business and citizens portals</u></li> <li>– The EC and MS levels are inter-linked</li> <li>– <u>EC and MS all monitor their own compliance</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– EC covers EU level information in Your Europe,</li> <li>– MS cover agreed national information <u>in different websites and portals</u></li> <li>– The EC and MS levels are inter-linked.</li> <li>– <u>Joint monitoring of compliance</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>EC will provide all agreed information</u> via an external contractor</li> <li>– MS only need to verify</li> <li>– <u>EC monitors compliance</u></li> </ul>
Lack of quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality criteria with monitoring via <u>separate user feedback tools one for each portal</u></li> <li>– <u>EC and MS all monitor their own compliance</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality criteria with monitoring via <u>common user feedback tool used for all linked portals</u></li> <li>– <u>Joint monitoring of compliance</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Quality criteria fully harmonised, integrated in contract, with monitoring via <u>single user feedback tool</u></li> <li>– <u>EC monitors compliance</u></li> </ul>
Lack of online procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Voluntary</u> roll-out of online procedures based on rolling work programme</li> <li>– MS can decide on priorities, no legal requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Obligatory</u> to offer 10+10 national procedures fully online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All 10+10 procedures will be <u>harmonised at EU level</u> for foreign users (such as for EPC and Services Card)</li> <li>– EC will develop IT structure for procedures within IMI</li> </ul>
Lack of accessibility for foreign users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Information and guidance about procedures should be made available in EN</li> <li>– Online procedures should be made fully accessible for foreign users</li> <li>– <u>National solutions</u> for use of documents and data to be made accessible for foreign users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Information and guidance about procedures should be made available in EN</li> <li>– Online procedures should be made fully accessible for foreign users</li> <li>– <u>Common user interface for cross-border use</u> of documents and data to be designed later</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For the 10+10 procedures:</li> <li>– Fully guaranteed, <u>translation in all or several languages</u></li> <li>– Procedures are <u>fully accessible to foreign users by design</u></li> <li>– <u>Integrated user interface for cross-border use</u> of documents and data</li> </ul>
Lack of awareness and findability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coordinated promotion</li> <li>– <u>Merger of contact points (for services, products, construction products)</u></li> <li>– <u>Every national portal has its own search facility</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coordinated promotion</li> <li>– Common assistance service finder</li> <li>– <u>Common search facility</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Joint promotion</u></li> <li>– Common assistance service finder</li> <li>– <u>Single search facility and fully harmonised presentation of information</u></li> </ul>
Lack of overview of single market problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Link to common user feedback tool on EU and all national single digital gateways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Link to common user feedback tool on EU and all national websites and portals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Common <u>user feedback tool will be fully integrated</u></li> </ul>

### **1.15.5.2. Option 1 – Nationally centralised business and citizens' portals**

The main characteristic of this option is that it prescribes a central information structure via single portals on the national and EU level, but takes a soft law approach with regard to the rollout of online procedures. It foresees no EU solution for accepting documents and data from other Member States. Each Member State should merge the three main business contact points (for services and goods).

#### *5.2.1. Information coverage within single national portals and a single EU portal*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States and the Commission respectively to provide online national and EU level information about rights, rules and requirements applicable within an agreed range of areas that are relevant for citizens and businesses exercising their single market rights, as currently covered by Your Europe.
- For both the Member States and the Commission to group this information within single business and citizens portals.

This option aims to ensure that enough high-quality information is available online for businesses and citizens, complemented where needed by high-quality individual assistance. Both information and assistance would have to be accessible through the same interface.

Defining the scope of the information coverage based on users' needs is key to the success of the initiative. The scope of the information coverage would be defined as described below.

The starting point for information coverage are issues already covered by the Your Europe services and the e-Justice portal. Member States and the Commission will continue to provide assistance through services mandated by the EU (see section 1.4.3), with Member States having the option to voluntarily include national assistance services under the single digital gateway. They will also have the option of including relevant complementary private or public-private assistance services.

For services, this option will complement the existing obligations under the Services Directive. The objective is to add areas not covered by the directive but recommended in the Charter of the Points of Single Contact. On the basis of user feedback, the information will be adapted as user needs develop and EU and national rules evolve.

For goods, a new obligation will be introduced to provide information on national product rules online on a website. Member States will need to offer a summary of the applicable rules for product categories, but may also refer to the assistance services for more detailed information tailored to specific products. This follows good practices already adopted by many Member States. To complement this, the single digital gateway will link to the Technical Regulation Information System (TRIS) database and to the database of the EU Export Helpdesk.<sup>92</sup>

#### *5.2.2. Minimum quality criteria*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States and the Commission to ensure that all information and assistance services and online procedures linked to the single digital gateway meet a minimum set of quality criteria, to be monitored via user feedback.
- For the Commission and the Member States to put in place their own user feedback mechanisms to cover their own single portals.

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<sup>92</sup> See Annex 8 and 9 for further details

This element sets quality criteria for the information, assistance services and online procedures offered, including a requirement about the availability to provide them in at least one language that is also widely understandable for foreign users. This element builds on the existing quality criteria that are defined, for instance, for the Services Directive and the Points of Single Contact Charter, Your Europe Advice and SOLVIT.

Quality criteria include basic explanations about purpose, deadlines and fees regarding assistance services and procedures. Systematic collection of user feedback will help to monitor compliance with quality standards and to identify problems and address them quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, each assistance service would need to keep records of numbers, origin and subject matter of requests, as well as of response times.<sup>93</sup>

#### 5.2.3. *Voluntary roll-out of online procedures*

This element includes the following requirements:

- A governance structure for Member States and the Commission in order to discuss and identify which procedures would be offered fully online.
- An annual work programme listing the procedures that each Member State agrees to put online.
- Arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the state of implementation.

In order to improve the availability of online service provision, this element uses a voluntary approach where the procedures to be introduced online are agreed separately for each Member State, respecting national priorities, but not necessarily leading to an even set of procedures across the Member States.

#### 5.2.4. *Making information and procedures accessible for foreign users*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States to provide all information that is part of the single digital gateway in one other commonly used language. Funding will be made available for translations in to English.
- For Member States to make all procedures that are online also fully accessible for foreign users.
- For Member States to allow foreign users to make use of e-documents and data.

All national procedures that are already available online would need to be fully cross-border transactional. In practice this will entail a range of practical elements:

- Making procedures available in another language or providing step-by-step online guidance in another language. This can be implemented through various technical solutions, depending on the basic IT structure of the procedure.
- Accepting eIDs will become obligatory under the eIDAS Regulation as of September 2018. The technical building blocks required for its implementation have been developed under the CEF programme (see Annex 11).
- Form fields used in procedures will need to accept contact details, such as addresses and phone numbers from other Member States.
- Payment facilities need to include systems widely used in other Member States, including for instance the possibility to make a SEPA transfer.

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<sup>93</sup> See Annex 6 for concrete quality criteria to be included in the single digital gateway proposal

For the cross-border acceptance of e-documents further efforts are needed to develop and implement cross-border once-only solutions. In this option Member States will only be required to make national solutions for documents, for instance e-messaging boxes and e-safes accessible for foreign users.

#### 5.2.5. *Merger of contact points for services, products and construction products*

This element includes the following requirement:

- A requirement for Member States to merge the existing contact points for services, products and construction products.

With a view to improving overall quality as well as findability, the various contact points created by EU law would be merged with a view to increasing awareness and findability of these services, but also to offer a more coherent assistance service to businesses and create economies of scale for the administrations involved.

Several Member States have already merged the services at least partially,<sup>94</sup> and most public authorities consider it desirable (45%) or very desirable (25%) to integrate the services and goods contact points in one national portal, although most of them consider this integration somewhat difficult (48%) or difficult (28%).<sup>95</sup> Members of the REFIT Platform Government Group recommend to the Commission to "(...) consider the integration of online information related to other contact points such as those falling under the Mutual Recognition Regulation, Construction Products Regulation and SOLVIT with that of the PSC; facilitate integration of information on online portals".<sup>96</sup>

#### 5.2.6. *Coordinated promotion*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States and the Commission to co-brand all promotion actions of the included services with the single digital gateway brand name.
- For Member States and the Commission to inform about, coordinate and where possible combine and synchronise promotion actions.

Promotion will raise awareness of online services. Under this option all promotion efforts of services within the remit of the single digital gateway will always include a reference to the gateway as a whole. Member States and the Commission finance their respective promotion actions.

#### 5.2.7. *User feedback tool and coordinated data gathering and reporting from assistance services*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For the Commission to provide a user feedback reporting tool that would allow it to identify problems with rules and difficulties encountered dealing with public authorities in an easy and familiar way in all EU languages;
- For Member States to collect data about the problems and queries submitted by citizens and businesses to the different services within the single digital gateway and to regularly submit it to the Commission;
- For the Commission to compile and analyse this data regularly.

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<sup>94</sup> Besides Lithuania above, also the United Kingdom, Slovenia and the Czech Republic provide good practices. See Annex 12.

<sup>95</sup> See Annex 13.

<sup>96</sup> REFIT Platform Opinion on the submission by the Danish Business Forum and BusinessEurope on the Point of Single Contact, 27/28 June 2016.

In addition to data gathered through assistance and problem solving services, an easy-to-use online tool can encourage the users of the single digital gateway to indicate problems they encounter in the Single Market. The public consultation indicated that 76 % of respondents would be willing to give feedback on their experience with the Single Market, so as to draw policy-makers' attention to recurrent problems.<sup>97</sup>

The tool will not be a formal complaint handling mechanism, nor will it offer individual replies or feedback (there will be signposting to SOLVIT for that). The received input would help to produce a good overview of the Single Market as perceived by users, identifying clear problem areas for possible future actions to improve its functioning.

#### 5.2.8. Addition in comparison to the baseline situation

Compared to the baseline situation, option 1 addresses the problems identified by introducing the following changes.

**Table 5.2: Problems addressed by option 1**

Lack of online information	Requires Member States to create national single businesses and citizens portals (where these do not already exist), to provide national information on a list of topics, and to monitor their compliance in offering the agreed information. The Commission will cover EU level information in Your Europe. The two levels will be linked.
Lack of quality	Introduces compulsory minimum quality criteria for information, information on procedures and assistance services. Introduces the requirement to have user feedback tools for each national portal and to monitor compliance in meeting the quality criteria.
Lack of accessibility for foreign users	Makes information and information about procedures available in English. Makes sure that procedures and national means to submit supporting evidence already available online are accessible to users from other Member States,.
Lack of awareness and findability	Introduces the coordinated promotion of the services offered and the merger of the national contact points for services and products. Introduces a requirement for each national website to have a search facility to facilitate navigation.
Lack of overview of Single Market problems	Requires the creation of a common feedback tool about Single Market obstacles to be linked to from each website.

#### 1.16.5.3. Option 2 –EU coordinated approach

The main characteristic of this option is that Member States could choose *where* they provide the required information online. They would only need to provide the links to the relevant websites on a central Commission repository, from which a common search facility would pick them up and present them to the user in reply to a search. As part of this, an "assistance service finder" would be developed to guide users to the right assistance service. The search facility would be limited to the gateway content, and could be integrated on EU and national information portals and webpages. In terms of procedures, this option assumes that Member States are obliged to make 10 key procedures for businesses and 10 for citizens fully online.

##### 5.3.1. Information coverage within existing national and EU portals and websites

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States and the Commission to provide online EU and national level information about rights, rules and requirements applicable within an agreed range of areas that are relevant for citizens and businesses exercising their single market rights, as currently covered by Your Europe.

Regarding information coverage and scope this option is the same as option 1, but unlike option 1 it leaves the choice of offering this information through a single business and

<sup>97</sup> See Annex 16.

citizens portal or via a range of different portals to the Member States. All information portals will be inter-linked and findability should be ensured via a common search facility (see section 5.3.5).

#### *5.3.2. Minimum quality criteria monitored jointly by Member States and the Commission through user feedback*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States and the Commission to ensure that all information and assistance services and online procedures linked to the single digital gateway meet a minimum quality standard, to be monitored on a regular basis via user feedback.
- For the Commission to develop a common user feedback mechanism to be used on all national and EU level websites and portals covered by the single digital gateway. Input will feed into a database that is accessible to the Commission and the Member States to enable joint monitoring.

The quality criteria in this option are the same as those for option 1, but the compliance with the criteria will be monitored jointly by the Commission and the Member States through a common user feedback mechanism to ensure full comparability and coordinated action.

#### *5.3.3. Obligation to offer the most important procedures online*

This element includes the following requirement:

- For Member States to move core procedures assumed to be, 10 for business and 10 for citizens (to be listed in the legal instrument) fully online (see section 1.4.2);

These procedures have been identified as being important for businesses and citizens, especially in a cross-border context, based on various studies and the public consultation<sup>98</sup>. The work to make core procedures available online will be aligned with other ongoing and planned EU initiatives.

#### *5.3.4. Making information and procedures accessible for foreign users*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States to provide all information that is part of the single digital gateway in one other commonly used language. EU funding will be made available for translations into English.
- For Member States to make all procedures that are online also fully accessible to foreign users.
- For the Commission to develop a common user interface to manage the provision of evidence across borders to implement the 'once only' principle.
- For competent authorities in the Member States managing base registers (where national data from citizens are kept) to make their systems interoperable with the common user interface.
- For competent authorities in the Member States to accept evidence submitted via the common user interface.

The first and second requirement of this option are the same as for option 1. The requirement for the use of cross-border evidence is more ambitious.

A solution is needed to make it possible to submit documents required for procedures in the scope of the single digital gateway. This includes supporting evidence in the form of

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<sup>98</sup> See Annexes 2 and 16.

authenticated documents or data, as part of a procedure across borders. There are various solutions how procedures can be linked with registers held by competent authorities.<sup>99</sup> Problems to be solved include the issues of language, permissions, and linkages to online procedures. In most cases a fully online procedure would in most cases need this tool and a solution will be part of the user centric service offered through the single digital gateway. This option does not address the recognition of the substance of the evidence.

#### 5.3.5. *Common search facility*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For Member States and the Commission to provide links to relevant websites in a common repository.
- For Member States and the Commission to structure information around common data models to improve findability.
- For the Commission to provide a search facility combined with navigation tools for various topics to guide the users.

An alternative to a fully harmonised presentation of information (as in option 3) is to make sure that users can easily find information, services and procedures through a search facility that is limited to the content specifically earmarked as part of the single digital gateway. This content may need to be tagged with the right search words to improve the quality of the package presented to a user search request. Some basic harmonisation of the identification of public services may be needed to improve their findability.<sup>100</sup> The search facility does not require the creation of a new portal, but can be integrated as part of the EU and national information portals and webpages.

#### 5.3.6. *Common assistance service finder*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For the Commission to develop a common tool that will guide the users to the right assistance service.
- For the Member States to ensure that the basic information about the assistance services is available to ensure good functioning of the tool.

At national and EU level, such assistance service finding tools or wizards for a limited range of services have already been integrated.<sup>101</sup> This helps the users to find the right assistance service even in a very complex landscape and it avoids these services receiving too many queries that should have been addressed to other assistance services.

#### 5.3.7. *Coordinated promotion*

This option element is the same as for option 1.

#### 5.3.8. *User feedback tool and coordinated data gathering and reporting from assistance services*

This option element is the same as for option 1 and 3.

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<sup>99</sup> For further information see 'The Once-Only Principle Project' (TOOP) is co-funded under Horizon 2020 and gathers 50 partners from 22 Member States with a view to explore and demonstrate the 'once-only' principle. [https://www.rlp-forschung.de/public/facilities/2/research\\_projects/21340](https://www.rlp-forschung.de/public/facilities/2/research_projects/21340).

<sup>100</sup> For instance through the use of the Core Public Services Vocabulary: [http://ec.europa.eu/isa/ready-to-use-solutions/cpsv-ap\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/isa/ready-to-use-solutions/cpsv-ap_en.htm).

<sup>101</sup> For instance in Germany, the 'Behördenfinder'



### 5.3.9. Addition in comparison to the baseline situation

Compared to the baseline situation, option 2 addresses the problems identified by introducing the following changes:

**Table 5.3: Problems addressed by option 2**

Lack of online information	Requires Member States and the EC to provide information on a list of topics and to jointly monitor their compliance in offering the agreed information. The EC and Member State pages are linked.
Lack of quality	Introduces compulsory minimum quality criteria for information, information on procedures and assistance services. Introduces the requirement to have a common user feedback tool to jointly monitor compliance in meeting the quality criteria.
Lack of online procedures	Introduces a requirement for Member States to offer online 10+10 procedures.
Lack of accessibility for foreign users	Makes information and guidance on procedures available in English and makes sure that online procedures already available are accessible to users from other Member States. It creates a common user interface for the cross-border use of documents and data.
Lack of awareness and findability	Introduces the coordinated promotion of the services offered. Creates a common assistance service finder and a common search facility that extracts information from all connected websites.
Lack of overview of Single Market problems	Requires the creation of a common feedback tool about Single Market obstacles to be linked to from each website.

#### 1.17.5.4. Option 3 – EU-wide fully centralised approach

The main characteristic of this option is that the Commission would provide all EU and national-level information through a central database on the EU level. The option would not prescribe putting the 20 core procedures online, but would foresee the establishment of a special IT tool to allow the back office cooperation of home and host country authorities to accommodate the needs (mainly in terms of submission of evidence) of the foreign user. "Findability" of information and procedures would be easy on the central database. A common assistance finder (same as option 2) would help find assistance services.

##### 5.4.1. Information coverage within a central database

This element includes the following requirements:

- For the Commission to create and manage (or outsource to an external contractor) a centralised database with an interface for users and generate the content to cover an agreed range of information (as in options 1 and 2);
- For the Member States to provide content according to harmonised templates and to verify and validate national information collected by the Commission.

This option would add to option 1 a harmonised presentation of all information through a centralised database. Information on national rules would be collected in this database (as is done currently in the EU Export Helpdesk) instead of reusing existing information available on national websites. The database would then be made available through the single digital gateway.

This option would ensure uniformity in coverage and presentation and would provide a simple and coherent access to information. It would make data easily findable and comparable across Member States.

##### 5.4.2. Minimum quality criteria monitored by the Commission through user feedback

This element includes the following requirements:

- For the Commission to ensure that all information and assistance services and online procedures linked to the single digital gateway comply with a minimum set of quality criteria, to be monitored essentially via user feedback.

- For the Member States to verify the information provided by the Commission.
- For the Commission to include a user feedback mechanism in the central database.

The quality criteria agreed in this option are the same as those for options 1 and 2, but the monitoring of compliance would be done centrally through a user feedback mechanism integrated in the central database. The Commission would ensure that the quality criteria are met.

#### 5.4.3. *Harmonised EU wide procedures*

This element includes the following requirements:

- For the Member States and the Commission to create harmonised EU wide procedures, modelled on the European Professional Card, for the 10+10 procedures identified in option 2.
- For the Commission to develop and manage the IT applications for these procedures.

This is an ambitious option that would require harmonisation of access for foreign users to the most relevant procedures. This approach would offer businesses and citizens a single access point to those procedures, especially designed to accommodate foreign users and integrating back office cooperation between national authorities where needed. This approach would follow the model of the European Professional Card and use the Internal Market Information system as a basis. Delegated acts would foresee the technical details of the system.

#### 5.4.4. *Addressing lack of accessibility for foreign users*

This option will guarantee full accessibility for foreign users *by design*, but only for the 20 procedures. All information about national rules will be translated in English and a large part of the information will be translated in all EU languages. The 20 procedures would be fully accessible for foreign users and the interface would be available in all languages, just as is the case for the European Professional Card.

#### 5.4.5. *Uniform navigation structure with search engine*

Thanks to the fully centralised and harmonised approach of option 3, there should be no problem of findability of any of the information. The database will include a search engine and an intuitive navigation path, but no additional requirements are needed to address findability.

#### 5.4.6. *Common assistance service finder*

This element is the same as for option 2.

#### 5.4.7. *Joint promotion*

This element includes the following requirements:

- A requirement for Member States and the Commission to promote all information, procedures and services under the same brand name in a coordinated fashion;
- Financing of all promotion actions through the EU budget.

This option ensures that all promotion actions are joint and based on a common single brand name, financed through the EU budget. To achieve all the benefits of the single digital gateway, it is necessary to ensure effective search engine findability of the entry point and all the underlying services.

#### 5.4.8. *User feedback tool and coordinated data gathering and reporting from assistance services*

This element is the same as for options 1 and 2.

#### 5.4.9. Addition in comparison to the baseline situation

Compared to the baseline situation, option 3 addresses the problems identified by introducing the following changes.

**Table 5.4: Problems addressed by option 3**

Lack of online information	The Commission provides all agreed information online. Member States help providing this information according to harmonised templates, and verify it prior to publication. The Commission monitors compliance.
Lack of quality	Introduces full harmonisation of quality criteria for information, guidance on procedures and assistance services (through a contract if outsourced). A single user feedback tool monitors compliance in meeting the quality criteria.
Lack of online procedures	Introduces a requirement to harmonise at EU level the 10+10 procedures for foreign users. The Commission is required to develop the IT structure for procedures within IMI.
Lack of accessibility for foreign users	It makes information and guidance on procedures available in all or several EU official languages. The 20 procedures are fully accessible to cross-border users by design. An integrated user interface for the cross-border use of documents and data is foreseen.
Lack of awareness and findability	Introduces joint promotion of the services offered. Creates a common assistance service finder, a single search facility, and a fully harmonised format for the presentation of information.
Lack of overview of Single Market problems	Requires the creation of a common feedback tool on Single Market obstacles to be integrated in the single gateway.

## 6. MAIN IMPACT OF THE OPTIONS

### 1.18.6.1. Main impact of option 1

#### 6.1.1. Main impact of information coverage within single national portals and a single EU portal

A legally binding obligation on Member States to provide all information citizens and businesses need to operate within the Single Market online would generate additional costs for Member States, depending on how much information is already available through national portals. For some Member States the gap will be very small, for others a very significant effort is needed.<sup>102</sup>

The volume of information to be provided will also depend on the regulatory complexity of the Member State concerned. Information will in any case need to be succinct and user friendly, which should keep the volume down.

The Your Europe portal can be used as a reasonable benchmark for the volume of national information to be provided, since it already covers all topics that are part of the envisaged scope of the single digital gateway. The most mature part of Your Europe is the citizens' part, which currently includes the equivalent of 245 pages of EU level information for 163 topics. The business part currently covers 46 topics but could be expected to cover around the same number of topics as the citizens section, adding up to a comprehensive volume of content of around 500 pages.

If Member States would provide the same range of information about their national rules in their national web portals, they would be likely to comply with the basic requirements of this option.

The costs for providing this type of information have been assessed at 17 person days by a recent study for all information on (complex) VAT rules. For the single digital gateway, 16

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<sup>102</sup> See Annex 4.

such topics would need to be covered representing an effort of 272 person days per Member State. However, this would be the maximum cost if a Member State had to start from scratch.

None of them is in that position, even the lowest performing Member States already covers around 40% of all information needed, while the best performing Member States covers 100%.<sup>103</sup> The average coverage is around 70%, representing an estimated additional effort of around 80 person days on average per Member State.<sup>104</sup>

In any case, these costs are likely to be more than compensated for by direct savings made due to many users being able to help themselves with information available on websites instead of turning to contact points with individual queries. This is illustrated by the example of the Your Europe portal that currently serves 13 million users per year. The web portal operates in cascade with the individualised Your Europe Advice service. It allows users who do not find the information they were looking for online to submit an individual request for advice and receive a reply by e-mail or telephone. Figures show that at current usage levels, providing a personal advice service is around 75 times more expensive than providing the same information online.

**Table 6.1: Online information is cheaper than individual assistance**

2016 figures	Channel	N° of users	Costs (incl. FTEs)	Cost per enquiry
<b>Your Europe portal</b>	Web based	17 000 000	EUR 1 200 000	EUR 0.92
<b>Your Europe advice</b>	Individual assistance	22 000	EUR 1 900 000	EUR 75.00

Source: European Commission, DG GROW

Moreover, the improved availability of information will considerably reduce the time and effort that citizens and businesses spend seeking information. The lack of such information creates frustration for users and firms often leading to them paying lawyers and consultants to get the information they need, which is especially onerous for SMEs.

#### 6.1.2. *Creating national single citizens and business portals*

A key element of this option consists of requiring Member States to create single citizens and business portals to host the content required under the single digital gateway. At present 26 Member States already have created such portals either for citizens and businesses separately or for both groups together. Only two Member States<sup>105</sup> do not yet have such portals.

A legal requirement to establish single portals in all MS would in practice only create significant IT costs for a few Member States. However, the most difficult part of establishing single portals is not so much the IT investment but the major governance effort required to get all parts of the administration on board. Member States who have managed to achieve this, report that taming the internal silos has been a herculean task. Although all seem to agree that the end result represents very significant cost savings for the administration itself and, in any case, a major improvement for citizens and businesses, these obvious net benefits are not always enough to trigger the necessary administrative culture change.

#### 6.1.3. *Main impact of minimum quality criteria*

All of the assistance services to be covered by the single digital gateway are either already required by existing EU law or paid from existing EU budgets. For both categories the objective of the single digital gateway is to provide good quality services. Experience (e.g. with SOLVIT) shows that improving the quality of the service is most often not a matter of adding resources but of assigning the right resources with the necessary skills to provide such services.

<sup>103</sup> These estimates are EC own research, see Annex 4.

<sup>104</sup> See table 7.4 for details.

<sup>105</sup> Germany and Italy

Adherence to a minimum list of quality criteria is not really an option but an essential element for the success of the single digital gateway, since providing information and assistance of variable and unreliable quality would seriously undermine the credibility of the single digital gateway as a whole.

Direct implementing costs involve setting up a practical framework for monitoring compliance with quality criteria and for enforcing a good level of quality across the board. This will help to generate more added value from expenses already made. Ensuring compliance with the quality requirements will be one of the tasks of the national single digital gateway coordinator, and at EU level the Commission will need to ensure the same. For this purpose extra resources need to be included as part of the overall management costs of the preferred option package. This will involve a user feedback tool with an estimated development cost of EUR 40 000.

Experience with existing services (SOLVIT, Your Europe Advice and the Your Europe portal) shows that once a quality framework is agreed, very good results can be achieved by devoting between 5% and 35% of the total management effort to quality monitoring and improvement.

#### *6.1.4. Main impact of voluntary roll-out of procedures*

Voluntary roll out of online procedures would in principle entail the same costs and benefits as obligatory digitalisation (see impact of option 2, section 6.2.3), but within this option each Member State could ultimately decide not to digitalise any procedures thus keeping both the costs and benefits at zero. In view of the significant benefits digitalisation creates for the running costs of administrations, it is unlikely that no digitalisation would take place. However, in a voluntary scenario, the risk of uneven development and considerable delays would be relatively high, even within a framework to coordinate at EU level. Moreover, it could undermine the overall credibility and relevance of the portal in the eyes of its users, making it less useful.

#### *6.1.5. Main impact of making information accessible in another EU official language*

To ensure that foreign users have access to national information, the agreed content within the remit of the single digital gateway would need to be translated into at least one other language in addition to the national languages (most usefully in English). Taking an estimated 500 pages of web text as a basis for the overall volume of pages to be translated<sup>106</sup>, translation costs would amount to EUR 32 500 (EUR 65 per page<sup>107</sup>) per Member State. The annual cost for translation of new content would be around half that amount, namely EUR 16 250 (based on Your Europe experience). However, these costs will not be additional costs for all Member States, since many of them already provide information in at least one other language. Costs for translations in English could be covered through EU funding.

In addition to the translation costs, managing web content in more than one language also requires an adapted content management system. However, experience with the Points of Single Contact and with the national portals feeding into Your Europe shows that all Member States already have content management systems equipped to handle two or more languages (see also section 2.2.3).

#### *6.1.6. Main impact making online procedures accessible to foreign users*

Around 39% of all procedures to be covered by the single digital gateway are already cross-border transactional.<sup>108</sup> For the remaining 61% additional work is needed:

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<sup>106</sup> See section 6.1.1 for explanation

<sup>107</sup> Rate quoted in Commission framework contracts.

<sup>108</sup> See Annex 4

- Solutions to ensure that foreign users have the possibility to access procedures in English, either by translating forms in English (very low cost solution), or by integrating an explanatory guide, depending on the basic IT structure of the procedure. One cost example was provided by Cyprus where the annual fee for maintaining 93 e-procedures in two languages is around EUR 20 000.
- Accepting eIDs will become obligatory under the eIDAS Regulation as of 2018<sup>109</sup>. The technical building blocks required for its implementation have been developed under the CEF programme. So these costs should not be attributed to the creation of the single digital gateway.
- Costs for adapting form fields to accept contact details, such as addresses and phone numbers from other Member States are very low.
- Adding payment facilities generally accessible for foreign users does in principle not entail any additional costs and any such costs could be recuperated directly.
- For the cross-border acceptance of e-documents further work is needed to develop and implement cross-border once-only solutions. Such work is in any case ongoing under other programmes (see Annex 9 for details of the once-only pilot) in view of the need for cross-border acceptance of e-documents for a wide range of other initiatives and taking account of the once-only principle. The associated costs are not part of the single digital gateway and such projects need a separate impact assessment.

Making existing procedures cross-border transactional will not entail any major additional costs for the Member States under this option (other than those already incurred under the eIDAS regulation). However, given the current problems with access to national procedures for non-nationals<sup>110</sup> and the absence of clear national quality guidelines to achieve this, some extra resources must be dedicated to the task. Depending on their starting point, each Member State should assign up to 1 FTE for a full year to examine current problems, write internal guidelines for compliance with the single digital gateway requirements in this area, and supervise their implementation by the different national authorities.

#### *6.1.7. Main impact of a merger of contact points*

A merger of the existing contact points for services, products and construction products would help to improve the overall findability and quality of the services provided. This model has been successfully implemented in the UK and Lithuania. In the public consultation 81% of business were in favour of a merger between the contact points for services and those for goods. Among public authority respondents 70% considered such a merger desirable, but difficult (28%) or somewhat difficult (48%). However, the feedback received through bilateral meetings with Member States' representatives suggest that a mandatory merger requirement would be quite problematic for some in view of national administrative structures.

#### *6.1.8. Main impact of coordinated promotion*

A coordinated promotion with co-branding implies that any national promotion efforts of the services covered by the gateway should always include a reference to the gateway as a whole. This increases the visibility of the single digital gateway both for businesses and citizens.

The increased visibility facilitates the findability and access of firms and citizens to information sources and procedures concerning the Single Market, making it easier to operate in markets or move across borders.

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<sup>109</sup> For e-signature the obligation under eIDAS exists already.

<sup>110</sup> See Annex 5, PSC table.

Promotion should essentially be done online and should also include search engine optimisation. The current budget for promoting Your Europe is around EUR 450 000 per year. In addition, EU-wide promotion campaigns for citizens' rights, consumer rights and business opportunities also refer to Your Europe. As a new service for citizens and businesses, the single digital gateway will need to be promoted intensively at its launch both directly to establish the new brand and indirectly to ensure that users quickly find their way to it. An additional one-off promotion budget of around EUR 2 million would be needed. Annual promotion work at EU level would require a further EUR 500 000.<sup>111</sup>

The Member States have to adjust their promotion efforts so that there is a common brand reference in all contexts, with a possibility of co-branding the single digital gateway with national initiatives. Coordinating the promotion efforts would be part of the overall management effort for the single digital gateway.

*6.1.9. Main impact of user feedback and Member State reporting*

The single digital gateway creates an opportunity to systematically gather non-personal data from many different sources to provide a richer picture of the state of the Single Market, based on how its users experience it in practice. This also offers additional material for evaluations and impact assessments.

This benefits firms and citizens as they can report problems with rules and public authorities in an easy and familiar way in all EU languages. The tool created for the collection of data can save time, by for example closed-form questions which can be answered quickly.

While no direct and individual reply or follow-up will be provided to firms and citizens, they will be able to see the overall picture of problems collected through the tool. Furthermore, SOLVIT and Your Europe Advice will be signposted in case they would like to provide more details of their problem. The data gathered via the tool would provide additional input for policy makers in identifying and addressing problem areas of the Single Market. The development costs for such a tool are estimated at EUR 150 000.<sup>112</sup>

The resulting data need to be combined with data currently gathered through SOLVIT, EEN, Your Europe Advice, European Consumer Centres and by national assistance services and it should be analysed systematically. This could lead to very important savings on the EU budget currently spent on studies since a large part of this expenditure is on gathering very basic data about experiences of citizens and business in the single market.

The data should in principle also be published on the EU Open Data Portal to make it available for further research and re-use by third parties where possible, facilitated by the use of common data structures.

*6.1.10. Costs and benefits of option 1*

**Table 6.2: Overview of costs and benefits for option 1**

	<i>Costs</i>	<i>Savings/benefits</i>
<b>Information coverage</b>		
MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completing national information where missing, estimated at 80 person days per MS (one-off)</li> <li>- Recurring costs for managing and updating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Reduced need for (more expensive) assistance services to answer individual queries.</li> <li>+ Better compliance with applicable rules</li> <li>+ Improved image of national public services</li> </ul>

<sup>111</sup> Based on the current YourEurope promotion budget.  
<sup>112</sup> EC/DG GROW estimate.

EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Completing EU level information for businesses where missing, managing and keeping it up to date (part of ongoing work in the Your Europe Portal)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Reduced need for (more expensive) assistance services to answer individual queries.</li> <li>+ Improved image of EU public services.</li> </ul>
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Finding information and assistance services will be faster and cheaper</li> <li>+ Better overall experience with public services</li> <li>+ Fewer barriers to expanding activities across borders</li> </ul>
<b>Creating single business and citizens portals</b>		
MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creating a single citizens and business portals (already exists in 25 MS)</li> <li>- Getting all relevant administrations to feed information into a single portal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Less resources needed for development and maintenance of many different websites and portals</li> <li>+ Reduced need for all parts of the administration to invent their own solutions for content and quality management</li> <li>+ Improved image of national public services.</li> </ul>
EC		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Easier to link to national information</li> </ul>
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Much easier, faster and cheaper to find national level information and assistance services</li> <li>+ Better overall experience with public services</li> <li>+ Fewer barriers to expanding activities across borders</li> </ul>
<b>Minimum quality criteria</b>		
MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial effort to establish a quality monitoring system and improve existing services where needed</li> <li>- Resources to monitor, encourage and facilitate quality compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Good quality services generate fewer complaints and lower management costs</li> <li>+ A common EU wide quality framework will make it easier to enforce quality criteria</li> </ul>
EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources to manage the quality management system at EU level</li> <li>- Organise training for the different networks of contact points and assistance services, both tasks estimated at 1 FTE</li> <li>- Develop and maintain common user feedback tool, estimated at EUR 40 000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ More enquiries can be met by online information, fewer enquiries to be addressed to Your Europe Advice</li> </ul>
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Much easier to find and understand national rules</li> <li>+ Much better experience with the services, less time wasted due to late responses, uncertainty and unanswered queries</li> <li>+ Trust in the single digital gateway since it provides a quality guarantee</li> </ul>
<b>Voluntary roll-out of online procedures</b>		
MS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digitalising remaining off-line procedures, costs depend on state of digitalisation per Member State</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Major administrative savings in handling procedures</li> <li>+ Improved compliance with national rules</li> </ul>
EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordinate the process</li> </ul>	
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ If implemented, improvement in handling compliance with national rules, especially in cross-border situations leading to considerable savings of time, effort and money.</li> </ul>



<b>Making information accessible in another community language</b>		
MS	– Organise translation of information covered in EN	+ Fewer requests for individual assistance from foreign users
EC	– Manage funding to cover translation costs in EN	
Users		+ Major improvement in handling compliance with national rules, especially in cross-border situations leading to considerable savings of time, effort and money.
<b>Making online procedures accessible for foreigners</b>		
MS	– Organising and implementing a process aimed at making existing online procedures fully cross border transactional , requiring 1 FTE for a year	+ Less non-standard applications to handle due to foreigners not being able to use national online procedures
EC	– Monitor compliance	
Users		+ Major improvement in handling compliance with national rules, especially in cross-border situations leading to considerable savings of time, effort and money.
<b>Merger of contact points</b>		
MS	– Effort required to overcome administrative resistance against the merger	+ Economies of scale will lead to savings in operational costs + Improved service quality will lead to better image of the public administration + Less signposting to other services needed
EC		
Users		+ Much easier to find the right services + Improved service quality
<b>Coordinated promotion</b>		
MS	– (Minimal) cost of integrating references to the single digital gateway and its logo in national campaigns	+ All services can benefit from the overall promotion effort, reducing the need for specific promotion campaigns
EC	– Moderate promotion budget and management costs, estimated at EUR 2m for the launch of the gateway, and EUR 0.5m for subsequent years.	+ No need for separate promotion of Your Europe
Users		+ More awareness of the services package available, leading to reduced time and effort for citizens and businesses
<b>User feedback mechanism and coordinated reporting</b>		
MS	– Organise collection of data regarding queries submitted to assistance services at national level	+ Less need for expensive studies to investigate problems and to measure user experience
EC	– Develop and maintain user feedback tool for single market problems – Organise collection of all data from EU and national level services and from user feedback mechanism, analyse and publish results	+ Less need for expensive studies to investigate problems and to measure user experience + More evidence about gravity of specific single market obstacles to feed into policy development and enforcement action priority setting
Users	– Make the effort to submit feedback	+ Get overview of all problems reported by other users; influence the further development of the Single Market; get their voice heard

**Table 6.3: Additional administrative costs and savings linked to option 1**

Requirement	Per Member State			Commission	
	Initial cost	Annual running cost	Savings	Initial cost	Annual running cost
The Commission covers EU level information in Your Europe; MS cover agreed national information in single national business and citizens portals; The Commission and MS all monitor their own compliance	On average 80 person days, (= 0.3 FTE estimated at EUR17 666) <sup>113</sup> , 2 MS <sup>114</sup> would need to create citizen and business portals <sup>115</sup>	1 FTE on average, estimated at EUR 53 000 <sup>116</sup>	EUR 74 per information need that can be answered by online information instead of an individual enquiry <sup>117</sup> ; fewer resources needed for development and maintenance of many different websites and portals	p.m.	p.m. <sup>118</sup>
Every national portal has its own search facility	EUR 5000 <sup>119</sup>				p.m.
Merger of contact points (for services, products, construction products)	IT effort <sup>120</sup> , internal coordination effort <sup>121</sup>	Internal administrative coordination effort <sup>122</sup>	Savings in operational costs; less sign-posting to other services needed		
Coordinated promotion	p.m. (No change in promotional resources or efforts required)			EUR 2m	EUR 0.5m
Quality criteria with monitoring via separate user feedback tools, one for each linked portal; EC and MS all monitor their own compliance	EUR 32 000 for national user feedback tool <sup>123</sup> , 1 FTE (estimated at EUR 53 000)	5-35% of resources for overall service management <sup>124</sup> estimated at 1 FTE (EUR 53 000)			

<sup>113</sup> Based on Eurostat public sector labour cost survey figures (LCS surveys 2008 and 2012 [lc\_ncost\_r2]) covering EU average public sector labour costs and their main components (wages and salaries; direct remuneration, bonuses and allowances; employers' social security contributions and other labour costs) amounting to EUR 40 000, as well as an additional EUR 13 000 in overhead costs.

<sup>114</sup> Germany and Italy.

<sup>115</sup> Based on a concrete past case from a Member State, a very rough estimate for this cost would be EUR 1.5 m for each of the two Member States.

<sup>116</sup> These costs are not additional due to the single digital gateway. Member States will be able to reuse information already presented on their national portals and they already have resources allocated to fulfil the role of Your Europe editorial board members.

<sup>117</sup> Based on cost comparison between Your Europe (information online, EUR 0,92 per enquiry) and Your Europe Advice (individual assistance, EUR 74 per enquiry).

<sup>118</sup> No additional costs, will be integrated with current effort for the Your Europe portal.

<sup>119</sup> The 2016 Deloitte study on Development of an EU VAT web-portal quotes EUR 5-8000 as cost for an advanced search engine with filters. Many national portals already have search engines, so the lower figure (5000) was chosen.

<sup>120</sup> The IT effort is difficult to estimate. We assume that the IT cost will be balanced by the savings in operational costs and the reduced sign-posting effort to the other contact points.

<sup>121</sup> It is assumed that existing staff can cover this initial internal coordination effort.

<sup>122</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>123</sup> Based on the assumption that the development cost of such a tool is EUR 40 000, and that at least 20% of MS already have such tools.

<sup>124</sup> Based on experience with, Your Europe (5%), SOLVIT (15%) and Your Europe Advice (35%). Will depend very much on how the service is organised.

Requirement	Per Member State			Commission	
	Initial cost	Annual running cost	Savings	Initial cost	Annual running cost
Voluntary roll-out of online procedures based on rolling work programme	50% of option 2: On average, 5 procedures <sup>125</sup> estimated at EUR 2.85 m per MS <sup>126</sup>	p.m.	For 9 of the 10 business procedures, the cost savings per MS are assumed to be 50% of option 2, i.e. EUR 2 m per MS. No figures available for the remaining 11 procedures.		Coordination costs <sup>127</sup>
Information and guidance on procedures made available in EN		Organise translation of information covered into EN <sup>128</sup>		EUR 1m <sup>129</sup>	EUR 500 000; manage funding <sup>130</sup>
Online procedures made fully accessible for foreign users	1 FTE (estimated at EUR 53 000)	p.m.			Monitoring of compliance <sup>131</sup>
National solutions for use of documents and data to be made accessible for foreign users	Cannot be quantified - depends on the situation in each country. <sup>132</sup>				
Development of user feedback tool on single market obstacles				EUR 150 000 <sup>133</sup>	1 IT developer (EUR 120 000)
Collection of data, analysis and publication of results		Organise collection of data regarding queries submitted to assistance services at national level <sup>134</sup>			1 FTE (estimated at 138 000)

<sup>125</sup> This figure is based on the assumption that in a voluntary scenario, Member States will digitalise fewer procedures than under option 2. The assumption is that they would digitalise about 50% less than under option 2. For the count of procedures not fully online or where information was not available – see Annex 4, table 4.5. It might be slightly overestimated. The same assumption is made with regard to Member State savings and costs for users.

<sup>126</sup> The cost of getting a single procedure online is estimated at EUR 600 000, which is at the higher end of the different estimates provided by the Member States. The overall cost estimate is the most likely to represent an overestimation.

<sup>127</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>128</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>129</sup> For translation of national information into English, MS can use a common translation fund to be created. Based on overall expected volume of 500 pages per Member State, and a translation cost of EUR 65 per page (rate quoted in Commission framework contracts).

<sup>130</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>131</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>132</sup> But as the solution would already exist for national users, extending it to cross-border users is expected not to cause major additional costs under this solution.

<sup>133</sup> Internal Commission estimate.

<sup>134</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<i>Requirement</i>	<i>Per Member State</i>			<i>Commission</i>	
	<i>Initial cost</i>	<i>Annual running cost</i>	<i>Savings</i>	<i>Initial cost</i>	<i>Annual running cost</i>
Hosting and maintenance costs for IT tools					Hosting: EUR 25 000135
Management of the single digital gateway <sup>136</sup>		2 FTE (estimated at EUR106 000)			2 FTE (estimated at EUR 276 000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 010 666<sup>137</sup></b>	<b>212 000</b>	<b>2 million<sup>138</sup></b>	<b>3 150 000</b>	<b>1 559 000</b>

<sup>135</sup>

Based on current Your Europe hosting costs for YEST and intake form (= EUR 19 000) as a proxy for search interface and assistance finder, and additional hosting costs for feedback.

<sup>136</sup>

This includes, inter alia, inserting links in common repository, administrative coordination effort and being part of the SDG governance structure.

<sup>137</sup>

The two MS without portals would need to add 1.5 m to this figure.

<sup>138</sup>

These savings are purely indicative and based on a rough estimate of potential savings for 9 of the 20 procedures. However, national administrations will also incur savings from putting information online and merging the three national business contact points. But as it was impossible to calculate these savings, they were not included.

### 6.1.11. User benefits

Option 1 provides considerable benefits for users as far as the completeness of EU and national information is concerned. However, as there would be no common search facility covering all the websites that make up the gateway, a user would either need to search for information on every national portal individually, or access national portals via Your Europe. Furthermore, the search engine on national portals would only be in the national language making a search potentially very difficult for foreign users. National user feedback tools would also only be in the national language, which would make it more difficult for foreign users to submit feedback, and for the Commission to feed it into a global gateway quality monitoring system. The merger of the three national business contact point networks would make a search somewhat easier on a national level.

The user benefits from the voluntary roll-out of online procedures are impossible to calculate, as Member States could decide to be very ambitious, or do nothing at all. For the cost and benefit calculation for Member States, the assumption has been that under the voluntary scenario, Member States will on average do less than under an obligatory scenario. This would reduce the user benefits accordingly. ‘National solutions for use of documents and data to be made accessible for foreign users’ would achieve non-discriminatory access of foreign users, but would not reduce their additional burden in terms of translation and certification of documents.

The table below shows the user benefits that could be calculated. These do not cover the entire solutions foreseen, and only give an "idea" of potential user benefits. The real user benefits could be much higher.

**Table 6.4: User benefits that can be calculated**

<b>Solution foreseen under this option</b>	<b>User benefits under this option</b>
Information: every national portal has its own search facility, merger of 3 contact points, completeness and quality of online information	Citizens would save 50% of the 1.5 million hours they currently spend looking up online six essential topics about their rights and obligations in order to live, study or retire in another Member State. <sup>139</sup> For the nine topics that businesses typically research when expanding their activities across borders, they would save between EUR 3.5 and 46 billion annually. <sup>140</sup>
Procedures: voluntary roll-out of online procedures	It is impossible to calculate this with any degree of certainty under a voluntary scenario, but the general Commission experience in this case is that Member States will do less than under a mandatory scenario. The assumption made for this benefit calculation is that Member States will do half of what the mandatory option 2 element foresees, resulting in half of the user benefits of option 2. For nine procedures, the potential cost savings for all EU business users would thus be in the magnitude of EUR 3.5 billion. <sup>141</sup> The 11 other procedures were not assessed.
Total user benefits	Purely indicative, and just giving an idea of potential benefits: For citizens: 770 000 hours saved For businesses: EUR 7 – 49.5 billion saved

<sup>139</sup> Based on Commission own research. For the methodology, see annex 19. For citizens, the hours cannot be converted into a monetary estimate as they do not relate to an actual expenditure but rather to citizens' spare time lost, as well as hassle costs.

<sup>140</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest& Young, 2017. See annex 19 for the methodology.

<sup>141</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017. Compare this also with the corresponding user benefit table under option 2.

#### *6.1.12. Time needed for implementation*

The time needed for implementing this option is calculated as two years. If the regulation were to enter into force at the end of 2018, the implementation would last to the end of 2020. This would enable Member States to voluntarily roll out as many online procedures as possible, merge the contact points for services, products and construction products. The two Member States that do not have portals would need to put them in place within this timeframe. The Commission would need to adopt a number of implementing acts, develop the repository of links, a data collection tool and the reporting tool on the functioning of the Single Market.

#### *6.1.13. Ease of implementation*

This option would be relatively easy to implement and would potentially cause difficulties for only two Member States that do not yet have citizen portals. The voluntary nature of the roll-out of online procedures would leave full flexibility and decision-making power with Member States.

The merger of the contact points is a REFIT Platform business stakeholder proposal, and Member States were advised to consider the integration of online information on goods with that of the Points of Single Contact at an operational level. One Member State has found this problematic as it would interfere with the administrative organisation of services. More generally, this would require internal coordination work and some IT development.

Member States would need to provide user feedback tools and search facilities on their portals. This is relatively easy to implement and most Member States have this already.

Member States would need to allocate human resources for quality monitoring and for making online procedures fully accessible to foreign users. However, as pointed out in section 6.1.6., the latter only requires limited additional work.

The Commission would provide a translation budget for translating national content into English, which should ease implementation.

### **1.19.6.2. Main impacts of option 2**

#### *6.2.1. Main impact of information coverage through an EU coordinated approach*

Option 2 includes a legally binding obligation on Member States to provide all information citizens and businesses need to operate within the Single Market online, as does option 1. The impacts of this element of the option are analysed in section 6.1.1.

This option does not require MS to establish single portals and leaves them free to organise content as they see fit, allowing flexibility to adapt the governance to the specific administrative organisation of each country.

#### *6.2.2. Main impact of minimum quality criteria for the included services*

Like option 1, option 2 requires an agreement on quality criteria (cf. impact section 6.1.3). The main difference is in the monitoring of compliance that will be done jointly by the EC and MS. In that respect, a common user feedback tool will have to be put in place to provide input for monitoring compliance with the quality criteria, information coverage and user friendliness of all services provided through the single digital gateway. Such a tool can be developed within the existing Your Europe content management system at an estimated cost of EUR 40 000.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Estimate by the Your Europe team.

### 6.2.3. Main impact of the obligation to have core procedures online

The 2016 e-government benchmark study reported that 25% of the procedures required for foreign entrepreneurs to start their business in another country are completely off-line. In contrast, entrepreneurs starting a business in their own country face such issues in only 2% of the cases.<sup>143</sup> Solving this problem as proposed in this option, would therefore have a very significant impact on the internal market business environment for start-ups.

This option will require Member States to offer the assumed 20 most frequently used procedures for businesses and citizens fully online. Already today on average 55% of the procedures to be included in the digitalisation effort under this option are already fully online while another 26% are partly online. The situation varies significantly between the different Member States (see section 2.2.3) and the remaining gaps would need to be closed by a deadline to be agreed. This work can be fully integrated in the e-government and ICT actions already envisaged by Member States and funded through the ESIF (see Table 6.5).

It is difficult to give a meaningful figure for replacing an existing off-line procedure by an on-line version without considering the very specific context of each Member State. Where generic IT platforms have been developed, the marginal cost of digitalising a new procedure will be relatively low. Ireland has outsourced the provision of the IT platform for on-line licensing procedures to a private company which now offers the platform to all municipalities for a per transaction fee. Cyprus and Denmark have also developed such platforms.

The costs of moving procedures online vary widely depending on the complexity of the procedure, the availability of existing procedure infrastructure, whether we are talking about both front end (user interface) or both front end and back office (subsequent processing of the data by the administrations involved), and the possibility to use ready-made building blocks. To be on the safe side, the estimated cost of making one procedure available online (€600 000) is a very conservative high-end estimate, based on a complex procedure (tax returns), assuming no procedure infrastructure, automating both the front end and the back office, and assuming no savings from ready-made components.<sup>144</sup> This means that the cost figures overestimate the direct costs implied by the proposed single digital gateway, which will only require the digitalisation of the front end, not the much more complex back office.

**Table 6.5: Examples of generic IT solutions to digitalise multiple procedures**

	<b>Total development cost</b>	<b>Number of procedures</b>
<b>Ireland</b>	None for the government, private business model/payment per transaction	97 licence procedures across 40 authorities
<b>Cyprus<sup>145</sup></b>	EUR 213 000 + EUR 7000 per procedure	93 procedures for the Points of Single Contact (with an additional 150 procedures planned)
<b>Denmark</b>	EUR 226 680 + yearly maintenance cost EUR 43 046 for a 'form-engine' service	Potentially unlimited, 300 in 2016

*Source: European Commission, stakeholder consultation on the single digital gateway*

The case examples provided by the Member States as part of the stakeholder consultation, all demonstrate that whatever IT approach is chosen, the costs of moving procedures on-line are greatly outweighed by the savings generated by digitalisation, especially if this is done in a coordinated way across the different parts of the administration.

<sup>143</sup> E-government Benchmark Background Report 2015, <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/eu-egovernment-report-2015-shows-online-public-services-europe-are-smart-could-be-smarter>

<sup>144</sup> The reference procedure cost is the upper limit estimate for a national level procedure with at least 100 000 users from the study "Business Case Berichtenbox voor Bedrijven. Definitief eindrapport, AgentschapNL / Ministerie van Economische Zaken, 2014."

<sup>145</sup> Based on figures provided by the Cyprus PSC.

Some savings can be made in costs associated with the digitalisation of procedures if public authorities use the tools at their disposal for increasing interoperability such as the European Interoperability Framework<sup>146</sup>.

Many Member States have made e-government a priority of their operational programmes for ESIF, which could provide the right financial framework to implement the roll-out of online procedures.

**Table 6.6: Summary of costs and savings for national digitalisation projects**

		Costs	Savings
<b>UK</b>	Building Gov.uk <sup>147</sup>	EUR 23m	EUR 610m
<b>UK</b>	Digitalising of the procedure for petitioning the Parliament <sup>148</sup>	EUR 120 000 (development) + EUR 45 000 (annual management)	EUR 3m per year
<b>Croatia</b>	Getting procedures online as part of the Point of Single Contact <sup>149</sup>	EUR 26 500 per procedure	70% of administrative costs
<b>Germany</b>	Digitalising and simplifying 60 frequently used procedures <sup>150</sup>	EUR 416m of initial IT development assuming no applications can be reused	34.8% of the total cost for the users 32.7% of the total cost for the administration
<b>Netherlands</b>	Digitalising business procedures with a volume of at least 100 000 transactions	EUR 600 000 per tax procedure EUR 400 000 per non-tax procedure EUR 16 000 per local procedure	EUR 79.4m per year for government in efficiency savings EUR 17.9m per year for business in administrative costs
<b>Belgium</b>	Aligning 300 procedures related to the business life cycle with the one-stop-shop requirements in the Services Directive	EUR 4 350 per procedure, without taking into account possible synergies or re-use of applications	Not quantified

Source: European Commission, stakeholder consultation on the single digital gateway

**Table 6.7: comparison of channel costs per transaction**

Channel	Cost per transaction – figures <sup>151</sup>	Cost per transaction (original figures in British pounds) <sup>152</sup>	Cost per transaction (original figures in Norwegian kr) <sup>153</sup>	Cost per transaction (original figures in British pounds) <sup>154</sup>
Counter service	€ 14 (100%)	€ 9.83 (100%)	€ 8.74 (100%)	€ 12.13 (87%)
Letter (physical)	€ 11.70 (83.57%)			€ 13.94 (100%)
Email	€ 11 (78.57%)			
Telephone	€ 7.80 (55.71%)	€ 3.26 (33%)	€ 4.37 (50%)	€ 3.91 (28%)
e-services / self services	€ 4.20 (30%)	€ 0.17 per online visit (2%)	€ 0.33 per online visit (4%)	€ 0.09 per online visit (1%)

<sup>146</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/isa/ready-to-use-solutions/cpsv-ap\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/isa/ready-to-use-solutions/cpsv-ap_en.htm)

<sup>147</sup> UK Digital Efficiency Report, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report>

<sup>148</sup> Figures provided by the UK in the public consultation on the single digital gateway.

<sup>149</sup> Figures provided by the Croatian PSC.

<sup>150</sup> E-Government in Deutschland: vom Abstieg zum Aufstieg", Fraunhofer, commissioned by Nationaler Normenkontrollrat, November 2015.

<sup>151</sup> Digitaliseringsstyrelsen, Danish Agency for digitisation, 2012

<sup>152</sup> Potential for Channel Shift in Local government, Socitm, 2012, as quoted in UK Digital Efficiency Report, 2013

<sup>153</sup> Norwegian Government Digitizing Public Sector Services, 2012, as quoted in UK Digital Efficiency Report

<sup>154</sup> Customer Contact Profiling Report – ESD Toolkit Aston Campbell associates, 2008, as quoted in UK Digital Efficiency Report



**Table 6.6: ESIF spending (EUR) on e-government and ICT development<sup>155</sup>**

Country	Allocation	Country	Allocation
Bulgaria	118 million	Lithuania	244 million
Czech Republic	330 million	Hungary	601 million
Estonia	204 million	Malta	5 million*
Greece	173 million	Poland	153 million
Spain	542 million*	Portugal	278 million
France	66 million*	Romania	188 million
Croatia	191 million	Slovenia	62 million
Italy	135 million	Slovakia	352 million*
Cyprus	50 million*	Sweden	5 million*
Latvia	173 million		

Source: Summary of Operational Programmes supporting institutional capacity building 2014-2020

#### 6.2.4. Main impact of making information available in another EU language

Option 2, like option 1 would require translation of the agreed content within the remit of the single digital gateway into at least one other language (most usefully in English). For the impact of these elements cf. section 6.1.5.

#### 6.2.5. Main impact of making online procedures accessible to foreign users

In option 2, like in option 1, all national procedures that are already available online would need to be fully cross-border transactional. For the impact of this element, see section 6.1.6.

Option 2 also includes the development of a common user interface for cross border use of documents and data. A main bottleneck for cross-border transactionality of online procedures is indeed the lack of acceptance of electronic supporting evidence (documents or data submitted as proof) in cross-border situations. Authenticity of such evidence and language aspects can be problematic. While at national level the once-only principle has already reduced the need for continuous resubmission of the same documents or data, such solutions exist today only at a very small scale at EU level (for instance for the European Professional Card, where a solution has been implemented through IMI). Other solutions are being tested as part of an ongoing pilot project.<sup>156</sup> This option would require the development of a common interface enabling citizens and businesses to manage access to evidence (documents or data) in cross border situations. It would also facilitate the evolution towards fully transactional cross-border procedures.

A possible technical solution for such a tool could build on IMI, in particular the existing repository for the European Professional Card. The estimated development costs for a generic IT tool based on IMI would be between EUR 0.5 and 1 million.<sup>157</sup> Member States would need to ensure interconnection with existing databases or in their absence foresee manual uploading of e-documents or data by the relevant authorities. However, other technical solutions are also possible, taking account of the experience with the ongoing once-only pilot project.<sup>158</sup> In the absence of a preferred technical solution today, it is not possible to give a reliable cost figure. Any such technical solution would need to be implemented through a secondary act with a separate impact assessment.

<sup>155</sup> The figures are allocations to those thematic objectives of ESIF funds that mention e-government or ICT development. In the absence of other information, the amounts marked with an asterisk are for e-government solutions only. Source: Summary of Operational Programmes supporting institutional capacity building 2014-2020, European Commission, September 2016, and Commission data.

<sup>156</sup> For further information see ‘The Once-Only Principle Project’ (TOOP) is co-funded under Horizon 2020 and gathers 50 partners from 22 Member States with a view to explore and demonstrate the ‘once-only’ principle. [https://www.rlp-forschung.de/public/facilities/2/research\\_projects/21340](https://www.rlp-forschung.de/public/facilities/2/research_projects/21340)

<sup>157</sup> Cost estimate by DG GROW.

<sup>158</sup> To develop and test reusable IT components that can help to implement a technical solution, see Annex 11.

### 6.2.6. *Main impacts of common assistance services finder*

Barring full integration of contact points (as in option 1), a requirement to at least introduce a common front office for services catering for the same target audience, would go a long way in reducing confusion among the users about where to go with which question. This can be done through a common assistance services finder that automatically guides the users to the right service. Costs for developing such a tool are around EUR 100 000<sup>159</sup> and there are important savings for the administration due to joined use of resources and reduced need for signposting users individually to the right service.

### 6.2.7. *Main impacts of coordinated promotion*

Coordinated promotion is part of both options 1 and 2. For a detailed analysis of impacts of this element, see section 6.1.8.

### 6.2.8. *Main impacts of a common user search facility*

The cost estimates for the development of a search-based tool for linking to and re-using information on the national portals is estimated at EUR 500 000 for a more sophisticated solution, including the common assistance service finder.<sup>160</sup> As there is an alternative where the costs of the integrated search engine would accrue per search, around EUR 350 000<sup>161</sup> in yearly licencing fees would need to be foreseen.

The links to national webpages will need to be included in a common repository to allow the search facility to use the closed set of approved EU and national webpages that are part of the single digital gateway. Such a repository can be created within IMI by using the existing generic building blocks at an estimated cost of EUR 75 000.

### 6.2.9. *Main impact of user feedback and MS reporting*

This element is common to all options. For a description of its impact see section 6.1.9.

**Table 6.7: Overview of costs and benefits for option 2**

<i>Costs</i>		<i>Savings/benefits</i>
<b>Information coverage</b>		
Same as for option 1		
<b>Minimum quality criteria with joint monitoring</b>		
Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Initial effort to establish a quality monitoring system and improve existing services where needed</li> <li>- Resources to monitor, encourage and facilitate quality compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Good quality services generate fewer complaints and lower management costs</li> <li>+ A common EU wide quality framework will make it easier to enforce quality criteria</li> </ul>
Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources to manage the quality management system at EU level</li> <li>- Organise training for the different networks of contact points and assistance services , both tasks estimated at 1 FTE</li> <li>- Develop and maintain common user feedback tool, estimated at EUR 40 000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ More enquiries can be met by online information, fewer enquiries to be addressed to Your Europe Advice</li> </ul>

<sup>159</sup> As stated in the draft Feasibility Study on a European Mobility Portal on Social Security. The assistance services finder can be integrated in the common user search interface.

<sup>160</sup> Estimate.

<sup>161</sup> This is a very rough estimate and would in any case be subject to contractual negotiation.

Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Much easier to find and understand national rules</li> <li>+ Much better experience with the services, less time wasted due to late responses, uncertainty and unanswered queries</li> <li>+ Trust in the single digital gateway since it provides a quality guarantee</li> </ul>
<b>Obligatory digitalisation of 10+10 procedures made accessible to cross-border users</b>		
Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digitalising remaining off-line procedures, costs depend on state of digitalisation per Member State (for an estimate, see Table 7.4)</li> <li>- Organising and implementing a process aimed at making existing online procedures fully cross border transactional , requiring 1 FTE for a year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Major administrative savings in handling procedures</li> <li>+ Improved compliance with national rules</li> </ul>
Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support national efforts through European Interoperability Framework, the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ More structured expenditure under existing funds, in support of the Single Market</li> </ul>
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Major improvement in handling compliance with national rules, especially in cross-border situations leading to considerable savings of time, effort and money.</li> </ul>
<b>IT tool for cross-border use of evidence</b>		
Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Linking national base registers with the common interface</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Reduction of administrative burden due to no further need to check validity and authenticity of documents</li> </ul>
Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development costs between EUR 500 000 and EUR 1 million of common interface for managing cross-border exchange of evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Opportunity to simplify current procedures in IMI</li> </ul>
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Great reduction of administrative burden thanks to re-use of existing national data/documents in cross border situations</li> <li>+ No need for translations, validation, authentication of documents.</li> <li>+ Full online management of evidence requirements for procedures□</li> </ul>
<b>Making information available in English</b>		
Same as for option 1		
<b>Making online procedures accessible to foreign users</b>		
Same as for option 1		
<b>Common assistance services finder</b>		
Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide accurate descriptions of assistance services at national level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Less need for further individual signposting due to users approaching the wrong service</li> <li>+ Easier to ensure service quality</li> </ul>
Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop common assistance finder as part of the functionality of the common search tool</li> </ul>	
Users		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Much easier to find the right service</li> <li>+ Improved service quality</li> </ul>

<b>Coordinated promotion</b>		
Same as for option 1		
<b>User Search facility</b>		
Member States	- Introduce links to relevant information into common repository	+ Reuse of information already provided on national webpages
Commission	- Develop and maintain user interface including search facility, common assistance finder and a common repository for web links at an estimated EUR 575 000 depending on functionality.	
Users		+ Less time and effort to find relevant information
<b>User feedback mechanisms and coordinated reporting</b>		
Same as for option 1		

**Table 6.8: Additional administrative costs and savings linked to option 2**

Requirement	Per Member State			Commission	
	Initial cost	Annual running cost	Savings per MS	Initial cost	Annual running cost
EC covers EU level information in Your Europe; MS cover agreed national information; Joint monitoring of compliance	On average 80 person days, (= 0.3 FTE estimated at EUR 17 666) <sup>162</sup>	1 FTE on average for managing and updating, estimated at EUR 53 000 <sup>163</sup>	EUR 74 per information need that can be answered by online information instead of an individual enquiry <sup>164</sup>	p.m.	p.m. <sup>165</sup>
Common search facility and common assistance finder	For assistance finder: provide accurate descriptions of assistance services where these do not yet exist.. For common search facility: introduce links to relevant information into common repository <sup>166</sup> .	As under initial cost, but only for updates. <sup>167</sup>		EUR 500 000 in IT development costs <sup>168</sup>	EUR 350 000 in licencing fees <sup>169</sup> 1 FTE for IT development costs (EUR 120 000)
+ common repository of links				EUR 75 000 <sup>170</sup>	p.m.
Coordinated promotion		p.m. (No change in promotional resources or efforts required)		EUR 2m	EUR 0.5m

<sup>162</sup> Based on Eurostat public sector labour cost survey figures (LCS surveys 2008 and 2012 [lc\_ncost\_r2]) covering EU average public sector labour costs and their main components (wages and salaries; direct remuneration, bonuses and allowances; employers' social security contributions and other labour costs) amounting to EUR 40 000, as well as an additional EUR 13 000 in overhead costs.

<sup>163</sup> These costs are not additional due to the single digital gateway. Member States will be able to reuse information already presented on their national portals and they already have resources allocated to fulfil the role of Your Europe editorial board members.

<sup>164</sup> Based on cost comparison between Your Europe (information online, EUR 0.92 per enquiry) and Your Europe Advice (individual assistance, EUR 74 per enquiry).

<sup>165</sup> No additional costs, will be integrated with current effort for the Your Europe portal.

<sup>166</sup> It is assumed that the 1 FTE foreseen for quality monitoring can also cover this task.

<sup>167</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>168</sup> This includes the common assistance finder, the cost of which is estimated at EUR 100 000 (as stated in the draft Feasibility Study on a European Mobility Portal on Social Security). Needs will i.a. depend on quality of information provided by the Member States.

<sup>169</sup> This is a very rough estimate of necessary licencing fees, which are per search, based on the traffic to the Your Europe portal, multiplied by 2 for the first year of operation. For the following years, a 50% increase in traffic is expected and reflected in the figure. The amount will be subject to contractual negotiation, so is very difficult to foresee at this stage.

<sup>170</sup> Estimate by relevant Commission services, based on generic repository building block in IMI.

Quality criteria with monitoring via common user feedback tool used for all linked portals; Joint monitoring of compliance	1 FTE (estimated at EUR 53 000)	5-35% of resources for overall service management <sup>171</sup> estimated at 1 FTE (EUR 53 000)		EUR 40 000 for common user feedback tool <sup>172</sup>	1 FTE (estimated at EUR 138 000)
10+10 national procedures fully online	On average, 9.6 procedures <sup>173</sup> estimated at EUR 5.7 m per MS <sup>174</sup>	p.m.	For 9 of the 10 business procedures, the cost savings per MS would be EUR 4 m <sup>175</sup> . No figures available for the remaining 11 procedures	n/a	n/a
Information and guidance on procedures made available in EN		Organise translation of updates <sup>176</sup>		EUR 1m <sup>177</sup>	EUR 500 000, manage funding <sup>178</sup>
Online procedures made fully accessible for foreign users	1 FTE (estimated at EUR 53 000)	p.m.			Monitoring compliance <sup>179</sup>
Common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data	<sup>180</sup>			EUR 0.5-1 m <sup>181</sup>	0.5 FTE (estimated at EUR 69 000)
Development of user feedback tool on single market obstacles				EUR 150 000 <sup>182</sup>	1 IT developer (EUR 120 000)
Collection of data, analysis and publication of results		Organise collection of data regarding queries submitted to assistance services <sup>183</sup>			1 FTE (estimated at EUR 138 000)

<sup>171</sup>

<sup>172</sup> Based on experience with, Your Europe (5%), SOLVIT (15%) and Your Europe Advice (35%). Will depend very much on how the service is organised.  
Based on internal Commission estimate.

<sup>173</sup> This figure is based on the count of procedures out of 20 not fully online or where information was not available – see Annex 4, table 4.5. It might be slightly overestimated. The total number of procedures not fully online, for all Member States (= 268), was divided by 28.

<sup>174</sup> The cost of getting a single procedure online is estimated at EUR 600 000, which is at the higher end of the different estimates provided by the Member States. The overall cost estimate is the most likely to represent an overestimation.

<sup>175</sup> See annex 19 for the methodology. There are large differences across Member States. The figure of EUR 4m may be an overestimate.

<sup>176</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>177</sup> For translation of national information into English, MS can use a common translation fund to be created. Based on overall expected volume of 500 pages per Member State, and a translation cost of EUR 65 per page (rate quoted in Commission framework contracts).

<sup>178</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>179</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>180</sup> The costs are very difficult to quantify, and will be part of a separate impact assessment that will be conducted for this solution (which would require an implementing act). Already 20 Member States are participating in a Commission-financed pilot which is supposed to work towards implementing this solution.

<sup>181</sup> Estimate by relevant Commission services. Basic option of user interface to manage access to documents and data provided directly from issuing authorities, to be used in procedures in other Member States.

<sup>182</sup> Internal Commission estimate.

<sup>183</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

Hosting and maintenance costs for IT tools					Hosting: EUR 25 000 <sup>184</sup>
Management of the single digital gateway <sup>185</sup>		2 FTE (estimated at EUR 106 000)			2 FTE (estimated at 276 000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 823 366</b>	<b>212 000</b>	<b>4 000 000<sup>186</sup></b>	<b>4 265 000 - 4 765 000</b>	<b>2 236 000</b>

<sup>184</sup>

Based on current Your Europe hosting costs for YEST (= EUR 19 000) as a proxy for search interface and assistance finder and intake form, and additional hosting costs for feedback.

<sup>185</sup>

This includes, inter alia, inserting links in common repository, administrative coordination effort and being part of the SDG governance structure.

<sup>186</sup>

These savings are purely indicative and based on a rough estimate of potential savings for 9 of the 20 procedures. However, national administrations will also incur savings from putting information online. But as it was impossible to calculate these savings, they were not included.

### 6.2.10. User benefits

The user benefits would be considerable under this option as far as completeness of information and its findability is concerned. The common search facility could provide information covering all Member States through one search request, saving the user a lot of time otherwise spent on various national portals. Search terms could be inserted in all EU languages, which would greatly increase findability and general user-friendliness.

The user benefits from the obligatory digitalisation of 20 core national procedures would also be significant, saving the user a lot of cost, time and hassle that he would otherwise have to incur, e.g. when required to come to an office or to send documents by post. A study on business procedures carried out to underpin this impact assessment concluded that for 9 procedures, the cost savings for all EU businesses - if e-procedures were introduced where missing - would be in the order of magnitude of EUR 7 billion. The common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data is expected to decrease the burden of translation and certification of documents, but this is at this stage difficult to quantify as subject to the outcome of a pilot and a future implementing act with its own impact assessment.

A common user feedback tool in all EU languages would facilitate especially the foreign user's quality monitoring and would thereby possibly lead to higher quality services also accommodating his needs.

The table below shows the user benefits that could be calculated. These do not cover the entire solutions foreseen, and only give an "idea" of potential user benefits. The real user benefits would be much higher.

**Table 6.9: User benefits that can be calculated**

<b>Solution foreseen under this option</b>	<b>User benefits under this option</b>
Information: common search facility, common assistance service finder, completeness and quality of online information	Citizens would save 60% of the 1.5 million hours they currently spend looking up online six essential topics about their rights and obligations in order to live, study or retire in another Member State. <sup>187</sup>  For the nine topics that businesses typically research when expanding their activities across borders, they would save between EUR 4 and 48 billion annually. <sup>188</sup>
Procedures: 10+10 national procedures fully online	For nine procedures, the potential cost savings from digital document submission for all EU business users would be in the magnitude of EUR 7 billion (made up of: 6.5 billion for domestic users, and 48.1 million for cross-border users in current costs from "in person" or "by post" carrying out of the procedures). <sup>189</sup>  The 11 remaining procedures were not assessed:
Common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data	For nine procedures, the cost savings for cross-border business users would be EUR 126 million, split up into: EUR 11 m for collecting documents from authorities, 55 m in document certification costs, 60 m in translation costs. <sup>190</sup>
Total user benefits	Purely indicative, and just giving an idea of potential benefits: For citizens: 885 000 hours saved For businesses: EUR 11.1 – 55.1 billion saved

<sup>187</sup> Based on Commission own research. For the methodology, see annex 19. For citizens, the hours cannot be converted into a monetary estimate as they do not relate to an actual expenditure but rather to citizens' spare time lost, as well as hassle costs.

<sup>188</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest& Young, 2017. See annex 19 for the methodology.

<sup>189</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017.

<sup>190</sup> Idem.



### 6.2.11. *Time needed for implementation*

The time necessary for this option would be two years, i.e. until the end of 2020 if the regulation is adopted by the end of 2018.

### 6.2.12. *Ease of implementation*

This option would be relatively easy for Member States to implement as far as completeness of information and findability are concerned. Member States would need to cover the information gap, provide accurate descriptions of assistance services where these do not yet exist, and introduce links to relevant information into a common repository. The Commission would have the task of developing the common search facility and common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data, which would require implementing acts, a budget and human resources. However, practical work on the common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data has already started through a (voluntary) Commission-financed pilot in which 20 Member States are participating.<sup>191</sup> The common user feedback tool in all languages would be relatively easy to develop and to deploy on all portals.

Member States that are not very advanced with e-government may need to make a substantial effort to fully digitalise the assumed 20 national procedures. However, EU structural funds can support the implementation in those Member States that have indicated this as a priority in their operational programmes. Likewise, translation into English can be paid for through an EU budget line.

Member States would need to foresee limited human resources for quality monitoring and making online procedures fully accessible for foreign users.

## **1.20.6.3. Main impacts of option 3**

### 6.3.1. *Main impact of offering all EU and national information in a centralised database*

This option complements the obligation of providing information with a central database that facilitates the search by offering a fully harmonised presentation of information, as there is no need to combine information from a multitude of sources. Users would have easier, centralised access to comparably structured information.

For Member States synergies with information already on national portals and websites would be better lost. Even if the Commission outsources the content management for a central database to an external contractor, the latter will still need to get in touch with all relevant authorities in the Member States to gather the necessary material according to harmonised templates and then ask for validation of the edited content. This therefore demands additional resources at Member State level too.

Information on the same topics is duplicated on the national level and in this centralised database, potentially creating confusion for the users.

The Commission needs to design, build and maintain the database and its interface. The budgetary and other resource implications are considerable. A recent study<sup>192</sup> looking into the creation of a centralised portal for VAT rules and procedures produced an estimate of EUR 500 000 for gathering, editing, validating and translating (into English only) all of the necessary content<sup>193</sup>. This is complemented by annual operation cost for updating of around EUR 150 000.<sup>194</sup> On the basis of these figures, the estimated cost for a centralised database of

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<sup>191</sup> 'Once-Only' principle large-scale pilot project, <http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/desktop/en/opportunities/h2020/topics/co-creation-05-2016.html>

<sup>192</sup> "Feasibility study of the options for development, implementation and maintenance" of an EU VAT web-portal, Deloitte, 2016.

<sup>193</sup> An estimated equivalent of 30 pages per Member State, 840 pages in total.

<sup>194</sup> This is under the assumption that Member States would cooperate with the Commission for the entire process.

the size required for all topics to be covered by the single digital gateway would be around EUR 8 million to establish (content only) and EUR 2.4 million annually for keeping it up to date.<sup>195</sup>

#### *6.3.2. Main impact of minimum quality criteria for the included services*

The monitoring of compliance with harmonised quality criteria would be based on user feedback, but still will require the deployment of resources within the Commission. It is estimated that 1 FTE would be needed to monitor compliance.

#### *6.3.3. Main impact of EU wide harmonised online procedures*

The harmonisation of the assumed 20 online procedures would constitute a clear advantage for cross-border citizens and businesses, since it would provide them with a single interface, available in all EU languages. The costs for the Commission of implementing this approach, modelled on the European Professional Card and the planned e-Services Card, would be approximately EUR 44 million, for business analysis and IT development costs (based on the estimated cost of 2.2 million for the e-services card<sup>196</sup>). Costs for the Member States would be limited to their involvement in agreeing on the business requirements for each of the new EU wide procedures.

#### *6.3.4. Main impact of a tool for cross-border evidence*

Like option 2, option 3 also includes the development of a common user interface for cross border use of documents and data. In this case it would be integrated in the centralised interface. For its impacts, see section 6.1.6.

#### *6.3.5. Main impact of making information and procedures accessible for foreign users*

This option would require translation of all content into English and possibly into all EU languages, considering that the service would be centrally coordinated by the EC. This would represent a clear advantage for users, since they could access information in their own language. The translation costs for the Commission would amount to an initial cost of EUR 1 million for English only, and EUR 23 million for translation in all EU languages. Annual costs for updates would be around half these amounts.<sup>197</sup>

There would be no extra costs for making procedures accessible for foreign users, as they would be especially designed to accommodate foreign users.

#### *6.3.6. Main impacts of joint promotion*

The benefits of this option come from coordinating all promotion actions into campaigns under a common brand name. The joint promotion efforts are financed from the EU budget and thus the Member States can make savings, if they are currently promoting their services.

This option requires an annually agreed EU budget contained in the Single Market governance tools budget line. To ensure adequate coverage of all Member States and cater for all languages, the budget would need to be quite substantial. As a benchmark, the ongoing 'Open for business campaign' has an annual budget of EUR 5 million. It reaches out to all businesses but only in five countries every year. For the single digital gateway the same approach could be adopted but it would also need to include citizens. This would increase the costs to EUR 10 million per year.

If all Member States had to be targeted at the same time (as would be appropriate at the launch of the single digital gateway), a budget of more than EUR 50 million would be needed.

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<sup>195</sup> Using the same extrapolation factor as for Option 1, namely x16 corresponding to the number of chapters to be covered.

<sup>196</sup> See impact assessment for the Commission proposal on an e-card for services

<sup>197</sup> See section 6.1.5

As a saving, the current budgets for promotion of existing EU level services to be integrated in the single digital gateway could be largely reduced. The advantage of this option would be that awareness raising can be done in an even manner across the EU, also covering countries and regions where currently no awareness raising activities are undertaken.

A disadvantage of this approach is that it may not be possible to adapt the format, style and message of the promotion adequately to the very specific national needs and circumstances. In addition, there may be duplication with national efforts to promote their own national portals linked to the single digital gateway.

### 6.3.7. Main impact of user feedback and MS reporting

This element is common to all options. For a description of its impact see section 6.1.9.

**Table 6.10: Overview of costs and benefits for option 3**

<b>Creation of a common database</b>		
Member States	– Duplication of effort because content on existing national portals cannot be reused	+ Technical management of the information will be done at EU level
Commission	– Developing central content management system for all relevant EU and national information (limited if based on existing Your Europe content management system) – Managing content gathering and verification (or outsourcing to a contractor estimated at EUR 8m, with EUR 2.4m annual running costs.	+ Easier to manage and monitor than a distributed system
Users		+ Much easier navigation since all information will be available in a fully harmonised format + Much easier to compare rules in different Member States
<b>Minimum quality criteria</b>		
MS	– Only ensure quality of own assistance services	+ No need to ensure quality of information or of procedures since this will be handled at EU level
EC	– Monitor quality compliance with quality criteria	
Users		+ Major improvement in finding reliable information and online procedures that are easy to use
<b>EU wide harmonised online procedures</b>		
MS	– Work together with the EC to agree on common business requirements for all procedures	+ No need to make national procedures accessible for foreign users
EC	– Develop and manage the 20 online procedures	
Users		+ Major improvement in handling the most important procedures in a cross-border context
<b>IT tool for cross-border use of evidence</b>		
Same as for option 2		
<b>Common assistance finder</b>		
Same as for option 2		
<b>Joint promotion</b>		
Member States		+ Decrease of national promotion budgets for individual services covered
Commission	– Significant promotion budget and equally high management costs, estimated at EUR 50m for the launch and EUR 10m for subsequent years.	+ Current EU level promotion budgets for the individual services covered by the single digital gateway
Users		+ More awareness of the services package available
<b>User feedback mechanisms and coordinated reporting</b>		
Same as for option 1		

**Table 6.11: Additional administrative costs and savings linked to option 3**

Requirement	Per Member State		Commission	
	Initial cost	Annual running cost	Savings	Initial cost
EC will provide all agreed information via an external contractor; MS only need to verify; EC monitors compliance	1 FTE (= EUR 53 000 <sup>198</sup> ) to gather additional material to fit the harmonised template.	0.5 (EUR 26 500) FTE on average for supplying updates to content to contractor and validating contractor's work. <sup>199</sup>	EUR 74 per information need that can be answered by online information instead of an individual enquiry <sup>200</sup>	- Develop central content management system for all relevant EU and national information (limited if based on existing Your Europe content management system) - outsourcing content gathering and verification estimated at EUR 8 m <sup>201</sup>
Single search facility and fully harmonised presentation of information and common assistance service finder	For assistance finder: provide accurate descriptions of assistance services where these do not yet exist <sup>203</sup>			p.m.
+common repository of links				p.m.
Joint promotion			p.m.	EUR 2.8 m (annual cost for first three years minus annual Your Europe promotion budget)

<sup>198</sup> Based on Eurostat public sector labour cost survey figures (LCS surveys 2008 and 2012 [lc\_ncost\_r2]) covering EU average public sector labour costs and their main components (wages and salaries; direct remuneration, bonuses and allowances; employers' social security contributions and other labour costs) amounting to EUR 40 000, as well as an additional EUR 13 000 in overhead costs.

<sup>199</sup> According to in-house estimations by the relevant Commission services; reflects national FTE working as national liaison for Your Europe.

<sup>200</sup> Based on cost comparison between Your Europe (information online, EUR 0,92 per enquiry) and Your Europe Advice (individual assistance, EUR 74 per enquiry).

<sup>201</sup> Based on the recent "Feasibility study of the options for development, implementation and maintenance" of an EU VAT web-portal, Deloitte, 2016, which estimated that EUR 500,000 would be necessary for gathering, editing, validating and translating (into English only) an estimated equivalent of 30 pages per Member States, 840 pages in total. This would need to be multiplied by 16 to cover the corresponding number of chapters of the Single Digital Gateway.

<sup>202</sup> Based on Trade Export Help Desk, which is fully outsourced but where 1 Commission FTE follows the work of the contractor, and 1 FTE for all IT aspects of the database.

<sup>203</sup> It is considered that the 1 FTE to gather additional material to fit the harmonised template can also carry out this task.

<sup>204</sup> The cost of the common assistance finder is estimated at EUR 100 000 (as stated in the draft Feasibility Study on a European Mobility Portal on Social Security). No cost is foreseen for the single search facility, as the Commission has a corporate IT solution which could be used for this.

<sup>205</sup> Based on in-house estimations by the relevant Commission services.

Quality criteria fully harmonised, integrated in contract with monitoring via single user feedback tool; EC monitors compliance		5-35% of resources for quality management of own assistance services <sup>206</sup> estimated at 0.3 FTE (EUR 17 666)	Ensuring quality of information and of procedures will be handled at EU level (0.7 FTE = EUR 37 100)	EUR 40 000 for user feedback tool	0.7 FTE (estimated at EUR 96 600) for monitoring quality compliance of information and procedures
All 10+10 procedures will be harmonised at EU level for foreign users (such as for EPC and Services Card); EC will develop IT structure for procedures within IMI	Agree on common business requirements for all procedures <sup>207</sup> as 1 FTE (EUR 53 000) as coordinator	p.m.		EUR 44 million for business analysis and IT development costs <sup>208</sup>	10 FTE (EUR 1 380 000)
Information and information about procedures made available in all or several languages				EUR 1 m <sup>209</sup> for EN	EUR 500 000 for EN <sup>210</sup>
Integrated user interface for cross-border use of documents and data	p.m. <sup>211</sup>	p.m.		EUR 0.5 m <sup>212</sup>	0.5 FTE (estimated at EUR 69 000)
Development of user feedback tool on single market obstacles				EUR 150 000 <sup>213</sup>	1 IT developer (EUR 120 000)
Collection of data, analysis and publication of results		Organise collection of data regarding queries submitted to assistance services <sup>214</sup>			1 FTE (estimated at 138 000)
Hosting and maintenance costs for IT tools					Hosting: EUR 525 000 <sup>215</sup>

<sup>206</sup>

Based on experience with, Your Europe (5%), SOLVIT (15%) and Your Europe Advice (35%). Will depend very much on how the service is organised.

<sup>207</sup> The FTE necessary for this task is not included, as this whole work stream would be subject to an implementing act with its own impact assessment.

<sup>208</sup> Based on the estimated cost of 2.2 million for the e-services card (see the impact assessment for the Commission proposal on an e-card for services).

<sup>209</sup> For translation of national information into English, MS can use a common translation fund to be created. Based on overall expected volume of 500 pages per Member State, and a translation cost of EUR 65 per page (rate quoted in Commission framework contracts). For 3 languages this would be EUR 3; for 23 languages it would be EUR 23 million.

<sup>210</sup> EUR 1.5 million for 3 languages; EUR 11.5 million for 23 languages

<sup>211</sup> The costs for this solution would be assessed through a separate impact assessment (necessary for the implementing act).

<sup>212</sup> Estimate by relevant Commission service.

<sup>213</sup> Internal Commission estimate.

<sup>214</sup> The FTE necessary for this task are included in the "Management of the single digital gateway".

<sup>215</sup> Based on: estimate of relevant Commission services for technical maintenance, improvements and hosting costs for the 20 procedures = EUR 500 000, plus 25 000 for search interface and assistance finder, and additional hosting costs for feedback (current Your Europe hosting costs for YEST and intake form (= EUR 19 000) served as a proxy).

Management of the single digital gateway		2 FTE (estimated at 106 000)			2 FTE (estimated at 276 000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>106 000</b>	<b>150 166</b>	<b>37 000<sup>216</sup></b>	<b>103 865 000</b>	<b>8 562 600</b>

<sup>216</sup>

These savings are purely indicative and do not include the main areas for savings of this option, namely by putting information online (instead of personalised assistance) and by the EU taking over the promotion. These two areas were not included as impossible to calculate.

### 6.3.8. User benefits

The user benefits are extensive under this option as far as completeness of information is concerned. The harmonised structure of the database would ensure optimal comparability of the information across Member States, as well as very good findability through the single search facility. The information would be of high quality, as the EU could require this contractually. A single user feedback tool in all EU languages would ensure that all users could provide feedback, which the Commission would analyse to monitor compliance. Information could be offered in more than one EU language, depending on the budget available.

The option would also provide clear benefits for the cross-border user for the assumed 20 procedures to be harmonised. Most likely, foreign users would not need to pay for translations and certification of their documents (though this would be subject to an implementing act with its own impact assessment), and would benefit from e-submission of documents and data for the 20 procedures. According to a study<sup>217</sup> underpinning the impact assessment, for nine investigated business procedures, cross-border users face EUR 174 million in additional costs as compared to domestic users for the same procedures (see table below). However, these benefits would not apply to the domestic business user, making up more than 95% of the total business user population.

Apart from the 20 procedures, there would not be a requirement on Member States to make online procedures fully accessible for foreign users. Overall, for procedures the benefits for the total user population would thus be limited.

The table below shows the user benefits that could be calculated. These do not cover the entire solutions foreseen, and only give an "idea" of potential user benefits. The real user benefits could be much higher.

**Table 6.12: User benefits that can be calculated**

<b>Solution foreseen under this option</b>	<b>User benefits under this option</b>
Information: Single search facility and fully harmonised presentation of information, common assistance finder, completeness and quality of online information	Citizens would save 75% of the time they currently spend looking up online six essential topics about their rights and obligations in order to live, study or retire in another Member State. <sup>218</sup>  For the 9 topics that businesses typically research when expanding their activities across borders, they would save between EUR 4.4 and 50.4 billion annually. <sup>219</sup>
Procedures: 10+10 procedures harmonised at EU level for foreign users (such as for EPC and Services Card)	For 9 procedures, the cost savings for cross-border business users would be EUR 174 million, split up into: EUR 11 m for collecting documents from authorities, 55 m in document certification costs, 60 m in translation costs, and 48 million in non-electronic submission costs. <sup>220</sup>  The cost savings from the remaining 11 procedures remain unassessed.
Total benefits	Purely indicative, and just giving an idea of potential benefits: For citizens: 1.1 million hours saved For businesses: EUR 4.6 – 50.6 billion saved

<sup>217</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017

<sup>218</sup> Based on Commission own research. For the methodology, see annex 19. For citizens, the hours cannot be converted into a monetary estimate as they do not relate to an actual expenditure but rather to citizens' spare time lost, as well as hassle costs.

<sup>219</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest& Young, 2017. See annex 19 for the methodology.

<sup>220</sup> Idem.

### 6.3.9. *Time needed for implementation*

For this option a legal instrument would only be necessary for the part of the 10+10 procedures. The regulation (covering the 20 procedures and the integrated user interface for cross-border use of documents and data) could be adopted at the end of 2018 and implemented two years later, at the end of 2020. A number of implementing acts would also need to be adopted and implemented during this period.

All the rest could be done under an EU budget line and the Commission work programme. A four-year period is estimated to be necessary for hiring the contractor through a call for tender (one year), the development of the IT architecture, the database and harmonised content templates and content management system (one year), collecting content from Member States according to a harmonised template, final verification and translation (two years). This means that, with the exception of the 20 procedures part which would be implemented a year earlier, this option could be achieved by end 2021.

### 6.3.10. *Ease of implementation*

This option would be costly for the Commission and Member States, as it would be necessary to duplicate the information available through the central EU database on their own national portals. Member States would, in addition to their national portal content, need to provide the central contractor with information in line with harmonised templates and validate edited content. The EU budget necessary for developing the database and content would be considerable. In addition, a budget and resources would need to be foreseen every year for running and updating the database.

A promotion budget of EUR 50 million would also be required at EU level, as well as almost the same amount for the development of the harmonised procedures. Politically, it appears unfeasible to get the Member States to agree to changing the substance of their most important national procedures. Overall, this option would be difficult to implement.

#### **1.21.6.4. Social impact**

By facilitating cross-border trade in goods and services, and by facilitating citizens' ability to work and study in other Member States, the single digital gateway has the potential to enhance labour mobility and support citizens' fundamental right to free movement in the EU. Lower barriers to mobility can improve educational opportunities and social cohesion. These have second-order effects on patterns of economic development, productivity and mobility for work and living.<sup>221</sup>

#### **1.22.6.5. SME impact**

The single digital gateway would facilitate SMEs access to the Single Market by significantly reducing the transaction costs for providing services or selling goods in other Member States. Just over half (52%) of all SMEs say the administrative procedures when exporting are too complicated, with 24% saying this has been a major problem.<sup>222</sup> Better access to the Single Market will lead to greater economies of scale and scope and thus enhanced firm-level competitiveness and cost efficiencies.

The lower the entry barrier to doing business in another Member State is, the easier it is for firms to provide their goods and services in other countries. This should increase the volume of trade and competition in the Single Market. According to a study<sup>223</sup>, firms that are active

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<sup>221</sup> EU-wide digital once-only principle for citizens and businesses: Policy options and their impacts, SMART 2015/0062, GNK Consult et al. 2016.

<sup>222</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 421: Internationalisation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises  
[https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2090\\_421\\_ENG](https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S2090_421_ENG)

<sup>223</sup> "Final Report on the Opportunities for the Internationalisation of European SMEs", European Commission 2011.



across borders introduce innovative products, services and processes more often than firms that are not active internationally.

Businesses from third countries looking for online information on EU Member States' rules and requirements will benefit from increased online provision of information to the same degree as EU businesses when they are established in the EU. This may contribute to an increase in exports (of products compliant with EU and national rules) to the EU market as well as more investment.

## **7. COMPARING THE OPTIONS**

### **1.23.7.1. Effectiveness, efficiency and coherence**

All elements of each of the three option packages are assessed against the following criteria:

#### **For effectiveness:**

- Usefulness: is this what our users (including SMEs and start-ups) really need? Can we make sure we will still be aligned with the user needs in ten years from now?
- Digitalisation: are we making the best use of digital possibilities today and in the near future?
- Enforceability: can we monitor results and do we have instruments to make sure it will work? How will it prevent mistakes we made in the past?
- Feasibility: can it be implemented across the board also taking account of different levels in IT development, centralised and decentralised administrative structures? Is there sufficient support among the Member States?

#### **For efficiency:**

- Cost effectiveness: is this the most efficient way of solving the problem?
- Synergies and non-duplication: does it take full account of existing solutions and actively prevent further duplication?
- Proportionality: does it ensure that we do not spend too much effort on less important elements?

#### **For coherence:**

- Alignment: is the option in line with the policy objectives of the Single Market and other initiatives?

The scores against these criteria are 1 for low, 2 for medium and 3 for high. The overall scores are expressed as a percentage of the maximum score for the relevant criterion.

For a more detailed explanation of costs and benefits, timing and ease of implementation of option 1, please refer to sections 6.1.10-6.1.12, for option 2: 6.2.10-6.2.12, and for option 3: 6.3.8.-6.3.10.

### 7.1.1. Effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of option 1

**Table 7.1: Option 1 - Nationally centralised business and citizen's portals**

Specific objectives = What we want to achieve	1. Nationally centralised business and citizen's portals	Effectiveness				Efficiency			Coherence
		Usefulness	Digitalisation	Enforceability	Feasibility	Cost-effectiveness	Synergies	Proportionality	Coherence
Ensure full coverage of information citizens and businesses need	EC covers EU level information in Your Europe MS cover agreed national information in single national business and citizens portals EC and MS all monitor their own compliance	3	3	2	1	2	3	2	3
Improve awareness of services available	Coordinated promotion	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3
Eliminate or overcome duplication an complexity, improve findability	Merger of contact points (for services, products, construction products)	3	3	2	1	3	3	1	3
	Every national portal has its own search facility	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Improve quality across the board for all information and assistance services, and for procedures	Agreed quality criteria with monitoring via separate user feedback tools (one for each portal) EC and MS all monitor their own compliance	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Ensure that EU citizens and businesses can complete the most important part of their interactions with the administration online	Voluntary roll-out of online procedures based on rolling work programme MS can decide on priorities, no legal requirements	1	2	1	3	1	2	2	2
Make all information and procedures fully accessible for non-national citizens and businesses	Information and procedures should be made available in EN	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
	Online procedures should be made fully accessible for foreign users	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3
	National solutions for use of documents and data to be made accessible for foreign users	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	2
Get a more systematic overview of obstacles encountered by cross-border users	Link to common user feedback tool on EU and all national single digital gateways	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
<b>Subtotals*</b>		<b>48%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>60%</b>				<b>71%</b>			<b>90%</b>
<b>ASSESSMENT TOTAL</b>		<b>74%</b>							

\* As a percentage of the maximum score

Option 1 scores high on coherence (90%) and quite good on efficiency (71%), but not good enough on effectiveness (60%). This is mostly due to the significant drawbacks of leaving the roll-out of online procedures voluntary for the Member States and of the lack of a common solution for the problem of cross-border use of documents for procedures. Furthermore, the lack of findability will not be sufficiently addressed since the search facilities on the national business portals will in principle not cater for search in all EU languages. Finally, the lack of a common monitoring tool for quality will make enforcement of the quality criteria more cumbersome. For these reasons, it is unlikely that the needs of the users identified would be met with this option.

### 7.1.2. Effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of option 2

Option 2 scores well for all three criteria, especially coherence (100%) and efficiency (88%). It has no low scores for any of the aspects assessed. It provides sufficient guarantees of enforceability thanks to the use of a common user feedback tool for coverage and quality monitoring. This option will rely more than the other two on very close cooperation between the Commission and the Member States.

**Table 7.2: Option 2 - EU-coordinated approach**

Specific objectives = What we want to achieve	2. EU coordinated approach	Effectiveness				Efficiency			Coherence
		Usefulness	Digitalisation	Enforceability	Feasibility	Cost-effectiveness	Synergies and non-duplication	Proportionality	Coherence
Ensure full coverage of information citizens and businesses need	EC covers EU level information in Your Europe MS cover agreed national information in different websites and portals Joint monitoring of compliance	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
Improve awareness of services available	Coordinated promotion	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3
Eliminate or overcome duplication an complexity, improve findability	Common assistance service finder	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
	Common search facility	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3
Improve quality across the board for all information and assistance services, and for procedures	Agreed quality criteria with monitoring via common user feedback tool used for all linked portals Joint monitoring of compliance	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Ensure that EU citizens and businesses can complete the most important part of their interactions with the administration online	Obligatory to offer 10+10 national procedures fully online Agreed timetable for implementation for each MS	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Make all information and procedures fully accessible for non-national citizens and businesses	Information and procedures should be made available in EN	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
	Online procedures should be made fully accessible for foreign users	2	3	2	3	3	3	2	3
	Common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data to be designed later	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3
Get a more systematic overview of obstacles encountered by cross-border users	Link to common user feedback tool on EU and all national websites and portals	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
<b>Subtotals*</b>		<b>75%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>76%</b>				<b>88%</b>			<b>100%</b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>		<b>87%</b>							

\* As a pourcentage of the maximum score

### 7.1.3. Effectiveness, efficiency and coherence of option 3

Option 3 has by far the best scores for meeting the needs of the users (93%). Its fully centralised approach would guarantee a harmonised way of presenting information ensuring that users can easily find the information they are looking for. Harmonised EU wide procedures would be designed fully to be accessible for cross-border users. However, serious drawbacks of this option are the lack of feasibility due to little support from the Member States for such a centralised approach. In addition, the overall efficiency of this option is not very high since it combines very high costs with significant duplication.

**Table 7.3: Option 3 - EU-wide fully centralised approach**

Specific objectives = What we want to achieve	3. EU-wide fully centralised approach	Effectiveness				Efficiency			Coherence
		Usefulness	Digitalisation	Enforceability	Feasibility	Cost-effectiveness	Synergies and non-duplication	Proportionality	Coherence
Ensure full coverage of information citizens and businesses need	EC will provide all agreed information	3	2	3	1	1	1	2	1
Improve awareness of services available	Joint promotion	3	2	2	1	3	3	2	3
Eliminate or overcome duplication an complexity, improve findability	Common assistance service finder	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
	Single search facility and fully harmonised presentation of information	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Improve quality across the board for all information and assistance services, and for procedures	Quality criteria fully harmonised and integrated in contract, with monitoring via single user feedback tool EC monitors compliance	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	3
Ensure that EU citizens and businesses can complete the most important part of their interactions with the administration online	All 10+10 procedures will be harmonised at EU level for foreign users (like for EPC and Services Card) EC will develop IT structure for procedures within IMI	3	3	3	1	1	1	1	1
Make all information and procedures fully accessible for non-national citizens and businesses	Fully guaranteed, translation in all or several languages	3	1	3	1	1	3	1	3
	Procedures are fully accessible to foreign users by design	3	3	3	2	2	1	2	3
	Integrated user interface for cross-border use of documents and data	3	3	3	1	2	1	1	3
Get a more systematic overview of obstacles encountered by cross-border users	Common user feedback tool will be fully integrated	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
<b>Subtotals*</b>		<b>93%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>72%</b>				<b>52%</b>			<b>71%</b>
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT</b>		<b>65%</b>							

\* As a percentage of the maximum score

### 1.24.7.2. Choice of the preferred package

Based on the analysis above, option 2 is most likely to achieve the objectives efficiently and in a proportionate way, while maximising the benefits for stakeholders. At the same time, this option is best aligned with the ideas and wishes expressed by the Member States so far. Broad support is key for the successful implementation of this ambitious project. The Commission and the Member States will need to work together very closely to achieve an effective, step-by-step implementation of all the different requirements of the preferred option. To illustrate how this could work, a detailed project plan is included in Annex 12.

### 1.25.7.3. Benefits of the preferred package – why will it succeed?

For EU citizens and businesses with a cross-border perspective, the benefits of having full online access to reliable information and user friendly procedures in a language that they can understand, will be very considerable. They will be able to compare rules and obligations in the different Member States, check them against their EU rights and handle a large part of their administration fully online. They will waste less time trying to find out which rules apply, which documents are needed, visiting administrations, waiting and getting all the paperwork done. The study about administrative formalities<sup>224</sup> has calculated that the costs of cross-border businesses are 50% higher compared to domestic businesses, and that the aggregate cost difference (between the same number of domestic and cross-border businesses, for nine procedures) is EUR 131 million. Almost half of the additional costs for cross-border businesses is caused by translations (EUR 60 million), followed by additional costs for gathering information (mostly advice, EUR 30 million), submitting documents (EUR 22 million, mostly travel costs if submission in person is required, certification (EUR 11 million) and collecting data and documents (EUR 7 million). The savings for domestic businesses from digitalisation are much greater and in the order of magnitude of EUR 6.5 billion for just nine businesses procedures, and EUR 48 million for cross-border users. As far as information

<sup>224</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017 See annex 19 for the methodology.

is concerned, businesses could save between EUR 11 and 55 billion annually for researching nine business topics<sup>225</sup>. The benefits for citizens can only be indicated by estimating the number of hours saved. The preferred option would reduce by 60% the 1.5 million hours that citizens currently spend on researching online seven essential topics before going abroad. If these costs, time and hassle could be avoided, not only for businesses but also for citizens, more people would be encouraged to expand their activities across borders due to much increased transparency. Furthermore, e-procedures reduce the risk of administrative errors and corruption.

Improved knowledge about rights and opportunities, and better-quality online services may also contribute to more firms and citizens claiming these EU rights. An example is the principle of mutual recognition for intra-EU trade in goods that is currently not well-known among businesses.

The preferred option will have the following specific advantages compared to the current situation:

- **Holistic:** This option aims at the vertical integration of the whole sequence of information, procedures and assistance services that Single Market users need. It will also link the many separate services that have been created in different policy domains over the past decades. It will go a long way to overcome the current fragmentation and duplication, and the gaps in the currently available information.
- **User-driven:** Through a common user feedback tool the option will systematically receive feedback on the quality and coverage of the services included. This will ensure that we concentrate resources on what is most important for the users, and provide for an integrated and efficient monitoring tool to assist enforcement. The expected result is a much higher level of customer orientation of these public services, also for cross-border customers.
- **More digital:** The current services have been built over several years, and in many cases recent information technology developments have enabled e-government solutions that were not feasible or were much more expensive earlier. Moving procedures online has advanced considerably and it can be expected that all Member States are in the position to complete the move of the most frequently used procedures online relatively quickly, and also make them fully transactional for cross-border users.
- **More practical and more enforceable:** The option includes clear and practical common rules for the range of services provided, integrates the lessons learned and facilitates enforcement. The proposed concrete quality standards for information, assistance and procedures will ensure consistency in service quality that is lacking today. Clearer rules of what makes a procedure fully online and fully accessible for cross-border users will help to prevent new single market obstacles.
- **Experience-based:** The solutions contained in the package have already been tested in practice, as they build on existing services and have been chosen based on feedback from Member States and stakeholders, in particular concerning their good practices. The chosen package is based on the most successful national solutions, in particular the citizen and business portals of France, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg, Cyprus and Malta. The package also reflects experience gained through the management of EU level networks and portals such as SOLVIT, Your Europe and the contact points, and the Commission-wide digital transformation process.
- **Strong support:** The chosen package is broad and ambitious, but it is based on strong

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<sup>225</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest & Young, 2017. See annex 19 for the methodology.

support from the Member States and stakeholders. In particular, the Member States will play an essential role in its implementation. During the consultation process, a series of bilateral meetings identified good practices to follow and pitfalls to avoid, based on experience with national e-government programmes. The consultation process has helped to shape the package and has confirmed that there is strong support for it. Likewise, business organisations, chambers of commerce, the European Parliament and the REFIT platform have strongly encouraged the Commission to propose such an initiative.

#### **1.26.7.4. Costs of the preferred package and available EU funding**

##### *7.4.1. Cost for Member States and the Commission*

The preferred package of options has eight cost categories. These are 1) extending the coverage of information; 2) providing information in another language; 3) meeting quality requirements for assistance services; 4) getting procedures online; 5) making online procedures fully transactional across borders; 6) developing the single digital gateway support tools, hosting and maintaining them; 7) promoting the gateway; and 8) managing it, see table 6.8.

Based on the assumed 20 procedures to be made available online, these costs amount to EUR 167 million of initial investment costs and around EUR 8 million of annual running costs for all Member States and the Commission together. The initial investment costs would already be mostly compensated for by the saving of EUR 112 million per year through the digitalisation of only nine out of the ten business procedures (with the 10 citizen procedures remaining unassessed). These figures are only indicative, but show the large potential for cost savings for national administrations from going online. Other areas for potential savings, e.g. deriving from a shift to online information instead of personalised advice to the public, are not included as they could not be calculated.

For the two countries that have the fewest procedures online (still 17 out of 20 missing), moving them online would take EUR 10.2m for each. This is 2 to 3% of the 2014-2020 ESIF funding they have allocated to e-government, so the required investment is relatively minor. It is expected that the single digital gateway approach will lead to cost savings for managing existing services, but it has not been possible to quantify these savings.

Concerning access to European funding when implementing the single digital gateway, the 2014-2020 ESIF can be used<sup>226</sup> by 17 Member States for funding of e-government programmes and ICT projects. Thirteen Member States are currently using these funds for that purpose. (see Table 6.5 and Annex 11 section 11.3). Many of them have already replaced paper based procedures by online versions on that basis and others could follow that example to comply with the requirements of the single digital gateway.

Horizon 2020 is funding a pilot project for once-only which is important for cross-border use of online procedures.

The ISA<sup>2</sup> programme<sup>227</sup> is developing reusable building blocks for EU wide interoperability, where the core public service catalogue is of particular importance, as it is envisaged to be used for the single digital gateway. In addition, the development of the common user interfaces foreseen for the single digital gateway could be funded via this programme.

#### **1.27.7.5. Choice of legal instrument**

The existing contact points, information and assistance services have been established on the basis of a variety of legally binding and non-binding instruments.

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<sup>226</sup> Provided these Member States have foreseen this in their Operational Programmes.

<sup>227</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/isa2/>

In view of the identified preferred option, the instrument to create the single digital gateway will need to overcome this divergence and address the identified problems in a practical way. It will need to complement the existing directives, regulations and recommendations that establish the different services. It will need to fill in the details where they have been missing and provide the necessary legal basis where voluntary action has not delivered satisfactory results. A regulation based on Articles 21(2), 48 and 114(1) of the Treaty would appear to be the most suitable instrument to satisfy these requirements.

#### **1.28.7.6. Subsidiarity and proportionality of the preferred option**

The preferred option strikes a careful balance between on the one hand the need to leave ownership and responsibility for national information and national procedures with the Member States, and on the other the need to address the obstacles that have occurred over time for citizens and businesses trying to exercise their Single Market rights. For each of the problems to be addressed, the most effective and proportionate solution has been chosen, as explained in the previous sections. The result is an approach that would appear to be both widely supported by Member States and very much welcomed by the intended beneficiaries, the citizens and businesses of Europe. This gives additional reassurance that the preferred option is fully aligned with requirements for subsidiarity and proportionality.

#### **1.29.7.7. Cumulative impact and synergies of the preferred option**

The single digital gateway can rely on the strong foundation of the national technology networks that have already been put in place by Member States. This is also true for those Member States that are lagging behind, given the substantial investments in e-government already planned to cover the gap by 2020, which corresponds to the timeframe for implementation of this initiative.

The benefit of the gateway, as built on the preferred option, is that it provides a clear framework for the roll-out of national online procedures based on Single Market priorities and principles. The latter can be taken on board already while national programmes are still ongoing. This is more cost-efficient than taking remedial action ex-post. As has been indicated in this assessment, the cross-border perspective tends to be overlooked by the Member States. The leverage effects of the gateway in terms of efficiency and benefits to both citizens and business and for administrations are potentially considerable.

Moreover, the use of the building blocks<sup>228</sup> developed under the Connecting Europe Facility<sup>229</sup> offers possibilities for additional savings of 20-40% and reducing the implementation cycle costs by 40-50%.<sup>230</sup> Helpdesk functions, assistance services and feedback tools can rely on services already available on the national and the EU levels.

#### **1.30.7.8. Coherence with other proposals**

The preferred option contributes to achieving the objectives of the Digital Single Market strategy, such as tackling discrimination based on residence or nationality. It supports the other actions of the E-government Action Plan. The proposed options are in line with the recommendations of the European Interoperability Framework.

Furthermore, the option complements the start-up and scale-up initiative,<sup>231</sup> which promotes the growth of firms by improving the business environment and cutting red tape. SMEs, in particular those trading across borders will benefit from lower costs related to information searches – relatively more than large firms. They will also benefit from the more uniform quality of available online information, assistance and procedures. Those trading across

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<sup>228</sup> eID, eDelivery, eSignature, eInvoicing, and eTranslation.

<sup>229</sup> With a budget of €970 million.

<sup>230</sup> The Advantages, Economics and Value of Reuse', joint paper Gartner Research and the MIT, 1 July 2010.

<sup>231</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item\\_id=8998](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8998)

borders will benefit from procedures that are important for them. SMEs will find it easier to identify procedures about the Single Market and thus enter new EU markets. They can signal problems with rules and public authorities in an easy and familiar way in all EU languages.

Ongoing initiatives at EU level are addressing aspects of VAT registration and return through the mini-one-stop-shop,<sup>232</sup> as well as patient registration,<sup>233</sup> and thus the single digital gateway needs to articulate its approach with these initiatives. Similarly, the approach needs to be articulated with the planned company law initiative to facilitate the use of digital technologies throughout a company's lifecycle.

The initiative contributes to and supports the achievements of other ongoing EU initiatives. For an overview of how the single digital gateway links to other initiatives, see Annex 9.

### 1.31.7.9. Implementing the preferred option – what is the timeline?

Work on the single digital gateway can start before the adoption of the regulation. The Commission can start upgrading the current Your Europe portal in line with the overall objectives. The different actions to be implemented as from adoption of the legal proposal are set out in the table below, and in more detail, in Annex 12.

*Table 7.4: Implementation plan and milestones*

Timing	Commission actions	Member States' actions
<i>Pre-adoption stage</i>		
Q1/2018	Works with MS on further convergence of information and assistance services towards the objectives of the single digital gateway	Work with the COM on further convergence of information and assistance services towards the objectives of the single digital gateway
Q1/2018	Analyses different options related to the IT tools and applications listed in the Commission Proposal. Incorporate IT security risk assessment and IT security plans.	Analyse the needs and efforts which have to be done to ensure full compliance with the Regulation
Q2/2018	Establishes a network of stakeholders (Chambers of Commerce, etc.) to discuss with them ideas related to the practical implementation of the single digital gateway	
Q2/2018	Prepares the draft annual work programme (e.g. to clarify detailed implementation steps per Member State)	
<i>Q4/2018</i>	<i>Adoption of the Regulation</i>	
Q3/2018	Convenes the first meeting of the single digital gateway Group to discuss the first annual work programme	Appoint national co-ordinators and notify their names to the COM
Q3/2018	Sets up internal governance structure to manage and coordinate all EU level services and portals that are part of the single digital gateway	Ensure that sufficient resources are made available at national level. Put in place the internal structure of co-ordination and monitoring
Q1/2019	Adoption of the first annual work programme	Adoption of the first annual work programme
Q1/2019	Adopts implementing acts	Discuss the draft implementing acts in the single digital gateway Committee

<sup>232</sup> Council Regulation (EU) No 967/2012.

<sup>233</sup> E-health Action Plan 2012-2020 - Innovative healthcare for the 21st century, COM(2012)736, 6.12.2012.



<b>Timing</b>	<b>Commission actions</b>	<b>Member States' actions</b>
Q1/2019	Starts developing the IT tools required for supporting the single digital gateway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- user interface</li> <li>- repository of links</li> <li>- reporting tool on the functioning of the Single Market</li> <li>- data collection tool</li> <li>- user feedback collection tool</li> </ul>	Start working on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- filling the online information coverage gaps</li> <li>- getting the missing procedures online</li> <li>- ensuring that existing online procedures are accessible for foreign users</li> </ul>
Q2/2019	Organises trainings, workshops, visits in Member States to discuss/advise Member States as regard the use of the ESF, ERDF and other sources of financing, managed by the COM	Re-structuring, tagging of information on their websites
Q2/2019	Issues interpretative/guidance documents or recommendations, if needed	
Q3/2019	Preparation of promotion campaigns and discussion within the single digital gateway Group	
Q3/2019	Finalisation of work on the IT tools, including a review of IT security plan and measures to cover risks.	Notification of links to the national services to the repository of links
Q3/2020	All agreed information is offered online User feedback tools deployed on all single digital gateway related webpages	All agreed information is offered online MSs with most advanced e-government programmes to offer all agreed procedures online User feedback tools deployed on all single digital gateway related webpages
Q4/2019	Beta-version of the single digital gateway to be put online and tested	Testing together with the COM the tools and applications to ensure that they are ready to use as from Q3 2020
Q4/2019	Implementing act on tool for cross-border use of evidence	
Q4/2020	Launch of tool for cross-border use of evidence	
<b>Q4 2020</b>	<b><i>Launch of the Single Digital Gateway</i></b>	
Q4/2022	First report on obstacles in the Single Market based on data gathered through all services within the single digital gateway and the user feedback tool	
Q4/2022	First report on the functioning of the single digital gateway	
Q1/2024	Second report on obstacles in the Single Market	
Q3/2024	Second report on the functioning of the single digital gateway and, if needed, recommendations for improvement	

## 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The set of indicators below aims to measure whether the single digital gateway will succeed in meeting the objectives defined in section 4.2 of this impact assessment.

The legislative proposal on the single digital gateway foresees that the necessary ongoing monitoring and evaluation measures are based on direct user feedback about the quality, availability and findability of the services offered. In addition, users will be encouraged through a second feedback tool to report problems encountered with the Single Market.

The user feedback tool is an efficient way for steering quality management but also for gathering evidence about success. When implemented as an integral part of an information system, it can provide quick and accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses. It is a low-cost option replacing an expensive ongoing evaluation machinery.

The gap analysis (see Annex 4) shows that the areas that need particular monitoring are linked to those Member States that have large gaps in the availability of information and procedures online, especially concerning the access of foreign citizens. The main risk for the successful implementation of the single digital gateway is that the Member States lagging behind today will not be able to catch up quickly enough. However, the planned governance structure based on very close cooperation of the Member States and the Commission, and the possibility to use ESIF funding should help in bringing all Member States up to speed.

The results of the monitoring efforts should guide continuous improvement of the services and will also be used for a Commission report on the functioning of the single digital gateway to the European Parliament and the Member States every two years. A full evaluation should take place four years after entry into force of the regulation.

**Table 8.1: Monitoring the performance of the single digital gateway**

Specific objectives	Indicator	Operational objective
Ensure full coverage of information citizens and businesses need	Percentage of businesses and citizens who indicate they have found the information they were looking for.	Yearly increase from benchmark in Year 1, towards target of 90%
Improve awareness of services available	Trends in average number of monthly users.	Yearly increase from benchmark in Year 1
Eliminate or overcome duplication complexity, improve findability	Percentage of businesses and citizens who indicate they have easily found the information they were looking for	Yearly increase from benchmark in Year 1, towards target of 90%
Improve quality across the board for all information and assistance services, and for procedures	Percentage of business and citizens who indicate satisfaction with quality (based on criteria).	Yearly increase from benchmark in Year 1, towards target of 90%
Ensure that EU citizens and businesses can complete the most important part of their interactions with the administration online	Percentage of businesses and citizens who indicate that they have been able to complete the available procedures fully online.	Yearly increase from benchmark in Year 1, towards target of 95%
Make all information and procedures fully accessible for non-national citizens and businesses	Percentage of cross-border businesses and citizens who indicate that they have been able to complete the available procedures fully online.	Yearly increase from benchmark in Year 1, towards target of 95%
Get a more systematic overview of obstacles encountered by cross-border users	Usability of data from user feedback tool and from assistance services regarding obstacles in the Single Market and quality of resulting report	Positive feedback from stakeholders on usefulness of reporting on Single Market obstacles



## **9. LIST OF ANNEXES**

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- Annex 2: Synopsis report of the public consultation
- Annex 3: Evaluation
- Annex 4: Gap analysis of national online information and procedures
- Annex 5: Detailed problem descriptions
- Annex 6: Detailed quality criteria
- Annex 7: Overview of problem drivers, problems, objectives and options
- Annex 8: Services to be covered by the single digital gateway
- Annex 9: Overview of the initiatives with links to the single digital gateway
- Annex 10: Visual overview of links with other initiatives
- Annex 11: Available IT building blocks and EU funding
- Annex 12: Outline and project plan of the single digital gateway
- Annex 13: Good practices from the Member States
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- Annex 15: Example of product requirements
- Annex 16: Report on the online public consultation
- Annex 17: Visual outline of the single digital gateway
- Annex 18: Financial and human resources of the relevant services
- Annex 19: Methodology of cost and benefit calculations
- Annex 20: Glossary



Brussels, 2.5.2017  
SWD(2017) 213 final

PART 2/3

## **Compliance Package**

### **COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

#### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### *Accompanying the document*

**Proposal for a regulation of the European parliament and of the Council  
on establishing a single digital gateway to provide information, procedures, assistance  
and problem solving services and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012**

{COM(2017) 256 final}  
{SWD(2017) 211 final}  
{SWD(2017) 212 final}  
{SWD(2017) 214 final}

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## ANNEX 1: PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

### 1.1 Identification

*Lead DG:* DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW)

*Agenda planning/Work programme references:* The single digital gateway is part of the Single Market Strategy of the Commission (Upgrading the Single Market: more opportunities for people and business, COM (2015) 550 final) and was included under reference 2017/GROW/012 in the agenda planning.

### 1.2 Organisation and timing

An Inter-Service Steering Group was set up early in 2016. In total, four meetings were organised: on 24 February, 26 April, 9 November and 7 December 2016.

The following Directorates-General, Agencies and services participated in the ISSG or were consulted: SG, SJ, COMM, EMPL, CNECT, REGIO, TAXUD, EAC, SANTE, JUST, HR, DIGIT, BUDG, OLAF and the EDPS. The feedback received from these Directorates-General and services has been taken into account.

The Inception Impact Assessment was published on 05/07/2016.

The ISSG of 7 December 2016 agreed to the submission of the Impact Assessment Report to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

### 1.3 Consultation of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board:

The Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB) of the European Commission assessed a draft version of the impact assessment and issued its opinion on 20/01/2017. The Board made several recommendations. Those were addressed in the revised IA report as follows:

RSB opinion	Follow-up
<p><b>(B) Overall assessment and main issues</b> The Board gives a negative opinion, because the report contains important shortcomings that need to be addressed, notably the following:</p> <p>(1) The report sets very high ambitions for online information and electronic procedures without identifying precisely what the portal should cover and the obstacles the initiative needs to overcome to deliver;</p> <p>(2) The report does not explain why and how this initiative will be more successful than similar earlier initiatives;</p> <p>(3) The report is unnecessarily complex in that it does not match the problems with the objectives and options;</p>	<p>(1) New chapter 1.4 on the scope of the initiative has been added explaining in detail the envisaged coverage of the single digital gateway. New section 2.2.3 explains the gaps that exist for each Member State regarding a) information coverage, b) coverage in English, c) procedures online and d) procedures accessible for foreign users.</p> <p>(2) Detailed explanation has been added in section 7.3 "Benefits of the preferred option- why will it succeed"?</p> <p>(3) Annex 7 on the intervention logic includes a table with a full overview of problem drivers, problems, specific objectives and different options. This structure has been followed throughout the document, in the problem tree in section 2.1, and in chapters 4, 5 and 6.</p>

<b>RSB opinion</b>	<b>Follow-up</b>
<p>(4) The options are not true alternatives but mostly a list of complementary measures. Their design and articulation is confusing and does not correspond to the five specific objectives;</p> <p>(5) The report lists benefits and quantifies some costs. But estimates seem to be on the low side and are not differentiated across Member States.</p>	<p>(4) The options have been presented as three alternative packages. An overview table is included in section 5.1. The table includes the links with the different problems to be addressed. New tables are included in section 7.1 linking each of the options with the specific objectives.</p> <p>(5) On the basis of a gap analysis for information coverage and online procedures, a new table with cost estimates has been included for each of the Member States (see Annex 4). For the overall cost estimates, an average has been used.</p>
<p><b>(C) Adjustment requirements and other recommendations for improvement</b></p> <p><b>(1) Context and scope:</b> The report should clarify the background of the initiative, outlining existing services stemming from EU law or soft measures, as well as trends and good practices in Member States in developing user-centric portals illustrated by examples. It should recall the 2015 request from seventeen Member States to regulate in this area. In particular, it should explain how the scope of the information services to be covered by the single digital gateway was determined and whether they are all relevant for the single market. Furthermore, the impact assessment should clarify the extensions beyond the existing portals. The report should make clear what the existing Commission and Member State commitments are, in particular in terms of resources.</p>	<p>1) A new chapter 1 on the context and the scope has been added explaining the current situation (section 1.1), the various calls from MS and stakeholders for this initiative (section 1.2), the trends and good practices in the MS (section 1.3 and Annex 13) and how the scope of the initiative was defined (section 1.4).</p> <p>Annex 4 includes a detailed analysis of the extensions required in all MS both for information and for procedures.</p> <p>Annex 18 includes a full overview of the human and financial resources currently allocated for the whole range of existing services that will be covered by the single digital gateway</p>
<p><b>(2) Problem definition:</b> Existing evidence should be better used, including from the previous initiatives. Given that the gateway focuses on improving EU level coordination and tools and imposing legal obligations on Member States, it should demonstrate that these two elements will correct failure of the past and address the main problem drivers of quality and reliability of information and services, cost, complexity, intra-EU divergence or lack of service orientation of national administrations as described in the problem tree.</p>	<p>The evaluation in Annex 3 has been adapted to clarify the problem drivers responsible for the partial success of the existing information and assistance services. Section 7.3 describes why the legal provisions as proposed are very likely to correct the failures of the past.</p>
<p><b>(3) Intervention logic:</b> The report should simplify the intervention logic by streamlining and restructuring the problem definition, objectives and options.</p>	<p>See new table in Annex 7, this logic is followed throughout the main document.</p>
<p><b>(4) Options:</b> The report should either group key actions into alternative packages clearly linked to the specific objectives or identify genuine alternative actions within each objective-area in order to eventually identify the preferred package. The options should include more concrete information on covered services, and explain in more detail the related "project plans" in terms of their content, governance, resources and timing of roll-out. It should be made clear what will be required from all concerned actors – i.e. EU versus Member States' level.</p>	<p>The options have been presented in three alternative packages. See section 5.</p> <p>A new Annex 12 has been added to outline the project plan for implementing the preferred option. The plan also indicates in detail what is required from the different actors.</p>



RSB opinion	Follow-up
<p><b>(5) Impact analysis:</b> The report should detail and substantiate some costs (one-off costs, administrative burdens, compliance costs and clarify whether funding only covers IT costs (development and maintenance) or the full cost of expanding and running information services (information collection, updates, processing user's queries and feedbacks). The analysis of impacts should refer to experience from existing single market e-Government tools, risks involved, and make realistic estimates for resource implications both for the Commission and for different Member States.</p> <p>The criteria for comparing the options should be clarified.</p> <p>For the preferred option, the cumulative cost on the Commission and the Member States should be presented.</p>	<p>The cost table in section 7.4.1 has been clarified to cover these remarks.</p> <p>More cost figures were obtained from some of the Member States. They confirmed that the cost range chosen was realistic. Nevertheless, for the overall calculation a cost figure on the very high end has now been used to make sure that the costs for digitalising procedures (the main cost component) will, in any case, not be underestimated.</p> <p>Section 7.1 includes three new tables with detailed criteria for comparing the three options.</p> <p>Cost table in section 7.4.1. has been adapted accordingly.</p>
<p><b>(6) Monitoring of implementation:</b> The report should be clearer about the project plan for the single digital gateway, how it will be monitored and what criteria will be used to measure its success. Especially, expected high risk areas of implementation should be pointed out.</p>	<p>A project plan is now included in Annex 12. The criteria for monitoring achievement of objectives, the exact tools for measuring this, and high risks have been clarified in chapter 8.</p>

In its positive opinion on 7 March 2017, the Regulatory Scrutiny Board requested further changes. These have been addressed in the final IA report as follows:

RSB opinion	Follow-up
<p><b>(1) Problem definition</b> The report should provide more analysis and data on the size of the problem. It should also elaborate on the potential for cost savings and benefits for business and citizens: the report could aggregate the data presented in section 2.2 to indicate orders of magnitude or the range of benefits for business and citizens.</p>	<p>Additional supporting evidence has been added to chapters 2.2, 2.3, annex 4 (section 4.3) and annex 5 (section 5.7). Data on potential cost savings for business and citizens were included for each option (6.1.11, 6.2.10., 6.3.8.).</p>
<p><b>(2) Options.</b> Each option includes and builds upon already existing Member State and Commission digital services and procedures. Therefore, the presentation of the options should make clearer what exactly the options provide in addition to what is not in place today. Moreover, the report should bring out an estimate of the resources and timing needed for the implementation of each option.</p> <p>The report does not aggregate nor compare costs in a transparent manner. It should further elaborate on the actual costs of the different options for the Commission and the Member States.</p> <p>The report has clarified the criteria to assess the options. But it should introduce a clearer link between the ratings of the options and the available evidence about impacts (benefits, costs, savings, implementation issues, timing, demand, etc.).</p>	<p>Further details have been added to each option description.</p> <p>Detailed tables listing the administrative costs (including human resources) and savings per Member State and the Commission have been included for each option (tables 6.3., 6.8., 6.11.). Further sections were added for each option spelling out the time needed for implementation and the ease of implementation. Thus, a clearer link has been established between the ratings of the options and the available evidence about impacts.</p>

RSB opinion	Follow-up
<p><b>(3) Preferred option</b> Table 7.4 summarises the cost of the preferred option. It assumes that the various steps are either the responsibility of Member States or of the Commission and it estimates costs accordingly. But in practice each step is likely to have coordination or implementation costs at both national and EU level (e.g. 10+10 procedures or the availability of websites in English). The overall final costs will therefore be possibly higher, in particular in terms of FTE necessary to develop the SDG. This should be reflected at the subsequent stage of finalisation of the proposal. The report should give indications of the accuracy of the estimates.</p>	<p>The cost table of the preferred option has been revised and made more detailed, including on coordination and implementation costs. Indications of the accuracy of the estimates have been provided.</p>

#### 1.4 Evidence and sources used for the IA

The impact assessment was prepared using diversified sources of information, including wide consultation of stakeholders, input from external experts, market reviews, sources of statistics, external studies, and surveys.

The following external studies were undertaken in support of the impact assessment:

- Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys, 2017<sup>234</sup>
- Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest & Young, 2017<sup>235</sup>

#### 1.5 External expertise used for the IA

EXTERNAL REFERENCES IN THE REPORT	
<p><a href="#">"EU Citizenship: Share your opinion on our common values, rights and democratic participation"</a>, Public consultation 2015</p>	2015
<p>“Towards a Digital Single Market Act”, European Parliament  <a href="http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&amp;reference=2015/2147(INI)">http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&amp;reference=2015/2147(INI)</a></p>	2015
<p>24 Years of EU Citizenship: Removing the obstacles to full potential, ECAS (European Citizen Action Service)</p>	2016
<p><a href="#">A European Single Point of Contact</a>, European Parliament</p>	2013
<p>Digital Service Standards  <a href="https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assets/documents/digital-service-standard.pdf">https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assets/documents/digital-service-standard.pdf</a></p>	
<p>Digitizing Public Sector Services, Norwegian E-government Program, 2012</p>	2012
<p>EUROCHAMBRES Economic Survey 2016  <a href="https://magic.piktochart.com/output/9670584-ees2016">https://magic.piktochart.com/output/9670584-ees2016</a></p>	2016
<p>High-level Group on Business Services</p>	
<p>European Parliament Report on Non-Tariff Barriers in the Single Market,</p>	2016

<sup>234</sup> Draft version of 5 April 2017 used for this impact assessment.

<sup>235</sup> Idem.

<b>EXTERNAL REFERENCES IN THE REPORT</b>	
German Chambers of Commerce annual member survey, "Obstacles in the EU Single Market for Services 2016"	2016
German Chambers of Commerce annual member survey, "Obstacles in the EU Single Market for Services 2015"	2015
GPSD Business Application	
Highlight findings, Netherlands Chamber of Commerce European internal market panel survey June 2016 <a href="https://www.kvk.nl/download/Highlights%20KvK%20entrepreneurs%20panel%20Internal%20Market%20Survey%20June%202016%20(English)_tcm109-421509.pdf">https://www.kvk.nl/download/Highlights%20KvK%20entrepreneurs%20panel%20Internal%20Market%20Survey%20June%202016%20(English)_tcm109-421509.pdf</a>	2016
<a href="https://www.kvk.nl/download/Highlights%20KvK%20entrepreneurs%20panel%20Internal%20Market%20Survey%20June%202016%20(English)_tcm109-421509.pdf">https://www.kvk.nl/download/Highlights%20KvK%20entrepreneurs%20panel%20Internal%20Market%20Survey%20June%202016%20(English)_tcm109-421509.pdf</a>	
<a href="#">Ministerial Declaration on e-government, Malmö, Sweden</a>	2009
Commission consultation on the e-government action plan <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/public-consultation-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020-contributions-businesses">https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/public-consultation-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020-contributions-businesses</a>	2016
<a href="#">Mutual Recognition Regulation (764/2008)</a> ,	2008
Public consultation on mutual recognition <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8831">http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=8831</a>	
<a href="#">Report on Non-Tariff Barriers in the Single Market</a> - European Parliament	2016
Report public consultation on EU Citizenship 2015, 2016 <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015_public_consultation_booklet_en.pdf">http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015_public_consultation_booklet_en.pdf</a> <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/search/citizenship/surveyKy/2130">http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/search/citizenship/surveyKy/2130</a>	2015
Results of Council of the Regions <a href="#">consultation on obstacles to investments at local and regional level</a> - Secretariat of the Commission for Economic Policy (ECON)	9/2016
<a href="#">Trade Export Helpdesk</a>	
UK Digital Efficiency Report, <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report</a>	2012
World Bank, Doing Business 2016.	2016

<b>REPORTS COMMISSIONED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION</b>	
<a href="#">Analysis on the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation</a>	2015
<a href="#">Charter for the electronic Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive</a>	
Construction Products Regulation, Final Report, 2015 – RPA Risk and Policy Analysts for DG GROW	2015
Consumer Conditions Scoreboard	2015
"Development of an EU VAT web-portal – Feasibility study of the options for development, implementation and maintenance", Final Report, 2016 – A study carried out by Deloitte for DG TAXUD	2016
ECAS - Your Europe Advice survey: <a href="http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/csdays2016---workshop-5---claire-damilano---ecas.pdf">http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/csdays2016---workshop-5---claire-damilano---ecas.pdf</a>	2016
<a href="#">EU citizenship consultation 2015</a> : Common values, rights and democratic participation"	2015
EU citizenship consultation EU citizenship 2016 <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2016-flash-eurobarometer-430-citizenship_en.pdf">http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2016-flash-eurobarometer-430-citizenship_en.pdf</a>	2016
EU Internal Market Barriers and Solutions: The Business Perspective	2015
EU-wide digital once-only principle for citizens and businesses: Policy options and their impacts, SMART 2015/0062, GNK Consult et al.	2016
<a href="#">Evaluation of Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products</a> , Centre for Strategic and Evaluation Services	2014
<a href="#">Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net)</a> , report by CPEC (CIVIC Consulting, Van Dijk Management Consultants, GHK) for DG SANTE	2011
<a href="#">Flash Eurobarometer 413: Future of Europe</a> TNS Political & Social	2014
<a href="#">Flash Eurobarometer 421: Internationalisation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises</a> , TNS Political & Social	2015
<a href="#">Flash Eurobarometer 430</a> , European Union Citizenship, TNS Political & Social	2016
" <a href="#">Future-proofing eGovernment for the Digital Single Market – An assessment of digital public service delivery in Europe</a> ", Capgemini, IDC, Sogeti and Politecnico di Milano. Background Report prepared for the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology.	2015
High-Level Group on Business Services, Final Report	2014
Internationalisation of European SMEs, Final Report, European Commission 2010	2010
Performance of the Points of Single Contact <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/points_of_single_contact/index_en.htm#maincontentSec2">http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/points_of_single_contact/index_en.htm#maincontentSec2</a>	2016
Special Eurobarometer 425, Patients' rights in cross-border healthcare in the European Union, 2015.	2015
<a href="#">Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-Border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers</a> , Final Report, Capgemini, Tech4i2, Time.lex, Universiteit van Antwerpen, European Commission 2013.	2013

<b>REPORTS COMMISSIONED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION</b>	
The e-government benchmark report, Delivering the European Advantage? ‘How European governments can and should benefit from innovative public services’ <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/eu-egovernment-report-2014-shows-usability-online-public-services-improving-not-fast">https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/eu-egovernment-report-2014-shows-usability-online-public-services-improving-not-fast</a> Capgemini, Rand Europe, SOGETI, IDC, Danish Technological Institute.	2014
The European Commission eGovernment Benchmark 2015: More Digital Transformation of European public services needed to drive the EU Digital Single Market – Capgemini <a href="https://www.capgemini.com/news/the-european-commission-egovernment-benchmark-2015-more-digital-transformation-of-european">https://www.capgemini.com/news/the-european-commission-egovernment-benchmark-2015-more-digital-transformation-of-european</a>	2015
Inventory of Contact Points (PCP, PCPC), Ecorys	2017
Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys ( <i>ongoing</i> ).	2017

## **ANNEX 2: SYNOPSIS REPORT OF THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

### **2.1 Overview of the consultation process**

The overall consultation process on the single digital gateway (SDG) started in November 2015 and closed in December 2016.

It included a dedicated stakeholders' workshop, an online public consultation targeting businesses, citizens and public authorities, meetings with stakeholder representatives, as well as exchanges with Member States (MS). Considering the scope of and responses to these activities it was decided not to launch a specific consultation targeting SMEs and start-ups.

The results of the consultation process constitute a key source of information and evidence for the impact assessment of the single digital gateway. The main outcomes of each consultation activity are analysed below.

### **2.2 Results of the consultation activities**

#### ***2.2.1 Conclusions from the single digital gateway stakeholders' workshop***

A dedicated workshop on the single digital gateway was organised in March 2016 in Brussels. Participants included representatives of the Points of Single Contact (PSCs), chambers of commerce and national authorities.

Participants were presented with ideas concerning the development of the single digital gateway and asked to express their views and experience concerning the main issues.

In the participants' views, many problems exist in terms of access to information, availability of e-procedures and access to assistance services. They appear to be due to gaps in legislation, a lack of information or assistance, as well as unsatisfactory implementation by national and local authorities.

#### ***2.2.2 Online information on applicable EU and national rules***

Participants claimed that it is complicated, costly and burdensome for businesses to make use of their Single Market rights, whether it relates to establishing, providing services or selling goods across borders. Either there is no online information or where it exists, it is difficult to find or understand, mostly due to lack of alternative languages and the widespread use of jargon. Moreover, when only general information is offered, it cannot be applied to a particular case. Participants recommended using high quality standards for online information. The content and presentation of information should be constantly improved on the basis of user feedback.

#### ***2.2.3 E-procedures to comply with national rules***

Participants pointed out that it is very difficult to use e-procedures across borders. Although some Member States have made impressive progress in terms of e-government domestically, the recognition of foreign e-Signature and eIDs is still very limited. As a consequence, access to e-procedures for foreign users is impossible.

### 2.2.4 Services for personalised assistance and advice

Access to assistance and problem-solving services is still limited due to low awareness of their existence and to language obstacles. In the participants' views, a useful single digital gateway should offer personalised information services and assistance in both the national language and in English, with the response in a reasonably short time.

### 2.2.5 Input from the online public consultation

The public consultation was open from 28 August 2016, until 28 November 2016. Target groups were businesses (including companies, self-employed and business representative organisations), citizens (including private individuals, organisations representing citizens or consumers and academics) and public authorities.

**Table 2.1: Distribution of respondents**

Type of respondent	N° of answers	% of answers
Self-employed	33	9%
Company	94	26%
Of which:		
- SME (1 to 249 employees)	87	93% of respondent companies
- Firm with more than 250 employees	7	7% of respondent companies
Business representative organisation	35	10%
<b>Total for business category</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>45%</b>
Private individual	147	40%
Organisation representing citizens / consumers	11	3%
Academic / research institution	8	2%
<b>Total for citizens</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>45%</b>
Public authority (including government)	39	10%
<b>Total for Public authority (including government)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF REPLIES</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

A detailed analysis of the results is available in Annex 15 of the IA.

It highlighted a strong consensus among business and citizens around the importance of the main pillars in terms of content of the single digital gateway, notably:

- the need for online information about rules and procedures in other EU countries: 93% of business respondents and 92% of citizens respondents consider it very important or important;
- access to e-procedures: 94% of business respondents and 92 % of citizens respondents consider it very important or important;
- Access to services providing assistance upon request: 88% of business respondents and 87% of citizen respondents consider it very important or important.

### ***Online information on applicable EU and national rules***

Businesses and citizens expressed very similar concerns with regards to online information on applicable EU and national rules. Most respondents in both categories would use the internet as the first source of information on these issues (74% of businesses and 80% of citizens). Most of them have tried to find such information online (78% and 70% respectively) but state that it was difficult (80% and 60% respectively). The main difficulties for both groups are the lack of findability (48% and 43% respectively), the quality of the information (40% in both cases) and the language in which the information was presented (24% and 13% respectively).

This is reflected in the opinions of respondents concerning quality criteria for online information. For both categories, the top three elements are that information should be findable (82% and 72% respectively), relevant, practical and up-to-date (77% and 69% respectively) and available in another EU language (72% and 64% respectively). 91% of responding businesses and 87% of responding citizens can understand information in a different EU language, the most common one being English (88% and 78% respectively), followed by French and German.

Being up-to-date, being run by an official authority and containing contact details to be considered trustworthy re considered the three most important indicators of trustworthiness for a website by both groups of respondents.

When it comes to improving information provision specifically for cross-border users respondents consider to a great extent that it should be mandatory for authorities to provide minimum information for citizens to carry out cross-border activities (80% in both cases) and that this information should be provided in at least one other EU language (77% and 72% respectively). The most effective means to prevent information gaps is for national authorities in each EU country to provide all (77% of business and 63% of citizens consider it very effective) or at least minimum information necessary for cross-border users (68% of businesses consider it very effective) and in at least one other language (72% and 63% of businesses and citizens respectively consider it very effective). Most public authorities consider that minimum information is already being provided (50%), while only 5% consider it unfeasible or too costly. Most of them consider it challenging but feasible to provide all information needed for cross-border activities (50%), information in a centralised EU database (48%) and information in at least one other EU language.

As far as existing national sources of information for rules and procedures applying to products and services are concerned, a majority of businesses (81%) would be in favour of merging the contact points for goods and services. This could be a realistic option for respondent public authorities, 70% of which consider it desirable or very desirable, despite considering this integration difficult or somewhat difficult (28% and 48% respectively).

### ***E-procedures to comply with national rules***

About half of responding businesses and citizens have tried carrying out an e-procedure in another EU/EEA country. The main problems faced by businesses are the use of too much jargon, the lack of full transactionality and the need to translate or certify documents. For citizens the main problems are the lack of full transactionality, the lack of findability of the procedure and problems with the languages available. Issues relating to languages and documents provision were identified as the most urgent to address by both groups of respondents.



The most important quality elements of e-procedures for both groups are the online transactionality of procedures (69% of businesses and 72% of citizens), the ease of navigation and presence of step-by-step guidance (80% and 72% respectively), the possibility to carry out the procedure in at least another EU language (65% and 67% respectively) and the presence of a helpdesk (51% and 63% respectively).

The three priority procedures to be put online for businesses are 1) registration of business activity, 2) VAT registration and 3) VAT return, while for citizens they are 1) requesting or renewing an ID or passport, 2) requesting the recognition of professional qualifications and 3) registering a change of address.

When asked which actions would help in improving the provision of e-procedures, respondents agree that it should be mandatory to make procedures available in at least another EU language (78% of businesses, 73% of citizens and 55% of public authorities) and that at least the most important (67%, 69% and 70% respectively) or any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future European law (69%, 67% and 48% respectively) should mandatorily be fully online.

Making the availability of at least one foreign language (77% and 67% respectively) the full transactionality of any relevant procedure required under future EU law (69% of citizens) or at least the most important procedures (65% of businesses) mandatory are considering as the most effective measures in encouraging the transition to e-procedures. Half of the responding public authorities consider these actions as challenging but feasible, the other half being split between those that consider that such procedures are already in place and those that consider them unfeasible or unnecessary.

Most public authorities see their transition to e-government as neutral (50%) or positive (30%). They are evenly split among those that consider making more procedures available online, and in that case they would be fully transactional in 83% of cases and they would be in place over the coming two years, and those that do not.

### ***Services for personalised assistance and advice***

Respondents were asked about the most important quality criteria for personalised assistance services and flagged that replies should be quick (70% of businesses and 63% of citizens), answer the specific question/query (75% and 79% respectively), be reliable and legally sound (69% and 60% respectively), clear, simple and in non-legalistic language (64% of businesses), services should be able to receive and process queries in a foreign language (68% and 58% respectively) and users should be able to access the service through different channels (35% of citizens).

### ***Feedback mechanism***

A majority of citizens (76%) and businesses (55%) would be willing to give feedback on their experience with the Single Market, so as to orient policy-making.

### ***2.2.6 Meetings and exchanges with business and citizens stakeholders***

Several meetings with stakeholders have been organised.

Key inputs include:

- The hearing "EU Citizenship in practice" in March 2016;
- Discussion at the Annual SME Assembly in Luxembourg in November 2015; discussion with the SME Envoys in June and October 2016;
- Consultations with several organisations representing business and consumers on a bilateral basis throughout 2016 (Eurochambres, Eurocommerce, BUSINESSEUROPE, national chambers of commerce, CEA-PME, Startup City Alliance Europe, etc.), as well as some businesses operating in most EU countries;
- Discussions at Commission expert groups, including those on e-government, on the right to free movement of persons, on the right of unrepresented citizens to consular protection abroad, and the EU Citizenship Inter-Service Group;
- Discussions at Commission expert groups and networks such as the committee on horizontal questions concerning trade in processed agricultural products, the REFIT platform, the Single Market Forum, the implementation of the services directive expert group, the Small Business Act regular meetings;
- Position papers sent by business and consumers associations in reply to the online public consultation;
- Presentation and discussion at expert groups of existing tools, including Your Europe Editorial Board, Your Europe Advice, SOLVIT network, EU-GO network (Points of Single Contact), Europe Direct Contact Centres etc.

### **2.2.7 Online information on applicable EU and national rules**

Stakeholder meetings have confirmed that information about applicable rules when operating abroad is needed and difficult to find.

One of the Centres for European Consumers highlights that MS should provide all the information necessary for citizens to engage in cross-border business or private activities and that information should be provided in at least one foreign language.

Some business stakeholders point out that the information provided needs to be sufficient to legally engage in cross-border activities, including detailed technical and regulatory requirements applying to testing and reporting, as well as information on taxation and social security, amongst others.

They have also stressed that information, besides being findable, should be of high quality, complete, reliable and updated. It also needs to be trustworthy so that users can rely on its legal value and accuracy.

Eurochambres contributed results of an internal survey that identified top single market obstacles and proposed solutions. Among the main obstacles were the inaccessibility of information on rules and requirements (81%) and different national product/service rules (81%).

A big company present in almost all MS pointed out that the mapping of legal requirements applying to their products in a new country takes at least 2 years before starting operations. They devote considerable resources to this process.

In their position papers, various business organisations (e.g. Eurocommerce, European Roundtable of Industrialists, and BusinessEurope) consider it more useful to streamline all online information tools under one single umbrella. Some encourage a common architecture

for information across Member States. This will assist information providers in identifying the information they are obliged to make accessible and facilitate the search process for users.

### ***E-procedures to comply with national rules***

Most business stakeholders argue that all procedures should be fully available online, avoiding a waste of resources in terms of time and money. Some are willing to accept exceptions only when security is at stake.

Some business associations' regret that only a limited number of procedures are available for online completion and only for certain sectors which can be found on current PSCs. They encourage the linking of contact points in order to make them more useful and efficient. Some stakeholders suggest that the Commission should coordinate and enforce shared compulsory quality criteria by Member States and improved interoperability between national portals through cross-border e-signatures and user-friendly eIDs.

Some stakeholders highlighted that local authority permits are hard to obtain electronically, due to incompatibility among systems.

Some businesses would find it useful to have a glossary to help them find the authority in charge of a specific procedure in another country, since competences are often distributed in different ways.

A majority of business representatives support the idea of common forms and more harmonisation across MS for e-procedures and rules. The layout and navigation of the single digital gateway should fall under this compliance.

Procedures identified as a priority for cross-border transactionality by BusinessEurope are: company establishment, fiscal registration, submission of tax forms and e-procurement.

### ***Services for personalised assistance and advice***

SMEs associations have highlighted the need for good quality assistance services, in particular for finding and understanding national requirements. Even bigger businesses have highlighted that affordable assistance should be made available to guide users through all steps of their cross-border endeavour, to ensure compliance with local requirements. Representatives of smaller sectors argue that they do not have national associations that could help them expand to new markets.

Most of the consulted stakeholders stressed that assistance services should be available in at least one language that is commonly understood across Member States, e.g. English. Some even suggest a shared European electronic service providing answers from a country in all languages.

### **2.2.8 Consultation with Member State administrations**

Member States have been consulted through the Expert Group on Services Directive, the Mutual Recognition Committee, as well as through bilateral meetings with national authorities and their representation offices in Brussels. Some MS have also submitted position papers in reply to the online public consultation.

In addition, 17 Member States have issued a position paper calling for a network of digital single gateways (fully functioning e-government portals) to help business to start up, scale up and trade across borders by providing all the information needed to operate in another Member State. They also support the idea that businesses should only have to go through one digital process to set up and operate anywhere in the EU.

### ***2.2.9 Governance of the single digital gateway***

Most MS argue for a clear distribution of responsibilities between the national level and the EU. All respondents have highlighted that content ownership and management should be a national responsibility. Most of them would like the European Commission to take a strong coordination role, aiming at the definition of objectives in terms of updates, content, usefulness, etc. Some support the creation of a stronger coordination body compared to that existing for the EUGO network, for example. Many support the idea of enforcement measures when agreed quality standards are lacking. MS also stressed the need to keep their autonomy when it comes to national initiatives.

MS have also pointed out the need to further integrate initiatives and portals at EU level.

Most stakeholders in this category are in favour of collecting data and user feedback for improving services.

#### ***Online information on applicable EU and national rules***

Most MS are in favour of providing basic information concerning cross-border operations.

A majority of MS stress the importance of quality and user-friendliness of the websites that will be part of the single digital gateway and support the proposal to use a quality label. Most also support the idea of merging or linking existing points of contact and of mandating information provision in at least another commonly used EU language.

#### ***E-procedures to comply with national rules***

It was observed that putting procedures online requires substantial investments, which sometimes slows down their adoption. Nevertheless, some Member States have pointed out that when ensuring an efficient distribution of responsibilities, the single digital gateway should lead to more efficient communication and data-sharing among the European Commission and MS. This will allow identification and further rationalisation of the most used procedures across MS. Some MS favour a digital-by-default principle for future EU legislation and its national implementation.

A majority of MS stressed the importance of interoperability and the challenges posed by identification, authentication and electronic signature.

#### ***Services for personalised assistance and advice***

Some Member States are concerned about the impact that the creation of a single digital gateway can have on the investment already made for the creation of the PSCs and other contact points as well as chambers of commerce portals. Most would prefer the single digital gateway to build on existing systems, so that past investments are not lost, but rather capitalized on.

## **2.3 Conclusions**

The main elements that emerge from the consultation are the need to tackle the quantity and quality of single market-related information, e-procedures and assistance services available, a broad support for the aims of the initiative and a high level of interest concerning the concrete implementation by stakeholders.

Businesses and citizens consider that having access to all applicable information would be useful to make informed decisions. Member States consider that minimum information is already being offered and that it would be challenging to offer all information online.

A majority of respondents would like to carry out cross-border procedures online. They consider it important to remove some of the remaining obstacles in the single market.

Member States have concerns with regards to feasibility, notably regarding authentication and mutual recognition of e-signatures and regarding potential cost of putting all procedures online.

In the participants' views, a useful single digital gateway should offer personalised information services and assistance in both the national language and in English, within a short response time. The quality of the information and services is crucial for all stakeholders involved.

Some Member States are concerned about the impact that the creation of a single digital gateway can have on the investment already made for the creation of the PSCs and other contact points and chambers of commerce portals. Most of them would like to make sure that the single digital gateway builds on the existing systems.

These results are fully reflected in the proposed preferred option presented in the impact assessment, which aims at striking a delicate balance between achieving an ambitious project that meets the expectations of users while taking into account issues linked to technical obstacles and limited resources available among MS.

**ANNEX 3: EVALUATION****Ex-Post evaluation of existing (regulatory and non-regulatory) framework of relevance to the single digital gateway****3.1 Purpose and scope of the evaluation**

The purpose of this annex is to summarise the results of existing evaluations, studies and public consultations insofar as they relate to the kind of services that are of relevance for the impact assessment prepared for a possible future single digital gateway. This annex will list and present the conclusions of these documents that cover nine different instruments. These instruments are regularly evaluated individually.

The evaluation will focus on a number of elements that are particularly important for businesses and citizens with respect to their rights and obligations concerning the Single Market: information, assistance and problem-solving services, online procedures, quality criteria for such services, (online) findability and visibility of services, as well as one element that is important for the Commission as guardian of the Single Market, namely the collection of case feedback to inform policy making. It will not consider other elements or functionalities of the instruments.

This evaluation aims at analysing how these services are performing together, and to what extent they are reaching the objectives to deliver to businesses and citizens the information, assistance and procedures they need in relation with their EU rights and obligations. In turn, this contributes to a better functioning Single Market, increased cross-border activities, more competition, jobs and growth.

The table on the next page shows which elements of the gateway the nine services cover, and where they are situated (national/EU level) as well as how they are funded.

(More detailed information on funding and resources of each instrument is provided in annex 18.)

The results of this evaluation will provide the basis for an impact assessment accompanying a future legislative initiative for a "single digital gateway". This initiative intends to streamline, complete and improve the existing instruments and to propose a feedback tool for the comprehensive collection and analysis of feedback from citizens and businesses.

Table 3.1

Elements assessed Instruments covered	Responsibility	Funding	Information (upfront on website)	Assistance (tailor-made, on request)	Online procedures	Quality criteria	Online findability	Case feedback
Points of Single Contact	National	National	x	x	x	x	x	
Product Contact Points	National	National		x		x	x	
Product Contact Points for Construction	National	National		x		x	x	
SOLVIT	National	National		x		x	x	x
Your Europe	EC + national	EC	x			x	x	
Your Europe Advice	EC	EC		x		x	x	x
Enterprise Europe Network	National	EC with national co- funding		x		x	x	x
EURES	National	EC with national co- funding	x	x		x	x	
European Consumer Centres Network	National	EC with national co- funding	x	x		x	x	x

### 3.2 Description of the existing framework and its objectives

This section presents the main instruments already in place at EU and national level in terms of what their frameworks foresee: general aims and – where applicable - for each the elements of the potential future single digital gateway: information, assistance, online procedures, quality criteria, findability and case feedback to policy-makers. The intervention logic in appendix 2 and the overview on page 4 provide further details. Taken together, the evaluated services provide:

- online information about on all relevant EU and national rights, obligations and rules applicable to EU citizens and businesses in the (broad) Single Market Area;
- assistance or problem-solving services which EU citizens and businesses can refer to with Single Market-related questions or problems about rights, rules or procedures;
- access to procedures established at EU or national level for the implementation of (broad) Single Market rights, obligations and rules;
- a register of all queries and problems handled, that can be used for policy-making.

Information on the implementation and usage of the instruments can be found in appendix 3.

#### 3.2.1 Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive

The Services Directive

<sup>236</sup> aims to contribute to a genuine Internal Market in Services so that businesses and consumers can make full use of the opportunities it presents and benefit from the fundamental freedoms guaranteed in Articles 49 and 56 of the Treaty. Full implementation of the Directive should remove red tape and significantly facilitate the establishment of service providers both at home and abroad. It should also facilitate the cross-border (temporary) provision of services. The Directive was adopted in 2006 and its transposition deadline was December 2009. The Services Directive contains provisions on information, assistance, online procedures and quality.

##### *Information*

The Directive established "Points of single contact" (PSCs): e-government portals for entrepreneurs active in the service sector, which should assist businesses by providing comprehensive information on the procedures necessary to offer and provide services, and by allowing them to complete formalities online. Article 7 "Right to information" refers to information that Member States should provide through the Points of Single Contact, such as applicable requirements, contact details of competent authorities and of associations or organisations for practical assistance, available means of redress and means of accessing public registers and databases. Article 21 lists information recipients can obtain in their Member State of residence.

##### *Assistance*

The Services Directive stipulates in Article 7 that Member States shall ensure that service providers and recipients can receive, at their request, assistance from the competent authorities. Article 21 allows Member States to confer responsibility for this task on the points

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<sup>236</sup> Directive 2006/123/EC



of single contact or any other body, such as centres of the European Consumer Centres Network, consumer associations or Euro Info Centres.

### ***Online procedures***

The Services Directive's Article 8 establishes electronic procedures, through the relevant point of single contact and with the relevant competent authorities. Electronic means have to be available for the whole administrative process, from the service provider's initial submission of documents to the final reply, if required, from the relevant competent authority. Documents from other Member States generally have to be accepted without requiring production of the documents in their original form or as a certified copy or a certified translation (Art 5(3)).

### ***Quality criteria***

The Services Directive contains a large number of quality criteria applying to information and online procedures. Information needs to be provided in a clear and unambiguous manner, easily accessible at a distance and by electronic means, and kept up to date.

Member States shall ensure that the PSCs and the competent authorities respond as quickly as possible to any request for information or assistance. PSCs are encouraged to make the information available in other Community languages.

Authorisation procedures and formalities shall provide applicants with a guarantee that their application will be processed as quickly as possible and, in any event, within a reasonable period which is fixed and made public in advance. The period shall run only from the time when all documentation has been submitted. When justified by the complexity of the issue, the time period may be extended once, by the competent authority, for a limited time. The extension and its duration shall be duly motivated and shall be notified to the applicant before the original period has expired.

All applications for authorisation shall be acknowledged as quickly as possible. In the case of an incomplete application, the applicant shall be informed as quickly as possible of the need to supply any additional documentation, as well as of any possible effects on deadlines. When a request is rejected because it fails to comply with the required procedures or formalities, the applicant shall be informed of the rejection as quickly as possible.

Additional quality criteria, though of a voluntary nature, were included in the "PSC Charter"<sup>237</sup> of 2013. These cover the quality and availability of information provided on PSCs, completion of e-procedures, accessibility of PSCs for cross-border users, and usability of PSCs.

### ***Findability***

The Points of Single Contact should provide procedures "at a distance and by electronic means". In practice, all Member States have set up online (e-government) PSCs. A central (Commission-level) website<sup>238</sup> provides links to all of them.

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<sup>237</sup> Charter for the electronic Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive, 2013, <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/14950/attachments/1/translations>

<sup>238</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/eu-go/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/eu-go/index_en.htm)

### 3.2.2 *Product Contact Points under Regulation (EC) 764/2008*

The Regulation<sup>239</sup> aims to guarantee the free movement of goods in the internal market, in the absence of harmonised rules. It lays down procedures to be followed by Member States when denying market access to a product lawfully marketed in a Member State. Another goal is to increase awareness of the mutual recognition principle, which allows for products lawfully marketed in another Member State to be sold in other Member States, despite the fact that this product complies with different national technical rules, ensuring legal certainty for national authorities and businesses and improving administrative cooperation between national authorities.

#### *Assistance*

As the application of the mutual recognition principle is not automatic, certain national technical regulations may prevail. Economic operators may wish to know about the applicable national rules before entering a market. The Regulation contains the obligation for Member States to establish national Product Contact Points ("PCPs"). These provide, upon request, information on the national technical rules applicable to a specific product, the contact details of the competent authorities in charge of supervising the implementation of the technical rules in question and remedies available in case of dispute between the economic operator and the competent authority. The scope of the PCPs is limited to the non-harmonised sector<sup>240</sup>. They therefore qualify as "assistance services".

#### *Quality criteria*

The Regulation contains a limited number of quality criteria, mostly voluntary. The only "hard" criterion is that PCPs should reply to requests within 15 working days of receiving them. According to a recital, PCPs should be adequately equipped and resourced, and are encouraged to make the information available online and in other Community languages. The provision of information in the scope of the Regulation should be free of charge. For additional information PCPs may charge proportionate fees.

#### *Findability*

Recital 30 encourages Member States to make the information available through a website – but this is voluntary. The Commission publishes and keeps up-to-date the list online with the contact details of the PCPs. 25 Member States have set up PCP websites.

#### *Case feedback*

No information is available on whether PCPs are recording the enquiries (and replies sent) in a database. However, Member States need to report to the Commission on this. A study<sup>241</sup> suggests that some PCPs do not, but no details are available.

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<sup>239</sup> Regulation 764/2008

<sup>240</sup> As opposed to the (EU) harmonised sector, for which the PCPs are not responsible.

<sup>241</sup> Evaluation of the Application of the mutual recognition principle in the field of goods, Technopolis, 2015, section 5.3.1.

### 3.2.3 *Product Contact Points for Construction under Regulation 305/2011*

The aim of the Construction Products Regulation<sup>242</sup> (CPR) is to facilitate the free movement of construction products.

#### *Assistance*

Member States had to set up Product Contact Points for Construction ("PCPCs") that should provide information on technical rules for construction products, contact details of authorities and information on remedies at the request of the economic operator. They cover the harmonised and non-harmonised sector. They qualify as "assistance services" for the purposes of the single digital gateway, as they offer a personalised service. A website with information is voluntary.

#### *Quality criteria*

The quality provisions for the PCPCs have been modelled on those applying to the PCPs under the Mutual Recognition Regulation (MRR) that was adopted three years earlier. For example, the 15 working-day deadline also applies to requests made to the PCPCs. However, many of the voluntary quality recommendations of the MRR have been weakened or dropped. The only quality criterion that the CPR contains and the MRR doesn't is that information shall be provided using "transparent and easily understandable terms".

#### *Findability*

Whereas the MRR encouraged the provision of information through a website and the use of other Community languages, this is missing from the CPR. The Commission publishes a list online with the contact details of the PCPCs. 25 Member States have created PCPC websites.

#### *Case feedback*

No information is available on whether PCPCs are recording the enquiries (and replies sent) in a database.

### 3.2.4 *SOLVIT*

SOLVIT<sup>243</sup> was launched on the basis of a Commission Recommendation in July 2002<sup>244</sup> and has developed significantly since, most lately through a Commission Recommendation of 2013<sup>245</sup> (replacing the initial 2001 Recommendation). SOLVIT is as an informal problem solving network within Member States, coordinated by the Commission. The general objective of SOLVIT is to deliver fast, effective and informal solutions to problems individuals and businesses encounter when their EU rights in the internal market are being denied by public authorities and to contribute to a better functioning Single Market by

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<sup>242</sup> Regulation 305/2011

<sup>243</sup> This evaluation assesses SOLVIT only for the purposes of the 'single digital gateway' initiative. For a current evaluation on SOLVIT based on the 5 evaluation criteria reference should be made to the evaluative annex accompanying the initiative on the 'Action Plan to reinforce SOLVIT'.

<sup>244</sup> Commission Recommendation of 7 December 2001 on principles for using "SOLVIT" – the Internal Market Problem Solving Network.

<sup>245</sup> Commission Recommendation of 17 September 2013 on the principles governing SOLVIT (2013/461/EU), OJ L 249, 19.9.2013, p. 10–15 and 2001/893/EC of 7 December 2001.

fostering and promoting better compliance with Union law. The 2013 Recommendation sets out specific qualitative objectives to achieve the general purpose of SOLVIT that relate to three main areas: (i) the handling, follow-up and reporting of 'structural problems' linked to breach of EU law by the Member States, (ii) the quality of the service and (iii) the use of SOLVIT.

SOLVIT aims to find solutions within 10 weeks – starting on the day the case is taken on by the SOLVIT centre in the country where the problem occurred. Submitting a case to SOLVIT doesn't suspend any formal or administrative deadlines under national law.

The role of the Commission is to coordinate and facilitate the network, while the actual problem-solving is done by the national SOLVIT centres. The Commission provides informal legal advice at the request of SOLVIT centres and legal training at regular training and networking events with the SOLVIT centres.

### ***Assistance***

SOLVIT is an assistance service, open to both citizens and businesses and is free of charge. It helps citizens and businesses when they encounter a cross-border problem caused by a potential breach of Union law by a public authority.

### ***Quality criteria***

The SOLVIT Recommendation contains several quality criteria for the service offered. SOLVIT centres should be available by telephone and email; should reply promptly and respect deadlines which are detailed in the Recommendation. When a problem cannot be taken up as a SOLVIT case, applicants should be given the reasons and advised of another possible course of action, including sign-posting or transferring the problem to another network or competent authority. Applicants should be informed of the informal nature of SOLVIT, the procedures and timeframes that apply and that SOLVIT is free of charge.

SOLVIT Centres are required to have sufficient and well-trained, multilingual staff, have adequate legal expertise or relevant experience and should have sufficient authority within the national administration.

In addition to the central (Commission) SOLVIT website, Member States should ensure user-friendly information and easy access to the SOLVIT services, in particular on all relevant websites of the public administration.

SOLVIT centres and the Commission should conduct regular quality control of cases handled. The Commission regularly reports on the quality and performance of SOLVIT<sup>246</sup>.

### ***Findability***

The Commission Recommendation also contains provisions on the visibility of the network. The Commission should promote SOLVIT with European stakeholder organisations and Union institutions and runs a SOLVIT central website<sup>247</sup>. Member States should ensure user-

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<sup>246</sup> This is done via the online Single Market Scoreboard:

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/solvit/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/solvit/index_en.htm)

<sup>247</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/>

friendly information and easy access to the SOLVIT services, in particular on all relevant websites of the public administration. They should also raise awareness about SOLVIT amongst its stakeholders, supported by the Commission.

The main channel for findability of SOLVIT is the Your Europe portal, followed by the cooperation with other networks and intermediary organisations.

### ***Case feedback***

SOLVIT is receiving more than 2000 eligible cases every year, which are fed into a central database as part of the Commission IT infrastructure. The cases in the SOLVIT database are also used for feedback on how the Single Market functions in practice. This is done through the annual reporting and on an ad hoc basis upon request. Following the Single Market Strategy the Commission is now exploring the possibilities to develop a more systematic reporting in particular about the structural and recurrent issues as detected through SOLVIT (see SOLVIT action plan of 2017).

### ***3.2.5 Your Europe***

The "Your Europe" (YE) portal has been created under the IDABC initiative<sup>248</sup> and was first launched in 2005. The 2013 Commission Communication on an "Action Plan for boosting Your Europe in cooperation with the Member States" was positively welcomed by both the EP and the Council.

### ***Information***

The portal is part of the inter-institutional "Europa" website<sup>249</sup> and contains practical and user-friendly information, in 23 languages, for citizens and businesses on rights and opportunities in the Single Market. The portal is divided into a Citizens section and a Business section.

As it is essential for people to find out about EU rights and how to exercise them in a particular country, Your Europe is a joint project of the Commission and the Member States. Visitors find EU level information provided by the Commission as well as the respective national information and implementation provided by the Member States through an Editorial Board, if not already collected through other expert groups/networks. Your Europe is divided up into topical sections that present EU-level content (EU rights) and national content, including through links to Member States' pages.

Your Europe also links to relevant assistance and problem-solving services (Your Europe Advice, Europe Direct, SOLVIT, EEC-Net, Enterprise Europe Network, etc.), other EU portals (e.g. e-justice, Euraxess, EURES), Commission websites, national contact and enforcement bodies, relevant forms and to relevant EU law and a few e-procedures (European Professional Card, Online Dispute Resolution).

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<sup>248</sup> Decision 2004/387/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 April 2004 on interoperable delivery of pan-European e-government services to public administrations, businesses and citizens (IDABC).

<sup>249</sup> <http://europa.eu/youreurope>

**Quality criteria**

As part of the Europa platform of the Commission, Your Europe respects the corporate "Information Providers Guide"<sup>250</sup>, i.e. the Europa-specific quality standards on content (definition, drafting, SEO, ...) and design (structure, layout, usability, accessibility, ...). Your Europe is a multilingual portal covering currently 23 languages<sup>251</sup> for the EU-level content. Information is provided in plain language, avoiding legal and administrative jargon. The portal is adapted for use through mobile devices and complies with corporate standards for web accessibility.

**Findability**

Your Europe invests in findability of its content, mainly through search engine optimisation, online promotion and social media activities. Further measures include interlinking with national government webpages and promotion of Your Europe as part of EU and national awareness-raising campaigns on issues covered by Your Europe.

**3.2.6 Your Europe Advice**

"Your Europe Advice" (YEA)<sup>252</sup> is a Europe-wide service funded and supported by the Commission that offers citizens and businesses tailored information and advice on their EU rights (mainly internal market rights), free of charge and in all 24 EU languages. The service is outsourced to an external contractor that manages a network of about 65 legal experts with EU law background and expertise and experience in national law and administration in all Member States. YEA is mentioned in the Your Europe Action Plan of 2013. The objective of YEA is to provide a fast, high-quality, personalised legal advice service to citizens and businesses free of charge.

**Assistance**

YEA is intended to be an extension of the practical information provided on the Your Europe portal. The Your Europe portal offers a link to YEA whenever citizens need personalised and specialised advice. In their replies YEA advice experts also signpost to other information and advice services, including, but not limited to, the Scadplus website, EURES, ECC Net and other EU and national level information services. YEA has a mandate to respond to enquiries submitted by EU or EEA citizens or their family members who are entitled to benefit from EU rights.

**Quality criteria**

Citizens and businesses receive comprehensive advice within one week and are directed or "signposted", when appropriate, to the authority or other body (local, national or European) best placed to solve their problem. The contract with the contractor specifies the speed of replies to enquiries (within 72 hours), and how the deadlines are calculated. Deadline compliance is monitored by the contractor and the Commission. A large number of quality criteria apply to the replies. Some refer to substance, such as relevance, accuracy, completeness, legal reference and sign-posting, where possible. Others refer to style, e.g. the

<sup>250</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/ipg/index_en.htm)

<sup>251</sup> All official EU languages but Irish, the business sections also covers Norwegian.

<sup>252</sup> [http://europa.eu/youreurope/advice/about\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/advice/about_en.htm)

requirement for the replies to be polite, personalized and tailor-made; in clear, simple, non-technical and non-legalistic terms and easily understandable for "normal" citizens without legal knowledge. The legal experts must also live up to quality criteria as regards their qualification, experience and communication skills.

### ***Findability***

Users find YEA through links from the Your Europe portal or other assistance services with whom YEA cooperates, such as SOLVIT and Europe Direct.

### ***Case feedback***

Apart from its core activity – provision of legal advice to citizens – the service has a number of other functions. Among these is the provision of feedback about the cases and the problems experienced by EU citizens in the various Member States through quarterly feedback reports to the Commission. Enquiries are analysed and regular reports are sent to the Commission. These reports provide an up-to-date picture of where obstacles to exercising EU rights persist. The YEA database with more than 200 000 real life cases constitutes a wealth of information which can be exploited by Commission services for policy shaping or impact assessments.

### ***3.2.7 Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)***

The Enterprise Europe Network was launched in February 2008 by the European Commission. It is co-financed under COSME (Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) — an EU funding programme designed to encourage the competitiveness of European enterprises. According to the EEN call for proposals for the period 2015-2020 the Network is established "to contribute to the objectives of the COSME programme by facilitating access to European and international markets for European SMEs and by providing growth-oriented integrated business and innovation support services that help strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of European Enterprises." The Enterprise Europe Network is the world's largest support network for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) with international ambitions. It has 3,000 experts across 600 member organisations in more than 60 countries. Member organisations include chambers of commerce and industry, technology centres, and research institutes. These member organizations co-finance the network's activities. The Commission Executive Agency for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (EASME) takes care of operational and financial matters concerning the management of the network for the Commission.

### ***Assistance***

The Network helps SMEs innovate and grow internationally. It provides international business expertise with local knowledge in three areas: partnership services<sup>253</sup>, innovation support (including important services supported under the Horizon 2020 programme) and other advisory services. , Part of the Network's advisory services are of relevance to the single digital gateway, in particular practical and customised advice on doing business in another country and national legal requirements applying to the marketing of goods and the provision of services, advice on intellectual property and information and advice on EU law and standards and the Internal Market more generally. SMEs can contact domestic EEN partners,

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<sup>253</sup> The Network manages Europe's largest database of business cooperation opportunities.

which get in touch with relevant EEN partners in the target country and receive information and advice from them.

The EEN also signposts to other suitable providers of SME-oriented services. This is called the "no wrong door" principle.

### ***Quality criteria***

The performance of the network is monitored through "Key Performance Indicators". Performance is defined as growth in turnover and employment of SMEs. More specific guidelines apply to advisory services, as specified in the EEN's "Achievement Guidelines on Advisory Services Outcomes" of June 2015. As a starting-point, the network partner should agree an "advisory plan" with the client. This plan should be a short and clear document defining the actions to address the gaps and needs, identify other service providers where relevant, and schedule the actions. All provided services need to be documented in the Customer Relations Management or internal documentation. This could cover emails exchange and documentation forwarded to the client, client confirmation on the advisory plan implementation, etc.

All achievements must be reported on in the achievement report, to be submitted to EASME's Achievements Database in the Network IT Platform. The achievements report has to contain a short section on the advice given and the advisory plan, how the plan was implemented and what initial and longer-term impacts on the client are expected. The documentation of outputs is to be kept at the premises of the Network partners and should be available to EASME or auditors upon request. Quality checks are performed regularly to verify the quality and eligibility of registered achievement reports. The Network will assess the impact of the implemented advisory plan through the impact assessment procedure of the Network. The EASME Project Adviser in charge of partner reporting can perform in-depth evaluations of achievements and can put achievement reports on hold or reject them.

### ***Findability***

EASME, (the executive agency dealing with operational and financial aspects of the network) runs a central website that guides to local support services by its partners. Partner organizations should also give visibility to the EEN brand. Your Europe enables the submission of questions to EEN partners through an online form.

### ***Case feedback***

Enterprise Europe Network partners make use of the SME Feedback database to record problems or cases faced by SMEs in the internal market. Some broad headings are provided<sup>254</sup> to facilitate the analysis, and businesses are asked to quantify the loss of time and loss of income (additional costs) caused by the problem. Businesses can also provide details on how the problem could be solved. European Commission officials can check the database.

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<sup>254</sup> Lack of detail in the text of the European legislation/programme, national requirements in a cross border activity avoid correct functioning of the Internal Market, severe difficulties to find European information needed to carry out the activity, the wording of the European legislation/programme or the procedure negatively affects in particular SMEs, and wrong interpretation at national level of a European text, other.



### 3.2.8 EURES

The recently adopted Regulation (EU) 2016/589 of 13 April 2016 on a European network of employment services (EURES), workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets amended Regulations (EU) 492/2011<sup>255</sup> and 1296/2013. The objective of this Regulation is to establish a common framework for cooperation between Member States to bring together job vacancies and the possibility of applying for those job vacancies and to facilitate the achievement of a balance between supply and demand in the employment market.

The European Employment Services (EURES) was established in 1993 in order to improve mobility in the European labour market and to strengthen the integration of employment services of the Member States as a means to achieve this goal. The purpose of EURES is to provide information, recruitment, matching and placement services for the benefit of workers and employers, as well as any citizen wishing to benefit from the principle of the free movement of workers. The network is primarily based on the public employment services (PES) of the EU/EEA countries. Each Member State has established a National Coordination Office (NCO) to facilitate the cooperation on its territory and with the other Member States.

#### *Information*

The member organisations of the network provide workers and employers with basic information concerning the EURES portal, including the job-application and CV database, and the EURES network, including contact details of relevant EURES member organisations at national level, information on the recruitment channels that they use (e-services, personalised services, location of contact points) and the relevant web links, in an easily accessible and user-friendly manner.

For the purpose of publication, in particular on the EURES portal, in the interest of workers and employers, each NCO shall make available, regularly update and disseminate in a timely manner, information and guidance available at national level relating to the situation in the Member State concerning: (a) living and working conditions, including general information on social security and tax payments; (b) the relevant administrative procedures regarding employment, and the rules applicable to workers upon taking up employment; (c) its national regulatory framework for apprenticeships and traineeships and existing Union rules and instruments; (d) without prejudice to point (b) of Article 17(2), access to vocational education and training; (e) the situation of frontier workers in particular in cross-border regions; (f) post-recruitment assistance in general and information about where to obtain such assistance within and, if such information is available, outside the EURES network. Where appropriate, NCOs may make available and disseminate the information in cooperation with other information and advisory services and networks and appropriate bodies at national level.

#### *Assistance*

At both national and regional level the EURES network has an extensive human network of advisers and assistants, which have the primary task of delivery of support services to target

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<sup>255</sup> Regulation 492/2011 obliges the Commission and the Member States to exchange vacancies and applications for employment, share information concerning living and work conditions and background information on the state and trends of the labour markets, and cooperate together towards the resultant placement of workers.

groups. More than 950 EURES advisers provide information, guidance and placement services related to the European job market to both jobseekers and employers.

The member organisations work together on the basis of individual requests, specific projects and in the framework of job fairs and other events to assist individual job seekers and employers interested in mobility to match and place workers in jobs in another country.

### ***Quality criteria***

EURES member organisations need to clearly indicate to workers and employers the range of support services they provide, where and how those services are accessible and the conditions under which access is provided, using their information channels. That information is published on the EURES portal. Assistance shall be free of charge and that users of EURES have access to general information on how, when and where they can update, revise and withdraw the data concerned.

Quality criteria also apply to the registration on the EURES portal for individual job seekers and employers.

At the level of the member organisations, minimum common criteria (EURES Regulation, Annex I) apply to their service delivery for them to be able to participate in the EURES network, such as ability to provide services through one or more easily accessible channels, with at least an internet/website of the organisation accessible; existence of or commitment to ensuring the allocation of appropriate human resources for the respective tasks to be fulfilled; commitment to ensuring quality standards on staff and commitment to use the EURES trade mark only for services and activities relating to the EURES network.

Performance of the EURES network is being monitored through the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data at national level by Member States, including, where available, through customer satisfaction surveys. The Regulation provides a procedural framework for establishing uniform detailed specifications for the collection and analysis of the data.

### ***Findability***

The EURES network consists of two pillars: the portal and the (human) network in the Member States. Your Europe signposts to EURES whenever relevant. Communication activities are carried out to increase the visibility of EURES and disseminate information about labour market conditions and mobility opportunities.

#### ***3.2.9 European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net)***

The European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net) aims at promoting consumer confidence by advising citizens on their rights as consumers and providing easy access to redress in cross border cases. Its objective is to help unlock the full economic potential of the internal market. ECC-Net is a network of 30 offices in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland, providing free-of-charge help and advice to consumers on their cross-border purchases, whether online or on the spot within these 30 countries.

***Information***

ECC-Net centres individually have very informative websites on consumer rights. They also undertake promotional activities such as information campaigns, events etc. to raise awareness of the Network and consumer rights.

***Assistance***

ECC-Net centres respond to specific consumer enquiries about their rights when shopping across borders, and assist consumers with complaints and disputes. They advise on consumer rights and assist citizens to resolve a complaint against a trader based in another EU country, Iceland or Norway with the aim of achieving amicable outcomes. They also redirect citizens to an appropriate body if the ECC-Net cannot help.

***Quality criteria***

Certain quality criteria on complaint handling exist, which the ECCs try to respect. These are regulated in the ECC-Net case handling protocol, which is an internal document, making the commitment neither formal nor public. These quality criteria also serve as the benchmark for evaluating the efficiency of the centres.

***Findability***

A central ECC-Net website on Europa guides users to local support in their countries. Your Europe signposts users to ECC whenever relevant.

An ECC-Net Travel App provides legal knowledge on consumer rights and language support in 23 EU languages plus Norwegian and Icelandic.

***Case feedback***

The ECC have a database for collecting complaint information on cross-border complaints. This database provides information on cross border consumer complaints for the EEA (including what are the problems, what are the most frequent problems, on which purchasing channel, which economic sector and which law applies).

The ECCs' capacity to act as an observatory of trends and issues arising in the Single Market is based on statistics derived from their case databases, and from specific studies they regularly undertake. For example, the 2014 ECC study on the non-discrimination clause in the Services Directive was an important piece of evidence used in the Commission's policy combatting geo-blocking. The study on the implementation of the small claims procedure contributed to its reform. Several studies on passenger rights were used by DG MOVE as input to a revision of those rights.

**3.3 Methodology and evidence base**

This evaluation builds on Commission and commissioned evaluations and studies<sup>256</sup> over the past five years and related to the tools screened, as well as an impact assessment (for the 2016 EURES Regulation) carried out in the recent past. Up-to-date data of the last (July 2016)

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<sup>256</sup> These are listed in the annex.

Single Market Scoreboard was also used. Further evidence was drawn from several public consultations of the Commission on: the single digital gateway (2016), the Mutual Recognition Regulation (2016), the Services Card (2016), the Start-up initiative (2016) and European Citizenship (2015) as well as the REFIT Platform. Stakeholder positions have also been taken into consideration.

The existing quantitative evidence on the efficiency of the instruments is relatively scarce and inconclusive.

### **3.4 Evaluation of the existing framework**

This chapter will examine the available evidence for each instrument as regards the effectiveness and efficiency, relevance, coherence and EU added value. On this basis, conclusions for the overall framework will be drawn.

#### ***3.4.1 The effectiveness of the existing framework***

To what extent have the instruments in place been effective in allowing citizens and businesses to obtain relevant information, complete electronically all relevant procedures, benefit from high quality services that are easy to find?

#### ***Points of Single Contact***

Overall, the Services Directive's Points of Single Contact have been a partial success, as will be elaborated in this section. Various analyses and studies<sup>257</sup> have shown the varying level of ambition and quality of national PSCs. Weaknesses exist in terms of languages available for completing the administrative requirements, user-friendliness, acceptance of e-signatures, in particular from foreign users, and the extent to which they actually function as e-government portals. Scope is also an issue, as the Services Directive does not cover certain areas, sectors and procedures which are nevertheless of key importance to businesses, such as VAT, income taxes, social security, labour law-related requirements and procedures.

In 2013 the Commission developed, and the High-level Group of the Competitiveness Council endorsed, a voluntary instrument for improving the PSCs, i.e. the PSC Charter. This was meant to serve as a guideline for those countries that intend their PSCs to go beyond that which is legally required. It recommends that the information, procedures and assistance provided through the PSCs take a holistic approach in terms of scope, taking into account the businesses' needs (and not the limits of the Directive). The Charter contains a number of quality criteria topping those of the Directive, such as accessibility of the PSCs in other languages, the payment of relevant fees online and clarification of what is meant by user-friendliness (e.g. FAQ, lay out, search engine, navigation, tracking tools).

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<sup>257</sup> "The functioning and usability of the Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive – State of Play and Way Forward", Deloitte, 2012; J. Montesgudo, A. Rutkowski, D. Lorenzani, "Part 2: Assessing the economic impact of setting up Points of Single Contact: an approximation based on the Doing Business" in "The economic impact of the Services Directive: a first assessment following implementation", Economic Papers No 456, June 2012; "Services Directive implementation survey – the Chambers' perspective on the Points of Single Contact, Eurochambres, Policy Survey, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, January 2011; "Are the Points of Single Contact truly making things easier for European companies? – Services Directive implementation Report, Business Europe, November 2011.

The most recent assessment of the performance of the Points of Single Contact was done against the Charter criteria<sup>258</sup>. It showed that, while some progress had been made, performance is still mediocre with considerable room for improvement. On most PSC portals only a limited number of procedures are available for online completion, and only for certain service sectors. In general and across Member States, PSC performance is clearly the weakest when it comes to offering information and e-procedures to cross-border users. This is explained by the incompleteness of information in other than national languages, foreign e-IDs and means of payment not being accepted, form fields only accepting national data, and necessity to present original paper documents or certified documents. Where certain key procedures are offline, entrepreneurs still need to travel to the other country(ies) they want to do business with.

The study was conducted on the basis of mystery shopping assessing four business scenarios in 2014. For these four scenarios, the missing necessary national information was 60% for 1/3 of Member States, 50-40% for 1/3 of Member States, and 30% for 1/3 of Member States<sup>259</sup>. The scenarios covered 20 national procedures. With the exception of one procedure<sup>260</sup>, more than 80% of Member States did not provide even such basic information as the time estimation for the procedure.

The underlying reasons for the weak performance with respect to the foreign user are that PSCs are primarily being used for a domestic audience (analytics and other data prove this) and Member States do not want to incur translation and other costs for foreign users. Foreign users have "no voice" and are easily overlooked when national information and procedures are designed. Thus small but effective obstacles, such as online form fields only allowing for national data, creep in. A further major stumbling block is that the e-IDAS Regulation has not yet been fully implemented<sup>261</sup>. The result is that very frequently, foreign e-IDs are not accepted. Also, the competencies of administrative levels vary greatly across Member States. Domestic citizens may be able to pinpoint the competent authority, but foreigners find this very difficult without proper guidance. More generally, national administrations lack service orientation and tend to not make the greatest effort to be user-friendly (e.g. as compared to commercial websites and applications). Many operate in "silos" and find cooperating with other administrations in order to offer more integrated, simpler and more user-friendly services difficult.

The REFIT Platform Stakeholder<sup>262</sup> Group stated in its background comments that "often, insufficient resources are allocated to the PSCs. (...) Member States regularly show political commitment and dedication in Council conclusions but this is often not translated into concrete action and improvement".

This general problem is also confirmed and highlighted by the Commission's yearly e-government benchmark reports<sup>263</sup>. The assessment showed that companies that want to go

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<sup>258</sup> "The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter", Capgemini and Eurochambres, June 2015.

<sup>259</sup> Idem, rough outcome of mystery shopping for four business scenarios.

<sup>260</sup> General registration of economic activity.

<sup>261</sup> The deadline for full implementation is September 2018.

<sup>262</sup> Refit Platform Opinion on the submission by the Danish Business forum and BusinessEurope on the Point of Single Contact, 27/28 June 2016.

<sup>263</sup> EE.g. 2016 report: The Business Mobility Benchmark indicates that 25% of services required of foreign entrepreneurs to start their business in another country is completely off-line: meaning there is no

cross-border face important linguistic and technical problems in completing administrative requirements online. Often only rudimentary information is provided in English or other foreign languages and online forms are merely available in local languages. Only the general business registration can be done fully online in more than 50% of the PSCs. For the more specific requirements (including sector specific requirements), greater in number and complexity, the PSCs still often only offer general information about the procedure or no information at all and few or no e-procedures.

The result is that foreign companies need to spend a lot of time and money in order to gather relevant information, understand what they need to do and carry out the necessary administrative procedures. More than half of SMEs say that administrative procedures related to exporting are too difficult to comply with and therefore deter many firms from marketing their products and services abroad<sup>264</sup>. This is confirmed by the Stakeholders' Consultation on the single digital gateway, where a significant majority of respondents claim that they find it very difficult both to find information online (78% of businesses and 70% of citizens), and most of those who tried to carry out procedures cross-border found it difficult or had to give up.

Based on the PSC study, the Commission launched 10 EU pilots<sup>265</sup> in July 2015 because of two main issues: (1) the relevant PSC not offering the possibility to complete all administrative procedures electronically and at distance; (2) lack of accessibility of electronic procedures for foreign users. These EU Pilots are still ongoing.

A recent Court of Auditors report on the implementation of the Services Directive<sup>266</sup> concludes that PSCs are difficult to find, and that there is low business awareness.

**Conclusion:** The Points of Single Contact which were established under the Services Directive have been partially effective in allowing businesses to complete all relevant procedures fully online. Often, necessary information is missing, quality is deficient and procedures cannot be carried out fully online. PSC performance is weakest when it comes to the cross-border user: offering him accessible information and e-procedures that he can conduct fully online from abroad is often deficient.

### ***Product Contact Points***

The Product Contact Points which the Regulation established have been partially successful in meeting their objective of providing businesses with information on the applicable rules and the application of the mutual recognition principle in the Member State where a business wants to market its product<sup>267</sup>.

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information – let alone a service – available online. In contrast, entrepreneurs starting a business in their own country face such issues in only 2% of the cases.

<sup>264</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 421: Internationalisation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Flash Eurobarometer 413.

<sup>265</sup> EU Pilots are pre-infringement tools that allow an exchange of letters with the concerned Member State.

<sup>266</sup> Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2016 "Has the Commission ensured effective implementation of the Services Directive?"

<sup>267</sup> The PCPs are also being evaluated in the framework of the Commission evaluation of the functioning of mutual recognition.

A general problem is awareness: companies' lack of awareness of the mutual recognition principle in general, and of the existence of the product contact points in particular. A company survey conducted during the evaluation of the mutual recognition principle<sup>268</sup> showed that 54% of the companies interviewed did not know about the principle, or have heard of it but are not familiar with the details. Among them, more than 80% are SMEs. A European Business Test Panel<sup>269</sup>, conducted between May and September 2004, showed that only 46% of respondents were familiar with the principle. A recent public consultation<sup>270</sup> with 91 business respondents had a more positive result: 70% of businesses declared being aware of the principle<sup>271</sup>. However, 95% of businesses replied in the same consultation that awareness-raising about the principle was still necessary. This points to an information weakness: information about the mutual recognition principle has not reached the business community to a sufficient degree. Although the principle is explained in detail on Commission websites, including on Your Europe, this seems to not have reached the target audience.

This general lack of awareness of the mutual recognition principle, which is not automatic, can have an impact on the use of the Product Contact Points, as awareness of the existence of different national technical rules that may apply to a product is a pre-condition for a business to contact a Product Contact Point. Nevertheless, according to the 2016 public consultation on mutual recognition, 94% of businesses are checking the national rules before entering a new market. However, most of businesses never contacted a PCP in order to obtain information on applicable product rules, mainly because they were not aware of their existence.

In terms of quality of the PCP service, the majority of those that did contact a PCP preferred not to assess their experience (72%<sup>272</sup>) or not to mention why precisely they considered it as not satisfactory (79%).

A few Member States<sup>273</sup> conducted national surveys on the usefulness of the PCPs, and the results show that economic operators are globally satisfied with the services. But generally, economic operators complain about the long time it takes for receiving an answer, the quality of the answer or even the absence of it. This issue is sometimes highlighted by the Member States in their annual reports. Often, PCPs receive questions which are not within their remit. This is not surprising since their remit is limited to the non-harmonised sector, but products are usually affected by both the harmonised and the non-harmonised sector. This constitutes a serious problem for businesses, as in most cases the PCPs cannot provide them with an exhaustive reply of which rules apply to their products.

Moreover, the variety of products falling under the scope of mutual recognition as well as the increasing number of national rules<sup>274</sup> makes it difficult to easily identify the responsible persons having the necessary expertise. Very often, the PCPs have to send enquiries to the local level. This is one more reason why PCPs find the strict deadlines for replying to

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<sup>268</sup> Evaluation of the Application of the mutual recognition principle in the field of goods, Technopolis, 2015.

<sup>269</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/ia\\_carried\\_out/docs/ia\\_2007/sec\\_2007\\_0112\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/ia_carried_out/docs/ia_2007/sec_2007_0112_en.pdf).

<sup>270</sup> Public consultation on mutual recognition, running from 1 June to 30 September 2016.

<sup>271</sup> There might be a selection bias: companies being aware of the principle and the regulation are more likely to answer to the open public consultation and are therefore likely to be overrepresented.

<sup>272</sup> Result of the 2016 public consultation on mutual recognition.

<sup>273</sup> Annual reports from SE 2015, DE and FR 2013.

<sup>274</sup> The complexity of the legal framework is a main reason for the lack of effectiveness of the PCPs. However, this is out of the scope of this exercise.

economic operators difficult to meet. According to a study<sup>275</sup>, the most frequent model for replying to requests to PCPs appears to be that the PCP sends the request to the responsible authority, which then replies directly to the company without involving the PCP. The PCP would then not be informed about the outcome of the query, rendering any monitoring of the quality of the reply impossible. Language issues<sup>276</sup>, especially when technical language is used, add further problems and delays. Both national and foreign companies use the product contact point system.

Although this is voluntary, most Member States have set up dedicated PCP webpages. According to a recent study<sup>277</sup>, Germany has two PCPs managed by different authorities; Romania runs 4 PCPs. 6 Member States do not list an email address on their webpages. In the case of Italy the email address is an online form which cannot be filled in online directly, but must be printed and later scanned. Only 15 countries provide the contact details of the competent authorities on their website/webpages, although this is a legal requirement. The remaining 13 Member States may not be in breach of the Regulation as it is not prescribed that information should be provided online. However, this would appear to be the easiest and most user-friendly means of fulfilling this requirement. The same applies to information on remedies, which is also required by law and which only half of the Member States (14) publish on their website.

In terms of content made available online, 22 Member States explain the Mutual Recognition Regulation. In their annual reports to the Commission, some Member States indicate that offering online information about mutual recognition and certain problematic sectors helped in optimising the functioning of the PCPs. 18 Member States present relevant national laws, to varying degrees of detail. 16 Member States provide information on technical product rules, though often not in an exhaustive way. 12 Member States display links to the NANDO database. 10 countries offer a FAQ section/guidelines online. Although this is "better than nothing", there is ample scope for every single Member State of improving (or even creating) PCP websites.

The majority of respondents to the public consultation considered that the PCP network is still useful and necessary, but needs to be further strengthened in order to be efficient as regards its objectives. Lack of awareness of the PCPs' existence may lie at the root of the quality problem, as this is responsible for the low demand. If the PCPs received more requests from economic operators, Member States would be more likely to supply them with more and good resources, or ensure a better functioning coordination mechanism within the country.

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<sup>275</sup> Evaluation of the Application of the Principle of Mutual Recognition in the Field of Goods, p. 62.

<sup>276</sup> However, according to the recent Ecorys survey in which only 6 PCP and 11 PCPC participated, all PCPs and PCPCs declared being able to answer queries in English. But the participation rate is too low to be representative.

<sup>277</sup> Screening Report on Member States' Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction, Ecorys, 2017.



**Conclusion:** The Mutual Recognition Regulation, under which the PCPs were set up, only encourages making information available through a website. While most Member States have set up PCP websites voluntarily, these websites are of varying quality (often not very user-friendly) and rarely list national technical rules per product. Businesses are mostly not aware of the existence of the PCPs, and therefore do not look for and solicit them. When they do, they often complain about response time and quality of the replies. It appears that the current PCP network – whilst considered necessary – is not functioning effectively for businesses.

### ***Construction Products Regulation and Product Contact Points for Construction***

According to the "Analysis of Implementation of the Construction Products Regulation" of July 2015, the awareness amongst companies about the existence of the PCPC is low, in particular as far as PCPCs in other EU countries are concerned. The number of requests put to PCPC is very low – between 15 for the Cypriot PCPC and 114 for the Croatian PCPCs<sup>278</sup>. Nothing is known about the quality of the replies provided. According to a recent study<sup>279</sup>, 20 Member States have set up dedicated webpages for their PCPC, and 5 have full websites. 15 countries have translated their website/webpage content into English. In most cases web content is only partially available in English.

The great majority (25 out of 28) of countries have created an ad hoc email address to contact PCPCs. For the Spanish and Greek PCPC, contact details can be found only on the EC list. In some other cases, contact details are not easy to find: the email address is provided only in the English version of the website/webpage, or can be found only in the FAQ section. In some countries, according to the study, there are reasons to believe that the email address attached to the PCP is not functioning properly.

In terms of actual online content of the PCPCs, all PCPCs except for Slovakia, Hungary and Poland provide information or link to information on CE marking. 16 PCPCs list the products falling under CE marking. Some countries like France and Hungary have developed a comprehensive database presenting the list of products and their related requirements. Otherwise, a link is provided to websites of other competent authorities. 24 countries mention the Declaration of Performance – some only mentioning it, others explaining it. 23 countries display or give access to a list of products affected by European or national legislation. 23 PCPCs mention harmonised European norms and provide links. 11 PCPCs or CPR websites display a link to the European Organisation for Technical Assessment. 19 online PCPCs include a Q&A/Guidelines section, to different degrees of detail (e.g. 3 Q&A's in the case of Bulgaria, and 73 in France). 4 countries display information on available remedies. Information is not always clearly displayed and well-structured. In some cases, introductory text is missing, including a clear explanation on the function of the national PCPC.

<sup>278</sup> Outcome of a PCPC survey to which only 16 PCPC replied.

<sup>279</sup> Screening Report on Member States' Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction, Ecorys, 2017.

**Conclusion:** Although a detailed analysis of effectiveness, including a PCPC user survey, has not been done until now, there are indications that the PCPCs are under-performing for businesses. There are of course country variations, but generally speaking the indicative number of requests submitted to the PCPCs appears to be very low and not in line with actual business demand. Business awareness of the PCPCs is low, in particular as far as PCPCs in other EU countries are concerned. While most Member States have set up PCPC websites voluntarily, these websites are of varying quality (often not very user-friendly) and rarely list national technical rules per product.

## ***SOLVIT***

The performance of SOLVIT and national SOLVIT centres has been reported yearly as of 2012<sup>280</sup> in the Single Market Scoreboard.<sup>281</sup> In 2015, the SOLVIT caseload was 2 228 cases which was stable in comparison to the high increase in 2014 (2 368 cases). In 2015 SOLVIT also received an additional 2 500 complaints that were not within its remit (the figure for 2014 was 2 400). For those cases, SOLVIT helped complainants by explaining their EU rights in more detail or by finding another means of redress.

51% of cases were submitted online, 12% were transferred by Your Europe Advice and 1% were transferred by Europe Direct Contact Centre. The rest were submitted via other means (e-mail, phone, post, in person).

The overall performance of Member States is measured through their performance in four indicators: (1) initial contact with the applicant – the target deadline is 7 days maximum; (2) time taken to prepare cases for transfer to the SOLVIT centre in the Member State where the problem occurred – the target deadline is 30 days maximum; time taken to handle a case – the target deadline is 10 weeks maximum; resolution rate of cases.

In 2015, out of 31 SOLVIT centres, 16 performed above the average whilst 13 within the average. For two centres no assessment could be done as they had no cases.

The result of the 2015 assessment on staffing is that caseloads are rising – but staff numbers are static or even decreasing. In many cases, staff may be unable to cope with any further caseload increases. Many centres also seem to experience difficulties with communicating promptly (replying to e-mails, telephone calls etc.). High turnover in some centres makes business continuity and efficient case handling even more difficult. In addition, many SOLVIT centres often have to give priority to other tasks for their national administrations, leaving insufficient time for SOLVIT duties.

The 2013 Recommendation set out specific qualitative objectives to achieve the general purpose of SOLVIT that relate to three main areas: (i) the handling, follow-up and reporting of 'structural problems' linked to breach of EU law by the Member States, (ii) the quality of the service and (iii) the use of SOLVIT.

<sup>280</sup> During the previous years, an individual report on SOLVIT was published. For an overview of the existing reports see [http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/documents/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/documents/index_en.htm).

<sup>281</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/solvit/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/solvit/index_en.htm). The data for 2016 will be published in July 2017.

The resolution time and the resolution rate of so-called 'structural cases' is low. 'Structural cases' are usually highly complex as they are caused by breaches of EU law by Member States that are difficult to resolve (e.g. only by amendments to national laws, which usually takes longer than the SOLVIT 10 week deadline). The number of structural cases handled increased in 2015 to 97 cases (64 in 2014) and the cases closed within 10 weeks were 39%. The main legal areas concerned were free movement of people and residence rights (50), recognition of professional qualifications (14), free movement of workers (10) and social security (10).

In September 2015, all the Member States endorsed a policy paper (the so-called 'Lisbon paper') on the future of SOLVIT<sup>282</sup>. The paper was presented to the Competitiveness Council in November 2015<sup>283</sup>. The Member States pointed out that SOLVIT is not living up to its full potential for businesses and citizens. They stressed that unresolved and repetitive cases are often rooted in difficulties with national implementation and application of EU law. A clear follow-up procedure for these unresolved cases is lacking. Neither SOLVIT centres nor complainants are informed about whether there will be a follow-up. Repetitive cases without structural solutions are not effectively dealt with by the Commission or referred to the Council and co-legislators. The paper stresses that citizens and businesses should not have to lodge their complaint again if their case is unresolved in SOLVIT as is the current situation. Moreover, it notes that the follow-up of the unresolved SOLVIT cases is not transparent and there is a lack of clear reporting and mechanism to the Member States and SOLVIT centres.

The 2013 SOLVIT Recommendation clarifies the level of service individuals and businesses can expect from SOLVIT and sets out minimum standards SOLVIT centres should comply with, in terms of organisation, legal expertise, and relations with other networks.<sup>284</sup> Nevertheless, although the quality of the service is satisfactory, it varies across the network due to different factors.<sup>285</sup> The quality check performed by the Commission SOLVIT team on a regular basis shows that there is scope for improvement in the handling of cases and respect of deadlines. Further work is required from governments in making sure that SOLVIT centres are adequately staffed, in enabling them to prioritise SOLVIT work, in ensuring a degree of staffing continuity and ensuring that national SOLVIT centres have sufficient authority within their national administration. In addition, further prioritization of the Member States' governments is needed as regards the follow-up of relevant structural issues detected through SOLVIT. In addition, as regards the SOLVIT centres, the focus on the quality of case handling should be strengthened, as well as efforts in meeting the recommended target times, keeping applicants informed on progress and ensuring access to expertise on issues of interest to business.

In 2015 SOLVIT also received an additional 2 500 complaints that were not within its remit (the figure for 2014 was 2 400). It is important to highlight that although these cases do not fall within SOLVIT's mandate, SOLVIT helped complainants by explaining their EU rights in more detail or by finding another means of redress. The proportion of in and out of scope

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<sup>282</sup> The paper was the outcome of a conference on SOLVIT held in Lisbon and organized by 18 SOLVIT centres on 18 September 2015. It contains specific actions and calls for the reinforcement of SOLVIT through (i) its promotion as the first step in the enforcement of EU law, (ii) the systematic follow-up by the Commission services of unresolved and repetitive cases and (iii) the establishment of regular reporting for SOLVIT to the Council.

<sup>283</sup> <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/compet/2015/11/30-01/>

<sup>284</sup> Commission Recommendation on principles governing SOLVIT, 17.9.2013, Brussels, C (2013) 5869 final.

<sup>285</sup> See yearly evaluation of the performance of SOLVIT on:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/solvit/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/solvit/index_en.htm).

cases (2 228 vs 2 500) cannot be considered satisfactory and deviates the reduced resources of the national SOLVIT centres from their main tasks. Another point as regards the use of SOLVIT is that although the number of the cases has increased significantly in the period 2012-2015, this is mainly due to the increase of submission of cases in two specific legal areas, namely social security and residence rights.

Moreover, over the years, businesses have submitted only a fraction of the number of cases compared with those submitted by individuals. In 2015, 107 out of 2 228 cases were submitted by business. A combination of factors appears to account for this, including the relatively low level of awareness of SOLVIT, complexity of business cases and businesses' preference for using formal legal channels that offer more leverage.

**Conclusion:** The general objective of SOLVIT has not been fully met: in 2015 12% of the cases could not be resolved, in 23% of the cases the applicants got their first reply after the deadline of 7 days, the preparation of cases as home centre took longer than the deadline of 30 days in 14% of the complaints and 34% of the accepted cases took longer than the aim of 10 weeks. Businesses are currently not using SOLVIT much. The main underlying reasons impeding SOLVIT's effectiveness are the lack of authority, adequacy of the staff and limited awareness of SOLVIT and the services it offers, especially for businesses and that there is not yet a fully operational systematic set-up for the handling, follow-up and reporting of 'structural problems' detected in SOLVIT.

### ***Your Europe***

Your Europe already functions as a "gateway". It is an online access point to EU-level and national information and certain services, and also signposts to a wide range of assistance services.

Data in the Single Market Scoreboard shows that use of the site has been continuously growing and reached over 1,4 million monthly visits in 2016 (up from 800,000 in 2014 and one million in 2015). No official evaluation of the Your Europe Portal has ever been carried out so far. Therefore, the only indications can be the online user surveys, which Your Europe conducts regularly. These show high levels of satisfaction, with more than 90% 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. 70% say that they found the information they were looking for, fully or at least partially.

Your Europe is written in jargon-free language from a user-perspective. A page on Your Europe contains typically a text describing the rights, obligations and/or opportunities related to EU legislation, real life sample stories to illustrate how it works in practice, links to the related EU legislation (as the core text is drafted for non-specialists, Directives and Regulations are not spelled out there), links to the contacts points of national authorities and national websites for content, frequently asked questions and links to relevant assistance services available to answer additional questions. Content is constantly updated and revised. Your Europe is considered a "best practice" example of a Commission webpage and is often quoted as best practice in the context of the Commission's "digital transformation" project towards a new and improved (more user-centric) Europa site.

Your Europe uses tracking data (e.g. the most frequently sought information; number of unique visitors/visits, etc.) as well as user feedback from a targeted yearly survey to constantly improve the service.

However, there is scope for improvement. According to the 2013 Your Europe Action Plan, people not finding the information they need frequently said that this was due to navigation problems or to missing national-level information. The EU citizenship public consultation (2015) showed that the main source of information that citizens consulted prior to moving to another EU country were websites of public authorities of that country. 73% of respondents searching for information available online had used websites of authorities in the EU country to which they were planning to move, as compared to 35% who had consulted web portals of EU institutions. This suggests thinking about a better integration of EU and national websites.

The Your Europe citizen section is much more used than the business section (more than 2/3 of total visitors). This is linked to the fact that the target audience is different in size, but might also suggest that there is scope for improvement as far as the business section is concerned. Your Europe links to national content where it exists and when this is notified to it via the Editorial Board or other expert groups.

For several sections on Your Europe, national content has been requested to Editorial Board members, but has not been entirely delivered. This concerns information for parts of the following sections: residence formalities: 33% is missing, vehicles: 24%, VAT refunds: 19%, national contact points: 17%, travel: 15%, taxation: 15%, terms of employment: 13%, start & grow: 11%. The Business Section mainly links to national portals and assistance services and contains much less national-level information than the Citizens section. In an attempt to avoid overlaps it is relying on Member States to provide information through their own portals. Given the diverging quality of national portals, incomplete and missing national content is therefore Your Europe's biggest concern.

According to European Commission desk research conducted in January 2017 assessing availability of national-level information and assistance services for eight selected business areas<sup>286</sup>, in national language and in English, the results vary significantly according to Member State and area, and availability of information is, on average, 25% lower in English than in the national language (for the language difference, please see the graph on the next page; for the detailed Member State figures and gap analysis, please see annex 4).

The biggest gaps can be found in the area of selling goods, complying with environmental rules and complying with health and safety conditions.

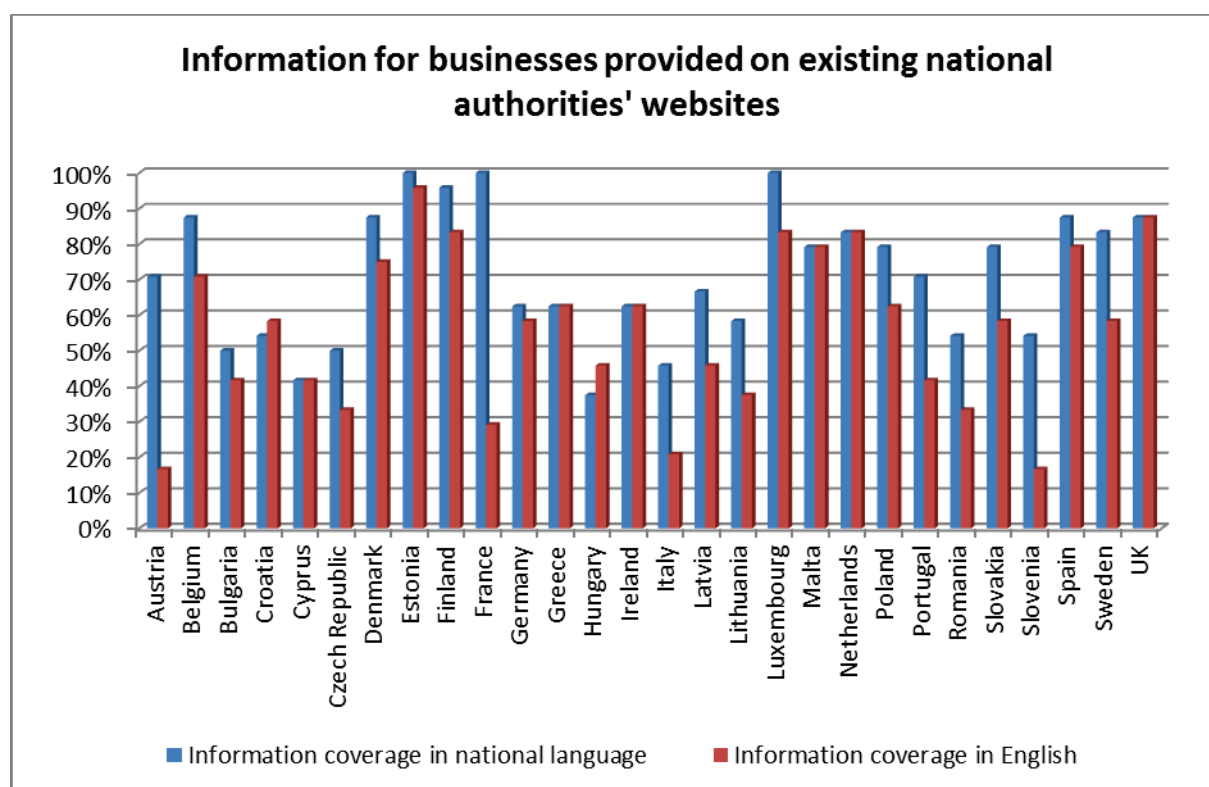
This lack of online availability of national information is then directly reflected via the Your Europe portal, where these parts become gaps (for certain Member States in any case). An ongoing study concludes that for specific national requirements and procedures, the portal refers users to the Point of Single Contact in the country of interest, where uneven levels of detail are provided<sup>287</sup>.

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<sup>286</sup> For each Member State, three questions were researched online for each of the following sections: 1) starting, running and closing a business, 2) hiring staff, 3) paying taxes, 4) selling goods, 5) providing services, 6) getting funds, 7) complying with environmental rules (certification and labels), 8) complying with health and safety conditions.

<sup>287</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Draft Final Report, January 2017.

Figure 3.1



The Commission tracks the contribution of Member States to Your Europe on the Single Market Scoreboard through three indicators: (1) answers received by the Editorial Board from their national administration, to request for information for Your Europe, (2) attendance at 2 Editorial Board meetings per year, and (3) traffic from government pages to Your Europe and promotional activity requested by members of the Editorial Board. The most recent (2015) available result is that the performance of 3 Member States was assessed as below average, 4 were average and the rest above average. Thus, overall, the cooperation with Member States is working effectively.

According to the Your Europe Action Plan, even where national information exists, it is often not tailored to the needs of those operating in a cross-border context. In addition, the quality of national content varies – sometimes national websites only exist in national language<sup>288</sup>, or no website is offered but only a summary of relevant national characteristics of the matter in question. The latter can seldom provide sufficient information in complex matters (e.g. in the business context).

User statistics indicate that visitors find Your Europe mainly through search engines and the europe.eu website.

<sup>288</sup> An internal analysis of the language coverage of national citizen portals shows that 10 Member States run portals which, in addition to the national language(s), also exist fully in English. 11 Member States offer portals that are partly available in English, and 5 Member States' portals are only available in the national language. 4 countries have no citizens' portals. Business portals (e.g. PSCs) provide more English coverage, but often only partially and sometimes only using machine translation.

According to Search Engine Optimisation assessment, information on Your Europe is generally well ranked in search engines. Further improvement could be reached by eliminating duplication. For example, the topic of social security is covered by Your Europe, websites of DGs employment and SANCO, EURES, Missoc, and a multitude of national sites<sup>289</sup>. Your Europe, the EU Commission in Ireland, the European Parliament's website, the ECC-Net Belgium and Denmark all present information on air passenger rights on their websites. In the area of consumer rights, everything covered by Your Europe is also covered separately by all individual ECC-Net national centres. Both Your Europe and EURES overlap with regard to working in another EU country. Information on roaming is presented on Your Europe, DG CNECT and European Parliament websites. The digital transformation process within the Commission is currently addressing these concerns for all europa pages while no procedures are in place beyond this mandate.

**Conclusion:** Your Europe users are usually satisfied with the portal and able to find what they need. Overall, Member States are cooperating well and are delivering national content. The content of the EU-level (main) portal is being drawn up in a user-friendly and user-centric way. Main areas for improvement are filling the national-level information gaps, addressing overlaps and enhancing awareness about Your Europe.

### *Your Europe Advice*

In 2016, the YEA service replied to some 24 000 enquiries, a number that has more than doubled since 2008.

Service effectiveness is measured by testing the quality of the replies through randomly selected samples of 10% of cases each month. Each sample case is assessed according to the substantial and formal quality criteria agreed with the Commission. According to the 2016 Single Market Scoreboard, replies are found to provide comprehensive and accurate advice on the issues in question.

According to the 2014 Evaluation of the Your Europe Advice Service, YEA meets the objective of providing a service that is fast, of high quality and offering advice that empowers its users. The reach of the service is however limited considering the number of EU citizens who may require personalised legal advice and assistance on their EU rights. Given budgetary limits to the total number of queries that can be handled in a year, the service is not actively promoted.

The YEA service meets the needs of a large majority of its current users. Only one sixth of all YEA users feel that the service did not fully meet their needs, mostly due to incomplete answers, unhelpful answers and replies that do not contain enough practical guidance.

The evaluation did not identify any unmet needs of the potential users of the YEA service that should be addressed by the service. However, the data gathered suggest that the citizens who

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<sup>289</sup> Another examples is air passenger rights, which is covered on Your Europe and also on the following websites:

EP: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU\\_5.6.2.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_5.6.2.html);

ECC-Net Belgium: <http://www.eccbelgium.be/themes/travel/travelling-by-plane>;

ECC-Net Denmark: <http://www.consumereurope.dk/Travel/When-you-travel/Airline-travel>.

submitted enquiries that were ineligible for the service could be better informed about the reasons why their case was rejected.

Users are overall satisfied with the quality of the replies. In total 80% are satisfied or very satisfied with the service received. Satisfaction was somewhat lower for enquiries related to tax and social security issues, mostly for lack of practical guidance, insufficient explanations of the relevant legislation and incomplete answers provided. Almost all YEA users receive replies in their preferred language and are satisfied with the time it took to obtain them.

The satisfaction with the signposting to national or EU level services was generally lower than with the other aspects of the service. Due to the characteristics of YEA a considerable share of responses lacks such signposting when it would have been relevant (45% of the responses do not include signposting to EU sources and 25% to national level sources).

Where a citizen is not satisfied with the service, relevant the Commission checks the reason for the dissatisfaction: delay, inaccuracy, unclear wording, false expectations. The following measures are taken: frequent delays are noted and the experts in question are reminded; for inaccurate or unclear replies revised replies are requested.

The Commission requires the contractor to signpost ineligible case to the Europe Direct Call Centres or other relevant assistance services within 24 hours.

The evaluation concludes that the quality control schemes applied by the Commission and the contractor are appropriate.

The evaluation points out that the YEA service is not easy to find. Most users either find the service through the Europa website or an internet search. The use of the service has evolved together with the increasing use of the Your Europe portal. This is intentional: following the rationale of the second line service, the YEA has not been the subject of extensive promotion. Information available online on the service is concentrate on the YEA website, which is part of the Europa website. Nevertheless, information on the service is also presented on various national, and to a smaller extent, regional and local stakeholders' websites as well as a host of private websites.

As a service that receives citizens' and businesses' enquiries on the application and misapplication of EU law, YEA is ideally placed to provide feedback to the various services of the Commission on the problem areas. Since 2012, YEA Quarterly Feedback Reports provide information on recurrent and new issues emerging in comparison to the previous quarter in each country as well as an overview of the main problem issues and 'problem countries'.

**Conclusion:** YEA meets the objective of providing a service that is fast, of high quality and offering advice that empowers its users. The quarterly feedback reports with recurrent and new issues are prepared for Commission policy-makers and contain useful information on how the Single Market is (not) working 'on the ground'. On purpose YEA is not easy to find online since the approach is to guide users to the Your Europe webpages to find answers to their questions. Too much publicity would lead to more queries than the current annual budget can handle. YEA should only step in where information is not available or not specific enough for the individual citizen's case. There is scope for improving signposting from YEA to other services from YEA .



### ***Enterprise Europe Network***

The most recent EEN Evaluation (focusing on the previous EEN network under the CIP programme)<sup>290</sup> assessed the effectiveness of the various services of the network. The outcome was that the effect of information services is slightly lower than other services. This can be explained by the fact that these services are used by most SMEs at an early stage of the involvement in the Network, when impact of the Network may be less pronounced. More than 85 % of SMEs are satisfied with the advisory services of the EEN. As a consequence of this, the focus of the Enterprise Europe Network under the new COSME programme has shifted towards the provision of higher impact advisory and partnership services.

The "no wrong door principle", which is basically sign-posting, was evaluated as very efficient.

Very detailed quality criteria apply to the reporting of the advisory services, including services provided and resulting achievements. All achievement reports need to be stored in a central EASME database. Quality checks are performed regularly to verify the quality and eligibility of registered achievement reports.

The EEN has been effective in collecting very detailed and practical feedback from businesses about problems encountered in the Single Market and their negative impacts on the businesses in terms of additional costs or losses and loss of time caused by the problem. The database in which these cases are registered since 2008 includes more than 8000 such cases and the network has been effective in collecting these cases.

A key recommendation of the evaluation is that the visibility of the Network should be improved.

*Conclusion: The EEN has been providing effective information and advisory services that have satisfied the large majority of SME clients. EEN partners' sign-posting activities are judged as very efficient. Effective achievement reporting standards and documentation through a central EU database are in place. The EEN has been effective in collecting feedback from businesses about problems encountered. One historic weakness has been low visibility, but according to most recent assessment reports this seems to be improving.*

### ***EURES***

The EURES network has helped many jobseekers, workers and employers in realising mobility opportunities. Those who reach out to the EURES network and can use the services it offers generally appreciate it<sup>291</sup>. Furthermore, EURES has contributed to building awareness on mobility, and by so doing to an improved balance between supply and demand of labour in the EU. EURES also contributes with indirect job searching assistance, in providing information on living and working conditions as well as other information about labour markets in other European countries.

As part of its activities, EURES provides information on issues such as social security, taxation, healthcare, pensions etc., which are important to workers and their family members

<sup>290</sup> Final Evaluation of the impact of the Enterprise Europe Network – 2008-2014, Technopolis, 2015.

<sup>291</sup> Quote from the impact assessment for the EURES Regulation, SWD(2014) 9 final of 17/1/2014.

moving abroad. According to the EURES 2006-08 ex-post evaluation and monthly reports of EURES managers, EURES advisers spend 10% of their time on information and guidance on social security and taxation and 8% on information and guidance on living and working conditions. The impact assessment accompanying the 2014 proposal for the Regulation states that, because of these information activities, EURES advisers dedicate only a small part of their time to concrete, individualised assistance to bring about recruitment and placement. The way how information and advice on social security is provided, as part of EURES services, is listed as one of three types of limitations in the services and measures of the EURES network. Under the new EURES Regulation, EURES member organisations should signpost requests for specific information on the rights relating to social security, active labour market measures, taxation, issues relating to work contracts, pension entitlement and health insurance to the national competent authorities and, if applicable, other appropriate bodies at national level support.

An IT-based “matching” interface is to be developed under the new Regulation, with May 2018 as deadline.

Conclusion: Apart from direct job placement, which is its core aim, EURES has been effective in allowing workers to be better informed about living and working conditions in other European countries. However, this information could be more detailed and more practical for jobseekers. EURES could function more effectively if EURES advisers could dedicate more time to concrete, individualised assistance to bring about recruitment and placement instead of to more general information and advice on working and living conditions in other countries.

### ***European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net)***

According to the 2011 evaluation of the EEC-Net, further work of the ECC-Net centres is needed to conduct regular market research (including research via media monitoring) to identify goods and services where price differentials remain high and make this information available to policy makers and consumers.

Most users (74%) are satisfied with the quality of the service they receive from the Network. For example, following advice received from the ECCs, a majority of the ECC-Net users (67%) have either resolved the issue directly with the trader, used the European Small Claims procedure or pursued further action by contacting another organisation (e.g. bodies responsible for policy, enforcement or ADR). The minority (14%) who were not satisfied typically stressed the prolonged time taken in case handling and/or that their particular complaint was not resolved to their satisfaction. The inability of the ECCs to secure redress is a source of disappointment for many unsatisfied users.

Moreover, 87% of the respondents to the user survey (conducted as part of the ECC-Net evaluation), consider that the replies and assistance provided by the ECCs are relevant, tailored and useful. Case study analysis and mystery shopping results however, suggest that some ECCs could provide more tailored responses to customer enquiries.

The evidence points to growing demand for the services offered by the Network. The number of consumer enquiries (information requests, complaints and disputes) handled by the Network rose by 25% over the period 2005 to 2009.

However, the ECCs' actions are having a limited impact on consumer confidence in cross border shopping. Only 29% of the respondents to the user survey reported an increase in confidence as a result of contacting the ECCs; while 19% reported a fall in confidence. This is because a significant proportion of the cases handled by the ECCs are closed without any solution each year (27% in 2008 and 39% in 2009) or transferred to other organisations (11% in 2008 and 13% in 2009). The ECC-Net's ability to facilitate access to redress is constrained by a number of external and internal factors, such as the lack of willingness on the part of some traders to engage with the ECCs in resolution of consumer complaints, the lack of effective case handling protocols, limited resources spread too thinly across a range of activities, and the lack of effective performance management tools.

Overall, 79% of EU citizens do not know where to get information and advice about cross-border shopping in the EU. The overall visibility of the ECCs among the general population is low. Only 15% of European citizens (and 20% of the cross-border shoppers) have heard of the ECCs. However, this is not necessarily an issue where the ECCs have good linkages with relevant stakeholders (such as national consumer, enforcement and ADR bodies) that allow effective signposting of consumers and cross-referral of cases. Moreover, a survey conducted by the Commission (which was addressed to EU networks) suggests that the ECCs are more visible than other EU networks. According to available evidence, 11% of EU25 citizens had heard of the ECCs in 2006; whereas the visibility of other EU networks ranged from 2% - 6%.

Once consumers are aware of them, the ECCs are generally easy to access. Over 75% of the users stated the ECC was either 'very easy' or 'somewhat easy' to find. Less than one-tenth of users stated the ECC had been 'very difficult' or 'difficult' to find (7%).

The ECC websites are an important means of introducing the ECC to potential users. The majority of the users are satisfied with the quality (76%), content (76%) and layout (71%) of the ECC websites. However, relevant internet searches do not identify the sites as well as they might and there is scope to improve the quality of the websites of some ECCs. The ECC-Net evaluation suggests for the ECC websites to have common structures (for example, the availability of a web form for contact, up to date information, FAQs etc.).

ECC-Net centres also undertake promotional activities which reach hundreds of thousands of consumers across Europe each year. However, the extent of cooperation for promotional purposes with other stakeholders involved in the field of consumer protection varies across the EU depending upon national context. The main promotional activities undertaken by the ECCs are normally not coordinated with other EU networks as the focus of such activities tends to be on 'consumer' issues rather than 'EU' issues; although some examples of common promotional activities can be found in countries like Latvia, Slovenia and Germany. As regards cooperation with national stakeholders (e.g. host organisation, enforcement bodies etc.), the need for cooperation is strongest when promotional activities cover topics of common interest. This is already happening, albeit to a limited extent (e.g. Luxembourg). Systematic coordination of promotional activity with other stakeholders by the ECCs could be a source of economies of scale and would ensure delivery of consistent messages.

The evaluation of the ECC-Net calls for informing consumers from the first point of contact about the role and competences of the Network, for placing greater emphasis on consumer/business awareness campaigns of a preventative nature, and for consumer education initiatives to equip consumers with the skills and knowledge to participate in the internal market with confidence. Such campaigns could usefully be linked to developments in EU consumer policy. Moreover, the evaluation suggests that the ECCs should systematically

coordinate their promotional activities with relevant European and national stakeholders on topics of common interest in order to benefit from economies of scale and to ensure delivery of consistent messages to consumers/businesses.

Only partial information is available from feedback on complaint outcomes. In many cases, ECCs simply inform consumers about their rights, so they can contact the trader themselves. These consumers rarely come back to the ECC with feedback, so the ECC assume this is because they reached an agreement with the trader. In more complicated cases, where ECCs help consumers further by contacting the traders themselves, more information on the outcome is available.

In terms of quality, the evaluation points out inconsistencies in working practices e.g. response times and differences in the quality of the case handlers across the centres. It calls for putting in place effective quality control and quality assurance measures for ECCs joint projects and for maintaining efforts to improve case handling procedures by introducing common minimum standards of service across the Network. According to the 2016 edition of the Single Market Scoreboard, the priorities for the further development of the ECC-Net's work are to increase the visibility of the network and its outcomes for consumers, business and enforcement authorities, and to further develop the quality standards to ensure a high standard of service to consumers.

**Conclusion:** The ECC-Net has been effective in allowing the majority of its users (67%) to resolve their issues, with cross-border shopping still an issue of great concern. The overall visibility of the ECCs among the general population is low. Overall, 79% of EU citizens do not know where to get information and advice about cross-border shopping in the EU. Promotional campaigns could be better coordinated with relevant European and national stakeholders on topics of common interest. Relevant internet searches do not identify the sites as well as they might and there is scope to improve the quality of the websites of some ECCs. However, once they are found online, the ECCs are easy to access via the ECC websites. Only partial information is available from feedback on complaint outcomes. Quality standards (on complaint handling only) exist, but are not public or formal. Common minimum service standards across the Network do not exist.

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**To what extent have the instruments, taken together, been effective in allowing citizens and businesses to obtain relevant information and assistance, complete electronically all relevant procedures, benefit from high quality services that are easy to find?**

Over the past 15 years, EU legislation has created legal requirements to set up information and assistance services aimed at helping citizens and businesses. Also, a large number of such services have been created in a non-legislative way. The individual effectiveness results of these services are mixed, but the overall effectiveness is even more worrying. There is no common recognisable brand under which they could operate. Many different brand names are used but citizens and businesses are not aware of them and are not using them in a systematic way<sup>292</sup>. Nor is there a "one brand search engine" under which they could be found online. The closest to such a gateway is the Your Europe portal, which links to other services. However,

<sup>292</sup> According to the European Parliament study "A European Single Point of Contact" (2015), 91.6% of consumers and businesses are unaware of any online services at European level that they could turn to in case of problems.

the portal is not well-known either; national-level information is missing, and the sign-posting is often not reciprocal. For instance, while Your Europe is sign-posting to the PSCs, not many PSCs are sign-posting to Your Europe. Navigation of the various Single Market information portals is not always straightforward, and many EU citizens and businesses do not know where to get the information and assistance they need<sup>293</sup>.

It also appears that the voluntary approach has its clear limits. It has failed to ensure that all Member States set up PCP and PCPC websites on which they offer relevant information in an exhaustive way. It has also failed to constrain the mushrooming of contact points, which is confusing for the users who often need to visit more than one 'single' contact point for the task at hand. SOLVIT's suffers from lack of sufficient national resources. Those responsible for the different services at national level, indicate that it is difficult to obtain adequate resources for voluntary commitments, and that the absence of clear, legally binding rules makes it difficult to cooperate effectively with the ministries and local authorities that need to provide input. Most respondents to the online public consultation on the single digital gateway consider that the provision of information and procedures should be mandatory, regardless of whether it covers all or basic information.

No common quality criteria exist, which is detrimental to the usability and user-friendliness of the services as a whole. Badly functioning contact points undermine credibility for the network as a whole. The PSC Charter established quite far-reaching quality criteria for the PSCs, but as these are not mandatory, adherence is patchy. This is confirmed by a recent study<sup>294</sup>: the quality of the PSCs varies significantly. Other services, e.g. the ECCs, have the same experience with voluntary quality standards.

The Refit Platform Stakeholder Group asked the Commission to propose a Regulation to create a true online business portal for both goods and services to complement the text of the 2006 Services Directive and clearly indicate which minimum criteria for performance must apply to the PSCs. Information should be offered in English and/or the language(s) of the neighbouring countries. The Refit Platform Government Group recommended to the Commission to consider the integration of online information from PCPs and PCPCs, and SOLVIT with that of the PSC. This would indeed go a long way towards improving the situation. However, as the current evaluation shows, the PSCs, PCPs, PCPCs and SOLVIT are only part of the picture, and other EU and national-level Single Market tools need to be included as well. In March 2015 the Competitiveness Council called for a political commitment 'to strengthen and streamline Single Market tools (...) in order to better meet the needs of businesses and citizens in their cross-border activities'.

### **To what extent have the instruments in place been effective in providing policy-makers with evidence for policy-making?**

The evidence from YEA, SOLVIT, ECC and the EEN cases has been used for policy-making but only on an ad hoc basis leaving a lot of untapped potential. For instance, the ECC Net's studies on passenger rights were used by the Commission as input to a revision of those rights. But case data from other sources (e.g. Your Europe Advice) could also have been used. The problem here is that these cases are not brought together and analysed collectively.

<sup>293</sup> E.g. Evaluation of the ECC Net, 2011: 79% of EU citizens do not know where to get consumer information and advice.

<sup>294</sup> "The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter", Capgemini and Eurochambres, June 2015.

### **Overview of "effectiveness" conclusions**

**PSCs:** The Points of Single Contact which were established under the Services Directive have been partially effective in allowing businesses to complete all relevant procedures fully online. Often, necessary information is missing, quality is deficient and procedures cannot be carried out fully online. PSC performance is weakest when it comes to the cross-border user: offering him accessible information and e-procedures that he can conduct fully online from abroad is often deficient.

**PCPs:** The Mutual Recognition Regulation, under which the PCPs were set up, only encourages making information available through a website. While most Member States have set up PCP websites voluntarily, these websites are of varying quality (often not very user-friendly) and rarely list national technical rules per product. Businesses are mostly unaware of the existence of the PCPs, and therefore do not look for and solicit them. When they do, they often complain about response times and the quality of the replies. It appears that the current PCP network – whilst considered necessary – is not functioning effectively for businesses.

**PCPCs:** Although a detailed analysis of effectiveness, including a PCPC user survey, has not been done, there are indications that the PCPC are under-performing for businesses. There are of course country variations, but generally speaking the indicative number of requests submitted to the PCPCs appears to be very low and not in line with actual business demand. Business awareness of the PCPCs is low, in particular as far as PCPCs in other EU countries are concerned. While most Member States have set up PCPC websites voluntarily, these websites are of varying quality (often not very user-friendly) and rarely list national technical rules per product.

**SOLVIT:** The general objective of SOLVIT has not been fully met: in 2015 12% of the cases could not be resolved, in 23% of the cases the applicants got their first reply after the deadline of 7 days, the preparation of cases as home centre took longer than the deadline of 30 days in 14% of the complaints and 34% of the accepted cases took longer than the aim of 10 weeks. Businesses are currently not using SOLVIT much. The main underlying reasons impeding SOLVIT's effectiveness are the lack of authority, adequacy of the staff and limited awareness of SOLVIT and the services it offers, especially for businesses and that there is not yet a fully operational systematic set-up for the handling, follow-up and reporting of 'structural problems' detected in SOLVIT.

**Your Europe** users are usually satisfied with the portal and able to find what they need. Overall, Member States are cooperating well and are delivering national content. The content of the EU-level (main) portal is being drawn up in a user-friendly and user-centric way. Main areas for improvement are filling the national-level information gaps, addressing overlaps and enhancing awareness about Your Europe.

**YEA** meets the objective of providing a service that is fast, of high quality and offering advice that empowers its users. The quarterly feedback reports with recurrent and new issues are prepared for Commission policy-makers and contain useful information on how the Single Market is (not) working 'on the ground'. Furthermore, the signposting to other services is not working as it should.

The **EEN** has been providing effective information and advisory services that have satisfied the large majority of SME clients. EEN partners' sign-posting activities are judged as very efficient. Effective achievement reporting standards and documentation through a central EU

database are in place. The EEN has been effective in collecting feedback from businesses about problems encountered. One historic weakness was low visibility, but according to most recent assessment reports this seems to be improving.

**EURES:** Apart from direct job placement, which is its core aim, EURES has been effective in allowing workers to be better informed about living and working conditions in other European countries. However, this information could be more detailed and more practical for jobseekers. EURES could function more effectively if EURES advisers could dedicate more time to concrete, individualised assistance to bring about recruitment and placement instead of to more general information and advice on working and living conditions in other countries.

The **ECC-Net** has been effective in allowing the majority of its users (67%) to resolve their issues, with cross-border shopping still an issue of great concern. The overall visibility of the ECCs among the general population is low. Overall, 79% of EU citizens do not know where to get information and advice about cross-border shopping in the EU. Promotional campaigns could be better coordinated with relevant European and national stakeholders on topics of common interest. Relevant internet searches do not identify the sites as well as they might and there is scope to improve the quality of the websites of some ECCs. However, once they are found online, the ECCs are easy to access via the ECC websites. Only partial information is available from feedback on complaint outcomes. Quality standards (on complaint handling only) exist, but are not public or formal. Common minimum service standards across the Network do not exist.

**Taken together**, the services have not been very effective in being perceived "as a whole" by citizens and businesses, as they are not operating under a common recognisable brand. This decreases their visibility and findability online – which is the key pre-condition for effectively delivering to the target group. Also, a common approach to quality is missing. Voluntary commitments and approaches have reached their limits and have not been effective in obtaining the necessary allocation of resources. The very interesting registers of cases and queries from the different services have not been linked up and analysed collectively by policy-makers.

### ***3.4.2 The efficiency of the existing framework***

To what extent have the instruments in place been successful in allowing citizens and businesses to obtain relevant information, to complete procedures electronically, to benefit from high-quality services that are easy to find at a reasonable cost to public administrations and to society at large?

#### ***Points of Single Contact***

The Services Directive generates costs to public authorities, as it obliged them to set up and run online points of single contact. Often, the PSCs are embedded in countries' general e-government portals and IT infrastructure. Cost figures for even a minority of Member States' PSCs do not exist. Where they exist, they are of such variety, patchy and incomplete (e.g. missing user figures for the benefit side) that no conclusions on efficiency can be drawn<sup>295</sup>.

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<sup>295</sup> e.g. German Land of Hessen: yearly technical running costs excluding human resources and organisational costs: € 900,000; Land of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern: annual running costs of € 120,000. The German PSC

### ***Product Contact Points***

The Mutual Recognition Regulation generates costs for Member States as far as the establishment and operation of the PCPs is concerned. However, as stated in the Regulation, Member States may entrust the role of PCP to existing services within the public administration or to national SOLVIT centres, chambers of commerce, professional organisations and private bodies, in order not to increase administrative costs for enterprises and authorities. Member States have adopted different approaches, with some generating more costs than others. Most of the time, the PCP has been integrated in an already existing department dealing with internal market issues. Based on the annual reports, one person on average runs the PCP. However, only 50% of Member States have reported the number of staff involved. In a small number of Member States<sup>296</sup>, the PCP responsibilities are divided between 6-7 sector ministries or inspectorates. A rather extreme version of a decentralised set-up can be found in France and Italy, where the PCP is not a central unit in charge of the mutual recognition concept, but simply the contact point towards the Commission.

During the mutual recognition public consultation, national authorities ranked the costs linked to the implementation of the Regulation as average costs. A recent survey as part of a study<sup>297</sup> asked Member States to estimate the costs of running the PCP in terms of Full-Time Equivalents (FTE). Very few Member States replied to this question. Member States indicated between 0.1 FTE (Ireland) and 2 FTE (Croatia). Slovenia's joint PCP/PCPC uses 1 FTE.

These FTE need to be compared to the number of requests dealt with. According to the same survey, in which only 6 PCP participated, the number of requests is very low and varies – from 15 per year for the Cypriot PCP to 100 for the Croatian PCP. However, figures are being calculated differently (some taking phone calls into account while others don't) and thus need to be treated with care. But they give an indication of the generally speaking very low number of requests. Furthermore, many businesses contact the competent authorities directly and do not go via the PCPs<sup>298</sup>, or PCPs act as coordinating bodies that simply forward the requests to the competent authorities, without playing any role as far as the substance of the request and the reply to the operator is concerned. Most likely, given the large magnitude of cross-border trading of products within the Single Market, there is a very large untapped potential for using the PCPs (much) more.

Most Member States (25) have – voluntarily – set up online portals that provide information on the role of the PCP and mutual recognition. 18 Member States provide this information (sometimes partially) in English. A number of Member States (e.g. UK, France, Denmark, Belgium) also provide national technical rules for products directly on their websites.

The availability of online information generates costs (website creation and keeping it up-to-date). However, these costs are easily counterbalanced by the potential reduction of the

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set-up cannot be considered as cost-efficient as it consists of a multitude of PSCs. Most (with the exception of Austria) Member States have just created one national PSC, which limits the costs.

<sup>296</sup> Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, according to the Evaluation of the Application of the Principle of Mutual Recognition in the Field of Goods.

<sup>297</sup> Guidelines for improving consistency across PCPCs and PCP, Ecorys, 2017.

<sup>298</sup> As stated in the "Evaluation of Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products" (SWD(2014) 23 final, many economic operators request and receive information directly from national authorities, without going through the PCPs. This is often due to a lack of awareness of the existence of the PCPs.



number of "basic" enquiries to the PCP. A survey<sup>299</sup> asked PCPs (and PCPCs) whether they saw advantages linked to the online publication of information on national technical product rules. 5 out of 6 surveyed PCPs and 10 out of 11 PCPCs did, mostly for transparency reasons, but in the case of two PCPs and all PCPCs except one, also for having fewer questions addressed to them.

As far as the administrative burden on businesses due to quality issues of the PCPs is concerned, companies may need to resort to consultants, lawyers or other private sector third parties to make up for the deficits, or may even lose market opportunities. This is actually the channel companies' use most often in order to receive information and advice about foreign market rules and requirements.

Conclusion: There is not enough information available on the efficiency of the PCPs. What can be said is that PCPs are only partially effective and are under-used by economic operators, who generally resort to much more expensive solutions to meet their needs. The (for many Member States) low quality of their PCP websites represents a missed opportunity for Member States in terms of the possibility to reduce the number of requests and to be even more cost-efficient.

### *Product Contact Points for Construction*

According to a study feeding into the Construction Sector Fitness Check<sup>300</sup>, the PCPs created under the Construction Products Regulation may save the business: i) internal work, i.e. the time needed to familiarise with unknown or uncertain legal provisions, and retrieve information from national and local authorities; and (ii) external costs, i.e. when consultants are resorted to provide information on unknown or uncertain legal provisions. Companies are likely to use PCPC for small or medium-complexity requests; for very complex issues, a company is likely to resort to its own internal resources or to external consultants in any case. The time saved for each request is based on Consultants' expert assessment; the degree of complexity of the various requests to PCPC is assumed over three different scenarios.

Based on the number of requests as extrapolated from a study by RPA, the average hourly salary rate for a technician inclusive of overheads (EUR 23.2, source: Eurostat Earnings Statistics), the time saved per request and the scenarios, the **range of administrative cost savings for businesses linked to the use of the PCPC then ranges between EUR 760 000 and EUR 1.2 million**. However, this estimation of cost savings is based on a very low number of received requests for some countries, such as 100 for France, 50 for Spain and 60 for Sweden. (The corresponding figures are 500 requests for Norway and 672 requests for the Netherlands). Given the large magnitude of cross-border trading of goods within the Single Market, it is likely that the low figures for some countries do not represent the real business demand but are caused by low awareness of the PCPCs' existence amongst the business community. There may be large untapped demand which is not reflected and the savings potential for businesses may be much larger.

<sup>299</sup> Guidelines for improving consistency across PCPCs and PCPs, Ecorys, 2017.

<sup>300</sup> Supporting Study for the Fitness Check on the Construction Sector: EU internal market and energy efficiency legislation, 2016.

A recent survey as part of a study<sup>301</sup> asked Member States to estimate the costs of running the PCP and PCPC in terms of Full-Time Equivalents (FTE). Only very few Member States replied to this question. Estimated PCPCs' costs are between 0.25 FTE (Czech Republic) and 3 FTE (Poland), with Sweden and Ireland both dedicating 1 FTE. Bulgaria explained that the PCPC is being developed by European Structural Funds for the cost of 330 000 BGN (168 729 euros). Slovenia joint PCP/PCPC uses 1 FTE.

These FTE need to be compared to the number of requests dealt with. According to the same survey, in which only 10 PCPC participated, the number of requests is very low and varies – between 15 for the Cypriot PCPC and 114 for the Croatian PCPC. However, figures are being calculated differently (some taking phone calls into account while others don't) and thus need to be treated with care. But they give an indication of the generally speaking very low number of requests.

The Construction Products Regulation (CPR) contains the same recital as the Mutual Recognition Regulation (MRR) as regards the possibility to entrust the role of PCPC to existing contact points already established, to prevent the unnecessary proliferation of contact points. However, less than half of the Member States followed up on this and built the PCPC on an existing PCP.

Conclusion: There is not enough information available on the efficiency of the PCPCs. The use of the PCPC can save a business significant costs. However, this is currently rather theoretical, as most businesses are not using the PCPCs. The number of requests submitted to them is low and seems not in line with actual business demand. The conclusion reached for the PCPs is also valid for the PCPCs: the (for many Member States) low quality of their PCPC websites represents a missed opportunity for Member States in terms of the possibility to reduce the number of requests and to be even more cost-efficient.

## ***SOLVIT***

Whilst difficult to quantify, it is clear that by centralising expertise and providing an agreed framework, SOLVIT has been able to provide an efficient mechanism for the resolution of individual problems linked to potential breach of EU law to citizens and businesses, to Member States' administrations and to European Commission services. The most efficient alternative means of redress to SOLVIT are national courts proceedings and formal infringement procedures which are lengthy and costly. In December 2015, around 732 infringement proceedings were pending in the area of the Single Market. On average, infringement proceedings take 30 months to address the issues contested<sup>302</sup>.

The staff numbers and therefore the staffing costs vary between the Member States. In 2015, the staffing levels for the SOLVIT centres were assessed (time to be spent on SOLVIT work) in relation to the caseload. The number of staff (FTEs or full-time equivalents) is determined by the caseload of the SOLVIT centres:

- small SOLVIT centres (16-50 cases) => 1 FTE
- medium SOLVIT centres (51-150 cases) => 2 FTEs
- large SOLVIT centres (151-300 cases) => 3 FTEs

<sup>301</sup> Guidelines for improving consistency across PCPCs and PCP, Ecorys, 2017.

<sup>302</sup> Idem.

- very large SOLVIT centres (over 300 cases) => 3.5 FTEs

Out of 8 small centres, 5 did not meet the target staffing. The same applies for 2 out of 10 medium centres, 4 out of 9 large centres and all 4 very large centres.

The cost of support from the Commission Services is also not easily quantifiable. The support is provided from the EC SOLVIT team within DG GROW and from case handlers in other DGs as SOLVIT covers the whole spectrum of the Single Market legislation (i.e. preparation of informal legal opinions). On the other hand, the benefits of the SOLVIT intervention in individual problems result in the release of Commission Services' resources from complaint handling and pursuit of formal infringement proceedings.

However, the benefits are considered to be significantly greater than the costs for citizens and businesses, Member States' administrations and to European Commission services.

It is even more difficult to quantify the costs and benefits of SOLVIT when contributing to a better functioning Single Market by fostering and promoting better compliance with Union law, as this entails reforms and changes in the administrative practice and legislation of Member States. In the 2015 Single Market Scoreboard, the number of infringement proceedings has slightly decreased over the last six months (-2%, from 749 to 732). This overall reduction of cases can in part be attributed to the implementation of a number of measures such as the introduction of EU-Pilot in April 2008. Since that time, the number of cases has gone down by 44%. Like SOLVIT, EU-Pilot facilitates cooperation between the Member States and the Commission to address non-compliance or the incorrect application of EU law before infringement proceedings are launched<sup>303</sup>

Finally, as regards the benefits of SOLVIT in terms of administrative burden, the use of IMI and the online SOLVIT database results in a reduction of the administrative burden in comparison to the use of off-line means of cooperation. Additionally, the services of administrative cooperation between the two Member States involved in handling a SOLVIT case, through the use of the IMI<sup>304</sup> SOLVIT database, reduces the administrative burden for citizens and businesses in comparison to the scenario of dealing directly with the public authority in the Member State causing the problem.

**Conclusion:** SOLVIT is providing an efficient alternative dispute settlement mechanism that delivers benefits to (a) mostly citizens and to a much less extent businesses in comparison to costly and lengthy legal proceedings, (b) Member States that do have the obligation to implement EU law correctly and to ensure that it is correctly applied, as otherwise they would have to engage in costly and lengthy legal proceedings at the national level and formal infringement proceedings at the EU level and (c) Commission Services in their role as the guardian of the treaties, as otherwise they would have to engage in costly and lengthy formal infringement proceedings. The use of IMI for the handling of SOLVIT cases reduces the administrative burden for the SOLVIT centres. Moreover, the use of SOLVIT reduces the administrative burden for individuals and businesses engaged in cross-border activity.

<sup>303</sup> See performance per governance tool at:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/infringements/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/infringements/index_en.htm)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/eu\\_pilot/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/eu_pilot/index_en.htm)  
[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/solvit/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/solvit/index_en.htm).

<sup>304</sup> IMI (Internal Market Information System) is Commission-run.

## *Your Europe*

*No efficiency analysis of Your Europe has yet been done. With a yearly budget of € 650,000 (excluding promotion) and 4.5 Commission staff working on it full-time (this excludes resources that contribute to Your Europe from other departments of the Commission as well as agencies and Member States), the portal registers currently 17 million visits a year, with constantly increasing user figures. Online user surveys register very positive satisfaction levels with the portals, and 70% of users found, partially or fully, what they were looking for.*

Conclusion: Your Europe has been successful in allowing citizens and businesses to obtain relevant information at a reasonable cost.

## *Your Europe Advice*

The total costs of the YEA service have increased from EUR 1.49 million in 2011/2012 to about EUR 1.8 million in 2016, accounting for the growing number of enquiries handled by the service during these past years.

The evaluation replied to the question whether the direct and indirect costs (for the citizen and for the EU institutions) of YEA per reply are adequate in comparison to other comparable possibilities citizens have to get the same level of advice (e.g. ask a lawyer, send a question to the European Commission or a national administration). It concludes that the cost benchmarking between YEA and the Europe Direct Call Centres as well as a number of private services suggests that the cost of the YEA service to the Commission is overall reasonable.

In terms of the estimated normalised cost per hour (EUR 94.06) the YEA cost is somewhat higher than the estimated cost of the Europe Direct Call Centres (EUR 88.26), but this is to be expected, considering the more specialised nature of the YEA service.

The cost of YEA is favourable if the cost per hour is examined against the hourly fees charged by private legal service providers, with the YEA hourly cost in line with the lowest hourly fees collected from the new Member States<sup>305</sup>.

As regards processes and procedures in place (case handling IT tool, other tools, human resources, workflows and organisational solutions), these are judged to be overall adequate.

Service efficiency of Your Europe Advice is measured primarily by the speed of replies. The aim is to reply to enquiries within 3 working days. Over 95% of replies are sent within that deadline and over 99% within four working days. The increase in the number of enquiries handled by the service has not affected the efficiency nor effectiveness of the service. Users are overall satisfied with the quality of the replies. In total 80% are satisfied or very satisfied with the service received.

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<sup>305</sup> i.e. the 13 most recent EU enlargements.

**Conclusion:** YEA is an efficient service in terms of service delivery and service organisation, and is meeting the needs of most of its users. Its costs to the Commission are assessed to be appropriate if compared to similar possibilities citizens have to get the same level of legal advice.

### ***Enterprise Europe Network***

According to a 2015 publication about the network, it has answered 600 000 questions on EU issues since 2008 to the satisfaction of most client SMEs. The most recent evaluation of the EEN (based on the period 2008-2014, under the CIP programme) points out that the importance of "information" for the partners exceeded the allocation of resources for this activity. The EEN partners considered the budget for information well spent in terms of benefits for SMEs. However, the same evaluation also pointed out that SME clients attribute the highest importance to the higher end services of the Network, in particular business cooperation, innovation support and technology transfer.

In the context of the COSME programme, a strategic decision was taken to shift the focus of EEN services away from information, towards creating impact for businesses.

**Conclusion:** The EEN partners consider the budget for information well spent in terms of benefits for SMEs.

### ***EURES***

Within the EURES network about 1 500 persons are actively contributing to information and assistance, of which 950 are qualified by the individual member organizations as EURES advisers.

The overall envelope spent on EURES services in the Union is estimated to be around € 60 million, essentially covering the staff cost and related overheads. The EU budget spent on EURES is € 20-22 million per year, within the EaSI Programme.

Following the 2010 report on EURES activities, it was estimated that the EURES network provides around 150 000 recruitments/placements per year. Of these, 50 000 were attributed to the work of the EURES Advisers, and 100 000 were – based on estimations and extrapolation – attributed to the functioning of its portal<sup>306</sup>. Figures were further elaborated in the impact assessment accompanying the 2014 proposal.

The activities of the EURES network have been monitored since 2012 under the Single Market Scoreboard. It uses 5 indicators which inter alia provide information on the activities of EURES advisers and the vacancies posted on EURES as a proportion of national vacancies. The global indicator (all 5 indicators combined) shows that 3 countries are below average, 8 above average and the rest average.

Some examples of possible better cost efficiencies were referred to in reports provided by EURES member organisations and Cross Border Partnerships, including:

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<sup>306</sup> Figures come from the Impact Assessment for the 2016 EURES Regulation, SWD(2014) 9 final, 17/1/2014.

- Further integration/mainstreaming of EURES into the Public Employment Service (PES) through increased training: “An increased mainstreaming with PES will lead to increased efficiency; there is only a small number of EURES advisors, and if the rest of the PES staff could provide information on EURES and EURES-services there is a great possibility for higher efficiency”.
- The development of synergies through the joint EURES- and ESF-funded projects.
- The creation of one-stop-shops where clients can find all the information needed in one place.
- The increased use of modern technologies and communications.

**Conclusion:** According to the Single Market Scoreboard, most Member States' EURES services perform to an "average" benchmark of quality. Recommendations for how to turn EURES into a more cost effective service suggest that there is room for improvement.

### *European Consumer Centres Network*

The Network is co-financed by the European Commission, the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland. The EU grant allocation to the ECCs for the year 2010 was EUR 4.5 million. With the addition of national co-financing, costs of running the ECC-Net amount to EUR 8 to 9 million per annum.

According to the evaluation<sup>307</sup>, monetary redress secured by consumers following ECC action is estimated to be over EUR 14 million for the period January to November 2010.

This means that the direct financial benefit accruing to consumers as a result of the ECCs' actions outweighs the cost to the tax payer of supporting the ECCs. The Network delivered direct financial benefits to consumers of at least 1.77 times its cost to the taxpayer during 2010.

According to data on the 2016 Single Market Scoreboard, the network had over **93 964** contacts from consumers in 2015. ECCs received over **38 048 complaints**. In 2015, the Network was able to help over half the complainants. 51% of complex cases (where more than one centre had to be involved) were resolved amicably. 16.35% of the closed complex complaints were transferred to other organisations (of which 26% were alternative dispute resolution entities; 11.1% to enforcement bodies and 27.8% to courts).

The ECC-Net evaluation suggests that some ECCs are adequately resourced; while others are not (particularly those hosted by NGOs). According to the results of the ECC survey, 52% (or 15 out of 29 ECCs) are of the opinion that they are adequately resourced; compared to 48% (or 14 ECCs) who think otherwise. Moreover, a vast majority of the ECCs (24 ECCs) indicate that they have little or no margin to deal with a sudden increase in the level of enquiries; and their present level of funding is too little to deliver additional promotional activity or an increased volume of consumer enquiries. A number of ECCs have experienced financial constraints and uncertainty (particularly those hosted by NGOs) as a result of the system of annual funding and uncertainties with respect to national co-financing. These pressures can be expected to worsen in the coming years as EU and national budgets come under increasing pressure and scrutiny.

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<sup>307</sup> Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net), CPEC, 2011.

The ECC-Net evaluation suggests:

- Improving the results orientation of the Network by introducing measurable performance benchmarks and performance-based incentives, and making the continuation of funding conditional upon individual ECCs demonstrating a positive benefits-cost ratio;
- Ensuring that activities of individual centres particularly promotional activities, networking and feedback functions are underpinned by a clear intervention logic in order to justify support;
- Replacing the current system of annual grants with a system of framework partnership agreements.

**Conclusion:** The ECC Network has delivered direct financial benefits to consumers of at least 1.77 times its cost to the taxpayer during 2010. On this basis, the ECCs are operating efficiently. However, there is scope for improvement, and the evaluation recommends the introduction of measurable performance benchmarks and performance based incentives, and making positive results a condition for further funding. 48% of ECCs consider their funding insufficient.

**To what extent have the instruments, taken together, been successful in allowing citizens and businesses to obtain relevant information, to complete procedures electronically, to benefit from high-quality services that are easy to find at a reasonable cost to public administrations and to society at large?**

Since evidence and data for this section is incomplete (especially for the national level), it is difficult to draw any conclusions on the overall efficiency. However, it seems obvious that coordinated promotion of the instruments could lead to more cost savings and better user awareness than the individual actions. Your Europe has an annual promotion budget of around EUR 450 000. With a slight increase of that budget, the annual promotion effort at EU level could probably be fully covered – if done via one "umbrella brand" substituting individual EU-level promotion efforts.

Also, there is a certain potential overlap in scope and duplication of effort. On the EU level, content is duplicated on various websites. The scope of the advice services that are EU-level initiatives can overlap somewhat: YEA and the Europe Direct Call Centres are often receiving similar queries – but an active referral policy is in place where one or the other service is better suited to reply. A well performing single brand search engine, and/or a common online enquiry form on the national level<sup>308</sup>, could probably ensure even better that user requests are channelled immediately to the most suitable service.

### ***Overview of "efficiency" conclusions***

**PSCs:** The Services Directive generates costs to public authorities, as it obliged them to set up and run online points of single contact. Often, the PSCs are embedded in countries' general e-government portals and IT infrastructure. Reliable and comparable cost figures for PSCs do not exist. The figures that are available are divergent and incomplete (e.g. missing user figures for the benefit side) that no conclusions on efficiency can be drawn.

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<sup>308</sup> A common online enquiry form currently exists on the Your Europe portal and sign-posts users to the most suitable assistance service.

**PCPs:** There is not enough information available on the efficiency of the PCPs. What can be said is that PCPs are only partially effective and are under-used by economic operators, who generally resort to much more expensive solutions to meet their needs. The (for many Member States) low quality of their PCP websites represents a missed opportunity for Member States in terms of the possibility to reduce the number of requests and to be even more cost-efficient.

**PCPCs:** The use of the PCPC can save a business significant costs. However, this is currently rather theoretical, as most businesses are not using the PCPCs. The number of requests submitted to them is low and not in line with actual business demand. Member States have set up the PCPCs in a cost-efficient way. The conclusion reached for the PCPs is also valid for the PCPCs: the (for many Member States) low quality of their PCPC websites represents a missed opportunity for Member States in terms of the possibility to reduce the number of requests and to be even more cost-efficient.

**SOLVIT** is providing an efficient alternative dispute settlement mechanism that delivers benefits to (a) mostly citizens and to a much less extent businesses in comparison to costly and lengthy legal proceedings, (b) Member States that do have the obligation to implement EU law correctly and to ensure that it is correctly applied, as otherwise they would have to engage in costly and lengthy legal proceedings at the national level and formal infringement proceedings at the EU level and (c) Commission Services in their role as the guardian of the treaties, as otherwise they would have to engage in costly and lengthy formal infringement proceedings. The use of IMI for the handling of SOLVIT cases reduces the administrative burden for the SOLVIT centres. Moreover, the use of SOLVIT reduces the administrative burden for individuals and businesses engaged in cross-border activity.

**Your Europe** has been successful in allowing citizens and businesses to obtain relevant information at a reasonable cost.

**YEA** is an efficient service in terms of service delivery and service organisation, and is meeting the needs of most of its users. Its costs to the Commission are assessed to be appropriate if compared to similar possibilities citizens have to get the same level of legal advice.

The **EEN** partners consider the budget for information well spent in terms of benefits for SMEs.

**EURES:** According to the Single Market Scoreboard, most Member States' EURES services perform to an "average" benchmark of quality. Recommendations for how to turn EURES into a more cost effective service suggest that there is room for improvement.

The **ECC Network** has delivered direct financial benefits to consumers of at least 1.77 times its cost to the taxpayer during 2010. On this basis, the ECCs are operating efficiently. However, there is scope for improvement, and the evaluation recommends the introduction of measurable performance benchmarks and performance based incentives, and making positive results a condition for further funding. 48% of ECCs consider their funding insufficient.

Taken together, there is scope for more efficiency on the EU (and possibly also national) level through coordinated promotion of the services using a common name for co-branding. A well performing common brand search engine, and/or a common online enquiry form on the



national level, could probably better ensure that user requests are channels to the most suitable service immediately. This is currently not done in the most efficient way.

### 3.4.3 *The relevance and coherence of the existing framework*

**Relevance:** To what extent are the current services to businesses and citizens relevant? To what extent are they meeting their needs? To what extent are the current instruments in line with current trends of digitalisation?

**Coherence:** To what extent are the different instruments coherent with each other? To what extent does the existing framework promote synergies, work well together and or point towards tensions and overlaps? To what extent does the existing framework take account of the fact that services and products are increasingly part of the same value chain? Is there evidence of gaps, loopholes or inconsistencies across the existing framework?

Evaluations, public consultation results, studies and surveys conducted show that the instruments which form part of this evaluation are considered relevant by their target audiences. They cater to the need of citizens and businesses for information, assistance and procedures in order to more easily navigate the Single Market and engage in cross-border activities. An overwhelming majority of business and citizens participating in the online public consultation consider it important or very important to have online access to information about rules and procedures in other EU countries (93% of businesses and 92% of citizens), access to e-procedures cross-borders (94% and 92% respectively) and access to services providing assistance upon request (88% and 87% respectively). Most respondents would also look for information on the internet. Therefore the relevance of these initiatives is high.

Whilst most of the instruments have adapted to the digital trend and services are available online, this is not the case for all the PCPs and PCPCs. Some do not have an online presence, and where they do, the quality of the website may be very rudimentary. Others may be online, but are very difficult to find (e.g. through a google search and without knowing the exact name), such as Your Europe Advice and SOLVIT<sup>309</sup>. The issue of visibility, findability and awareness of the services is a cross-cutting problem.

The existing EU legal framework contains gaps. An obvious gap concerns the citizen side. Apart from the Health Contact Points providing information to citizens about other countries' health systems, and the European Job Mobility Portal informing citizens about living and working conditions, social security and tax payments, national employment rules and relevant administrative procedures, EU law does not oblige Member States to provide information to citizens. For the Your Europe portal the Commission works together with Member States on a voluntary basis in order to offer this information to citizens. The effectiveness of this approach depends very heavily on personal commitment and good will of individual persons with no guarantee for continuity and sustainability.

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<sup>309</sup> For the mentioned services this is intentional, as "second level support services" in line with the cascade approach.

There are also legal gaps on the business side. The Services Directive is not exhaustive, and several important fields are not part of it<sup>310</sup> and therefore formally need not be covered by the PSCs. However, many PSCs do cover at least some of these fields voluntarily (and this has also been the approach of the PSC Charter), but the Charter cannot be enforced and there are significant gaps in its implementation as shown in the most recent study on the PSCs.<sup>311</sup>

The scope of the PCPs is confined to the non-harmonised sector, which means that businesses are only receiving half of the answer to their question which rules (EU + national) are applying to their products. This, together with low visibility and quality issues, may explain why hardly any businesses are using the PCPs.

The existing legal framework promotes synergies. The legal instruments that established the PSCs, PCPs and PCPCs all foresee the possibility, and even encourage, that the contact points be established as parts of already existing contact points, networks, structures or even relevant private bodies. When the Professional Qualifications Directive ("PQD", of 2005, amended in 2013) set up professional qualifications contact points in 2013, with online information on requirements, procedures and formalities, it laid down that these were to be established on the (existing) Points of Single Contact of the Services Directive. However, where this was not provided in a legally binding way, most Member States have not acted upon this possibility (thus potentially also missing out on cost savings). A notable exception is Lithuania, which has set up its business contact points as part of one institution and one website. A recent study<sup>312</sup> which analysed the inter-linkages between the PSC, PCP and PCPC websites found that even within the Member States, cross-linking of contact point websites is not done, let alone to other Member States' contact point websites.

This is all the more regrettable as businesses frequently require information on both services and product rules at the same time. The current trend of "servitisation" means that products and services are increasingly part of the same value chain. As stated in the Evaluation of Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products, the distinction between product and services markets is becoming ever more blurred, in part because consumers increasingly demand high-quality after-sales services. "Instead of selling a product with a service, there is a tendency of selling a service with a product (e.g. mobile phones)". The results of the public consultation on the single digital gateway show that a majority of businesses (80.87%) would be in favour of merging the contact points for goods and services. 70% of respondent public authorities consider this as desirable or very desirable, with some considering this integration difficult or somewhat difficult (27.5% and 47.5% respectively).

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<sup>310</sup> The Directive does not apply to the following services: financial services; electronic communications services with respect to matters covered by other EU instruments; transport services falling within the scope of Title VI of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU); healthcare services provided by health professionals to assess, maintain or restore the state of patients' health where those activities are reserved to a regulated health profession; temporary work agencies' services; private security services; audio-visual services; gambling; certain social services provided by the State, by providers mandated by the State or by charities recognised by the State; services provided by notaries and bailiffs appointed by an official act of government. The Directive does not apply in the field of taxation.

<sup>311</sup> Business Europe concludes in its submission to the REFIT platform that the voluntary Charter approach "has not delivered the desired results".

<sup>312</sup> Screening Report on Member States Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction by Ecorys, 2017.

The business representative organisation "BusinessEurope" has called on Member States to transform the existing Points of Single Contact into fully-fledged online business portals (for goods and services) offering companies all the information and assistance they need to operate across borders and on the home market, including offering the possibility to complete procedures entirely online<sup>313</sup>. This is also one key demand of the REFIT stakeholder platform and mostly shared by the REFIT government group<sup>314</sup>. Member States have not (or rarely) acted upon this trend in the set-up of their contact points for businesses. In a recent report<sup>315</sup> the European Parliament considered the implementation of the present system built around a diverse range of contact points, including Product Contact Points and Single Points of Contact as inconsistent across Member States and overly complex.

The EU-mandated assistance services have been actively promoting synergies between themselves through sign-posting mechanisms. YEA, SOLVIT, the EEN, the ECCs and EURES all sign-post requests, where relevant, to other services. The EEN has made this its official policy ("no wrong door policy"). Your Europe connects the EU and the national level and sign-posts to a large range of other services. It runs a "common intake form" in the form of a "help and advice" button that guides users to a large range of relevant (EU-mandated) assistance and problem-solving services, with some operating on the national level: SOLVIT, Your Europe Advice, Points of Single Contact, Product Contact Points, EURES, ECC-Net and Fin-net. The Your Europe "help and advice" signposting has helped to lower the number of cases that had been incorrectly directed to SOLVIT. Furthermore, Your Europe Advice is providing a supporting role to SOLVIT in terms of providing legal advice to fill current gaps.

The SOLVIT Recommendation contains provisions on cooperation with other networks and contact points. To ensure that applicants get effective help, SOLVIT centres should cooperate with other European and national information and help networks, such as Your Europe, Europe Direct, Your Europe Advice, the Enterprise Europe Network, European Consumer Centres, EURES, Fin-Net and the European Network of Ombudsmen. Cooperation between SOLVIT and other organisations predominantly takes the form of signposting cases from one organisation to the other. Complaints and questions can now be directly transferred from SOLVIT to Your Europe Advice and the Europe Direct Contact Centre and vice versa. In addition, SOLVIT is coherent with the European Commission's complaint handling and enforcement policy<sup>316</sup>.

The evaluations, however, also point to inefficiencies resulting from lack of coherence. According to the YEA evaluation, around one fourth of the enquiries currently addressed by the YEA service could have been answered by the information readily available on the Your Europe portal. The evaluation data suggest that almost one fourth of all YEA users did not visit the Your Europe portal prior to submitting their case to YEA. On the EU level, a lot of other Commission services are duplicating on their websites information that is already being offered by Your Europe, which is not only inefficient but also confusing to the user.

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<sup>313</sup> See for example the Business Europe Strategy Paper "Remaining obstacles to a true single market for services" of December 2014.

<sup>314</sup> REFIT Platform Opinion on the submission by the Danish Business Forum and BusinessEurope on the Point of Single Contact, June 2016. The government Group also recommended "one single entry point with clear information and coordinated services in each Member State".

<sup>315</sup> EP, Report on Non-Tariff Barriers in the Single Market, 2016.

<sup>316</sup> See 'Better Governance for the Single Market', European Commission Communication COM (2012) 259 final.

The YEA evaluation also shows that there is an overlap in scope of YEA with the mandates of the European Consumer Centres network, the EURES centres and the national contact points for professional qualifications.

A coherent "quality approach" to the instruments is lacking. There are "families" of instruments providing either or a mix of: information, assistance services and procedures. Whereas YEA and SOLVIT have very detailed (in the case of YEA even contractual) quality criteria the respect of which is being monitored, the ECC, EURES, the PCPs and PCPCs do not and this impacts on the quality of the service. The Services Directive (and PSC Charter) also contains a detailed list of quality provisions, but nothing comparable exists for the product side (PCPs and PCPCs). A coverage gap exists with regard to information: Your Europe lacks parts of Member State information on certain specific topics. The latter is due to the voluntary nature of information provision to YE and the resulting lack of leverage of the Commission.

Visibility of the instruments is another general concern. Target audiences are currently too unlikely to discover the appropriate assistance. The 'Smart Single Market Regulation' study of the European Parliament points out that the level of awareness of the various assistance services and the understanding of their scope and functions is very limited among European citizens and businesses. None of the tools was known by more than 25% of surveyed citizens, and the lowest awareness levels amounted to just 1% of survey respondent. Users often do not understand the complementarities and differences between the tools<sup>317</sup>. Businesses participating in the online public consultation on the single digital gateway indicated that the first reason why they consider it difficult to find information is that it is hard to find the right website (48%).

All the instruments covered are relevant for and coherent with the current Commission's ten priorities, which includes a 'deeper and fairer Internal Market' and a 'connected Digital Single Market'. To ensure a fairer Single Market, the EU must address the concerns of both citizens and businesses. They must have the assurance that the Single Market works in practice and feel empowered to benefit from it.<sup>318</sup> In the context of ensuring practical delivery, the Single Market Strategy stresses the importance of a culture of compliance and smart enforcement to be achieved inter alia through strengthening and streamlining the Single Market problem-solving tools. Furthermore, the "start-up initiative" aims to remove administrative burdens to the starting and scaling-up of companies' activities, including through initiatives to facilitate the use of digital technologies. The Digital Single Market Strategy aims to create the right conditions for networks to flourish in the digital economy.

#### **3.4.4 The utility and EU added value of the existing framework**

**What is the additional value resulting from current interventions at EU level when it comes to the services covered, compared to what could be achieved by Member States at national and/or regional level?**

<sup>317</sup> According to the December 2015-January 2016 panel survey on the European Internal Market conducted by the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, the 80% of Dutch entrepreneurs who are doing business in the internal market have never heard of the listed online information and advisory services.

<sup>318</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Upgrading the Single Market: more opportunities for people and business", Brussels, 28.10.2015 COM (2015) 550 final.

**To what extent does this continue to require action at EU level? What would be the most likely consequences of stopping for withdrawing current EU actions in the field?**

Generally speaking, the impacts of the instruments covered by this evaluation have been positive (though to varying degrees) for citizens and businesses, and the EU has created added value. In this section, the (positive) "EU added value" will be described first, followed by a more critical assessment.

The Services Directive addresses issues which have a clear cross-border dimension. EU-level action has created legal certainty for service providers going cross-border, and the PSCs facilitate the required administrative process by requiring online procedures that can also be completed across borders.

The EU-mandated contact points all provide support for the implementation of EU legislation, and make other Member States' markets more accessible to businesses.

The wide mandate of SOLVIT covers all EU law governing the Single Market, including the four freedoms and supporting policies that have a direct impact on the Single Market. There is an EU added value due to the necessity on the one hand to provide fast and informal problem solving services to citizens and business when their EU rights are not respected by public authorities and on the other hand to contribute to a better functioning Single Market by fostering and promoting better compliance with EU law.

SOLVIT meets the need of EU citizens and businesses for an easy and informal out of court solution to their cross-border complaints regarding misapplication of EU law by national authorities. In terms of providing this kind of solution in the Internal Market area, SOLVIT is the only service provider currently covering this niche. With increasing numbers of EU citizens living in other Member States, there is growing demand for this service, and a growing SOLVIT caseload. SOLVIT fits a clear market segment which is supported by the user survey finding that the majority of citizens feel that no alternative service currently exists.

The same applies to the ECC Network, which provides help to citizens for their cross-border consumer problems with foreign traders. It is unlikely that Member States acting alone would have (been able to) set up this Network. The EEN and YEA – two services which are appreciated highly by mobile EU citizens and businesses – would not exist without EU funding.

EURES has become a pan-EU cooperation mechanism of employment services that needed EU legislation in order to succeed. There is no earmarked or specifically allocated budget nationally to support mobility, and overall it appears very unlikely that national funding sources could have enabled a similar scope and scale of activities. In addition, the funding provided through EURES has strengthened the network of EURES advisers, which in turn led to initiatives and joint activities between countries, thereby further integrating the European labour market.

Your Europe presents information for mobile businesses and citizens covering the EU and the national level. This kind of "information partnership" between the Commission and Member States can only be brokered and implemented through EU-level coordination action.

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However, the potential "network effect" that could be achieved by closer collaboration of all the individual instruments presented in this evaluation, could be very much higher. All these instruments are important to businesses and citizens exploiting the opportunities of the Single Market. Yet they are not presented as a whole anywhere online, but in isolation<sup>319</sup>. If the services functioned as a network, they should also live up to common quality standards, proposed by the Commission and agreed by Member States, which is currently not the case. In this respect, coherence is missing.

This logic also applies to the individual cases databases operated by YEA, SOLVIT, EEN and the ECC. All these case databases contain significant evidence of problems citizens and businesses experience with the internal market 'on the ground'. However, these cases are not brought together in a single database (per broad topic), not analysed collectively and not exploited for global internal market policy-making.

This is confirmed by the study 'Smart Single Market Regulation' of London Economics for the European Parliament<sup>320</sup>, which highlights that the Single Market tools potentially offer valuable information about the issues hindering a successful implementation of the different Single Market areas. This information could be used to inform new policy priorities and adjustments to existing programmes and policies. Conversely, policy adjustments might be able to address those factors that impair the effectiveness of assistance tools.

The study 'Smart Single Market Regulation' of London Economics for the European Parliament<sup>321</sup> also notes that demand for the services provided by the Single Market governance tools (which are all covered in this evaluation) has been continuously rising in the last decade. However, there is room for improving their effectiveness. In particular, long case handling periods (e.g. SOLVIT, ECC Net) and limited expertise of network staff (e.g. EEN, EURES) were mentioned. In addition, Member States do not always contribute as positively to the performance of the tools as they should (e.g. Your Europe). It concludes that, in order to use existing tools more effectively at the policy execution stage, coordination efforts and information flows between the different tools as well as between the tools and national authorities have to be enhanced.

Along the same lines, in April 2016 the European Parliament<sup>322</sup> stated its concern with the low level of awareness and understanding among Europeans of the services available, such as Your Europe, Your Europe Advice and SOLVIT, and noted that only 4 % of consumers and companies are aware of such tools and that the level of take-up of these services is very low at present. It called on the Commission and the Member States, with a view to resolving this problem, to foster further awareness of such tools, while examining whether the outcomes and responses they generate are adequate for users. Furthermore, it called on the Commission to work on better cooperation between the various assistance services, such as Your Europe and SOLVIT, with the aim of increasing user satisfaction.

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<sup>319</sup> However, Your Europe is acting as a gateway that links to various services.

<sup>320</sup> See 'Smart Single Market Regulation' (IP/A/IMCO/2015-02 PE 563.442), London Economics for the European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department A, Economic and Scientific Policy at the request of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee.

<sup>321</sup> Idem.

<sup>322</sup> See Resolution 'Towards improved single market regulation', P8\_TA(2016)0105, (2015/2089(INI)), European Parliament, April 2016.

The EU could create additional value by creating a common recognisable brand under which all the services could operate, without necessarily losing their own labels, backed up by a common brand search engine and common quality criteria. This is currently lacking.

### ***3.4.5 Why have the initiatives covered by this evaluation not fully delivered for their intended beneficiaries, and what problems has this caused?***

The existing initiatives have all been designed with the best of intentions, but have not fully delivered and display weaknesses that should be explained by the underlying reasons. The underlying reasons are deeply rooted in national (and EU) administrations, and only strong and determined action will stand a chance of improving the current situation.

So which factors are chiefly to blame for the current under-performance of the instruments?

#### ***Silo based, administration-centred approaches, leading to fragmentation***

All the instruments were constructed in isolation – without first checking how they fit into the bigger picture and what already exists, and whether existing structures could be built upon to make it less confusing and easier to find for the user. Both at EU and national level, administrations and Directorates-Generals have set up their own websites and assistance services, which are sometimes overlapping but also leaving very significant gaps in coverage. No overall governance structure, encompassing the EU and national level, exists to ensure consistency and a user-centric approach. No "overall concept" has been driving the website and service creation, and nobody has ever evaluated whether what is online forms a "coherent whole" for the user, in particular the cross-border one. This is the task of this evaluation, and it concludes that the state of play is an inconsistent set of initiatives without an overall user-oriented vision behind it.

There are various national contact points (for services, products, construction products, professional qualifications cross-border healthcare) that cater either to businesses or citizens, or both. Some of the legal bases require that information should be provided online, others do not. Very often, the target groups need to address more than one contact point when planning cross-border activities. But the individual contact points are usually run by separate national institutions which do not bother to inter-link contact points, to present them via one portal or to think of other ways (e.g. online questionnaires) of guiding users to the most appropriate one(s). Most services and goods contact points do not provide links to the other points even within the same country, let alone other countries<sup>323</sup>.

Only one Member State has so far brought together the services and goods contact points on one website, and one Member State runs an online enquiry form that guides businesses to the right contact point. Yet business stakeholders<sup>324</sup> (e.g. Business Europe and Danish Business Forum as part of a submission to the REFIT Platform) have called for precisely this, as well as EuroChambres and EuroCommerce in their calls for single online business portals per Member State. When a recent study<sup>325</sup> asked each country's product contact points' views as to a potential future joint national PCP and PCPC website, only few replies were received.

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<sup>323</sup> Result of Screening Report on Member States' Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction", Ecorys, 2017

<sup>324</sup> See appendix 1: Business stakeholder positions.

<sup>325</sup> Screening Report on Member States Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction, 2017.

They were about evenly split between positive and negative reactions. The reasons given for a negative view were one-off transition costs and the fact that different authorities are running the two contact points.

The EU and national-level silo based approach has led to fragmentation and unnecessary complexity that makes navigating the web for information confusing and difficult for the user.

***EU and national administrations designing services from their perspective, not that of the user***

When administrations prepare information for online publication, they tend to make this as easy as possible for themselves. Online information is often presented with legal jargon, limited to legal texts, is not systematically updated and does not cover everything the user needs to know.<sup>326</sup> Assistance services do not publish their average response times or what kind of quality the user can expect of them, or do not ask for user feedback on the quality of the service. The product contact points are not even required to have a website, and their replies only refer to the "non-harmonised" parts of products but not the harmonised sector

Procedures are often not designed with the user in mind (who wants simple, intuitive procedures that can be carried out online) but follow the logic of the administration. For example, the very typical life event of "starting a business" contains the registration with the company register, VAT registration and registration with social security scheme. But these are not combined in a one-stop shop but remain separate<sup>327</sup>. The result of this administration-centric design of services is that they do not fully meet user needs, and that quality is deficient.

Furthermore, the "silo based approach" as outlined before has prevented a common approach to quality that could provide some guarantee of common basic quality standards to the user. The current patchwork (see table below: mix of degrees of quality standards and whether (contractually) binding or voluntary) cannot work as a coherent whole. The user does not know what to expect as most existing quality standards are not made public or are very difficult to find out (e.g. only by consulting an EU legal act), and will most likely not complain. If no user feedback mechanisms exist where feedback is used to improve the quality, this is basically made impossible in any case.

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<sup>326</sup> This is also supported by the 2016 eGovernment Benchmark report. User centricity: governments have advanced in making public services digital, but focussed less on the quality of the delivery from the user's perspective, which advanced poorly.

<sup>327</sup> See World Bank Doing Business national statistics on "starting a business", <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data>.



Table 3.2

Level of quality standard, soft or hard law	Well-developed, legally binding	Well-developed, voluntary	Medium, Legally binding	Medium, voluntary	Very basic, legally binding	Very basic, voluntary
Instruments						
Points of Single Contact	x	x (Charter)				
Product Contact Points				x	x	
Product Contact Points for Construction					x	x
SOLVIT		x				
Your Europe		x				
Your Europe Advice	x (binding contractually)					
Enterprise Europe Network			x (binding contractually)			
EURES	x					
European Consumer Centres Network				x		

The evaluation shows that well-developed but voluntary approaches to quality can work well if all Member States are fully on board. However, they can also quickly reach their limits in an environment of scarce resources competing for attention with legally binding tasks. This is the case for Your Europe, SOLVIT and the Charter for the Points of Single Contact. The of business stakeholders, who have called in a REFIT action for the PSC Charter criteria to be made mandatory, is that a soft-law approach fares worse than a hard law one.

The monitoring of compliance with quality criteria is challenging and costly and can usually only be done with external contractors and a mystery shopping approach. The new EURES Regulation has adopted well-developed and binding quality criteria and will monitor compliance through the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data at national level, including through customer satisfaction surveys. A detailed EURES Performance Measurement System will be foreseen in an implementing act. With a well-defined quality monitoring system in place, and a governance structure with Member States where quality issues can be discussed and dealt with, it is probably safe to argue that a well-defined and legally binding quality system will make the biggest headway.

***Technical solutions designed 10 years ago no longer reflect technical progress and best practice of today***

When the Services Directive was adopted in 2006, it foresaw (in Art. 8 (1)) that all procedures within the scope of the Services Directive "may be easily completed, at a distance and by electronic means" via the Points of Single Contact. Ten years ago when Member States drew up this provision, it was considered revolutionary, as most were just launching their e-government programmes and many procedures were still being carried out offline. Nowadays, this provision has become almost outdated. It does not foresee "full onlineness" in the sense of enabling the user to carry out the entire procedure within the website environment, and without using email, fax or similar. The example of Estonia and many other "forerunner" Member States shows that EU citizens and businesses can be enabled to complete most of their interactions with the administration fully online. This trend is supported by very

ambitious national e-government programmes, EU funding possibilities for e-government via the social and regional funds, the Connecting Europe Facility and the ISA Programme, and technical evolutions in the commercial sector with which the public sector is expected to keep pace.

When Regulation (EC) 764/2008 was adopted in 2008 and set up the Product Contact Points (and three years later Regulation (EC) 305/2011 creating the Construction Product Contact Points, which was modelled on 764/2008), it obliged Member States to provide information on technical rules applicable to a specific type of product, information whether that type of product is subject to a requirement for prior authorisation, together with information concerning the principle of mutual recognition, contact details of competent authorities and remedies. Nowadays, it would appear evident that these information requirements would need to be fulfilled via a website. But as this was not foreseen and only recommended, more than a third of Member States are not even publishing the contact details online, and a minority of Member States have not even created webpages.

The result is that "first generation" technical implementation solutions in legislation – be it for procedures or information – have not kept pace with the evolution in technology and users' expectations (based on what they experience in the commercial world). They have led to sub-optimal solutions in the case of some Member States that did not adopt state-of-the-art solutions exceeding what had been enshrined in law. The "digital divide" across Member States is large<sup>328</sup>. With hindsight, our legal instruments have not been ambitious enough compared with what can and should be required today.

And the Commission learnt from the Services Directive that it should have put more emphasis on helping Member States with the implementation of e-government. This not only refers to EU funding – which is available and many Member States have used it for financing e-government programmes – but also the necessary technical enablers (developed in the form of large scale pilots over the past few years). Many implementation problems could have been avoided if the e-IDAS Regulation had already been in place 10 years earlier.

### ***National administrations' neglect of the non-national user***

Most Member States do not have users from other Member States "on their radar" when designing e-government solutions. These are not their "natural clients". 50% of the public authorities replying to the public consultation for the single digital gateway said that they do not take into consideration the specific needs of users from other EU countries<sup>329</sup> when putting procedures online or planning to do so. And as the foreign user has got "no voice" and is not part of any constituency to which public administrations listen, his specific needs in terms of access to information, assistance services and procedures are not catered for<sup>330</sup>. Cost

<sup>328</sup> eGovernment Benchmark 2016, "A turning point for eGovernment development in Europe", Capgemini, IDC, Sogeti, Politecnico de Milano, 2016, p. 6: "A string of countries from the South-West to the North-East of Europe perform above the European average and are also showing stronger progress than the European average, while most of the other European countries are behind the European average on both indicators."

<sup>329</sup> In the question, reference was made to language covers, technical aspects such as e-identification and payment, or legal aspects such as whether foreign documents need to be certified.

<sup>330</sup> Idem, p. 10: "25% of the services required of foreign entrepreneurs to start their business in another country is completely offline: meaning there is no information – let alone a service – available online. In contrast, entrepreneurs starting a business in their own country face such issues in only 2% of the cases. Foreign

considerations also come into play, as translations have a cost and the benefit of this cost for the administration is not obvious.

### **What are the foreign user's "special needs"?**

In a nutshell, his needs are for online information, assistance services and procedures to be made available in English; online procedures without stumbling blocks (such as: national authentication and payment means only, form fields only accepting national data); and help with submitting evidence (documents or data) as part of the procedure, i.e. online and without the need for certification and translation. According to an IMI all user survey in 2015, when dealing with foreign documents, 43% of administrations require often (or very often) original documents and 45% require often (or very often) certified translations (45%). The finding of all Commission e-government benchmark reports and relevant Commission studies on the performance of the Points of Single Contact is that the foreign user's accessibility to information, assistance and procedures is much more limited than for the national one. At the same time, his need for smooth online solutions is even greater than for the national user, as he cannot easily visit an administration to drop off evidence or to find out about requirements.

For the services under review, the problem of "lack of accessibility for foreign users" does not pose itself across the board. The services that are fully (Your Europe, Your Europe Advice) or partly (Enterprise Europe Network, EURES, European Consumer Centres' Network) funded by the Commission all ensure cross-border services and mainly cater to the foreign user. SOLVIT, which is a national service with a cross-border reach, has this as its mission as well. The problem lies with the 100% national services, i.e. the services and goods contact points (and also national websites which are within Your Europe's remit), which primarily have a national clientele.

Successful national e-government strategies have further widened the gap between national and foreign users. They have allowed national citizens and companies to benefit from full online interaction with the administration, and good websites in the national language, while foreign citizens and companies still need to follow off-line paper-based procedures and find ways to overcome the language barrier. This has created new Single Market obstacles for EU citizens and businesses from other Member States. These problems largely go unnoticed as foreigners have got no lobby that could complain on their behalf. They usually just pay expensive private services to sort everything out for them. And as pointed out before, the evidence from YEA, SOLVIT, ECC and EEN cases has not been used effectively by the Commission as valuable insights for policy-making.

#### **3.4.6 Conclusion**

The evaluation has pointed to a number of problems that concern the individual services, as well as a lack of effectiveness, efficiency and coherence that concerns them as a package of Single Market services for citizens and businesses.

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start-ups are also less able to find/access information on services (33% vs. 39%) and using services across borders is only possible in 27% of cases (compared to 46% of services in the national context). Most common barriers are language, lack of information on the foreign website, and the need for a physical encounter to perform the service successfully."

### *Effectiveness of existing services*

As far as the effectiveness of individual services is concerned, recurring and cross-cutting problems pointed out are: lack of visibility and findability online, lack of quality and under-use. 92% of consumers and businesses are unaware of any online services at European level that they could turn to in case of problems.<sup>331</sup> In addition, gaps exist with regard to national-level information, which is either not online or only in national language, and procedures can often not be carried out online by foreign users – even where this is possible for domestic users. The existing legal framework also contains a number of gaps<sup>332</sup>. Cross-border accessibility remains one of the key development points in order for contact points and other portals to fully support the Single Market.

Nevertheless, the level of quality, user-centricity and accessibility for foreign users is quite divergent for the different services.

For services funded by the EU, quality criteria have been included in contracts (Enterprise Europe Network, Your Europe Advice). These services are contractually obliged to cater for foreign users.

For services created through binding EU law, quality criteria have proven to be too general (Points of Single Contact) or hardly exist (Products Contact Points). Additional voluntary quality criteria (Charter for PSCs) have had limited success.<sup>333</sup> Access for foreign users is still limited.

For services created through non-binding EU law and managed by the Commission (SOLVIT, Your Europe<sup>334</sup>) quality criteria have been agreed, but due to their voluntary nature some Member States are fully onboard, others are not. Access for foreign citizens is guaranteed for these services.

### *Efficiency of existing services*

The efficiency part of the evaluation produces a mixed picture. The EU-level assistance services are considered cost efficient when taking into account the savings and other benefits these services provide to businesses and citizens as compared to much more costly private alternative services. However, the national-level assistance services (PSCs, PCPs and PCPCs) can only be considered as partially efficient. The cost effectiveness aspect is difficult to assess, as data are missing, but they are under-performing for businesses as far as their effectiveness is concerned. Moreover, the low quality of their websites represents a missed opportunity to reduce the number of requests through better online up-front information, and thus to be even more cost-efficient<sup>335</sup>.

There is scope for more efficiency and easier "findability" online if the individual services promoted their services under a common brand name. The EU could create added value here, as one recognizable brand, backed up by a common brand search engine, could only be set up at the EU level.

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<sup>331</sup> A European Single Point of Contact, European Parliament, 2015.

<sup>332</sup> With regard to information for citizens, and for businesses the fields not covered by the Services Directive and the PCPs only covering the non-harmonised sector.

<sup>333</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/services/docs/services-dir/psc-charter\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/psc-charter_en.pdf).

<sup>334</sup> For the content that Your Europe aims at, see Annex 13.

<sup>335</sup> On the premise that personalised assistance is always more expensive than online information.

### ***Coherence of existing services***

The lack of coherence refers to the fact that all the instruments that were evaluated were created by EU level action, but do not operate as a whole: they are dispersed, incomplete, not sufficiently linked up and not sufficiently user-friendly. A common approach to ensuring quality through minimum quality standards is missing. There is no overall EU-Member States governance structure that would assess and ensure consistency of all the instruments. Whilst the legal framework promotes synergies, these have not been sufficiently exploited by the Member States (in the absence of binding obligations). In particular, contact points for goods and services are distinct for most Member States, whilst businesses tend to demand them as a package. On the European level, the problem lies primarily with duplicating content on Commission websites. A successful sign-posting policy is, however, in place.

### ***Reasons for the under-performance of existing services***

The underlying reasons for the under-performance (for the user) of the existing services are:

- Silo based, administration-centred approaches, leading to fragmentation  
In the absence of a coordinated, holistic approach from the perspective of the user, national and EU administrations have acted as "silos", dealing with related but different topics on a multitude of single topic portals that are not inter-linked, and only covering the policy areas within their mandates. This has led to complexity, lack of coherence and restricted online findability.
- Administration-centred design  
EU and national administrations designing services from their perspective, not that of the user. Both at EU and national level, administration-centred service design has traditionally produced public services that accommodated more the needs of the administration than that of the user in terms of clear and easy-to-understand online explanations. It is easier for the administration to 'launch and leave' a new webportal than to organise for regular and systematic updates of its content. The regular e-government benchmark reports of the Commission all point to this problem of quality content taking second place to making content available online.
- Technical solutions designed 10 years ago no longer reflect technical progress and best practice of today  
Existing first generation services could not benefit from well developed digital solutions or national e-government architectures, as these were just being developed. Certain technical solutions foreseen in legal instruments of 10 years ago have been overtaken by technical progress, and not all Member States have been willing to make the necessary adaptations (and investments) to keep their technical systems up-to-date.
- National administrations' neglect of the non-national user.  
National administrations concentrate on national digital solutions; accessibility for foreign users is at best an afterthought. Foreign users have got no "voice" in decision-making, and their needs in terms of language coverage and access to procedures are generally not taken into account. This manifests itself in various ways, such as form fields of procedures only accepting national data, foreign evidence (e.g. documents) not being accepted as part of the online procedure, payment possibilities only being accessible to nationals, foreign e-IDs not being accepted and procedures only in the national language(s).

## APPENDIX 1: Existing framework and studies and evaluations used

Instrument	Currently applicable rules	Studies/evaluations
Points of single contact (EUGO)	Art. 6-8 and 21 of Directive 2006/123/EC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "The <u>Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter</u>" Capgemini and Eurochambres study, June 2015</li> <li>- Evaluation for the Services Card as part of the impact assessment, 2016</li> <li>- REFIT Platform Opinion on the submission by the Danish Business Forum and BusinessEurope on the Point of Single Contact, June 2016</li> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> </ul>
Product contact points	Art. 9 and 10 of Regulation (EC) 764/2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Yearly reports on the application of Regulation (EC) No 764/2008 (internal documents of GROW in a form of note to file)</li> <li>- draft Commission evaluation on mutual recognition</li> <li>- CSW Part 1 Evaluation of the Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products Accompanying the document the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee.</li> <li>- "Evaluation of the Application of the mutual recognition principle in the field of goods"(ENTR/172/PP/2012/FC-Lot 4), 2015</li> <li>- Communication from the Commission to the EP and the Council "First Report on the application of Regulation (EC) No 764/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 July 2008 laying down procedures relating to the application of certain national technical rules to products lawfully marketed in another Member State and repealing Decision No 3052/95/EC", COM(2012) 292final.</li> <li>- Results from public consultation on the mutual recognition regulation, 2016</li> <li>- "Screening Report on Member States Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction", Ecorys, 2017</li> </ul>
Construction product contact points	Art. 10 of Regulation (EC) 305/2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "<u>Analysis of implementation of the Construction Products Regulation</u>", Report by RPA of 31 July 2015 for GROW and Annexes.</li> <li>- "Screening Report on Member States Product Contact Points and Product Contact Points for Construction", Ecorys, 2017</li> </ul>

Instrument	Currently applicable rules	Studies/evaluations
SOLVIT	Recommendation 2013/461/EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Evaluation</u> of SOLVIT, cses, 2011</li> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> <li>- Ongoing Commission evaluation that will accompany the initiative 'action Plan to reinforce SOLVIT'</li> </ul>
Your Europe	Part of Decision 2004/387/EC on the IDABC Programme Your Europe Action Plan COM(2013) 636 final	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> <li>- Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Draft Final Report, January 2017</li> </ul>
Your Europe Advice	Your Europe Action Plan COM(2013) 636 final	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Evaluation</u> of the Your Europe Advice Service, ICF GHK, 2014</li> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> </ul>
Enterprise Europe Network	Regulation (EU) 1287/2013 establishing the COSME Programme, as well as yearly Commission implementing decision on the adoption of the work programme and the financing decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final evaluation of the impact of the Enterprise Europe Network, 2008-2014, Technopolis, 2015</li> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> </ul>
EURES	Regulation (EU) 2016/589 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 April 2016 on a European network of employment services (EURES), workers' access to mobility services and the further integration of labour markets, and amending Regulations (EU) No 492/2011 and (EU) No 1296/2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Impact assessment accompanying the EURES Regulation, 2014, SWD(2014) 9 final of 17/1/2014</li> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> </ul>
European Consumer Centres Network		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net), CPEC, 2011</li> <li>- Single Market Scoreboard data, 2016</li> </ul>

**Further studies and evidence used:**

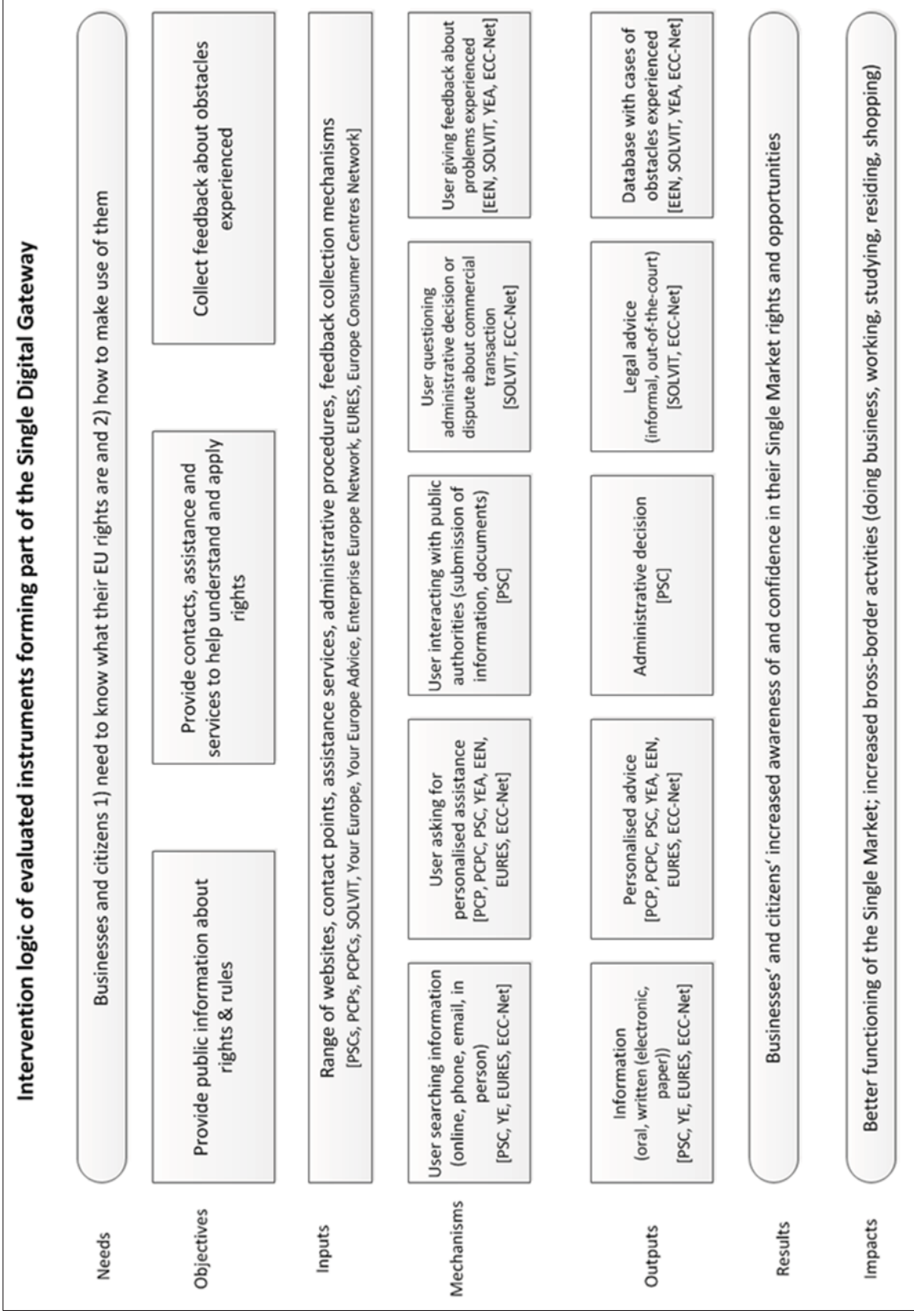
- J. Montegudo, A. Rutkowski, D. Lorenzani, "Part 2: Assessing the economic impact of setting up Points of Single Contact: an approximation based on the Doing Business" in "The economic impact of the Services Directive: a first assessment following implementation", Economic Papers No 456, June 2012
- "Services Directive implementation survey – the Chambers' perspective on the Points of Single Contact, Eurochambres, Policy Survey, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, January 2011
- "Are the Points of Single Contact truly making things easier for European companies? – Services Directive implementation Report, Business Europe, November 2011
- Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2016 "Has the Commission ensured effective implementation of the Services Directive?"
- European Parliament, Report on Non-Tariff Barriers in the Single Market, 2016
- Better Governance for the Single Market', European Commission Communication COM (2012) 259 final.
- December 2015-January 2016 panel survey on the European Internal Market conducted by the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Upgrading the Single Market: more opportunities for people and business", Brussels, 28.10.2015 COM (2015) 550 final.
- 'Smart Single Market Regulation' (IP/A/IMCO/2015-02 PE 563.442), London Economics for the European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department A, Economic and Scientific Policy at the request of the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee
- Resolution 'Towards improved single market regulation', P8\_TA(2016)0105, (2015/2089(INI)), European Parliament, April 2016.

**Stakeholder positions used:**

Eurochambres survey "EU Internal Market Barriers and Solutions: The Business Perspective", 23 September 2015  
EuroCommerce Position Paper on the single digital gateway, "Giving businesses (especially SMEs) better access to information", 6/12/2016  
EuroCommerce Position Paper, Contribution to the forthcoming Commission Single Market strategy 2015, 3/7/2015  
Business Europe position paper "Building a true single market for Europe – business priorities", 28 September 2015  
Danish Business forum, proposal submitted to the REFIT Platform, July 2015  
Business Europe Strategy Paper "Remaining obstacles to a true single market for services" of December 2014



## APPENDIX 2: Intervention Logic



### APPENDIX 3: Information on implementation of the instruments

	ESTABLISHMENT	USAGE
Points of Single Contact	Created between 2006-2009, may have two forms: online and off-line (physical points of contact). They are managed by public authorities, sometimes in co-operation with Chambers of Commerce. Sometimes online PSCs are part of the e-government portals (and part of e-government strategies).	<p>The recent survey on the PSC (June – August 2016) shows that almost all PSCs use web analytics programmes to collect information about the PSC users. Majority of PSCs (18) regularly process and evaluate the collected information. 19 PSCs provided the number of visitors (returning and unique) in 2015. EE PSC with 5.468,908 visitors is by far the most often visited PSC, followed by FR (over 4.000.000), SE (over 3.500.000), IT (over 2.000.000), PL and LUX (over 1.000.000).</p> <p>18 PSCs are monitoring the requests for information or assistance. As the numbers vary enormously, different methods of monitoring/counting have been introduced: data for 2015: 71.000 (IT), 20.000 per month (PL), 32.000 (NO), 20.000 (SE) and 5.680 (FR) or 554 (NL). The majority of these PSCs can distinguish between nationals and foreigners and the method of contact (by phone or e-mail).</p> <p>The performance is (usually) monitored through the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>
Product Contact Points	In operation since 2009, part of national authorities. The list of e-mail addresses is published on a Commission website.	<p>MS are obliged to send yearly reports to the Commission summarising the activities of the PCPs. Out of the 22 annual reports received in 2015, 16 only indicate the number of inquiries received. The other Member States mentioned the activity of PCPs, without indicating the number of questions they received.</p> <p>Few MSs conduct national surveys on the usefulness of the PCPs.</p> <p>The performance of PCPs is not regularly monitored and they are not part of the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>
Product Contact Points for Construction	In operation since July 2013, part of national authorities. The list of contact details (telephones, e-mail addresses) is published on a Commission website.	<p>MS are obliged to send yearly reports to the Commission summarising the activities of the PCPCs.</p> <p>The performance of PCPs is not regularly monitored and they are not part of the Single Market Scoreboard. A study commissioned by the Commission shows that in 2015 the number of requests put to PCPC was very low – between 15 and 114 per replying MS. Nothing is known about the quality of the replies provided.</p>

	<b>ESTABLISHMENT</b>	<b>USAGE</b>
SOLVIT	<p>Launched in 2002 as an informal network of SOLVIT centres being part of the national administration. Operates using an online procedure since 2013.</p>	<p>The online system (part of the Commission IT infrastructure) allows for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• registration of the complaints,</li> <li>• registration of answers and the response time</li> <li>• monitoring of the quality of answers provided.</li> </ul> <p>Over 2000 complaints (eligible cases) are introduced to SOLVIT every year. They are answered within 70 days (average). In 2015 SOLVIT helped more than 4 700 people by resolving their problem, clarifying the issue(s) or signposting them towards another service.</p> <p>Performance is monitored through the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>
Your Europe	<p>The YE portal was launched in 2005. It is part of the inter-institutional “Europe” website, and a joint project between the COM and Member States (including EEA). It contains information needed for citizens and business in 23 languages.</p>	<p>The portal is regularly monitored and efforts are made to constantly increase its findability (search engine optimisation).</p> <p>Use of the site is growing fast – over one million monthly visits in 2015 (800 000 in 2014)</p> <p>Continued high level of satisfaction – more than 90% ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ in online user surveys.</p> <p>Performance is monitored through the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>
Your Europe Advice	<p>In operation since 1996 - EU-run advisory service answering citizens' and enterprises' queries (by phone or online) about their EU rights in the Single Market. It relies on a network of more than 60 legal experts based in all Member States (including EEA) who handle enquiries in all 24 official EU languages.</p>	<p>Between 2009 and 2015 the number of enquiries more than doubled reaching 25.569 in 2015.</p> <p>Service efficiency is measured primarily by the speed of replies. The aim is to reply to enquiries within 3 working days. Over 95% of replies are sent within that deadline and over 99% within four working days.</p> <p>Performance is monitored through the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>
Enterprise Europe Network	<p>Launched in February 2008 and co-financed under COSME programme. Network of 600 member organisations (including chambers of commerce and industry, technology centres, universities and development agencies).</p>	<p>EEN helps SMEs innovate and grow internationally. Its performance is monitored through “Key Performance Indicators” and verified against “Achievement Guidelines on Advisory Services Outcomes”.</p> <p>Not part of the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>

	<b>ESTABLISHMENT</b>	<b>USAGE</b>
EURES	Established in 1993 as a network of employment services (through the National Coordination Offices) in EU/EEA countries, now operating under Regulation (EU) 2016/589 which constitutes its legal basis.	The EURES network provides job mobility information (through 960 advisers) recruitment/placement services in a form of a portal where jobseekers and employers can create their personal accounts. The performance of EURES is monitored yearly in the Single Market Scoreboard.
European Consumer Centres Network	Set up in 2005 by a decision of the European Commission and national governments. It comprises 30 centres covering the EU/EEA. They are hosted by either the national consumer protection authority or a consumer association.	<p>In 2015, the network had over 93 964 contacts from consumers and received over 38 048 complaints. In 2015, the ECC was able to help over half the complainants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 51% of complex cases (where more than one centre had to be involved) were resolved amicably</li> <li>• 16.35% of the closed complex complaints were transferred to other organisations (of which 26% were alternative dispute resolution entities; 11.1% to enforcement bodies and 27.8% to courts).</li> </ul> <p>The achievements of the ECC are presented yearly in the Single Market Scoreboard.</p>

## **ANNEX 4: GAP ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL ONLINE INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES**

### **Methodology for the gap analysis**

#### **4.1 Information**

The information coverage represents the degree to which a random user can find information on the topics to be covered by the single digital gateway, in each Member State.

#### ***EC desk research, 2016/2017 - mystery shopping***

In order to estimate this information coverage, a team of "assessors" looked for answers to a number of questions selected across 8 areas.

Each assessor was attributed with one or several Member States, and had to look for answers to the following questions:

- Area 1. Starting, running and closing a business
  - Question 1: how can I open a business in this MS ? (level of detail required: list of the different steps to follow, and explanation of under which authority each falls)
  - Question 2: what different legal types of companies can I choose from?
  - Question 3: how do I close my business?
- Area 2. Hiring staff
  - Question 1: what are the labour law rules (e.g. nb of working hours per week, min wage)
  - Question 2: what is the average wage cost, gross and net wage in this MS?
  - Question 3: Are there any incentives to hire disadvantaged groups (elder workers, young people, or persons with disabilities)
- Area 3. Paying taxes
  - Question 1: How can I estimate the company taxes I will pay (what is the tax rate and the base)?
  - Question 2: Am I entitled to tax benefits?
  - Question 3: Whom do I owe taxes at the federal, regional and local levels?
- Area 4. Selling goods
  - Question 1: Is there an overview on the rules my products have to comply with?
  - Question 2: Are there regulations that define requirements for selling dolls online?
  - Question 3: Is there a summary of the regulations that applies to paper cups?
- Area 5. Providing services
  - Question 1: what national rules do I have to comply with to provide freight transport services?
  - Question 2: how do I get my professional qualifications as a hairdresser recognised?
  - Question 3: what licences do I need to apply for in order to open a restaurant?
- Area 6. Getting funds
  - Question 1: What are the public funding programmes available for my business at the national level?
  - Question 2: as an SME, to which funds do I get access?
  - Question 3: what innovation funds are available in this MS?
- Area 7. Complying with environmental rules (certification and labels)
  - Question 1: how can I get an EMAS certification?
  - Question 2: if I want to operate a factory, what rules do I have to comply with in terms of waste management?

- Question 3: what are the main administrative requirements for setting up a contingency plan for environmental risks management?
- Area 8. Complying with health and safety conditions
  - Question 1: Is there an overview of what I need to do to respect legislation on health and safety at work ?
  - Question 2: what trainings do I have to give my employees concerning health and safety?
  - Question 3: what are the specific safety requirements in the construction sector?

This process was repeated for information in the national language and in English. For a limited number of Member States, for which no native speaker was available, assessment was based on the information that could be found in English as well as through research using machine translation.

### ***Drawing conclusions***

The total number of questions to which an answer could be found on public authorities' websites was then calculated for each Member State. Finally, a percentage was calculated by dividing the total number of questions that could be answered by 24.

## **4.2 Procedures**

As regards procedures, the objective was to assess the degree to which a selected list of procedures were online in each Member State. Five degrees of "onlineness" were defined:

- Information online and procedures fully online :
  - 1/ Information is available online
  - 2/ The whole procedure can be carried out online, on the website of the responsible public organisation, without the need for the user to provide anything offline
- Information online and procedures partly online :
  - 1/ Information is available online
  - 2/ Forms to be filled in for the procedure are available online, but the user needs to provide part of or all documents offline or per email
- Information online and procedures offline:
  - 1/ Information is available online
  - 2/ The procedure is not online at all
- Nothing online: nothing can be found online, neither information nor access to an online procedure
- This procedure is not managed at the national level, but is decentralised. Therefore no assessment of the degree of onlineness was done.

### ***EC desk research, 2016/2017 - mystery shopping***

A team of "assessors" looked for the online availability of a list of 20 procedures in each Member State, and rated each procedure according along the degrees of onlineness described above.

The procedures that were assessed are the following:

<b>For businesses:</b>	<b>For citizens:</b>
Registration of business activity	Registering a change of address
VAT registration	Requesting or renewing ID card or passport

VAT returns	Request a birth certificate
Corporate/business tax declaration	Request recognition of diploma from a foreign EU national
Recognition of professional qualification	Apply for a study grant
Registration for income tax	Enrol in university
Registration with national insurance scheme as employer	Declaring income taxes
Notification of cessation of activity subject to VAT	Register for social security benefits
Payment of social contributions for employees and payroll withholding tax	Register a car
Registration of employees with pension schemes	Register for a pension

This assessment was done both for domestic and cross-border users.

In a number of cases, in order to access the procedure itself, Member States authorities' websites require identification. In those cases, it was not possible to go through the procedure itself and the assessment was based on the information available on the authorities' websites before accessing the procedure.

For a limited number for Member States, for which no native speaker was available, assessment was based on the information that could be found in English as well as through research using machine translation.

#### ***Cross-checking with other sources of information***

Two other sources of information were then used to double check the findings of the first exercise:

- a study on administrative formalities of important procedures & administrative burden for business, 2016/2017. This study provided a table assessing, for 8 of the 10 business procedures, the degree to which the procedure was online in each Member State.
- the public consultation on the single digital gateway, 2016 – self-assessment by national public authorities: 16 Member States provided a self-assessment of the degree of onlineness of their procedures.

When the comparison of the 3 sources of information showed differences, it was considered that the self-assessment from the public consultation was the most reliable information, followed by the study on administrative formalities, and then the mystery shopping.

#### ***Drawing conclusions***

This exercise enabled to produce 2 tables:

- a table showing, for domestic users, the degree of onlineness per procedure and per Member State,
- a table showing, for users from other Member States, the degree of onlineness per procedure and per Member State.

On this basis, 4 indicators were calculated:

- the number of procedures fully online for domestic users (out of 20),
- the number of procedures partly online for domestic users (out of 20),
- the number of procedures fully online for users from other Member States (out of 20),
- the number of procedures partly online for users from other Member States (out of 20).

## 4.3 Results of the gap analysis

Table 4.1: Overview gap analysis for information and procedures

Member State	Information coverage in national language(s) (% out of 24)	Information coverage in English	Procedures fully online for domestic users (% out of 20)	Procedures partly online for domestic users (% out of 20)	Procedures fully accessible online for foreign users (% out of 20)	Procedures partly accessible online for foreign users (% out of 20)
Estonia	100%	96%	55%	25%	45%	35%
Luxembourg	100%	83%	40%	40%	35%	45%
France	96%	29%	60%	25%	55%	25%
Finland	96%	96%	80%	5%	60%	15%
UK	88%	88%	89%	0%	79%	11%
Denmark	88%	75%	88%	12%	56%	13%
Belgium	88%	71%	75%	20%	60%	15%
Spain	88%	79%	53%	32%	53%	26%
Sweden	83%	58%	100%	0%	67%	28%
Netherlands	83%	83%	65%	25%	65%	15%
Poland	79%	63%	87%	0%	73%	7%
Malta	79%	79%	75%	10%	75%	10%
Slovakia	79%	58%	42%	37%	26%	32%
Portugal	71%	42%	63%	11%	63%	5%
Austria	71%	17%	33%	47%	0%	27%
Latvia	67%	54%	55%	40%	45%	20%
Germany	63%	58%	47%	33%	33%	13%
Ireland	63%	63%	45%	30%	35%	30%
Greece	63%	63%	15%	30%	5%	20%
Lithuania	58%	38%	70%	25%	20%	25%
Slovenia	54%	54%	40%	5%	30%	5%
Croatia	54%	50%	25%	60%	20%	55%
Romania	54%	21%	25%	40%	20%	25%
Bulgaria	50%	42%	55%	10%	20%	20%
Czech Republic	50%	33%	15%	80%	5%	25%
Italy	46%	21%	70%	10%	6%	33%
Cyprus	42%	42%	25%	30%	25%	25%
Hungary	38%	46%	45%	50%	20%	45%
EU	Average EU = 71 %	Average EU = 57%	Average EU = 55%	Average EU = 26%	Average EU = 39%	Average EU = 23%



Table 4.2: Degree to which national procedures can be handled online by a domestic user (key on page 22)

Degree to which national procedures can be handled online by a domestic user		Member States																													
		AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LI	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK		
Business	Registration of business activity																														
	VAT registration																														
	VAT returns																														
	Corporate/business tax declaration																														
	Recognition of professional qualification acquired in another MS																														
	Registration for income tax																														
	Registration with national social insurance scheme upon establishment																														
	Notification of cessation of activity subject to VAT																														
	Payment of social contributions and payroll withholding tax for employees																														
	Registration of employees with pension and insurance scheme																														
Registering a change of address																															
Requesting/renewing ID card or passport																															
Request a birth certificate																															
Request recognition of diploma acquired in another MS																															
Apply for a study grant																															
Enrol in university																															
Declaration of income taxes																															
Register for social security benefits																															
Register a car previously registered in another EU country																															
Register for a pension																															
Citizens																															

Table 4.3: Degree to which national procedures can be handled online by a user from another Member State (key on next page)

Degree to which national procedures can be handled online by a user from another Member State		Member States	AT	BE	BG	HR	CY	CZ	DK	EE	FI	FR	DE	EL	HU	IE	IT	LV	LT	LU	MT	NL	PL	PT	RO	SK	SI	ES	SE	UK				
Businesses	Registration of business activity																																	
	VAT registration																																	
	VAT returns																																	
	Corporate/business tax declaration																																	
	Recognition of professional qualification																																	
	Registration for income tax																																	
	Registration with national social insurance scheme upon establishment																																	
	Notification of cessation of activity subject to VAT																																	
	Payment of social contributions and payroll withholding tax for employees																																	
	Registration of employees with pension and insurance scheme																																	
	Registering a change of address																																	
	Requesting/renewing ID card or passport																																	
	Request a birth certificate																																	
	Request recognition of diploma																																	
	Apply for a study grant																																	
Enrol in university																																		
Declaration of income taxes																																		
Register for social security benefits																																		
Register a car previously registered in another EU country																																		
Register for a pension																																		
Citizens																																		

	<p>Information online and procedures fully online :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/ Information is available online</li> <li>2/ The whole procedure can be carried out online, on the website of the responsible public organisation, without the need for the user to provide anything offline</li> </ol>
	<p>Information online and procedures partly online :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/ Information is available online</li> <li>2/ Forms to be filled in for the procedure are available online, but the user needs to provide part of or all documents offline or per email</li> </ol>
	<p>Information online and procedures offline:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1/ Information is available online</li> <li>2/ The procedure is not online at all</li> </ol>
	<p>Nothing online: nothing can be found online, neither information nor access to an online procedure</p>
	<p>No assessment of the degree of onlineness was possible, for instance because this procedure is not managed at the national level, but is decentralised.</p>

#### 4.4 Information provided per area

*Table 4.4*

<b>Area</b>	<b>Availability of information in the national language (%)</b>	<b>Availability of information in English (%)</b>
<b>Starting, running and closing a business</b>	90%	80%
<b>Paying taxes</b>	86%	73%
<b>Getting funds</b>	86%	70%
<b>Hiring staff</b>	79%	60%
<b>Providing services</b>	68%	50%
<b>Complying with health and safety conditions</b>	62%	33%
<b>Complying with environmental rules (certification and labels)</b>	58%	39%
<b>Selling goods</b>	40%	27%
<b>Average EU</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>54%</b>
<p><i>Source: EC desk research, January 2017.</i>  <i>Assessment was done for 8 selected areas. For each selected area, assessors looked for answers to 3 specific questions, and for related assistance services.</i></p>		

Table 4.5: Cost of covering missing information per Member State

Member State	Information coverage in national language(s)	Cost for each MS to put online missing information (100% = 267 man-days)	Information coverage in English
Estonia	100%	0	96%
Luxembourg	100%	0	83%
Finland	96%	11	96%
France	96%	11	29%
UK	88%	33	88%
Spain	88%	33	79%
Denmark	88%	33	75%
Belgium	88%	33	71%
Netherlands	83%	45	83%
Sweden	83%	45	58%
Malta	79%	56	79%
Poland	79%	56	63%
Slovakia	79%	56	58%
Portugal	71%	78	42%
Austria	71%	78	17%
Latvia	67%	89	54%
Ireland	63%	100	63%
Greece	63%	100	63%
Germany	63%	100	58%
Lithuania	58%	111	38%
Slovenia	54%	122	54%
Croatia	54%	122	50%
Romania	54%	122	21%
Bulgaria	50%	134	42%
Czech Republic	50%	134	33%
Italy	46%	145	21%
Cyprus	42%	156	42%
Hungary	38%	167	46%
EU	Average EU = 71 %	Average EU = 77.46 man-days	Average EU = 56%

**Table 4.6: Cost of covering missing procedures (out of 20) per Member State**

Member State	Absolute number of procedures not fully online	Estimated cost	ESIF funding allocated to e-government and ICT 2014-2020 <sup>336</sup>
Sweden	2	€ 1.2 m	€ 5 m*
UK	3	€ 1.8 m	
Finland	4	€ 2.4 m	
Belgium	5	€ 3.0 m	
Denmark	5	€ 3.0 m	
Malta	5	€ 3.0 m	€ 5 m*
Lithuania	6	€ 3.6 m	€ 244 m
Italy	6	€ 3.6 m	€ 135 m
Netherlands	7	€ 4.2 m	
Poland	7	€ 4.2 m	€ 153 m
France	8	€ 4.8 m	€ 66 m*
Portugal	8	€ 4.8 m	€ 278 m
Estonia	9	€ 5.4 m	€ 204 m
Latvia	9	€ 5.4 m	€ 173 m
Bulgaria	9	€ 5.4 m	€ 118 m
Spain	10	€ 6.0 m	€ 542 m*
Ireland	11	€ 6.6 m	
Hungary	11	€ 6.6 m	€ 601 m
Luxembourg	12	€ 7.2 m	
Slovakia	12	€ 7.2 m	€ 352 m*
Slovenia	12	€ 7.2 m	€ 62 m
Germany	13	€ 7.8 m	
Austria	15	€ 9.0 m	
Croatia	15	€ 9.0 m	€ 191 m
Romania	15	€ 9.0 m	€188 m
Cyprus	15	€ 9.0 m	€ 50 m*
Greece	17	€ 10.2 m	€ 173 m
Czech Republic	17	€ 10.2 m	€ 330 m

<sup>336</sup> The figures are allocations to those thematic objectives of ESIF funds that mention e-government or ICT development. In the absence of other information, the amounts marked with an asterisk are for e-government solutions only. Source: Summary of Operational Programmes supporting institutional capacity building 2014-2020, European Commission, September 2016, and Commission data.

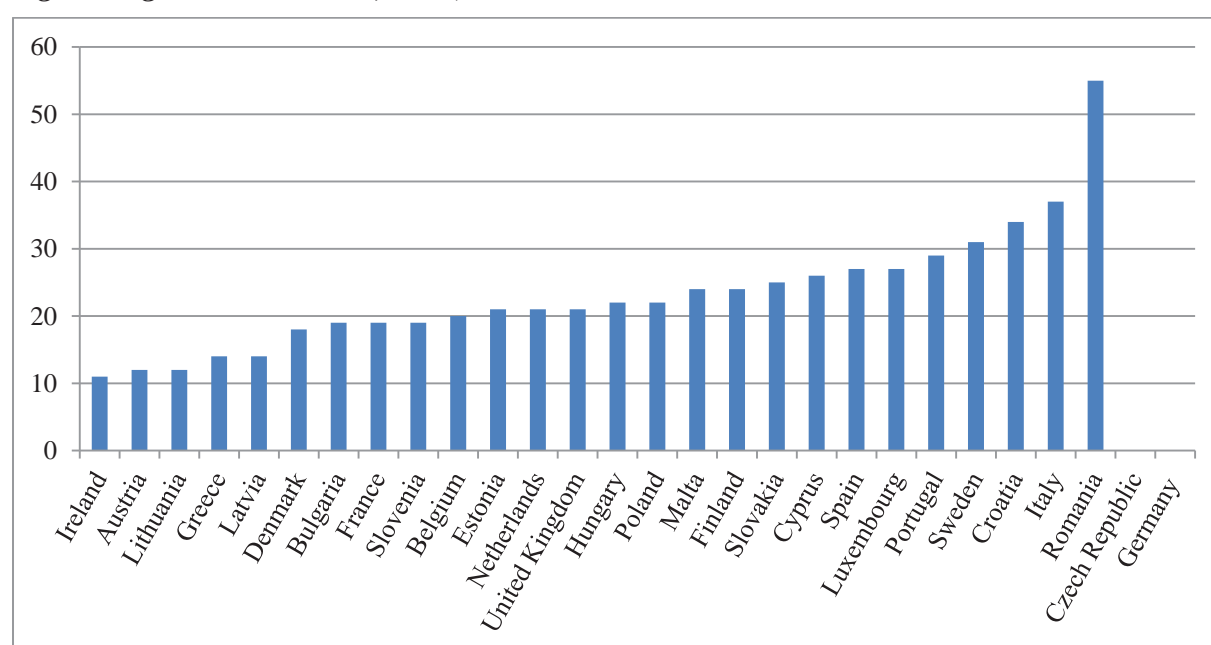
## ANNEX 5: DETAILED PROBLEM DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Lack of online information

The information about rules and requirements that is necessary for the cross-border provision of services and sales of goods is often not available online,<sup>337</sup> nor are the rules and procedures for citizens wanting to work, study, travel or reside in another Member State. The lack of online information might not be a problem for domestic firms and citizens, but this creates a substantial hurdle for foreign SMEs.

**5.2 Businesses do not find information about rules and requirements that are necessary for the cross-border provision of services and sale of goods. In particular for smaller firms the cost and administrative burden can be considerable, and for micro-companies, self-employed or start-ups they can be prohibitive.**

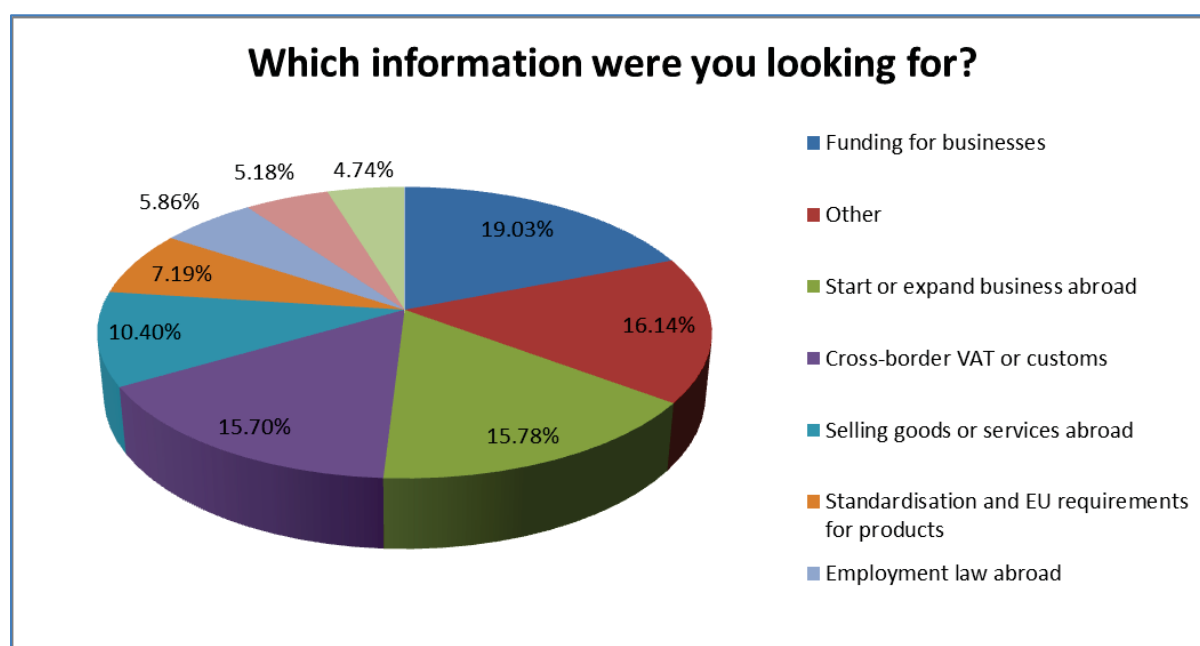
*Figure 5.1: Problems experienced when using e-government websites (as percentage of regular e-government users, 2013)*



Source: EUROSTAT - Problems experienced when using e-government websites (isoc\_ciegi\_pb)

<sup>337</sup> According to a 2015 Eurobarometer survey on European businesses and public administration, only four in ten companies are satisfied with the ease of obtaining reliable information from public authorities in their country, just 3% being 'very satisfied'. Most companies (55%) are dissatisfied, and almost one in five (17%) say they are 'very dissatisfied'. Given the extra difficulties (language, lack of familiarity) for companies established in other Member States, scores for cross-border situations would no doubt be even lower.

Figure 5.2: Most sought-after information by businesses



*Source: Your Europe for Business, Exit survey, 2016.*

Member States' implementation of the Points of Single Contact has been uneven.<sup>338</sup> Some of them have sophisticated e-government portals that offer extensive information in an understandable format and in more than the national language(s) across all service sectors. However, in other cases only general information on business procedures is available online, without the necessary detail on specific procedures.

According to the Single Market Scoreboard,<sup>339</sup> only in eight countries out of 31 these contact points are performing well.<sup>340</sup> A study<sup>341</sup> has found that information is frequently missing, incomplete or not adapted to user needs. There is a big gap between the availability of information on general requirements such as business registration (71%) and tax formalities (62%) on one hand; and sector specific information such as licences (49%) and permits related to operations and location (46%) on the other hand. These findings are in line with user comments that indicate that the points often provide only general information about requirements.<sup>342</sup>

<sup>338</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

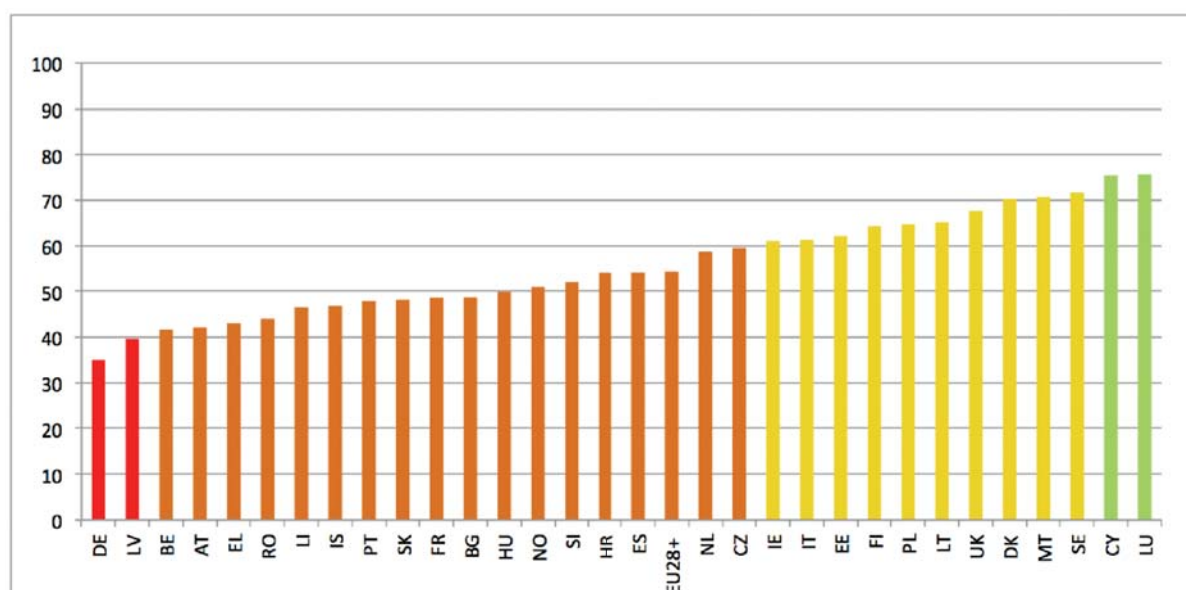
<sup>339</sup> See [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/scoreboard/performance\\_by\\_governance\\_tool/points\\_of\\_single\\_contact/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/scoreboard/performance_by_governance_tool/points_of_single_contact/index_en.htm) (consulted on 13/06/2016)

<sup>340</sup> The reviewed countries were EU28 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

<sup>341</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

<sup>342</sup> Further details about the evaluation of the Points of Single Contact in Annex 3.



**Figure 5.3: Overall performance of Points of Single Contact**

Source: Performance of the Points of Single Contact, Capgemini Consulting, Eurochambres, 2015

The Product Contact Points that were set up to facilitate access to product-specific technical rules<sup>343</sup> are not well known and many do not even have a website. Further, many do not have sufficient resources to provide replies timely or in foreign languages.<sup>344</sup>

**Table 5.1: Key findings on shortcomings of PCPs**

Finding	Figures
PCPs not having a website	11%
Principle of mutual recognition not explained	29%
No link to EU Mutual Recognition Regulation	39%
No information on relevant national legislation	36%
No technical rules applicable to a specific type of product	46%
Type of product subject to a requirement for prior authorisation not published	64%
No information on implementing authorities	43%
No link to NANDO database	57%
No information on dispute remedies	46%
No published online or postal mail address	61%
No listed phone number	36%
Not available in another language.	32%
Websites having invalid links	61%

Source: Draft study "Inventory of Contact Points (PCP, PCPC), Ecorys, 2017 (forthcoming)

<sup>343</sup> The Product Contact Points were set up following a provision (Art. 9) in the Mutual Recognition Regulation (764/2008).

<sup>344</sup> For a more detailed overview of the evaluation of the PCPs please see Annex 3. One issue worth highlighting is the fact that some PCPs forward queries from companies to the responsible authorities without further involvement and follow-up of the responses given by those authorities. Therefore, there is in some Member States little information about the outcome of queries (see Evaluation of the Internal Market Legislation for Industrial Products (2014), <http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/evaluation/search/download.do?documentId=9966151>, p. 62).

Moreover, in the area of construction products a separate network of Product Contact Points for Construction was created. These should provide information about technical rules for construction products. The proliferation of contact points has promoted neither service quality nor awareness. Only one Member State has streamlined three categories of contact points (Points of Single Contact, Product Contact Points, Construction Product Contact Points) into a single website, and another has combined two contact points under one website. In nine countries the Product Contact Points for Construction do not have a dedicated website.

**Table 5.2: Key findings on shortcomings of PCPCs**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Figures</b>
PCPCs not having a website	11%
No online information on products subject to CE marking	43%
No publication of EU Construction Product Regulation	25%
No link to the EU CE marking website	57%
Publication of relevant legislation	50%
No link to the European Committee for Standardization	86%
No link to the European Commission Q&A section	61%
No information about remedies available	75%
No relevant documents contained	36%
No postal mail address online	39%
No phone number provided online	21%
Not available in another language	43%

*Source: Draft study "Inventory of Contact Points (PCP, PCPC), Ecorys, 2017 (forthcoming)*

In general, there is a relatively low level of awareness amongst companies regarding the existence or purpose of any of these contact points, which means that they are not used very often.<sup>345</sup> Overall, the shortcomings in terms of coverage and quality of information provided are broadly similar to those for products more generally as described above.<sup>346</sup>

Information on European justice and access to judicial procedures is provided on the European e-Justice Portal, which is being made into a one-stop shop for information on European justice. This will include tools for direct communication between citizens and courts in other Member States, as well as interconnection of Member States' business or insolvency registers.

<sup>345</sup> Analysis of implementation of the Construction Products Regulation, Final Report, 2015. According to a Commission study/survey of PCPs and PCPCs which is not yet published, requests varied between 12 and 230 per year, with most roughly receiving one request per week. This is based on a limited panel of respondents (6 PCP and 10 PCPC).

<sup>346</sup> For further details and relevant evaluation results please see Annex 3.

**Table 5.3: Key findings on availability of information**

Finding	Figures
Companies dissatisfied with the ease of obtaining reliable information from national public authorities	55% <sup>347</sup>
On PSCs significant shares of information for 4 tested specific business scenarios is missing	60% for 1/3 of MS; 50%-40% for 1/3 of MS; 30% for 1/3 of MS <sup>348</sup>
Businesses identified inaccessibility of information on rules and requirements as a major internal market obstacle	81% <sup>349</sup>
National content on Your Europe missing for several areas for a sizable share of (EEA) countries	42% (taxation); 39% (vehicles); 16% (travel, residence formalities and national contact points); 10% (start & grow) <sup>350</sup>

**Citizens** who responded to the public consultation have tried finding which rules they should be following to comply with national requirements when moving to another EU country and most of them thought it was difficult or somewhat difficult (27% and 59% respectively). In another context just over one quarter of citizens (26%) say they feel informed about what they can do when their rights as an EU citizen are not respected.<sup>351</sup> This is why it has been proposed to encourage Member States to take a more proactive approach with regard to the provision of information to citizens.<sup>352</sup>

**Table 5.4: Information needs**

What information citizens need <sup>353</sup>	Percentage of respondents
Residency documents and registering	69%
Studying	50%
Employment and working conditions	45%
Social security and welfare	41%
Recognition of diplomas	39%

More than one out of three citizens who had lived or were living in another EU country indicated that they had experienced difficulties in relation to the exercise of their rights as EU citizens after having moved. Most of these problems were linked to lengthy or unclear administrative procedures and a majority of them said they could not find enough information or were not sufficiently aware of their rights as EU citizens.<sup>354</sup>

Online information, such as on administrative requirements, is not always available. The possibility of completing such requirements online would help significantly the move to

<sup>347</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 417, European businesses and public administration, 2016.

<sup>348</sup> Study "The Performance of the Points of Single Contact", Capgemini Consulting and Eurochambres, 2015.

<sup>349</sup> Survey by Eurochambres, 2015.

<sup>350</sup> Your Europe portal.

<sup>351</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 430

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2016-flash-eurobarometer-430-citizenship\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2016-flash-eurobarometer-430-citizenship_en.pdf)

<sup>352</sup> 24 Years of EU Citizenship: Removing the obstacles to full potential, ECAS (European Citizen Action Service), May 2016.

<sup>353</sup> EU citizenship consultation 2015.

<sup>354</sup> EU citizenship consultation 2015 "EU Citizenship: Share your opinion on our common values, rights and democratic participation", available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015\\_public\\_consultation\\_booklet\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015_public_consultation_booklet_en.pdf), pp. 31-32.

another EU country. EU citizens also asked for information and assistance responding to the individual needs and questions of newcomers through one-stop-shop web portals provided by the authorities to help them settle down in an EU country.<sup>355</sup>

### 5.3 Lack of quality

The validity of information, even when it is available online, is difficult to ascertain. Users have difficulties in finding the right information: content is not always up-to-date, navigation tools do not always lead to the information needed, and legal and administrative jargon is used instead of a vocabulary that is adapted to the users.

Member States seem also to prioritise the availability of services online over the quality of those services<sup>356</sup>. Users have noted that structuring information according to the business life cycle would help them to find the information needed.<sup>357</sup>

As regards citizens, satisfaction with complaint handling is highest amongst those consumers who complained to Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies, although the use and knowledge of these bodies are relatively low.<sup>358</sup>

Before deciding whether to move to another Member State, approximately three out of four citizens search for information on administrative websites of the destination country. Almost half of the respondents (47%) would like to receive effective support and assistance in the enforcement of their rights through specialised bodies.<sup>359</sup>

#### *The need for reliable information and uniform quality levels across the EU*

A Romanian construction company is currently operating in several EU Member States and is looking to expand its operations to new countries. In particular, it recently found a good market opportunity in Member State B and it is starting to go through all the required administrative procedures needed for it to be able to operate on this new market. Among these steps is obtaining a Luxembourgish VAT number. At a meeting with the European Commission, this company reported paying 3000 EUR to a private law firm to gather the necessary information on this procedure. Companies value the legal reliability of the information they base their decisions and business upon. This is why they considered that the information that could be found on the official websites, to this date and with the current quality standards, was not a good enough source for them.<sup>360</sup>

A Dutch company wishing to register economic activity in Member State C spent 7 000 EUR to hire a consultant who knew the language of the host country, and who could deal with the burden of the procedure.

<sup>355</sup> EU citizenship consultation 2015 "EU Citizenship: Share your opinion on our common values, rights and democratic participation", available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015\\_public\\_consultation\\_booklet\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015_public_consultation_booklet_en.pdf).

<sup>356</sup> Future-proofing E-government for the Digital Single Market, background report, European Commission 2015.

<sup>357</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

<sup>358</sup> Consumer Conditions Scoreboard (2015).

<sup>359</sup> See Report on 2015 public consultation on EU Citizenship (available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015\\_public\\_consultation\\_booklet\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/2015_public_consultation_booklet_en.pdf)), p. 31.

<sup>360</sup> Information received at a bilateral meeting with the European Commission in October 2016.

Users have frequently criticised information-oriented web sites for the difficulty of finding relevant information and the fact that relevant information was often located in different parts of the web site.<sup>361</sup>

**Table 5.5: Key findings on missing inter-linkages**

Finding	Figures
No link to the PCPC of the same country	57%
PCPs not linking to the PSC of the same country	54%
PCPs not providing the contact details of PCPs in other countries	43%
PCPs not providing links to PCPCs in other countries	89%
PCPs not linking to other EU websites	50%
PCPCs not linking to the PCP of the same country	43%
PCPCs not linking to the PSC of the same country	64%
PCPCs not linking to other countries' PCPCs	50%
PCPCs not linking to other EU websites	54%
PCPCs websites containing invalid links	32%
National online services in the area of social security referring to corresponding EU-level services	13% <sup>362</sup>
EU level online services in the area of social security referring to corresponding national services	47% <sup>363</sup>

Source unless indicated: Draft study "Inventory of contact points (PCP, PCPC), Ecorys, 2017 (forthcoming)

#### 5.4 Lack of online procedures

Firms and citizens who want to engage in a cross-border activity often need to fulfil registration and other relevant administrative procedures. These can be related to starting or expanding a business, looking for a job or a place of study, or establishing residence. In this context it is often necessary to provide proof of rights or competencies (a VAT number, a permit, a residence permit, a confirmation of a car registration), supporting documents, identity verification and sometimes fee payment.

Despite progress that has been achieved, considerable progress needs to be made to meet business expectations and the requirements of the Directive, in particular regarding the number of procedures available online. The availability of information and online procedures for foreign users is a recurring problem as often only rudimentary information is provided in English or other foreign languages and that online forms are only available in local languages.<sup>364</sup>

A study<sup>365</sup> on the Points of Single Contacts concluded that the ability to complete government procedures online is limited and uneven in Member States. The registration of economic

<sup>361</sup> Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-Border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers, Final Report, European Commission 2013.

<sup>362</sup> EMPSS study interim report.

<sup>363</sup> Idem.

<sup>364</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015.

<sup>365</sup> The Performance of the Points of Single Contact. An Assessment against the PSC Charter, European Commission 2015. The Services Directive sets out a list of obligatory features of the Points of Single Contact that the Member States need to implement. The PSCs also provide a framework for more advanced e-government services aimed at creating a more business-friendly environment.

activity or applying for a tax number score best, since these procedures are fully online in about half of the countries investigated. There is room for improvement in other areas, including applying for permits.

**Table 5.6: Key findings on lack of procedures fully online**

Finding	Figures
Administrative procedures are the top obstacle for exporting SMEs <sup>366</sup>	
Companies identifying complex administrative procedures as the main internal market obstacle	83% <sup>367</sup>
Services required of foreign entrepreneurs to start their business in another country that are completely offline (no information, no procedure)	25% <sup>368</sup>
Share of entrepreneurs starting a business in their own country face such issues (row above)	2%
PSCs scoring worst for cross-border accessibility	41% <sup>369</sup>
Share of MS where financial services procedures are online	59% <sup>370</sup>
Share of MS where registrations procedures are online	54%
Share of MS where permits procedures are online	35%
Share of administrations requiring often (or very often) original documents when dealing with foreign documents	43% <sup>371</sup>
Share of administrations requiring often (or very often) certified translations	45%

Another problem is the quality of the procedures available online. Putting parts of a procedure online is of limited use if its completion needs to happen offline. And even when procedures can be completed online nationally, they are often not accessible for users from other Member States.

The legal requirements are another layer, as despite progress made recently, in many cases citizens and businesses are still required to produce original documents, possibly with validation, (requiring an office visit), as part of complying with rules. Most often scanned copies of supporting documents are not accepted.<sup>372</sup>

Where entrepreneurs employ third-party professionals to assist in start-up, they often do so for company incorporation and tax registration. These formalities are the major bottlenecks in the start-up process, requiring more procedures than other such as business licensing and inspections. When used, professional services account for most of the cost to start a business.<sup>373</sup>

Almost three out of four citizens (73%) would welcome the availability of e-services enabling them to fulfil administrative formalities in the country of destination online, such as the possibility to fill in administrative forms online.

<sup>366</sup> Flash Eurobarometer 421.

<sup>367</sup> Survey by Eurochambres, 2015.

<sup>368</sup> E-government benchmark report 2016, insight report.

<sup>369</sup> Study "The Performance of the Points of Single Contact", Capgemini Consulting and Eurochambres, 2015.

<sup>370</sup> E-government benchmark report 2016, insight report.

<sup>371</sup> IMI user survey 2015.

<sup>372</sup> For citizens, 14 often used documents are covered by the Public Documents Regulation that dispenses with authorisations and translations.

<sup>373</sup> World Bank, Doing Business 2016.

The number of cases dealt with by Your Europe Advice gives indications about where the problems lie:<sup>374</sup>

**Table 5.7: Your Europe Advice cases**

Issue	Cases in 2015
Social security	14 000
Entry procedures	10 000
Residence	9 000
Motor vehicle	6 000
Work	4 000
Taxes	3 000

On the measures rated as highly important, making all online public services inclusive and accessible to all got the highest score (64%) in the EU citizenship consultation, giving users access to public services online (63%) and making online public services more trustworthy and secure.<sup>375</sup> When surfing online, beyond your mother tongue, the most helpful language is English.<sup>376</sup>

According to a study,<sup>377</sup> the EU score for the availability and sophistication of procedures, availability of e-payment tools, and track and trace systems (providing end-users with the possibility to follow the status of an application online) are on average 60%, but there are large country variations. Key enabling factors such as electronic identification and electronic signatures are often not available for cross-border users. The e-government benchmark reports<sup>378</sup> also point out that the range of services available online to foreign users is much more limited than for domestic users.

Higher costs are caused by the need to visit an office; to provide certified translations of supporting documents; and to provide the necessary identification. Cross-border users face additional costs caused by the demand for more documents than for domestic users; information that is not available in foreign languages; request for certified translations of documents or certificates; or face-to-face meetings with officials or other persons that would not be required for domestic businesses or citizens requesting the same service.<sup>379</sup>

**Table 5.8: Key findings on information, assistance services and procedures**

Finding	Figures
PSCs assessed as below the EU average for the criterion of navigation tools	46%
PSCs assessed as below the EU average for the	36%

<sup>374</sup> ECAS - Your Europe Advice survey:

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/csdays2016---workshop-5---claire-damilano---ecas.pdf>.

<sup>375</sup> EU citizenship consultation 2015.

<sup>376</sup> See the Exit Survey at [http://europa.eu/youreurope/business/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/business/index_en.htm). It consisted of +/- 1600 results between December 2015 and January 2016.

<sup>377</sup> Capgemini, IDC, Sogeti and Politecnico di Milano, "Future-proofing eGovernment for the Digital Single Market – An assessment of digital public service delivery in Europe", Background Report prepared for the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, 2015. It found out that e.g. only 57% of all assessed services are available to cross-border businesses.

<sup>378</sup> European Commission 2014 and 2015.

<sup>379</sup> EU-wide digital once-only principle for citizens and businesses: Policy options and their impacts, SMART 2015/0062, GNK Consult et al. 2016.

criticon of website structure	
Time estimation of procedure provided on PSCs is hardly ever provided.	45% (procedure of general registration of economic activity); 15% (for applying for a VAT number); for other procedures much lower
Respondents considering lengthy or unclear administrative procedures as frequent difficulties	69% <sup>380</sup>
Public websites that are 'mobile-friendly'	1 in 3 <sup>381</sup>

Source unless indicated: Study "The Performance of the Points of Single Contact", Capgemini Consulting and Eurochambres, 2015

## 5.5 Lack of awareness and findability

Services that are available online are not useful if they cannot be found easily. In many cases, instead of increasing the scope of an existing service whenever a new need arises, the administrative tendency is to create new portals or services for each policy area. This leads to the creation of new networks, new contact points, new IT tools, and new awareness-raising campaigns. Both at European and at national levels it would be more cost-effective to use an existing network, portal or contact point and broaden its tasks but there is very little incentive to avoid proliferation.

### *Limited awareness of existing rights in healthcare*

Lack of awareness about rights and existing assistance services also limits citizen's opportunities and fruition of rights across the Single Market. As an example, one year after their creation, 90% of respondents to a Special Eurobarometer on patients' rights in the EU had never heard of the National Contact Points that provide information about EU cross-border healthcare, and fewer than two out of ten citizens feel that they are informed about their cross-border healthcare rights.<sup>382</sup>

The awareness of both businesses and the general public of the Points of Single Contact portals is low, possibly related to the fact that none of the PSCs included in the study ran awareness campaigns when the portals were launched, nor did they create direct links to other Member State portals. Search engine ranking of the PSCs was poor in over half of the countries. Language also limits findability, as foreign users should explicitly be catered for when indexing the website.

The Mutual Recognition Regulation<sup>383</sup> encourages Member States to entrust the role of Product Contact Points to existing contact points, but most have not followed this recommendation. Similarly, the Construction Products Regulation encourages setting up Construction Product Points (PCPCs) by building on an existing Product Contact Point. However, fewer than half of all Member States followed this recommendation, and of those only eight can be accessed online. According to a study,<sup>384</sup> few firms are aware of the existence of the PCPCs, in particular in other EU countries.

<sup>380</sup> EU Citizenship consultation.

<sup>381</sup> E-government benchmark report 2016, insight report.

<sup>382</sup> Special Eurobarometer 425, Patients' rights in cross-border healthcare in the European Union, 2015.

<sup>383</sup> Regulation 764/2008.

<sup>384</sup> Analysis on the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation, 2015.



There are large differences between Member States concerning the awareness of citizens of national e-government portals.<sup>385</sup> One of the reasons why portals and websites are difficult to find for firms from other countries is that they are not linked

**Table 5.9: Key findings on lack of awareness and online findability**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Figures</b>
Share of consumers and businesses are unaware of any online services at European level that they could turn to in case of problems	91.6% <sup>386</sup>
Number of existing EU-level online services	44.0%
Share of targeted citizens unaware	48.0%
Share of targeted businesses unaware	34.0%
Share of Dutch entrepreneurs who are doing business in the internal market have never heard of any EU-level online information and advisory services	80.0% <sup>387</sup>
respondents to a Special Eurobarometer on patients' rights in the EU had never heard of the National Contact Points	90.0% <sup>388</sup>
Respondents considering not finding enough information or not being sufficiently aware of their rights as EU citizens as frequent difficulties	51.0% <sup>389</sup>
Share of citizens having never heard of the European Consumer Centres	85.0% <sup>390</sup>
Share of cross-border shoppers having never heard of the European Consumer Centres	80.0%

## 5.6 Lack of accessibility for foreign users

The primary areas for improvement identified by users are the provision of information in English and other foreign languages, the ability to submit forms in languages other than the home country language and the ability to log into a service area with a foreign eID.<sup>391</sup>

Even on some sites where multiple languages are provided for communication forms can only be completed in the home country language. As most websites can use translation tools, it would be beneficial if these tools were highlighted on the website. For technical information more elaborate and formal translation and mapping would be required.<sup>392</sup>

### *Procedure only available in the national languages*

Member State A, a German company wishing to handle VAT return, VAT refund and income tax return had to hire an adviser who knew the language of the host country, and who could deal with the burden of the procedure (3 hours of a senior adviser).

In the same Member State A, a Finnish company needed to pay 3 000 EUR for a consultant to help registering its economic activity, because it found the procedure too cumbersome and needed an adviser knowing the language of the country. In order to register business for VAT, the same company tried to find information online on the procedure. This was difficult because of the low quality of the

<sup>385</sup> For instance the Austrian business service portal 'Unternehmensserviceportal' is known by 23% of Austrian enterprises according to a 2015 survey. The central UK government gov.uk domain is among the 25 most visited domains in the UK according to regular surveys.

<sup>386</sup> A European Single Point of Contact, European Parliament, 2015.

<sup>387</sup> Survey, by the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, 2016.

<sup>388</sup> Special Eurobarometer 425, Patients' rights in cross-border healthcare in the EU, 2015.

<sup>389</sup> Report on 2015 Public consultation on EU citizenship.

<sup>390</sup> Evaluation of the European Consumer Centres Network, 2011.

<sup>391</sup> Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-Border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers, Final Report, European Commission 2013.

<sup>392</sup> Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-Border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers, Final Report, European Commission 2013.

information, and language that the company didn't understand. In order to deal with this problem, the company used a web translator, but the result was not accurate.

Besides language issues, the technical implementation can create problems. When eID and e-signature are required, this can discriminate against nationals who do not have eIDs, and the systems may not recognise foreign eIDs and e-signatures until the eIDAS regulation is in force.<sup>393</sup> Further, integrated payment tools may not be accessible to foreign users, or are not foreseen at all, i.e. requiring office visits.

## 5.7 Lack of overview of single market problems

With the current tools, citizens and businesses have to make an effort to signal a problem or make a complaint, which reduces the incentives to do so. Motivation is also diminished when there is no feedback, or when it is delayed. Moreover, it is likely that there is a bias towards complaints from larger businesses, as these have more resources and legal expertise to launch a complaint procedure.

Most business respondent respondents (55%) would be willing to give feedback on their experience with the Single Market, so as to draw the attention of policy-makers to recurrent problems.

**Table 5.10: Key findings on problems of users not being analysed**

Finding	Cases
Number of real life cases in Your Europe Advice database	200 000
Approximate number of cases received annually in SOLVIT	2 000
No central analysis of real life cases in the database of the Enterprise Europe Network	8 000

*Source: European Commission*

## 5.8 Affected business population

With regard to the number of businesses involved cross-border, Eurostat data on the number of businesses controlled from other EU Member States is used (Table 5.10). This figure excludes for example self-employed who move and establish in another EU country, or businesses offering temporary services in another EU country – for example they may need to notify the business register of the host country. Thus, the figures used underestimate the relevant cross-border business population.

<sup>393</sup> The full implementation of the eIDAS regulation should address this.  
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L\\_.2014.257.01.0073.01.ENG](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2014.257.01.0073.01.ENG)

Table 5.11: Number of businesses controlled from other EU MS<sup>394</sup>

Host MS	Most recent year	Total businesses	Estimate of new establishments
AT	2013	7 384	185
BE	2013	872	22
BG	2014	7 820	196
CY	2013	169	7 <sup>a)</sup>
CZ	2014	10 097	73 <sup>a)</sup>
DE	2014	16 959	424
DK	2014	2 344	59 <sup>b)</sup>
EE	2014	622	16
ES	2013	8 412	210
FI	2013	1 979	49
FR	2014	16 947	424
GR	2014	1 549	39
HR	2013	3 055	76
HU	2014	12,768	319
IE	2012	1 962	49
IT	2014	7 663	192
LT	2014	2 643	66
LU	2014	5 937	148
LV	2014	4 415	110
MT	2014	105	3
NL	2014	6 915	173
PL	2013	5 452	136
PT	2014	4 408	110
RO	2014	21 028	526
SE	2013	7 279	182
SI	2014	3 171	79
SK	2014	3 069	69 <sup>a)</sup>
UK	2013	8 701	218

Source: Eurostat,

Notes: a) Amadeus database, b) www.virk.dk, other: 2.5% of total cross-border businesses

With regard to the number of businesses involved cross-border, Eurostat data on the number of businesses controlled from other EU Member States is used (Table 5.11). This figure excludes for example self-employed who move and establish in another EU country, or businesses offering temporary services in another EU country – for example they may need to notify the business register of the host country. Thus, the Eurostat figures that were used, underestimate the relevant cross-border business population.

<sup>394</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys for the European Commission, forthcoming, 2017

**Table 5.11: EU Countries from which cross-border businesses are controlled<sup>395</sup>**

Host MS	Total businesses	Most frequent other EU countries from which the business is controlled
AT	7,384	DE (55%), NL (6%), UK (6%)
BE	872	FR (22%), NL (21%), DE (17%), LU (11%), UK (10%)
BG	7,820	GR (28%), IT (11%), DE (10%)
CY	169	DE (27%), GR (25%), UK (16%), NL (11%)
CZ	10,097	DE (32%), AT (13%), SK (11%)
DE	16,959	NL (21%), UK (15%), AT (12%), LU (11%)
DK	2,344	SE (35%), DE (17%), NL (11%), UK (11%)
EE	622	FI (36%), SE (18%), EE (9%)
ES	8,412	DE (22%), FR (19%), NL (14%), UK (11%), IT (10%)
FI	1,979	SE (38%), DE (16%), UK (12%)
FR	16,947	DE (23%), BE (15%), LU (14%), UK (12%)
GR	1,549	CY (42%), DE (10%), NL (9%)
HR	3,055	AT (20%), IT (16%), SI (14%), DE (13%)
HU	12,768	DE (25%), AT (23%), IT (7%)
IE	1,962	UK (54%), DE (12%), FR (8%)
IT	7,663	DE (24%), FR (22%), UK (16%)
LT	2,643	DE (12%), EE (12%), LV (9%), NL (9%)
LU	5,937	BE (35%), FR (31%), DE (23%)
LV	4,415	LT (23%), EE (16%), UK (9%)
MT	105	DE (24%), IT (15%), UK (13%)
NL	6,915	DE (30%), UK (19%), BE (16%), FR (11%)
PL	5,452	DE (32%), FR (10%), NL (9%)
PT	4,408	ES (32%), FR (25%), DE (10%)
RO	21,028	IT (26%), DE (13%), CY (10%)
SE	7,279	DK (17%), DE (14%), UK (14%), LU (13%), NL (13%)
SI	3,171	IT (26%), AT (20%), HR (17%), DE (13%)
SK	3,069	CZ (20%), AT (19%), DE (17%)
UK	8,701	DE (21%), FR (16%), NL (16%), IE (11%)

<sup>395</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys for the European Commission, forthcoming, 2017

## **ANNEX 6: DETAILED QUALITY CRITERIA**

### **6.1 Possible quality criteria to be included in the legal act**

#### **6.1.1 Information**

All national and EU level information covered by the single digital gateway should:

- be comprehensive and cover everything citizens and business need to know to exercise their rights in the Single Market and to comply with rules and obligations which apply to his/her situation (e.g. moving to another Member State, opening business in another EU country);
- be accurate and kept up-to-date
- include references, links and access to legal acts, more specific, technical information or assistance service, as appropriate;
- include the name of entity responsible for the content of the information;
- indicate dates of its publication and its last update,
- be written in a comprehensible language adapted to the needs of a target audience,
- be provided in at least one other EU language different from the national language.

#### **6.1.2 Procedures**

Required preliminary information about procedures:

- All the different steps of the procedure, including the competent authorities it involves;
- means of identification that are required (e.g. eID, eSignature);
- the type and format of evidence which should be submitted;
- any fees, if applicable and how they can be paid;
- how long the procedure will last (e.g. on average), what are the deadlines (if any);
- in which languages the procedure can be completed.

The deadlines indicated in the description should be respected and in case of a delay, users should be immediately informed about the cause of such delay and a new deadline should be indicated to them.

The single digital gateway should ensure that when the online procedure has been established, it can be accessed on equal conditions by national users as well as users from other Member States. It is therefore important to ensure that such procedures:

- do not contain form fields which accept data in particular national formats,
- accept eID and eSignature issues from other Member States;
- accept evidence in electronic format;
- contain instructions how to complete the procedure in at least one EU language other than a national one;
- in case the payment of a fee is required, users should be able to pay such fees using a payment service commonly accessible in cross-border situations.

#### **6.1.3 Assistance and problem solving services**

The explanation of the nature of the assistance service should be provided upfront, so that users have clear understanding of what they can and cannot expect from such service. The explanation should include:

- the type, purpose and expected results of the service offered;
- the name and contact details of the entity responsible for the service;
- fees, if applicable, and how they can be paid;
- the deadline for the delivery of the service or an average response time;
- languages in which the request can be submitted and further contact carried on.

The deadlines indicated in the description of the service should be respected and in case of a delay, users should be immediately informed about the cause of such delay and a new deadline should be indicated to them.

## **6.2 Background to the EIPA Study**

In the context of the work on the Impact Assessment accompanying the Commission Proposal on the single digital gateway, the Commission requested EIPA to identify quality criteria that could be used to establish standards for the gateway services, in each of the following three areas:

- Information;
- Assistance and problem-solving services; and
- Procedures.

These quality criteria might be applied by the Commission, to monitor the quality of the services accessible through the gateway, by service users to give feedback, or service providers to improve the service quality and delivery.

The EIPA Study describes existing, available systems for measuring and managing the quality of public services, including several international and national assessment standards and awards, and evaluates their potential suitability and transferability for services to be covered by the gateway.

## **6.3 Content of the study**

The report outlines and analyses the gateway's operating environment, the development of e-Government in public service delivery (five stages of e-service development), how public administrations interact both with citizens and businesses as e-service users, and with each other (interoperability, once-only principle), and the expectations of users' interface with public administrations: preferences for a package of services that corresponds to user's individual circumstances ('life events' approach).

The study briefly summarises the tools available to understand and improve the quality of public service delivery, both in content and process (user/satisfaction surveys, user panels, focus groups, mystery shopping, customer journey mapping (CJM), and comments, suggestions and complaints schemes), and sets out their pros and cons. It indicates that online surveys, comments and complaints schemes, CJM and mystery shopping would be the most pertinent for the gateway.

The report next reviews the three dominant quality management systems (QMSs) recognised internationally, applied in public and private organisations, namely the ISO 9000 series, the European Foundation for Quality Management's Excellence Model and the Common Assessment Framework. It provides a short description of each standard, setting out the purpose, nature and methodology of each one, the context in which they are applied, and their pros and cons. As regards their overall applicability to the single digital gateway, the report

notes that their transferability to the single digital gateway context is limited by their organisational focus. The methodology behind each QMS enables institutional self-improvement which indirectly influences the quality of services provided by the organisation.

Following the review of international models, the report presents the eight Member State initiatives (plus one EU-funded project in a pre-accession environment) establishing standards and awards for quality service delivery:

- The Estonian Public Sector Quality Award,
- The UK's Beacon Council Scheme,
- The UK's Customer Service Excellence Initiative,
- France's Le Referentiel Marianne,
- The Dutch 'Mark of Good Services',
- The 'Triple A for Citizens' project,
- Estonia's e-State Charter,
- The UK's Digital Service Standard.

Lessons have been drawn from these experiences for the single digital gateway: strong motivation based on competition, leverage (central government bodies or the supreme audit institution influencing the actions of the target institutions), prestige, funding and improvement (underlying concept of self-improvement within organisation).

The report then proposes a list of potential criteria, drawn from the international & national models and other sources as applicable, for the three elements of the single digital gateway (information, assistance & problem-solving services, and e-procedures), as well as the entire end-to-end 'life event' process).

Finally, the report puts forward some ideas on how the tools, standards and criteria might be applied to the single digital gateway.

#### **6.4 Potential quality criteria for the single digital gateway**

The report identifies the following elements of a quality e-service for users in another Member State:

- Available online through an easily identifiable portal,
- Accessible through various electronic channels, on devices and platforms that meet user's preferences,
- User friendly (the portal uses clear, concise, jargon-free & non-legalistic language),
- Easy to navigate: with good signposting from one step to the next, and to other complementary services on other public and private websites,
- Straightforward and quick to use: requiring as few steps as possible, to reduce the administrative burden and cost,
- Available in at least one or two common languages, different than a native language and possibly in neighbouring country languages.

The potential criteria could include the following elements:

a) Quality of information:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Elaboration</b>
<b>Channel choice</b>	Information is accessible through all the mainstream devices and platforms, including mobile apps.
<b>Transparency of ownership</b>	The portal includes clear information about the website owner (physical and electronic addresses), its purpose, objective and the target audience.
<b>Life event presentation</b>	Information is structured and presented under 'life events', corresponds with user needs, and is organized flexibly to allow the user to assemble and customise their own service package.
<b>Ease of access</b>	The information is easy to find on the portal, including for non-native readers and the visually impaired.
<b>Language preference</b>	Information is ideally available in all official languages of the EU; otherwise at least English and the languages of the main countries using the specific service(s).
<b>Clarity of orientation</b>	The future steps towards the goal are clear to the information seeker, and particularly what he or she should do next.
<b>Information relevance</b>	The information is practical, accurate, precisely specified, and up-to-date.
<b>Information presentation</b>	Information is set out in simple, non-legalistic and jargon-free language, with any technical terms explained.
<b>Feedback option</b>	It is possible for service users to send feedback regarding their experience with the information provision and to provide reviews and ratings (user satisfaction) that are published on the website.
<b>Feedback use</b>	The feedback from service users is analysed regularly by the portal owner to improve the quality of information and other aspects of the service.
<b>Referral option</b>	It is possible for service users to directly get in contact with personalised assistance services online (using IM or e-mail), there is an up-to-date list of competent sources of advice for further help online or by phone, including up-to-date contact details and language options (see section 7.2).



## b) Quality of assistance and problem-solving service:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Elaboration</b>
<b>Ease of enquiry, comment or complaint</b>	It is possible to make an enquiry, comment or complaint through all appropriate channels (namely e-mail, social media, telephone), including online by mobile, and the process should be indifferent to the medium, each one being equally as convenient to use as the others.
<b>Language of query &amp; response</b>	It is possible for the query / comment / complaint and the response to be made ideally in any official language of the EU, in accordance with the language preference of the enquirer, otherwise at least English and the languages of the main countries using the specific service(s).
<b>Transparency of ownership</b>	The organisation behind the assistance and problem-solving service is clearly identified, including its ownership, legal identity and contact details (physical and electronic addresses) in the event of complaints.
<b>Clarity of process</b>	It should be clear to the enquiring citizen or entrepreneur what will happen with their query and how long it will take to respond.
<b>Speed of response</b>	The response is executed within a reasonable time (which could be set depending on complexity, from 'instantly' onwards).
<b>Relevance of response</b>	The response is addressed precisely to the query under consideration.
<b>Reliability of response</b>	The response is accurate and legally robust (i.e. not open to challenge).
<b>Clarity of response</b>	The response is provided in simple, non-legalistic and jargon-free language, with any technical terms explained.
<b>Visibility of enquiry, comment, complaint and response</b>	The enquiries, comments and complaints are presented on the applicable website / social media along with the response, with all information anonymised (if appropriate) and aggregated (if helpful to the service user), to enhance future service quality.
<b>Feedback option</b>	It is possible for service users to send feedback regarding their experience with the assistance and problem-solving service and to provide reviews and ratings (user satisfaction) that are published on the website.
<b>Feedback use</b>	The feedback from service users is analysed regularly by the portal owner to improve the quality of assistance and problem-solving.

## c) Quality of e-procedures:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Elaboration</b>
<b>Online availability</b>	The procedure is fully electronic (via the internet) and can be performed without the need to visit an office or use telephone or postal services.
<b>Ease of access</b>	The procedure is easy to find on the portal, including for non-native readers.
<b>Language preference</b>	The procedure can be performed ideally in all official languages of the EU, otherwise at least English and the languages of the main countries using the specific service(s).
<b>Transparency of ownership</b>	A procedure might comprise many steps, where each one falls to a different organisation, which is invisible in the interests of interoperability and a fully integrated and user-friendly service. The organisation that has the lead responsibility for the procedure as the service provider is clearly identified, including its ownership, legal identity and contact details (physical and electronic addresses) in the event of complaints.
<b>Personal data protection</b>	The portal includes information about the personal data processing policy in accordance with data protection law, the service provider complies with the policy and the legislation, and service users have the right to know how their personal data are protected in administrative agencies.
<b>Intuitive process</b>	The steps required to navigate through the procedure are easy for the user to understand and follow.
<b>User guidance</b>	The procedure is accompanied by clear information that explains the steps to be taken, the duration of the process, and the stage they have reached in the process, in clear, concise, precise, user-friendly, jargon-free, non-legalistic language, which is reliable and up-to-date, with any technical terms explained.
<b>Prior notice</b>	Clear and up-to-date information is provided concerning what the user should have ready in advance to successfully carry out the next step of the procedure (e.g. eID, e-documents, payment details, etc.)
<b>Electronic authentication</b>	If an authentication is needed for a cross-border service, it is possible online using national eID.
<b>Electronic documentation</b>	If any kind of documentation is needed to complete the procedure (e.g. certificate, diploma, proof of registration etc.), it is possible to submit it online.
<b>Speed of process</b>	The procedure can be executed in a reasonable time, including any online checks that must be performed by the service provider.
<b>User tracking</b>	It is possible for the service users to follow the status of the procedure online
<b>Feedback option</b>	It is possible for service users to send feedback regarding their experience with the procedure and to provide reviews and ratings (user satisfaction) that are published on the website.
<b>Performance analysis</b>	The feedback from service users is analysed regularly by the portal owner, along with the 'abandon rate' (the % of site visitors who leave without completing a transaction) to improve the quality of the procedure and other aspects of the service.
<b>Referral option</b>	It is possible for service users to directly get in contact with personalised assistance services online (using IM or e-mail), there is an up-to-date list of competent sources of advice for further help online or by phone, including up-to-date contact details and language options.

## d) Quality of the whole process:

Potential criterion	Elaboration
<b>Channel preference</b>	The single digital gateway is accessible throughout the EU on all relevant platforms and devices, including mobile apps.
<b>Language preference</b>	The single digital gateway is accessible in all official EU languages.
<b>Life event presentation</b>	Cross-border services are presented on the single digital gateway from a user viewpoint, corresponding with life events, rather than from the administration's perspective as a series of technical services.
<b>Completeness</b>	Each potential step under the life event is available and accessible online through the single digital gateway.
<b>Customisation</b>	The service user can personalise their 'customer journey', choosing the path they take to realise their desired goal.
<b>Ease of whole process</b>	The number of steps required to complete the life event is as few as possible, while still retaining the ability to customise the service to individual needs and circumstances.
<b>Digital only</b>	It is possible to complete the entire process without requiring paper-based (validated) documentation, office visits, telephone contact or postal services.
<b>Once-only data registration</b>	Ultimately, it should be possible for personal data which is provided to one EU public administration to be available to any other administrative agency, subject to safeguards over data protection and data control by the citizen or business.
<b>Once-only authentication</b>	Once the user has authenticated online for a service, it is possible to access another service in the same life event (provided by a different service provider) without re-authentication.
<b>Total quality</b>	Each service which is accessible through the single digital gateway should meet, or be striving to meet, the quality criteria for information (section 7.1), assistance and problem-solving (section 7.2) and e-procedures (section 7.3).
<b>Feedback option</b>	It is possible for service users to send feedback regarding their experience with the single digital gateway and to provide reviews and ratings (user satisfaction) that are published on the website.
<b>Performance analysis</b>	The feedback from service users is analysed regularly by the European Commission, along with the 'abandon rate' (the % of site visitors who leave without completing a transaction) to improve the quality of the procedure and other aspects of the service.
<b>Referral option</b>	It is possible for service users to directly get in contact with personalised assistance services online (using IM or e-mail), there is an up-to-date list of competent sources of advice for further help online or by phone, including up-to-date contact details and language options (see section 7.2).

The report suggests using the quality criteria as indicators within a (balanced) scorecard approach. They could be also used as standards/targets and form part of an accreditation, award and labelling initiative.

## ANNEX 7: COMPARISON OF PROBLEM DRIVERS, PROBLEMS, OBJECTIVE AND OPTIONS

Problem drivers = Reasons for limited success of current initiatives	Silo-based approach		Administration-centered design		First generation drawbacks		Neglect of foreign users	
	Lack of online information	Lack of awareness and findability	Lack of quality	Lack of online procedures	Lack of accessibility for foreign users	Lack of overview of single market problems	Lack of accessibility for foreign users	Lack of overview of single market problems
<b>Problems</b> = Results of evaluation								
<b>Overall objectives</b> = How we can make it work this time		Holistic approach	User driven	Build on best practices and more advanced digitalisation	Integrated EU wide accessibility			
<b>Specific objectives</b> = What we want to achieve	Ensure full coverage of information citizens and businesses need	Improve awareness of services available	Improve quality across the board for all information and assistance services, and for procedures	Ensure that EU citizens and businesses can complete the most important part of their interactions with the administration online	Make all information and procedures fully accessible for non-national citizens and businesses	Get a more systematic overview of obstacles encountered by cross-border users		
<b>1. Nationally centralised business and citizens' portals</b>	EC covers EU level information in Your Europe MS cover agreed national information in single national business and citizens portals EC and MS all monitor their own compliance	Coordinated promotion	Agreed quality criteria with monitoring via separate user feedback tools (one for each portal) EC and MS all monitor their own compliance	Voluntary roll-out of online procedures based on rolling work programme MS can decide on priorities, no legal requirements	Information and procedures should be made available in EN Online procedures should be made fully accessible for foreign users National solutions for use of documents and data to be made accessible for foreign users	Link to common user feedback tool on EU and all national single digital gateways		
<b>2. EU coordinated approach</b>	EC covers EU level information in Your Europe MS cover agreed national information in different websites and portals Joint monitoring of compliance	Coordinated promotion	Agreed quality criteria with monitoring via common user feedback tool used for all linked portals Joint monitoring of compliance	Obligatory to offer 10+10 national procedures fully online MS to implement according to an agreed timetable	Information and procedures should be made available in EN Online procedures should be made fully accessible for foreign users Common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data to be designed later	Link to common user feedback tool on EU and all national websites and portals		
<b>3. EU-wide fully centralised approach</b>	EC will provide all agreed information MS only need to verify EC monitors compliance	Joint promotion	Quality criteria fully harmonised and integrated in contract, with monitoring via single user feedback tool EC monitors compliance	All 10+10 procedures will be harmonised at EU level for foreign users (like for EPC and Services Card) EC will develop IT structure for procedures within IMI	Fully guaranteed, translation in all or several languages Procedures are fully accessible to foreign users by design Integrated user interface for cross-border use of documents and data	Common user feedback tool will be fully integrated		

## **ANNEX 8: SERVICES TO BE COVERED BY THE SINGLE DIGITAL GATEWAY**

This annex contains the assistance services that will be covered by the gateway as foreseen in Table 1.3 of the impact assessment, as well as EU services providing information. (The below grouping into assistance services and information is only indicative, as some have competencies in both fields.)

The information and assistance services listed in this annex will be covered by the legal instrument for the single digital gateway in the sense that they would need to meet the quality criteria, be part of coordinated promotion actions, integrate a user feedback mechanism and link up to the user search interface of the single digital gateway.

### **A Assistance services**

#### ***The Points of Single Contact – EUGO network<sup>396</sup>***

The Points of Single Contact (PSCs) are online portals for entrepreneurs active in the services sector. Some Member States have in addition physical offices fulfilling the function of PSCs. All PSCs are connected through the EUGO Network. It is a legal requirement to have a PSC in each EU country since December 2009 as set out in the Services Directive (Directive 2006/123/EC). EU countries are not legally obliged to make available information and procedures on topics like tax and social security that are of relevance to businesses but outside the scope of the Services Directive. The requirement to make procedures available electronically has been implemented differently across Member States, resulting in very different degrees of online transactionality and only in few cases to full online availability for cross-border users. Some Member States have integrated the PSCs into e-government portals developed for national businesses, in others two or more portals exist next to each other with more or less strong inter-linkages. For more details about the performance of the PSCs see Annex 3 on evaluation and the PSC study.

#### ***Product Contact Points (PCP)***

The Mutual Recognition Regulation (Regulation (EC) No 764/2008) provides for Product Contact Points (PCP) to be set up in each Member State. PCPs provide companies from other EU countries with information about national technical rules applicable to a specific type of product, about contact details of the competent authorities and about remedies generally available in the event of a dispute about these rules. Product Contact Points should respond free of charge and within 15 working days of receiving a request. They are encouraged to provide their services in several languages and to provide personalised advice to users. The service covers only products that are not subject to harmonised requirements provided in EU legislation. Not all PCPs have a website.

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<sup>396</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/eu-go/](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/eu-go/)

## ***New Commission initiative: Extension of Product Contact Points<sup>397</sup> and possible revision of Mutual Recognition Regulation***

Two ongoing Commission initiatives aim, inter alia, at improving the PCPs. In the context of the possible revision of the Mutual Recognition Regulation, one key policy idea is to extend the scope of the PCPs to also cover the harmonised sector, so that businesses can receive an all-encompassing reply on the national and EU rules applying to their products. For further details see Annex 3 and the inception impact assessments<sup>398 399</sup> for two planned initiatives to improve the functioning of the Single Market for goods.

### **8.1 Your Europe Advice<sup>400</sup>**

Your Europe Advice (Your Europe Action Plan COM(2013) 636 final) is a free of charge assistance service for citizens and businesses in need of tailored advice about their rights originating from EU law. The advice about how such rights apply in a specific situation is given by a team of lawyers who cover all EU official languages and are familiar both with EU law and national laws in all EU countries. These experts have a contract with the European Commission; the service is financed through the EU budget. Visitors of the Your Europe Portal are signposted to Your Europe Advice for situations where the information provided online is not specific enough. They receive a reply within a week after sending a request. Replies are not binding for the European Commission or national authorities. All requests dealt with by Your Europe Advice are captured in a data base which forms the basis for analysis of major, recurring problems for people who use their Single Market rights.

### **8.2 SOLVIT<sup>401</sup>**

SOLVIT (Recommendation 2013/461/EU) is a free of charge out-of-the-court problem-solving service for EU citizens and businesses who consider that their EU rights are not respected by a public administration in another Member State. A complaining user has to introduce his request through a simple online form. If the request fulfils certain criteria (e.g. no related legal proceeding on-going) it is dealt with through a network of SOLVIT offices with the office the complainant's home country contacting the office of the Member State where (allegedly) administrative decisions are infringing on the complainant's EU rights. Requests are as a rule dealt with within 10 weeks. Decisions/agreements reached through SOLVIT do not pre-empt the possibility of using formal complaint mechanisms or launching a legal proceeding.

In the Single Market Strategy<sup>402</sup> the European Commission has announced to strengthen SOLVIT as an enforcement and problem-solving tool. Possible actions would include stronger links with and delimitation from other complaint handling mechanisms, increasing awareness and findability through inter alia closer links with relevant online portals, making more intensive use of the database of SOLVIT cases and communicating success stories more widely<sup>403</sup>. All cases dealt with by SOLVIT are captured in a data base which forms the basis

<sup>397</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/goods/free-movement-sectors/mutual-recognition/contacts-list\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/goods/free-movement-sectors/mutual-recognition/contacts-list_en)

<sup>398</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017\\_grow\\_007\\_enforcement\\_compliance\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017_grow_007_enforcement_compliance_en.pdf)

<sup>399</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017\\_grow\\_005\\_mutual\\_recognition\\_revision\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/roadmaps/docs/2017_grow_005_mutual_recognition_revision_en.pdf)

<sup>400</sup> [http://europa.eu/youreurope/advice/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/youreurope/advice/index_en.htm)

<sup>401</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index_en.htm)

<sup>402</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2015/EN/1-2015-550-EN-F1-1.PDF>

<sup>403</sup> Roadmap not yet published.

for analysis of major, recurring problems of cross-border active citizens and businesses in the EU.

### 8.3 Product Contact Points for Construction (PCPC)<sup>404</sup>

According to the Construction Products Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 305/2011, ‘CPR’), Member States have to designate a PCPC to ‘provide information, using transparent and easily understandable terms, on the provisions within its territory aimed at fulfilling basic requirements for construction works’. This applies to both national technical and EU harmonised rules. The objective is to reduce the burdens for companies to familiarise with national construction product and building legislation. Not all PCPCs have a website. According to a recent study<sup>405</sup> in the framework of a Fitness Check this has been partially achieved but also several shortcomings identified. For instance the study cites slow response to requests for information, poor quality of information provided (answers provided in legal language, difficult to comprehend and queries not fully answered) and the language barrier. The study finds that PCPCs are frequently unable to provide legally binding advice for practical implementation of the CPR. For more details about the performance of the PCPCs see Annex 3 on evaluation.

### 8.4 Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)<sup>406</sup>

The Enterprise Europe Network is a support network for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) that want to do business abroad within the EU or beyond. The Network helps them to access European and international markets, and provides them with growth-oriented integrated business and innovation support services to help strengthen their competitiveness and sustainability. It has 3,000 experts across 600 member organisations in more than 60 countries. Member organisations include chambers of commerce and industry, technology centres and research institutes. The Network provides a range of services such as matchmaking events for finding business partners; practical advice on doing business in another country; targeted market intelligence; information on EU laws and standards; advice on intellectual property; or help with access to R&I funding (e.g. H2020, SME Instrument). EEN also acts as an intermediary between European Commission and SMEs for consultations preparing new EU legislation. Businesses contact national network partner organisations in their language these take care of translations where needed. The EEN also manages a feedback database of 8150 practical cases of SMEs encountering difficulties with legislation which have been encoded by EEN since 2006. EEN partners also provide feedback on practical cases where SMEs encounter difficulties with legislation. Since 2006 8150 cases have been encoded in the feedback database created for this purpose.

### 8.5 European Employment Services (EURES)<sup>407</sup>

EURES (Regulation (EU) 2016/589) is a cooperation network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU and EEA countries. Partners in the network include Public Employment Services, Private employment services, trade unions and employers' organisations. The partners provide information, placement and recruitment services to

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<sup>404</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/18242/attachments/1/translations/>

<sup>405</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/19343/attachments/1/translations>

<sup>406</sup> <http://een.ec.europa.eu/>

<sup>407</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/en/homepage>

employers and jobseekers. Moreover, EURES provides specific information and facilitates placements for employers and frontier workers in European cross-border regions. In practice EURES provides its services through the portal and through a human network of around 1000 EURES advisers that are in contact with jobseekers and employers. The portal is available in the languages of all participating countries.

### **8.6 National Contact Points for cross-border healthcare<sup>408</sup>**

The Patients' Rights Directive (Directive 2011/24/EU) requires each EU Member State to establish at least one National Contact Point providing information about the right to receive health care in other EU countries, including rights to have costs covered; types of treatment that are reimbursed and the amount of reimbursement; need of prior authorisation and how to apply for it and how to appeal if rights have not been respected. Moreover National Contact Points are also required to provide information about the quality and safety standards used in their Member State along with other relevant information (e.g. patients' rights, complaints and redress procedures, as well as whether a provider is authorised to provide certain services, among others).

### **8.7 National Assistance Centres under Professional Qualifications Directive<sup>409</sup>**

The Professional Qualifications Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC) obliges Member States to designate assistance centres to provide information on the recognition of professional qualifications and guide professionals through the administrative formalities concerning the recognition of such qualifications. They also inform about national legislation governing the professions, social legislation, and, where appropriate, the rules of ethics.

### **8.8 The Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform<sup>410</sup>**

The ODR platform, established by Regulation (EU) No 524/2013, is a web-based platform developed by the European Commission, operational since February 2016. Its objective is to help consumers and traders resolve their contractual disputes about online purchases of goods and services out-of-court at a low cost in a simple and fast way. It allows consumers to submit their disputes online in any of the 23 EU languages. The platform transmits the disputes to the dispute resolution bodies communicated by Member States. Member States have to establish a national contact point to provide assistance to users of the ODR platform. Businesses established in the EU that sell goods or services online need to comply with the ADR/ODR legislation, in particular by informing consumers of the dispute resolution bodies by which they are covered and by providing a link from their website to the ODR platform.

### **8.9 European Consumer Centres Network (ECC-Net)<sup>411</sup>**

The European Consumer Centre Network "ECC-Net" is a network of offices in all Member States, co-financed by the European Commission that assist citizens who are shopping cross-border in the Single Market online or on the spot. The ECCs advice in the national language on consumer rights, assist to resolve complaints launched against traders based in another EU country with the aim of achieving amicable outcomes and redirect to an appropriate body if

<sup>408</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/cross\\_border\\_care/docs/cbhc\\_ncp\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/cross_border_care/docs/cbhc_ncp_en.pdf)

<sup>409</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/free-movement-professionals/>

<sup>410</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/odr>

<sup>411</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/solving\\_consumer\\_disputes/non-judicial\\_redress/ecc-net/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/solving_consumer_disputes/non-judicial_redress/ecc-net/index_en.htm)



the ECC-Net cannot help. Assistance covers popular consumer topics like on-line shopping, air passenger rights, car rental problems and internet frauds.

### **8.10 Europe Direct information centres (EDIC)<sup>412</sup>**

The European Commission manages a network of information centres, documentation centres and speakers in every EU country. They provide answers to questions on EU rights, funding, etc.; access to EU documents and publications including detailed information on European law, policies and institutions; references to other information sources and contact details for relevant organisations. They also organise trainings for students on EU-related fact-finding and research; help to find an EU expert speaker (lawyers, consultants, academics) for EU-focused events and operate a free of charge call service.

### **8.11 EU Intellectual Property Rights Helpdesk<sup>413</sup>**

The European IPR Helpdesk supports cross-border SME and research activities to manage, disseminate and valorise technologies and other Intellectual Property (IP) Rights and IP assets at an EU level. Services include information material in the form of newsletters and an online library, a free Helpline service through phone or fax for direct and confidential IP support by legal specialists and on-site and online training. Services are available in 13 EU languages and Turkish.

## **B EU services providing information**

### **8.12 Your Europe Portal<sup>414</sup>**

Your Europe (Your Europe Action Plan COM(2013) 636 final) offers information to EU citizens and businesses about their basic rights under EU law, about how these rights are implemented in each individual country (where information has been provided by the national authorities) and it gives access to free email or telephone contact with EU assistance services, to get more personalised or detailed help and advice. While information about EU legislation is provided in all 23 official languages country-specific information is provided, where possible, in the national language(s) and in English.

### **8.13 The European e-Justice portal<sup>415</sup>**

The portal provides information and links on laws and practices in all EU countries about practical questions like finding a lawyer, consulting a land register or finding basic information about a judicial system. The target audience are citizens, businesses, lawyers and judges with cross-border legal questions. The resources range from information on legal aid, judicial training, European small claims and videoconferencing to links to legal databases, online insolvency and land registers. It also includes user-friendly forms for various judicial proceedings, such as the European order for payment. The portal is implemented by the Commission in very close cooperation with the EU countries. It is available in all 23 official EU languages.

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<sup>412</sup> [http://europa.eu/european-union/contact/meet-us\\_en](http://europa.eu/european-union/contact/meet-us_en)

<sup>413</sup> <https://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/>

<sup>414</sup> <http://europa.eu/youreurope/index.htm>

<sup>415</sup> <https://e-justice.europa.eu/home.do?action=home>

### 8.14 The portal covers two procedures, to which the gateway will link:

#### European Small Claims procedure<sup>416</sup>

The European Small Claims procedure (Regulation (EC) No 861/2007), which is accessible through the e-Justice portal, is designed to simplify and speed up cross-border claims of up to EUR 2000. It is available to litigants as an alternative to the procedures existing under national laws. It operates on the basis of standard forms and is as a rule a written procedure. A judgment given in the European Small Claims Procedure is recognized and enforceable in another Member State without the need for a declaration of enforceability and without any possibility of opposing its recognition. Standard forms are available in all languages. From the handing in of an application there are fixed time spans for the following steps such as the forwarding to the defendant, the judgement by the court, etc.

#### The European Payment Order<sup>417</sup>

The European Payment Order is a simplified procedure for cross-border monetary claims which are uncontested by the defendant, based on standard forms available in all EU languages through the e-Justice portal. The portal also provides information about which courts can issue a European Payment Order and where the application forms should be sent. After a form starting the procedure has been filled in, giving all the details of the parties and the nature and amount of the claim, the responsible court will examine the application, and as a rule should issue the European Payment Order within 30 days. The defendant then has another 30 days to serve or oppose it. If the latter happens, the case must be transferred to the normal civil law courts to be dealt with under national law.

### 8.15 Technical Regulation Information System database (TRIS)<sup>418</sup>

The TRIS database is an information tool aimed at allowing companies to detect upcoming national technical regulations that might affect the marketing of their products in the Single Market. It is based on a notification procedure established by Directive (EU) 2015/1535 dealing with information, prevention and dialogue in the field of technical regulations on products and Information Society services. EU countries must inform the European Commission of any draft technical regulation before its adoption. Starting from the date of notification, a three-month standstill period comes into place, during which the EU country must refrain from adopting the technical regulation in question. This procedure enables the Commission and other EU countries to examine the proposed text and respond. Notifications are translated into at least English, French and German. A mailing list mechanism allows economic operators and stakeholders to be automatically alerted when a draft regulation is announced. Final adopted national regulations also need to be notified to and included in TRIS.

### 8.16 VAT Information portal<sup>419</sup>

This European Commission webpage offers basic information about value added tax rules and procedures in the EU. As most of them are decided at national level the portal links to the

<sup>416</sup> [https://e-justice.europa.eu/content\\_small\\_claims-42-en.do](https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_small_claims-42-en.do)

<sup>417</sup> [https://e-justice.europa.eu/content\\_order\\_for\\_payment\\_procedures-41-en.do](https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_order_for_payment_procedures-41-en.do)

<sup>418</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/tris/en/>

<sup>419</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/business/vat\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/vat_en)

respective national websites. There are currently a vast number of sources of VAT information across the EU taking many forms, including online information portals and advisory services. The aim of the VAT portal is to create added value by matching specific needs based on an analysis of users and their habits, on the principles of user-centricity and modularity, and on search engines that allow for a comparison of relevant information across Member States in English.

### **8.17 EU Trade Export Helpdesk<sup>420</sup>**

The EU Trade Export Helpdesk offers information to companies in third countries exporting goods to the EU. Through the European Commission website they can find information on EU tariffs, requirements (e.g. plant health, public health, labelling, etc.), preferential arrangements, quotas and statistics relating to imports from trade partner countries. A database with a search function allows finding this information easily per product per destination Member State and for both requirements resulting from EU and from national legislation. The service is available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and Russian.

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<http://exporthelp.europa.eu/thdapp/form/output?action=tariff&prodLine=80&mode=specificRequirements&status=null&simDate=20151202&languageId=en&cmd=chap&taricCode=1001110010&partnerId=AL&reporterId=BG&simulationDate=02%2F12%2F2015&submit=Search>

## ANNEX 9: OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVES WITH LINKS TO THE SINGLE DIGITAL GATEWAY

This annex gives an overview of existing services and websites to which the gateway will link in order to give access to them, planned services and websites to which the gateway will link once they are available online, and initiatives of interest in the general context of developing and over time improving the gateway. The services included in this annex will not fall under the single digital gateway Regulation.

### A. Existing services and websites to which the gateway will link

#### European professional card (EPC)<sup>421</sup>

The EPC, introduced by Directive 2013/55/EC (amending Directive 2005/36/EC), is an electronic certificate issued via the first EU-wide fully online procedure for the recognition of qualifications for five professions (nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, real estate agents and mountain guides). This digital procedure is based on the Single Market Information System (IMI) and allows professionals to communicate with the relevant authorities inside a secure network. The IMI also provides for an official, multilingual communication channel between the regulating authorities for professionals in EU countries to facilitate their cooperation. The EPC does not replace the 'traditional' recognition procedures under the Professional Qualifications Directive, but it does offer an option for professionals who wish to work either temporarily or permanently in another EU country. It might be extended to other professions in the future.

#### 9.1 EUROPASS<sup>422</sup>

With a view to facilitating movement across intra-EU borders of workers the EU has developed five mutually recognised document formats that make it easier to communicate skills and qualifications. Two documents are filled in by citizens themselves, the Curriculum Vitae and the Language Passport that both rely on self-assessment. Three documents are issued by education and training authorities: the Europass Mobility records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country; the Certificate Supplement describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates; and the Diploma Supplement describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees. The Commission is considering<sup>423</sup> a revision of the Europass Framework to set up an intuitive and seamless online service platform. The aim is to provide web-based tools for documenting and sharing information on skills and qualifications, as well as free self-assessment tools. This initiative will focus primarily on Europass, the EU Skills Panorama, the Learning opportunities and qualifications portal, and the Euroguidance, Europass and European Qualifications Framework networks as these are the ones where most synergies can be exploited in the short term.

<sup>421</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/free-movement-professionals/policy/european-professional-card\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/services/free-movement-professionals/policy/european-professional-card_en)

<sup>422</sup> <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/>

<sup>423</sup> In its Communication on the New Skills Agenda for Europe <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223>.

## 9.2 Mini one-stop-shop (MOSS) for VAT<sup>424</sup>

Since 2015, as foreseen in Regulation (EU) No 904/2010, new VAT rules apply for businesses in the fields of telecommunications, broadcasting, and electronic services (e.g. supply of websites, software, databases, films, music, distant teaching, and web-hosting). Such services are now taxed in the country of the customer. The MOSS allows businesses to submit their VAT returns and to pay the applicable VAT due to a number of EU Member States through an online system in one of the EU Member States. This must be a country where the company has a permanent establishment. Therefore, businesses do not have to register for VAT in numerous EU countries and submit multiple VAT return declarations. The tax authorities of the EU Member State have established separate MOSS online platforms.

The 2015 Mini One Stop Shop for B2C supplies of electronic services, which is hosted by tax administrations in Member States, is an efficient system which has reduced compliance costs by 95% compared to the alternative of direct registration. This has led to annual administrative savings of EUR 40,000 per business or a total of EUR 500 million. EUR 3 billion VAT was collected through the system in 2015 representing up to EUR 18 billion in trade.

### **B Planned services and websites to which the gateway will link once they are available online**

## 9.3 Extension of Mini one-stop-shop for VAT

On 1/12/2016 the Commission presented a legislative proposal to extend the Mini One Stop shop (MOSS) to online B2C supplies of goods and other services. It is currently under discussion in Council.

This current Mini One Stop Shop should be extended to cross-border B2C online sales of physical goods ordered online both within and outside the EU. Instead of having to declare and pay VAT to each individual Member State where their customers are based, businesses would be able to make a single declaration and payment in their own Member State.

The overall objective is to minimise burdens attached to cross-border e-commerce arising from different VAT regimes, provide a level playing field for EU business and ensure that VAT revenues accrue to the Member State of the consumer. It is estimated that the proposal to extend the One-Stop Shop will reduce administrative costs for business by EUR 2.3 billion and will lead to an increase in intra-EU e-commerce. The extension of the one-stop shop combined with the removal of the VAT exemption for the importation of small consignments is estimated to increase VAT revenues for Member States by EUR 7 billion annually by 2021 and improve the competitiveness of EU business.

## 9.4 Transition to E-procurement - European Single Procurement Document (ESPD)<sup>425</sup>

The new Directives on Public Procurement provide for a gradual transition to electronic procurement by October 2018. Simplification of procurement procedures will contribute to higher transparency, efficiency, cost-savings and modernisation of public administrations. Supporting actions by the European Commission include sharing of best practices between

<sup>424</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/business/vat\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/vat_en)

<sup>425</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/e-procurement\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement/e-procurement_en)

the Member States, assistance via the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), as well as activities to promote interoperability of national systems. Important milestones of the transition process are the following:

- central purchasing bodies should move to full electronic means of communication including electronic bid submission by April 2017;
- e-submission should be made mandatory for all contracting authorities and all procurement procedures by October 2018;

The European Single Procurement Document (ESPD), an online standard self-declaration for all public procurement above the EU threshold, is envisaged to implement the once-only principle in public procurement. This will be complemented by a new version with new functionalities (including links to ESPD) of e-Certis – an online tool on certificates and attestations required in public procurement.

### **9.5 European Services e-Card<sup>426</sup>**

The Commission has proposed to introduce a Services e-Card. It foresees a simplified electronic procedure that will make it easier for providers of business services (e.g. engineering firms, IT consultants, and organisers of trade shows) and construction services to complete the administrative formalities required to provide services abroad. Services providers will simply have to liaise with a single interlocutor in their home country and in their own language. The home country interlocutor would then verify the necessary data and transmit it to the host Member State. The host Member State retains the current power to apply domestic regulatory requirements and to decide whether the applicant can offer services on its territory. The e-card would not affect existing employer obligations or workers' rights.

### **9.6 Interconnection of EU Business Registers<sup>427</sup>**

In line with the Directive on the interconnection of central, commercial and companies registers (Directive 2012/17/EU), a system of interconnection of business registers is being set up at EU level by June 2017 jointly by EU Member States and the European Commission. The system is known as the Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS). When in place, BRIS will ensure access at EU level to information on companies registered in the Member States, and enable, for the first time, the electronic communication between all EU business registers. They will be able to exchange information in relation to foreign branches and cross-border mergers of companies. Thanks to BRIS, citizens, businesses and national authorities will be able to search for information filed by companies in the national registers.

### **9.7 Electronic Interconnection of EU Insolvency Registers**

The Commission will further develop an electronic interconnection of insolvency registers to enhance transparency and legal certainty in the internal market. Member States are obliged to set up their own domestic insolvency electronic registers by 2018[3], while the establishment of the interconnection of insolvency registers is set for 2019, with the aim to enhance the effective administration of cross-border insolvency proceedings, establishing a common framework for the benefit of all stakeholders. This will become available on the European e-Justice Portal.

<sup>426</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-23\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-23_en.htm)

<sup>427</sup> [https://e-justice.europa.eu/content\\_business\\_registers\\_at\\_european\\_level-105-en.do](https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_business_registers_at_european_level-105-en.do)

The system shall provide a search service in all the official languages of the institutions of the Union in order to make available the mandatory information and any other documents or information included in the insolvency registers which the Member States choose to make available through the European e-Justice Portal.

### **9.8 European Mobility Portal on Social Security (EMPSS)<sup>428</sup>**

A feasibility study is on-going which explores an online tool that would assist mobile people in their contacts with public authorities, primarily related to social security, and would simplify the procedures they are confronted with when exercising their right to free movement. The tool could also help public authorities fight instances of fraud and error. The study assesses potential options for scope, architecture, functionality and their impacts.

#### **C. Initiatives of interest in the general context of developing and over time improving the gateway**

### **9.9 Initiative for a Single-member private limited liability company ('SUP')**

The Commission proposal for a directive on single member private limited liability companies ('SUP') in April 2014<sup>429</sup>, which is currently in the inter-institutional decision-making process, includes provisions on cross-border on-line registration specifically for the legal form of SUP.

### **9.10 Company law initiative to facilitate the use of digital technologies throughout a company's lifecycle**

The Commission initiative on facilitating the use of digital technologies throughout a company's lifecycle was announced in the Commission Work Programme for 2017.<sup>430</sup> This initiative will look at the entire company lifecycle and it aims to address, among others, the online registration of companies as legal entities and branches with business registers.

### **9.11 The eIDAS Regulation<sup>431</sup>**

The Regulation (EU) 910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the Single Market (eIDAS) from 2014 aims to provide a predictable regulatory environment to enable secure and seamless electronic interactions between businesses, citizens and public authorities. On the one hand, the Regulation ensures that people and businesses can use their own national electronic identification schemes (eIDs) to access public services in other EU countries where eIDs are available: Member States will have to recognise the eIDs notified by other Member States as of 29 September 2018. On the other hand, the Regulation creates a European Single Market for e-trust services such as electronic signatures, electronic seals, time stamp, and electronic delivery service - by ensuring that they will work across borders and have the same legal status as traditional paper based processes.

Implementation of the Regulation is supported by cooperation and technical tools:

<sup>428</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=624&langId=en&callId=458>

<sup>429</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52014PC0212>

<sup>430</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/atwork/pdf/cwp\\_2017\\_annex\\_i\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/pdf/atwork/pdf/cwp_2017_annex_i_en.pdf)

<sup>431</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/trust-services-and-eid>

- Cooperation between Member States is being facilitated through the eIDAS Cooperation Network.
- As regards technical tools, the Commission funds the development of so-called “CEF building blocks” such as the eID or the eSignature building blocks which are usable in any European project to facilitate the delivery of digital public services across borders. See also Annex 10 on available IT building blocks for further technical details.

When fully implemented and operational in practice, the eIDAS Regulation will be an important enabler for numerous cross-border online procedures as envisaged to be promoted as part of the single digital gateway.

### 9.12 Regulation on the free circulation of public documents<sup>432</sup>

The Regulation (EU/2016/1191) adopted in June 2016 covers public documents such as certificates, notarial acts, judgments and consular documents in certain areas such as birth; a person being alive; death; name; marriage; divorce; registered partnership; parenthood; adoption; residence; nationality; absence of a criminal record and the right to vote in municipal and European Parliament elections; public documents in order to prove the legal status of a company. Under the Regulation, when a citizen or business presents a public document (original or certified copy) issued in another Union country the receiving authorities will no longer be able to require an 'apostille' stamp to prove its authenticity. This exemption will save citizens the time and money needed to obtain such stamp. In addition national authorities cannot require a translation of public documents if it is in one of the official languages of the Union country. The Regulation also introduces multilingual standard forms that can be used as translation aids attached to their public document. When used the receiving authority can require a translation only in exceptional circumstances and even then it must accept a certified translation made in another Union country.

When fully applied as from 2019 the Regulation will partially reduce the administrative burdens on cross-border active businesses and citizens also for procedures envisaged to be covered by the single digital gateway.

### 9.13 European eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020<sup>433</sup>

The Action Plan was adopted in April 2016 and has as key objectives to modernise public administration, to achieve the digital Single Market, and to engage more with citizens and businesses to deliver high quality services. The single digital gateway is one of the actions mentioned in the Action Plan as well as several others of the below mentioned initiatives. A stakeholder engagement platform<sup>434</sup> enables all kinds of stakeholders to submit proposals for additional actions to be taken up.

### 9.14 Start-up initiative

The Commission adopted its Communication "Europe's next leaders: the Start-up and Scale-up Initiative" on 22/11/2016. The single digital gateway is foreseen as the action to help tackle some of the identified **administrative barriers** especially in a cross-border situation.

<sup>432</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/civil/judicial-cooperation/document-circulation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/civil/judicial-cooperation/document-circulation/index_en.htm)

<sup>433</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020>

<sup>434</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/egovernment4eu>



### 9.15 Digital Transformation – Redesign of the European Commission web presence<sup>435</sup>

The Digital Transformation project is a process of redesigning and streamlining of the European Commission's web presence that was in the past characterised by strong segmentation of content according to Commission Services. In order to provide high quality, accessible online services to citizens and businesses in the EU, the Commission is transforming its websites into a thematic, user-centered web presence. The Commission's web presence will be thematically organised according to one single information architecture and align organisational goals with user needs and tasks. It will provide modern online services and up-to-date information to citizens and businesses. This will improve access to information on EU programmes and their funding opportunities. Key objectives are to design by 2018 a web presence that is more in line with user needs and to reduce duplication and inconsistencies resulting from the current segmentation.

### 9.16 Core Public Service Vocabulary (CPSV)<sup>436</sup>

The Core Public Service Vocabulary is a data model financed by the ISA Programme<sup>437</sup> that captures the fundamental characteristics of a service offered by public administration.

Even within the same country, public services are documented following different flavours of national, regional or local traditions. This fragmented view of the public service concept impacts on the quality and the efficiency of public service provision for cross-border users, increases administrative burdens and makes public service provision more costly. The Core Public Service Vocabulary aims to offer a technology independent, generic representation of a service provided by public administration. The vocabulary will emerge as the common denominator of existing national, regional and local public service models, providing a lingua franca that will enable the seamless exchange of services and information across different e-Government systems. See also Annex 10 on available IT building blocks for further technical details.

### 9.17 Pilot on the Once Only Principle<sup>438</sup>

The Commission has launched a large-scale pilot to test the once-only principle for businesses cross-border in a business-to-public administration area. The project, with the participation of 20 Member States is being funded through the Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework programme and started in January 2017. The areas to pilot will include business mobility, exchanges between business registers and maritime certificates. In addition, further actions to support the implementation of the "once-only" principle have been launched under the ISA programme and continue under the ISA<sup>2</sup> programme; the best practices and recommendations for base registers management and the semantic specifications for description of public services (essential for the implementation of coherent and inter-connectable catalogues of services).

Another parallel pilot will assess the feasibility of a citizen case.

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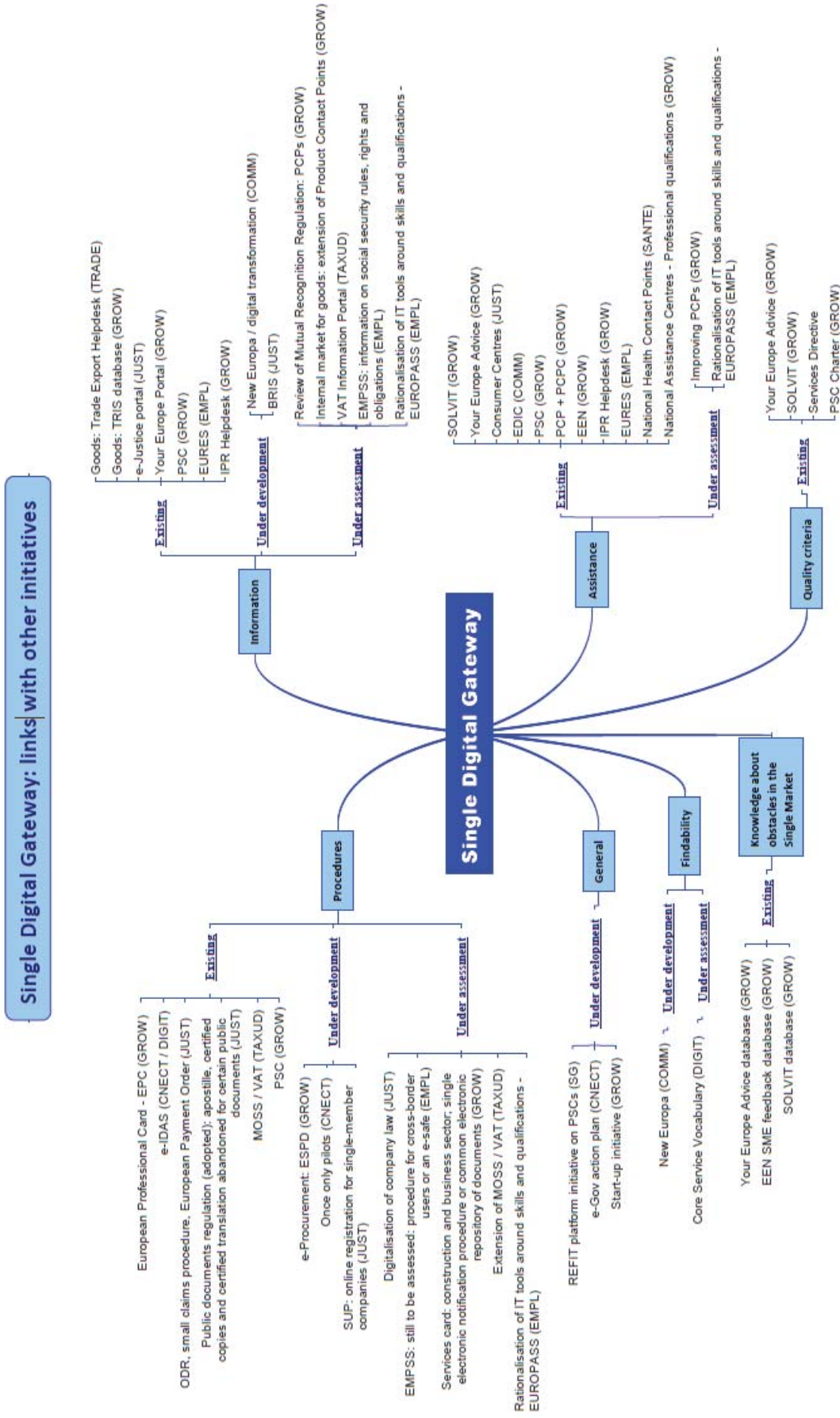
<sup>435</sup> [https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eu-digital/home\\_en](https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eu-digital/home_en)

<sup>436</sup> [https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/asset/core\\_public\\_service/description](https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/asset/core_public_service/description)

<sup>437</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/isa/>

<sup>438</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/content/pillar-2-13-once-only-principle-large-scale-pilot-project>

ANNEX 10: VISUAL OVERVIEW OF LINKS WITH OTHER INITIATIVES





Brussels, 2.5.2017  
SWD(2017) 213 final

PART 3/3

## **Compliance Package**

### **COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

#### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

#### *Accompanying the document*

**Proposal for a regulation of the European parliament and of the Council  
on establishing a single digital gateway to provide information, procedures, assistance  
and problem solving services and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012**

{COM(2017) 256 final}  
{SWD(2017) 211 final}  
{SWD(2017) 212 final}  
{SWD(2017) 214 final}

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## **ANNEX 11: AVAILABLE IT BUILDING BLOCKS AND EU FUNDING**

### **Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) building blocks**

The CEF building blocks offer basic capabilities (specifications, software and services) that can be used in any European project to facilitate the delivery of digital public services across borders.

At the core the CEF building blocks are interoperability agreements between European Union member states. They ensure interoperability between IT systems so citizens, businesses and administrations can benefit from seamless digital public services wherever they may be in Europe.

The building blocks are based on existing formalised technical specifications and standards. They are intended to facilitate the adoption of common technical specifications by projects across different policy domains with minimal (or no) adaptations by providing services and sometimes sample software. The building blocks can be combined and used in projects in any domain or sector at European, national or local level.

#### ***eDelivery***

The eDelivery building block helps public administrations to exchange electronic data and documents with other public administrations, businesses and citizens, in an interoperable, secure, reliable and trusted way.

Concretely, eDelivery prescribes technical specifications. Through the use of this building block, every participant becomes a node in a network using standard transport protocols and security policies: these nodes are conformant to the same technical rules and therefore capable of interacting with each other. As a result of this, organisations that have developed their IT systems independently from each other can start to securely communicate with one another once they have connected to an eDelivery node.

This building block could be an option in the single digital gateway for the exchange of documents used as evidence by citizens or businesses when completing procedures online.

#### ***eID***

In line with the eIDAS Regulation (EU) 910/2014, the eID building block helps citizens of one Member State to access online services provided by public and private organisations from other participating EU Member States, using their own national eID.

It allows cross-border authentication, in a secure, reliable and trusted way, by making national electronic identification systems interoperable thanks to the development of open-source software components, documentation, training and support.

The eID building block could be used to enable cross-border transactionality of online procedures, as foreseen by the single digital gateway proposal.

***eSignature***

In line with the eIDAS Regulation (EU) 910/2014, the eSignature building block helps public administrations and businesses to accelerate the creation and verification of electronic signatures. The deployment of solutions based on this building block in a Member State facilitates the mutual recognition and cross-border interoperability of eSignatures. This means that public administrations and businesses can trust and use eSignatures that are valid and structured in EU interoperable formats, and that legal value of eSignatures can be recognised in countries other than the country of origin of the signer.

The eSignature building block could be further used to enable cross-border transactionality of online procedures, as foreseen by the single digital gateway proposal.

***eInvoicing***

Since 2001, European legislation has given electronic invoices legal equivalence with their paper counterparts. However, a diversity of eInvoicing standards exists. Directive 2014/55/EU on eInvoicing in public procurement calls for the definition of a common European standard and makes it mandatory for all contracting authorities to accept eInvoices complying with the European standard as of November 2018.

The eInvoicing building block aims at supporting CEN in the definition of the common EU eInvoicing standard and at promoting its use amongst both public and private entities established in the EU.

Use of this building block could be recommended in the frame of procedures covered by the single digital gateway, beginning with public procurement procedures.

***eTranslation***

The eTranslation / Automated Translation building block helps European and national public administrations exchange information across language barriers in the EU. While eTranslation is mainly intended to be integrated into other digital services, it also offers stand-alone services for translating documents or snippets of text.

This building block builds on the existing Commission Machine Translation Service (MT@EC). The technical implementation of a user interface for this building block guarantees confidentiality and security of all translated data. Unlike general-purpose web translators, the eTranslation building block is adapted to specific terminology and text types that are typical for the usage context (e.g. tender documents, legal texts, medical terminology).

Already used on the Online Dispute Resolution Portal, this building block could help making multilingual the information, services and procedures that are accessible through the single digital gateway.

**Interoperability tools**

Costs associated with the digitalisation of procedures are expected to be limited if public authorities use the tools at their disposal for increasing interoperability such as the European Interoperability Framework or the Core Public Services Vocabulary.

### ***European Interoperability Framework (EIF)***

The European Interoperability Framework aims at supporting enhanced interoperability between public administrations across Europe.

Foreseen to be reviewed by the end of 2016, this framework provides a set of recommendations / guidelines to improve the interoperability of European public services, as well as an action plan for implementation.

Several of the recommendations made in this Framework could be promoted in the frame of the single digital gateway. Implementation of the European Interoperability Framework will facilitate the achievement of the Single digital gateway objectives by increasing the level of interconnection of public services and thereby reducing solutions costs.

### ***Core Public Services Vocabulary (CPSV)*** <sup>439</sup>

The Core Public Services Vocabulary is a tool for:

- Providing information on public services in a user-centric way, grouped logically around key business events;
- Mapping different data models to a common model requiring only one single description, with a view to federating and sharing information in a more efficient and interoperable way.

Concretely, it consists of a common data model for describing key business events and public services. It allows for harmonised, machine-readable and interoperable semantic descriptions.

Use by Member States authorities of the Core Public Services Vocabulary when designing or updating their websites would facilitate the development of the search by the single digital gateway's user interface of online information, services and procedures, and thereby help improving their findability. The use of common models and vocabularies would also facilitate translation as well as the reporting and analysis of users' feedback.

### **EU funding**

The European social and regional development funds provide EU funding to most Member States in the area of e-government (thematic objective (TO) 2 "enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communication technologies" and thematic objective (TO) 11 "enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities"). All Member States have access to TO2. For TO 11, 18 Member States are eligible, and 17 use it.

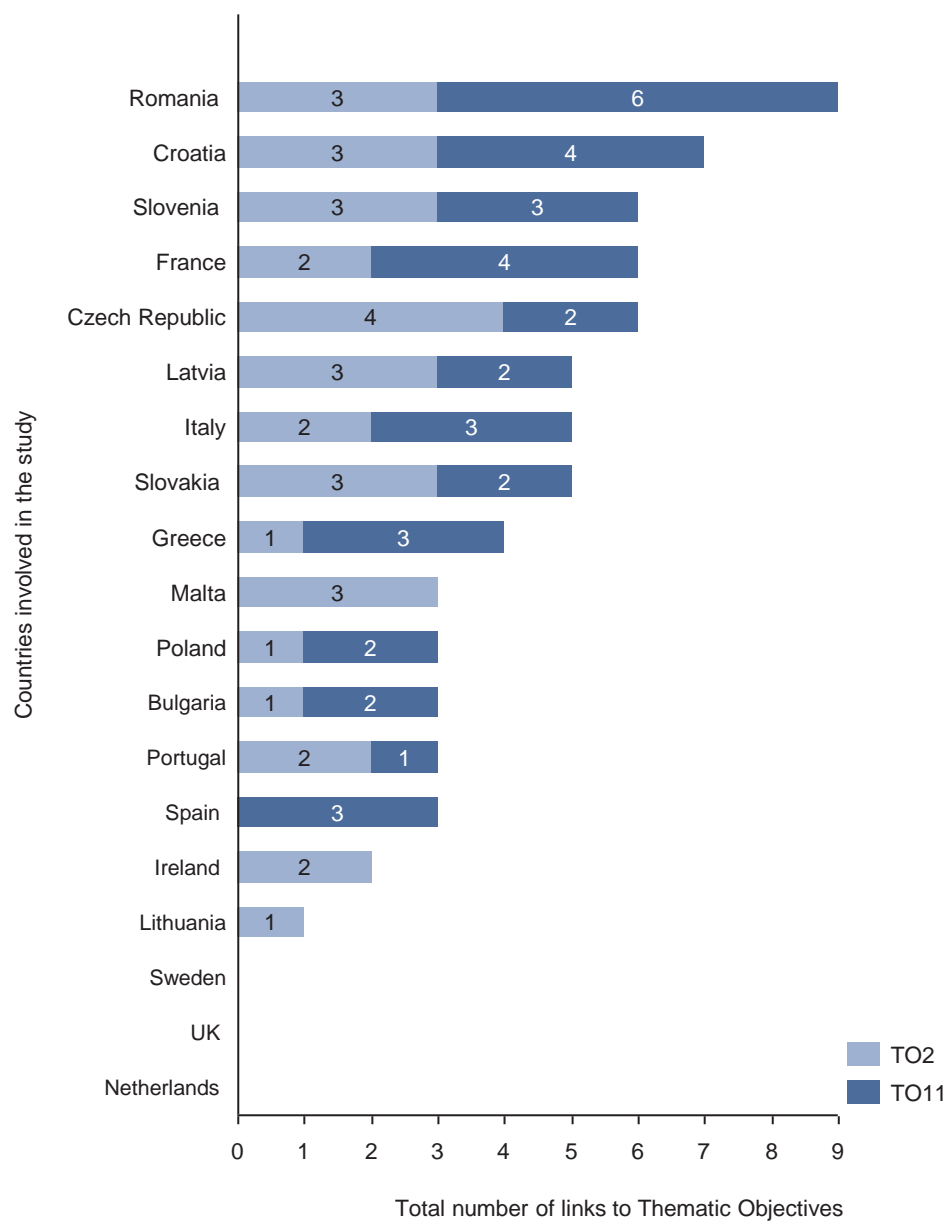
The tables below provide an overview. In the past, (some) Member States have made active use of EU funding in order to implement requirements from EU legislation, e.g. the Services Directive 2006/123/EC, the Public Procurement Directive 2014/24/EC, the eIDAS Regulation EU 910/2014, NIS Directive 2016/1148, directive on the Reuse of Public Sector Information 2013/27/EU and Directive on electronic invoicing in public procurement 2014/55/EU<sup>440</sup>.

<sup>439</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/isa/ready-to-use-solutions/cpsv-ap\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/isa/ready-to-use-solutions/cpsv-ap_en.htm)

<sup>440</sup> Forthcoming study on the main actions, plans and funding priorities of Member States towards the modernisation of Public Administrations, Wavestone for the European Commission, 2016.

All eligible Member States except Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands have included links to thematic objectives 2 and 11 in their operational programmes, which is the pre-condition for securing EU funding in this area.

*Figure 11.1: Member States with thematic objectives 2 and 11 in operational programmes<sup>441</sup>*



*Source: In-depth analysis of NRP 2016 documents, performed by Wavestone*

<sup>441</sup> Data prepared after carefully surveying the NRPs for countries in the study and identifying reforms linked TO2 and TO11, subsequently categorising them between cross-cutting reforms and sector specific reforms



Figure 11.2: ESIF funding for e-government under TO2 for 2014-2020, EUR million

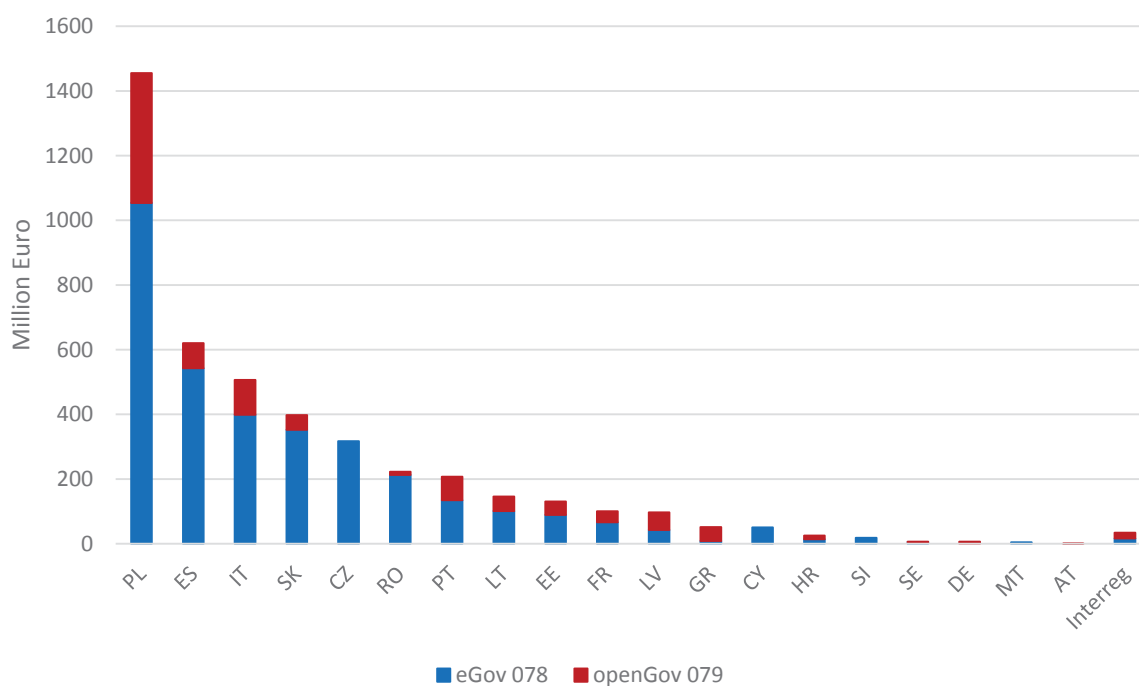
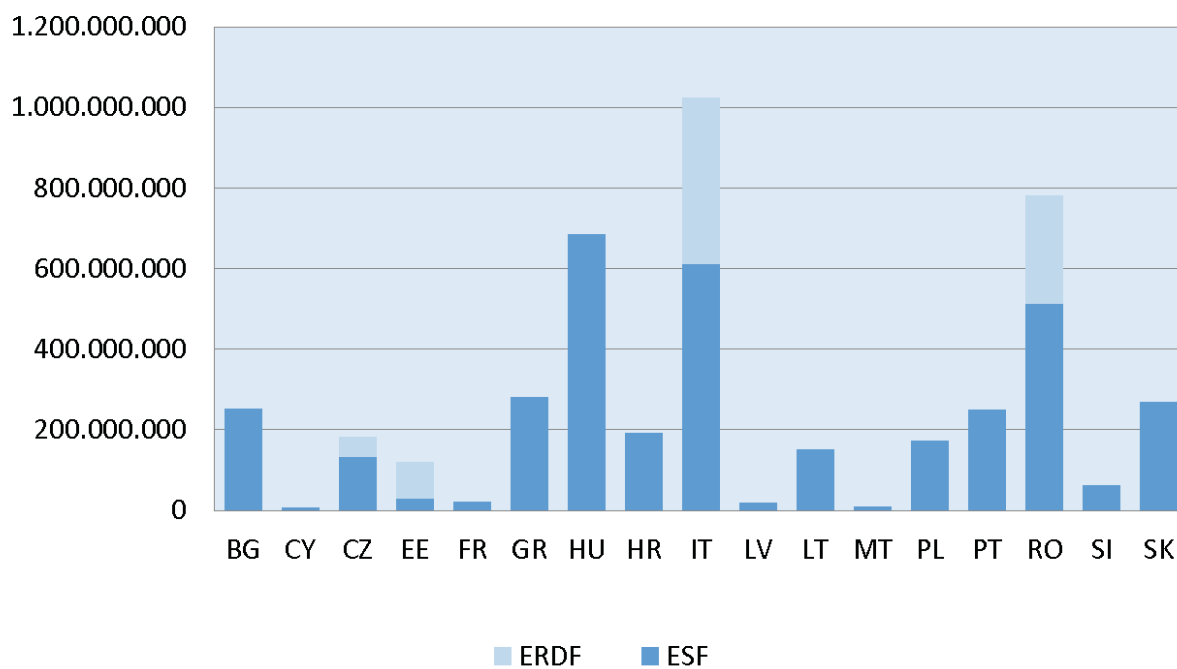


Figure 11.3: ESIF support for institutional capacity building in 2014-2020, EUR



## **ANNEX 12: OUTLINE AND PROJECT PLAN OF THE SINGLE DIGITAL GATEWAY**

The preferred option follows an EU-coordinated approach, where the Commission covers EU-level information on the Your Europe portal and Member States cover agreed national information in their own different websites and portals, and both access levels (EU and national) are linked. The Your Europe portal will be the EU-level access point to the Single digital gateway, and all national and other EU websites that are part of the gateway will contain links to the central access point site.

The Your Europe portal, which is part of the Commission's Europa site, contains separate sections for citizens and businesses. Both sections have a hierarchical navigation structure according to topic, guiding the user from EU-level information to corresponding information for each Member State, as well as EU-mandated assistance and problem-solving services and contact details of national competent authorities. This general structure will remain, but will be supplemented by further search possibilities and filled with new national content in (usually) English.

### ***1. Information and assistance services***

The information areas on Your Europe, as well as the assistance and problem solving services to which it links (supplemented in the future by national - public or private- services where Member States decide to add them to the gateway) will constitute the scope of the gateway in terms of information and assistance services.

### ***2. Findability and awareness***

A new common search facility will be added to the Your Europe central page, which will guide the user to the right information pages which Member States will have notified to the Commission as part of the gateway. Member States will need to provide information in the agreed areas in their national as well as a foreign language (most likely English). A common EU-level enquiry form for assistance services will make for additional findability of these services from the Your Europe central page.

### ***3. Quality criteria and feedback***

Common quality criteria (e.g. clear, comprehensive and easy-to-understand information, clear descriptions of procedures and assistance services, respect of deadlines) will be introduced to apply to all covered information, assistance services and procedures. These will be monitored via a common user feedback tool that will be available on Your Europe and all linked portals, and through which users can comment on whether they could find what they were looking for, and if so, comment on the quality. This information will be used for quality and compliance monitoring and to further develop and improve the gateway content according to user needs.

### ***4. Procedures***

In addition, the gateway seeks to ensure that citizens and businesses can access and carry out the most important administrative procedures fully online. As Member States are on different levels of e-government implementation, this cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, it will follow an agreed implementation timetable per Member State. Foreign users should be able to carry out procedures on an equal footing with domestic users. As the transmission of foreign evidence usually constitutes the biggest hurdle to being fully online for foreign users, with Member States usually requiring translation and certification of foreign documents, the Commission will provide a user interface IT tool for the cross-border use of documents and data. The details of this tool will be specified later on.

## 5. Governance

The single digital gateway is a fully cooperative project between the Commission and the Member States. For this purpose a single digital gateway coordination group will be created to support consistent implementation of the legal requirements. The group will work on the basis of annual programmes to implement the project plan (see below). In addition, since the success of the gateway will depend on how well it meets the needs of its users, we plan to create a stakeholders network group of organisations representing the different user groups. The Commission will also coordinate the networks of EU assistance services and create more synergies.

## 6. Responsibilities

In general, the responsibilities of the Member States are:

- Getting information about applicable national rules online and make sure it fulfils the quality criteria, including one foreign language;
- Monitoring compliance of national level assistance services with quality criteria;
- Getting the 10+10 key procedures online and available for foreigners.

The main responsibilities of the Commission is to:

- Provide EU level information online (as in Your Europe portal);
- Coordinate the networks of EU assistance services networks (synergies as compared with current situation);
- Provide common IT tools for the single digital gateway;
- Ensure governance of the single digital gateway.

The detailed responsibilities that the chosen package of options places on the Commission and the Member States are indicated under the description of each option in section 4 of the impact assessment.

The single digital gateway project will require solid preparation, strong coordination, proactive implementation and continuous development over time to make sure that it remains fully aligned with user needs. Careful planning and a clear understanding of who does what are of the essence.

Assuming that the Commission Proposal will be adopted in Q1/2017 and the legal act in Q3/2018, the timetable below presents main actions which need to be undertaken to ensure the successful launch of the gateway in Q3/2020 and its further development.

## 7. Project plan

Timing	Commission actions	Member States' actions
<i>Pre-adoption stage</i>		
Q1/2018	Works with MS on developing synergies for information and assistance services towards the objectives of the single digital gateway	Work with the COM on further convergence of information and assistance services towards the objectives of the single digital gateway
Q1/2018	Analyses different options related to the IT tools and applications listed in the Commission Proposal	Analyse the needs and efforts which have to be done to ensure full compliance with the Regulation

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Commission actions</b>	<b>Member States' actions</b>
Q2/2018	Establishes a network of stakeholders (Chambers of Commerce, etc.) to discuss with them ideas related to the practical implementation of the single digital gateway	
Q2/2018	Prepares the draft annual work programme (e.g. to clarify detailed implementation steps per Member State)	
<b>Q4/2018</b>	<b><i>Adoption of the [single digital gateway] Regulation</i></b>	
Q3/2018	Convenes the first meeting of the single digital gateway Group to discuss the first annual work programme	Appoint national co-ordinators and notify their names to the COM
Q3/2018	Sets up internal governance structure to manage and coordinate all EU level services and portals that are part of the single digital gateway	Ensure that sufficient resources are made available at national level Put in place the internal structure of co-ordination and monitoring
Q1/2019	Adoption of the first annual work programme	Adoption of the first annual work programme
Q1/2019	Adopts implementing acts	Discuss the draft implementing acts in the single digital gateway Committee
Q1/2019	Starts developing the IT tools required for supporting the single digital gateway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- user interface</li> <li>- repository of links</li> <li>- reporting tool on the functioning of the Single Market</li> <li>- data collection tool</li> <li>- user feedback collection tool</li> </ul>	Start working on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- filling the online information coverage gaps</li> <li>- getting the missing procedures online</li> <li>- ensuring that existing online procedures are accessible for foreign users</li> </ul>
Q2/2019	Organises trainings, workshops, visits in Member States to discuss/advise Member States as regard the use of the ESF, ERDF and other sources of financing, managed by the COM	Re-structuring, tagging of information on their websites
Q2/2019	Issues of interpretative/guidance documents or recommendations, if needed	
Q3/2019	Preparation of promotion campaigns and discussion within the [single digital gateway] Group	
Q3/2019	Finalisation of work on the IT tools	Notification of links to the national services to the repository of links
Q4/2019	Implementing act on tool for cross-border use of evidence	
Q4/2019	Beta-version of the single digital gateway to be put online and tested	Testing together with the COM the tools and applications to ensure that they are ready to use as from Q3 2020
Q3/2020	All agreed information is offered online User feedback tools deployed on all single digital gateway related webpages	All agreed information is offered online User feedback tools deployed on all single digital gateway related webpages

Timing	Commission actions	Member States' actions
Q4/2020	Launch of tool for cross-border use of evidence	
<b>Q4/2020</b> <i>Launch of the Single digital gateway</i>		
Q4/2022	First report on obstacles in the Single Market based on data gathered through all services within the single digital gateway and the user feedback tool	
Q4/2022	First report on the functioning of the single digital gateway	
Q1/2024	Second report on obstacles in the Single Market	
Q3/2024	Second report on the functioning of the single digital gateway and, if needed, recommendations for improvement	

### 8. Governance structure

The envisaged governance structure for implementation, coordination and development of the gateway would be based on the following elements:

- a) Co-ordination within Member States of all tools and services which will be accessible through the gateway, monitoring their quality and ensuring that they comply with the foreseen quality standards on a permanent basis. Each Member State should appoint one **national co-ordinator** who would be entrusted with the co-ordination tasks at the national level and who could act as an interlocutor in discussions with other Member States and the Commission.
- b) Co-ordination within the Commission in relation to websites and tools provided by different services of the Commission. The co-ordination can be ensured in the most efficient way if one **central point within the Commission** is appointed to perform the relevant tasks, including monitoring of the quality of linked services, analysing user feedback, ensuring the development, maintenance and the security of IT tools and applications relevant for the gateway.
- c) **The single digital gateway Co-ordination Group** bringing together the Member States (their national co-ordinators) and the Commission for coordination, discussion and decision-making on the practical implementation of the gateway and its further development. The work of the group would be prepared by the Commission co-ordination centre. In particular the Group should agree on:
  - The annual work programme;
  - Promotion activities;
  - Steps which should be taken to ensure the consistent implementation of the gateway in all Member States including assistance measures.
- d) A **Stakeholder feedback group** including representatives of the main user groups to provide input on planned developments and priorities to ensure regular calibration of the project towards the real needs of its users.

**ANNEX 13: GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE MEMBER STATES****How to present good quality information****Austria**

A table presents a list of categories of products which are not subject to harmonisation. For each category, the main pieces of law applicable and their amendments are identified, the competent authority is indicated, together with an e-mail address for questions.

<http://www.en.bmwfw.gv.at/technicalaffairsandsurveying/ProductContactPointOfTechnicalRules/Seite/default.aspx>

**Denmark**

The Product Contact Point for the Construction website presents general information concerning product categories under the FAQ section. A search tool allows the search for all applicable and soon to be applicable standards in both Danish and English.

<http://danishcprcontactpoint.dk/forside/0/2>

The Product Contact Point website explains the principle of mutual recognition and publishes a list of Danish general rules and technical rules per product, in English.

<https://danishbusinessauthority.dk/product-contact-point>

**Finland**

Finland is making available a common open wiki for public administration IT materials.

<https://wiki.julkict.fi/julkict/>

**France**

The Product Contact Point for the Construction website allows the search for information on standards and construction products both through a free search and through a graphical search. It also has information on other relevant documents and concerned bodies. The FAQ section presents comprehensive overall information on construction products in France.

<http://www.rpcnet.fr/index.php>

The Product Contact Point publishes information sheets by product family, in English, with links to the relevant European and/or French legislation, contact details for the government departments responsible for this legislation and for market surveillance, as well as other useful contacts.

<http://www.entreprises.gouv.fr/libre-circulation-marchandises/free-movement-of-goods-in-europe?language=en-gb>

**Germany**

Many German e-government websites offer the additional facility of "easy language", i.e. the more complicated text on the official website is translated into a more simple language.

**Ireland**

The website of the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government presents information on all aspects of construction in Ireland, well beyond standards for construction products. Specific thematic documents guide the user to understand what requirements apply.

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/>

**Luxembourg**

Citizens and businesses can access the information they need on their rights and obligations through accessing a single website. The website structures the information around topics, and uses a single template for all procedures. The logic of the template is the one of the user, so the information is adapted to it, not the other way round. To that extent, the PSC engages people with specific communication skills and proof-readers without specific expertise in the topic covered. Furthermore, the website also provides a user-friendly and precise search engine through which the user can find the information he needs in a more dynamic manner.

<http://www.guichet.public.lu>

**Sweden**

The PCPC website proposes a good overview of national rules and EU standards, in both Swedish and English. Information goes beyond what is offered by the Product Contact Point for Construction.

<http://www.boverket.se/en/start-in-english/products/construction-products-regulation/cpr-contact-point/>

**United Kingdom**

The Product Contact Point explains the principle of mutual recognition and publishes an exhaustive list of UK technical rules according to product categories.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mutual-recognition-regulation-across-the-eea#technical-rules-for-specific-non-harmonised-products-in-the-uk>

Availability and usability of information provided by the PSC has scored considerably above the EU average (2015 Points of Single Contact Study) and was praised for the good quality of supporting functions (e.g. search, navigation). The portal provides extensive information on business procedures.

<http://www.gov.uk>

**Public and private entities working together****Finland**

The Finnish Building Information Foundation is a private, non-profitmaking Foundation which provides construction information in Finland. The company publishes instructions for building and property management, regulations, contract documents and forms and product information, and promotes good practices.

<https://www.rakennustieto.fi/index/english.html>

**Ireland**

Ireland has chosen a private company, Licences.ie, to provide an Integrated Licensing Application Service. The company provides all the infrastructure and resources necessary to deliver the service at its own expense. It recovers all costs by means of charges levied on the licensing authorities which are using its service. The licensing authorities may decide not to use the Licenses.ie. In such a case, they have to build their own system to enable the access to e-procedures.

**Luxembourg**

The Point of Single Contact cooperates with the Chambers of Commerce to identify and prioritize requirements and procedures relevant for businesses which should be included in the scope of PSC services.

**Poland**

The Ministry of Economic Development shares tasks over PSC with the Polish Chamber of Commerce: when questions from users submitted to the PSC Help Centre require technical knowledge, they are transmitted to the Chamber of Commerce which contacts relevant experts. The answers from experts are verified and sent to users from the Help Centre.

**ProductIP**

Personal Product Compliance Partner is a private company established in the Netherlands that provides on a client's request and for an affordable price a comprehensive requirements list for a given product (the list of requirements for a defined market, from a defined moment, for a defined product, where applicable, for a defined customer, etc.).

<https://www.productip.com>

**Sweden**

The Product Contact Point for Construction displays an overview of links towards Swedish and European private sector organisations that can help with various questions related to selling goods in the EU.

<http://www.boverket.se/contactpoint-cpr>

The PSC has a section on how to find affordable business advisers:

<https://www.verksamst.se/en/web/international/find-advisors>

**Quality management for information and assistance services****France**

Le Référentiel Marianne aims to provide users of national administration services with guarantees on the conditions and performance of these services. It was redesigned in 2016, resulting from a large-scale study on user satisfaction. Administrations have to comply with 12 commitments belonging to five categories: effective guidance; information relating to users' expectations; a warm welcome and attention; clear responses within published deadlines; progress by listening to users; and undertakings of the public agencies.

**Germany**

The PSC of Brandenburg is getting content reviewed and approved by the competent authority staff as well as by the PSC staff, including legal experts, before posting it.

**Malta**

The PSC ensures the accuracy of information through 19 service-level agreements with ministries and competent organisations. These administrative arrangements ensure the updating and reliability of the information.

**SOLVIT**

The 2013 Commission Recommendation on the principles governing SOLVIT provides that SOLVIT centres should abide by minimum service obligations and detailed case handling rules, such as time limits for SOLVIT centre replies to applicants and regular quality checks of cases. After a case has been closed, applicants should be invited to give feedback on how the case has been handled by SOLVIT. The general performance of SOLVIT and per Member State is subject to reporting and published online each year in the Single Market Scoreboard.

**United Kingdom**

The central e-government portal "gov.uk" is run according to a published Digital Service Standard, which includes principles such as ongoing user research and usability testing to continuously seek feedback from users to improve the service. The service should be regularly assessed according to pre-identified performance indicators, and performance data reported on a dedicated performance platform. The ministry responsible for the service should test it from the beginning to the end.

The responsible service defines standard criteria for services, develops open source solutions and promotes the exchange of good practices. Multidisciplinary development teams are created in the operational departments, covering expertise in infrastructure, development, and analysis of user needs. It also monitors developments in digital professions and works on role identification for the



composition of a collaborative team. The service follows a policy of discouraging digitising legacy services.

<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/assets/documents/digital-service-standard.pdf>

### **Your Europe Advice**

The **Your Europe Advice** service provides free and personalised advice in the enquirer's language **within a week**. Quality criteria apply to the reply, such as "precise, concise, complete, tailor-made, clear, accurate and easily understandable for "normal citizens" without legal knowledge". Various quality control measures are carried out by both the contractor and the Commission, such as random ex post quality control of replies, ex-ante controls and keeping records for internal management purposes of expert-by-expert performance in relation to the content-related and the formal quality criteria.

### **Using the user feedback mechanism to improve quality**

#### **Luxembourg**

The PSC organizes its own mystery shopping to get feedback and define priorities for further development.

#### **Malta**

The Maltese PSC has a good and complete track and trace mechanism in place, resulting in the highest possible performance on this element of the PSC.

#### **The Netherlands**

The Dutch chamber of commerce portal "ondernemersplein" uses analytics and user feedback as part of a feedback loop to continuously improve the content on its website.

#### **Poland**

The Point of Single Contact collects user feedback on every service (Help Centre and on the PSC portal). This includes a short and effective feedback mechanism on each web page of the portal. Poland uses the application Survicat to create targeted questions.

<http://business.pl>

#### **United Kingdom**

The UK is continuously measuring user satisfaction on its e-government platform "gov.uk". Each service runs a satisfaction survey feedback page, asking to rate the experience of using the service on a 5 point scale, from 'very satisfied' to 'very dissatisfied'. It also includes a final open-ended question for users to say whatever they think of the service. Key performance figures for services and results from the user feedback mechanism are kept in a central database managed by gov.uk. The GDS team is undertaking efforts to establish monthly performance benchmarks on delivery, accuracy and usefulness.

<https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/measuring-success/measuring-user-satisfaction>

The UK Friends and Family Test (FFT) is a user insight tool which asks users of public services: "Would you recommend this service to your friends and family?" FFT scores are published transparently and displayed by each provider. The score provides a vivid, actionable and customer-focused performance measure, and open text feedback is used by providers to improve user experience, as an example of the UK's programme of creating Open Public Services.

OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation,

[https://www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sector-innovation/innovations/page/friendsandfamilytest.htm#tab\\_description](https://www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sector-innovation/innovations/page/friendsandfamilytest.htm#tab_description)

**Your Europe**

The portal has a constant button on all webpages "Help us improve", asking the user whether he found what he wanted, what he was looking for, as well as an open text box for any suggestions.

**Central government plan to roll out e-procedures****Cyprus**

In Cyprus, the Council of Ministers established a national strategy to enable communication with public authorities through a single point of entry: the ARIADNI gateway, established in 2015, is already covering 20 e-services, and is foreseen to be complete for both citizens and businesses within the next 2 years.

<https://cge.cyprus.gov.cy/re/public/>

**Estonia**

Estonia is deciding on which procedures to digitalise through a centrally steered competitive process. Services need to provide evidence about the return on investment of digitalisation, which determines which procedures are chosen for digitalisation. Taxes online were a prime example for a successful e-procedure.

**France**

In France, a citizen who wishes to register for their pension, check the number of points they still have on their driving license, join the army or create an enterprise online does not have to create another account on the website of the involved authority. Instead, via FranceConnect, they can just login by using the account they already holds at the tax authority, the post office or the social security authority.

<https://franceconnect.gouv.fr/>

**Hungary**

Hungary had a national programme foreseeing the task of drawing up an action plan for making the 10 most frequently used procedures by citizens available online. In order to choose these procedures, public authorities examined 20 cases.

Other procedures were also selected to be made available online, after the examination of more than 100 cases, this time based on the ease of making them available online.

**Luxembourg**

Citizens and businesses can carry out a number of administrative procedures online through connecting to a single platform called "MyGuichet". The user can handle the whole procedure online, from completing a form to signing it and attaching supporting documents. In addition, MyGuichet provides additional services. It enables the user to follow the processing of the application through an eTracking tool. And it allows the user to collect all completed forms, supporting documents and personal data which may be reused for another administrative procedure in a dedicated secure eSpace.

<http://www.guichet.public.lu/myguichet/en/index.html>

**Poland**

Plans for rolling-out e-procedures are part of the 2012 Strategy: "Efficient State 2020".

**United Kingdom**

In the UK, a central portal was established in 2012 by the Government Digital Service ('GDS'). The GDS centrally scrutinises all government services that are geared towards more than 100 000 users. Potential service use is estimated by looking at comparative existing digital services. The GDS leads the digital transformation of government and is part of the Cabinet Office.

<https://gds.blog.gov.uk/about/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/cabinet-office>.

## Achieving cost-efficiency

### The Netherlands

The Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs initiated a plan that deals with the fragmentation of portals in the Netherlands. In order to improve the quality and findability of the information, the ministry set up a central platform for business information called ondernemersplein.nl (the Dutch PSC). Within this system the existing portals work together by providing information, sharing best practices and improving their key performance indicators together. The system continuously has to adapt to changing economic and regulatory changes in the Netherlands. In order to do this, it is essential that the involved organisations closely cooperate with each other and that there is flexibility within the system.

### Poland

Poland uses structural funds to set up a self-sustainable online system for collecting and updating information regarding requirements and procedures.

### United Kingdom

A digital efficiency report produced in 2012 shows that the re-use of platforms in different government departments and for different services generates significant cost-savings. Real-time digital dashboards accessible directly via gov.uk monitor the performance of every single digital service. Figures are available on costs for digital transactions and service take-up. Figures published by the efficiency reform group are available on gov.uk and further information is available from parliamentary scrutiny.

<http://gov.uk/performance>

### Denmark

The Danish government provides a service (called 'form engine' – "Blanketmotor") to authorities where they can produce their own digital solutions in an easy way. This is particularly relevant when there is no 'return on investment' in creating a digital solution. The Danish Business Authority paid for the initial development cost of EUR 228,680 of the form engine, and requires a very small fee for the operational costs of the engine from each authority. The further development is done collaboratively and all authorities benefit from it. (E.g. if one authority develops a payment module and pays for it, all other authorities can reuse this afterwards.) The service is extremely popular. The solutions will automatically be aligned with the technical and usability demands for design (looks and feel, flow, etc.) of the portal.

## Cross-border transactionality

### Belgium

The PSC is available in Dutch, French, German and English.

### Denmark

The PSC is available in Danish, English, German, Lithuanian and Polish.

<https://danishbusinessauthority.dk/business-denmark>

### Estonia

The Estonian eID card is also available for non-nationals. It is used for instance:

- For accessing government databases to check one's medical records, file taxes, etc.;
- For picking up e-Prescriptions;
- As a pre-paid public transport ticket in Tallinn and Tartu;
- For e-voting;
- For digital signatures.

**The Netherlands and Lithuania**

These two Member States integrated a Message Box in the PSC to provide cross-border users with the opportunity to submit documents online. Enquiries submitted through the Message Box are processed inside the PSC or are forwarded to the competent authority.

**Malta**

Malta gets the highest score as regards accessibility for cross-border user (availability of information and e-procedures for cross-border users). In particular, Malta makes sure that online procedures that are available to residents with support of eID can be accessed by foreign users as well. Foreign users are offered alternative ways for authentication that, in conjunction with additional documentation, provide an acceptable level of legitimacy of the respective users.

**Merging contact points****Czech Republic**

The **Czech** Point of Single Contact has got an online enquiry which, under the heading "Business in the EU", covers both trade in products and services

<http://www.businessinfo.cz/en/online-tools/business-enquiry.html>

**Lithuania**

The portal "Business Gateway **Lithuania**" covers both trade in goods and services through one website. The Point of Single Contact, the Product Contact Point and the Product Contact Point for Construction are all part of this website and are listed under "Permits and Requirements".

Services and product contact points have always worked together. This ensures above all a better user experience, as well as a simplification of work for institutions. Enquiries received by the Point of Single Contact for Services and Products often cover more than one topic and gather different areas of expertise in the same service allowing for faster comprehensive replies. Institutions also only need to communicate any changes to relevant regulations to one Single Point of Contact, which results in better administration.

<http://www.verslovartai.lt/en/main/>

**Slovenia**

The Product Contact Point and the Product Contact Point for Construction are run by the same institution, and covered through one website.

<http://www.sist.si/contact-point/information>

**Spain**

The PSC links to other PSCs on a prominent place on the websites.

**United Kingdom**

The Single Market Service centre is the single contact point for the Point of Single Contact, YourEurope, SOLVIT, IMI, the Product Contact Points, and TRIS. The Product Contact Point for Construction is run separately.

**Reducing regulatory burden based on user input****Poland**


Digitalisation of procedures which are the most "popular" includes different steps:

- Verification of the volume of procedures;
- Contacting authorities in charge to see how it can be digitalised and what can be simplified;
- Consultations with stakeholders (entrepreneurs, tax advisors in case of taxation);
- Changing the law;
- Digitalisation of procedure.

**United Kingdom**

The complete rebuild of the entire process for obtaining a vehicle license, the fast voting registry process and the introduction of the student account are examples of user-driven innovations.


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## ANNEX 15: EXAMPLE OF PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS



### Requirement list for paper cup

In this document you will find legal and company specific requirements that apply to your non food product in the selected European countries and for selected customers. Important note: The requirements list is based on the currently available information in the ProductIP regulatory database for the selected market release date. Please also keep in mind that legislation is subject to constant change. These changes are not monitored within this list. If you want to keep track of legislative and company specific changes to requirements we recommend that you start a technical file within the ProductIP Platform.

### Your requirement list is based upon following information

#### Order company

European Commission

200 Rue de la Loi, Brussels, B-1049, Belgium

Tel: +32 2 2967101

#### Regions

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Croatia,

#### Market release date

2016-12-15

#### Categories

Food contact materials - Paper plates, paper cups,

### Your additional selections

#### Which of these properties apply to the packaging?

- The packaging should be considered to be a toy or child appealing
- The packaging includes plastic bags or foils potential hazardous for children
- The product DOES have packaging

#### Do you want to add inspection plans and results?

- YES, inspection requirements and results should be added.

#### Does the product appeal to children?

- YES; the product has bright, appealing colours with themes that attract or entertain children; but no play value, not a toy

#### Do you want to add Social Compliance to your requirements list?

- NO; Social Compliance standards should not be added to the requirements list

#### Does the product contain any licensed trademarks, designs or similar intellectual properties?

- YES; the product contains intellectual property that requires a license.



Table 15.1

## Requirements

paper cup				
Requirement Group	Requirement	Description	Risk Cat	Regions
Product Information				
	Product construction - Bill of Materials, Substances (BOM, BOS) of the product	The Bill of Material gives an overview of the parts required to produce the product. The minimum that should be highlighted here are those parts relevant for compliance with the requirements. Those could be parts relevant for LVD, EMC, but also plastics relevant for mechanical strength and so on. It shall be not easy to dismiss parts from the list as being not relevant. The Bill of Substances is relevant for the chemical assessment of the product e.g. for REACH or Cosmetics, etc.	B3	EU
	Product identification - Declaration of Product Identity	Declaration of Product Identity - with this declaration you declare that the related product X is the same as the product mentioned in test documents	B3	EU
	Product identification - Pictures, artwork	Please include here picture(s) of the product. These could be generic pictures that you use to identify the product.	B3	EU
Product Labelling				
	French Decree 2014-1577 about the Triman recycle sign	Décret no 2014-1577 du 23 décembre 2014 relatif à la signalétique commune des produits recyclables qui relèvent d'une consigne de tri. (French Decree No. 2014-1577 of 23 December 2014 on the common sign of recyclable products which require a sorting instruction). Known as the Triman logo. Check the handbook on the applicability (available as resource).	B3	FR
	Traceability - Production Batch code	It is advised to have a production code - batch code - on a product and on the consumer outer packaging (unless otherwise agreed with your customer and not in conflict with the legal requirements) in order to be able to identify a specific batch in case of an issue in the market. In some cases an "use before date" is applicable Add your example here.	B3	EU
Packaging information				
	Product construction - Bill of Materials (BOM) of the packaging	Bill of material for the packaging. This is important as market surveillance authorities are also checking for example REACH compliance of packaging components	B3	EU
	Product identification - Declaration of Product Identity of packaging	Declaration of Product Identity of the packaging - with this declaration you declare that the related packaging X is the same as the packaging mentioned in test documents	B3	EU
	Product identification - Picture, artwork of Packaging	Add here a picture or PDF of the packaging. This is important because in some cases rating information, warnings, instructions are required. Be aware that images of packaging might lead to certain interpretations about the usages of a product which could have consequences for the requirements that apply. Note that there is also a section where you need to declare about compliance of the packaging with packaging guidelines - chemicals used etc.	B3	EU
General Product Safety Directive (GPSD) 2001/95/EC				
	EN 71-1:2014 (GPSD)	Safety of toys. Part 1: Mechanical and physical properties For GPSD risk assessment for child care and child appealing products that are not toys.	A	EU
	EN 71-1:2014 (GPSD) Child safety - Plastic bags and foils	Products supplied with plastic bags with an opening perimeter larger than 380 mm and/or plastic foils with an area larger than 100 by 100 mm may pose a suffocation risk for babies and children. The risk can be assessed by application of clauses 4.3, 6.a and 6.b of EN 71-1. If the risk can not be mitigated than a warning should be added to the packaging.	B1	EU
	EN 71-2:2011 (GPSD)	Safety of toys - Part 2: Flammability For GPSD risk assessment for child care and child appealing products that are not toys.	A	EU
	EN 71-2:2011/A1:2014 (GPSD)	Safety of toys - Part 2: Flammability For GPSD risk assessment for child care and child appealing products that are not toys.	A	EU
	EN 71-3:2013 (GPSD)	Safety of toys - Part 3: Migration of certain elements For GPSD risk assessment for child care and child appealing products that are not toys.	B1	EU
	EN 71-3:2013/A1:2014 (GPSD)	Safety of toys - Part 3: Migration of certain elements For GPSD risk assessment for child care and child appealing products that are not toys.	B1	EU
	Risk Assessment - General Product Safety (GPSD) 2001/95/EC	General Product Safety Directive (GPSD) 2001/95/EC The manufacturer shall determine the applicable standards for the product, at national, European or the international level, and then identify the appropriate conformity assessment module according to the product classification. Finally, a full "Quality System" shall be implemented, which includes post-market surveillance, vigilance and traceability, a risk analysis report and a safety assessment report. See also our download section for a template of a declaration on risk analysis	A	EU
	SR 930.11 - Product Safety Law (PrSG) (2009)	Bundesgesetz über die Produktesicherheit (PrSG) Federal Law on Product Safety (Switzerland)	A	CH
	SR 930.111 - Product Safety Regulation (PrSV) (2010)	SR 930.111 Verordnung über die Produktesicherheit (PrSV)	A	CH
REACH Regulation (EC) 1907/2006				
	ED/21/2016 - REACH (EC) 1907/2006 - SVHC candidate list 20 June 2016 (169 substances)	The latest version of the Candidate List for substances of very high concern (SVHC) is available in our Knowledge Centre. A declaration template for ALL current relevant candidate substances can be found for download in our knowledge centre (click on more info)	B1	EU
	ED/79/2015 - REACH (EC) 1907/2006 - SVHC candidate list 17 December 2015 (168 substances)	The latest version of the Candidate List for substances of very high concern (SVHC) is available in our Knowledge Centre. A declaration template for ALL current relevant candidate substances can be found for download in ProductIP's knowledge centre.	B1	EU
	REACH (EC) 1907/2006 - Annex XVII plus amendments per 24 June 2016	Annex XVII of the REACH Regulation (EC) 1907/2006 Restrictions on the manufacture, placing on the market and use of certain Dangerous Substances, Preparations (Mixtures) and Articles. Plus the following amending Regulations: (EU) 276/2010 of 2010-04-01 (lamp oils, grill lighter fluids, a.o.) (EU) 207/2011 of 2011-03-02 (PFOS a.o.) (EU) 366/2011 of 2011-04-14 (acrylamide) (EU) 494/2011 of 2011-05-20 (cadmium) (EU) 109/2012 of 2012-02-09 (CMR) (EU) 412/2012 of 2012-05-15 (DMF) (EU) 835/2012 of 2012-09-18 (cadmium) (EU) 836/2012 of 2012-09-18 (lead) (EU) 847/2012 of 2012-09-19 (mercury - per 10 April 2014) (EU) 848/2012 of 2012-09-19 (phenylmercury - per 10 October 2017) (EU) 126/2013 of 2013-02-13 (EU) 1272/2013 of 2013-12-07 (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons PAH per 27 December 2015) (EU) 301/2014 of 2014-03-24 (Chromium VI update per 1 May 2015) (EU) 317/2014 of 2014-03-27 (Update of appendices 1, 2, 4 and 6 per 1 April 2014, 1 January 2015 and 1 April 2016) (EU) 474/2014 of 2014-05-08 (addition of 1,4-dichlorobenzene) (EU) 2015/326 of 2015-03-02 (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and phthalates) (EU) 2015/628 of 2015-04-22 (lead and its compounds - per 1 June 2016) (EU) 2015/1494 of 2015-09-04 (benzene) (EU) 2016/26 of 2016-01-14 (nonylphenol ethoxylates - NPE) (EU) 2016/217 of 2016-02-16 (cadmium in paints) (EU) 2016/1005 of 2016-06-22 (asbestos fibres, chrysotile) (EU) 2016/1017 of 2016-06-23 (inorganic ammonium salts) A template for a declaration can be found at MORE INFO.	B1	EU
Hazardous Substances not covered by REACH				
	Ban of products containing lead - BEK 856 - Denmark	BEK nr 856 af 05/09/2009 Bekendtgørelse om forbud mod import og salg af produkter, der indeholder bly (Danish legislation) Ordinance to ban the import and sale of products containing lead	B1	DK

	Norwegian Chemical Product Regulation - Ban on mercury	(Norwegian legislation). Regulations relating to restrictions on the manufacture, import, export, sale and use of chemicals and other products hazardous to health and the environment (Product Regulation). Forskrift om begrensning i bruk av helse- og miljøfarlige kjemikalier og andre produkter (produktforskriften). Chapter 2.3 Mercury and mercury compounds. It is prohibited to manufacture, import, export, make available on the market and use, substances or preparations or finished products that contain mercury or mercury compounds.	B1	NO
	PFOA Restrictions in consumer products (Norway)	Forbyr PFOA i norske forbrukerprodukter Norwegian legislation prohibits PFOA in consumer products. Effective from 1 June 2014. The limits: - PFOA in a liquid mixture: 0.001% (10 mg/kg) - PFOA in a solid product: 0.1% - PFOA in textiles: 1 ?g/m <sup>2</sup>	B1	NO
	SR 814.81 - Chemical Risk Reduction Ordinance	SR 814.81 - Chemical Risk Reduction Ordinance (ORRChem) Ordinance on the Reduction of Risks relating to the Use of Certain Particularly Dangerous Substances, Preparations and Articles. Legislation Switzerland.	B1	CH
	The Chemical Products (Handling, Import, and Export Prohibitions) Ordinance (1998:944) - mercury (§8 - 11)	The Swedish Chemical Products (Handling, Import and Export Prohibitions) Ordinance (1998:944) contains particular provision on the restriction of articles containing mercury. "Goods containing mercury may not be placed on the Swedish market or professionally exported from Sweden" NOTE: this requirement does not apply to products already covered by other European mercury restrictions, like RoHS, REACH etc. Swedish: Förordning (1998:944) om förbud m.m. i vissa fall i samband med hantering, införsel och utförsel av kemiska produkter - kvicksilver (§8 - 11)	B1	SE
	Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) Regulation (EC) 850/2004			
	Regulation (EC) 850/2004 - Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) - 2016	Regulation (EC) No 850/2004 of the European parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on persistent organic pollutants (POP) and amending Directive 79/117/EEC. Consolidated version of 31 March 2016 includes amending regulations: (EC) 1195/2006 of 18 July 2006; (EC) 172/2007 of 16 February 2007; (EC) 323/2007 of 26 March 2007; (EC) 219/2009 of 11 March 2009; (EC) 304/2009 of 14 April 2009; (EU) 756/2010 of 24 August 2010; (EU) 757/2010 of 24 August 2010; (EU) 519/2012 of 19 June 2012; (EU) 1342/2014 of 17 December 2014; (EU) 2015/2030 of 13 November 2015; (EU) 2016/293 of 1 March 2016; (EU) 2016/460 of 30 March 2016.	B1	EU
	Toys Safety Directive (TSD) 2009/48/EC			
	Packaging with play value	Packaging and plastic sheeting are regarded as (part of) a toy in case of: * Packaging with additional features adding play value * Packaging becomes a product intended to be played with by children under 14 years of age. * The outer box of board games commonly contains information on how to play the game. In this way the packaging becomes an integral part of the toy. * Plastic sheeting used as part of a toy (aprons, nurse badges, nurses caps, dolls diapers, glued on transparent plastic sheeting covering children's books. etc	A	EU
	Food Contact Materials (FCM)			
	Act 258/2000 – General hygienic requirements for items of common use	General legislation for food contact materials, Czech Republic: Act 258/2000 Part 1 – title II – part 5: Hygienic requirements for items of common use Czech: Zákon ? 258/2000 Sb. ?ÁST PRVNÍ - HLAVA II – díl 5: Hygienické požadavky na p?ední?y b?žného užívání	B1	CZ
	Belgian Decree of 11/05/1992 on food contact materials	(Belgian legislation). Royal Decree regarding materials and articles intended to come into contact with food. (Dutch) "Koninklijk besluit van 11 MEI 1992 betreffende materialen en voorwerpen bestemd om met voedingsmiddelen in aanraking te komen" (French) "Arrêté royal concernant les matériaux et objets destinés à entrer en contact avec les denrées alimentaires".	B1	BE
	Belgian Royal Decree of 11 May 1992 on food contact materials, Annex 4, paper and carton	Belgium: Royal Decree regarding materials and articles intended to come into contact with food, Annex 4, paper and carton. (Dutch) Koninklijk besluit van 11 MEI 1992 betreffende materialen en voorwerpen bestemd om met voedingsmiddelen in aanraking te komen, bijlage 4, papier en karton (French) Arrêté royal concernant les matériaux et objets destinés à entrer en contact avec les denrées alimentaires. ANNEXE 4. Papier et carton.	B1	BE
	Decree 127/2009 amending the Decree of the Ministry of Health no. 38/2001, on hygienic requirements on products intended for contact with food and dishes – part 1	Czech: Vyhláška 127/2009 kterou se m?ní vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotnictví ? 38/2001 Sb., o hygienických požadavcích na výrobky ur?ené pro styk s potravinami a pokrmý – ?ÁST PRVNÍ	B1	CZ
	Decree 186/2003 amending the Decree of the Ministry of Health no. 38/2001, on hygienic requirements on products intended for contact with food and dishes – part 1	Czech: Vyhláška 186/2003, kterou se m?ní vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotnictví ? 38/2001 Sb., o hygienických požadavcích na výrobky ur?ené pro styk s potravinami a pokrmý – ?ÁST PRVNÍ	B1	CZ
	Decree 207/2006 amending the Decree of the Ministry of Health no. 38/2001, on hygienic requirements on products intended for contact with food and dishes – part 1	Czech: Vyhláška 207/2006, kterou se m?ní vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotnictví ? 38/2001 Sb., o hygienických požadavcích na výrobky ur?ené pro styk s potravinami a pokrmý – ?ÁST PRVNÍ	B1	CZ
	Decree 271/2008 amending the Decree of the Ministry of Health no. 38/2001, on hygienic requirements on products intended for contact with food and dishes – part 1	Czech: Vyhláška 271/2008, kterou se m?ní vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotnictví ? 38/2001 Sb., o hygienických požadavcích na výrobky ur?ené pro styk s potravinami a pokrmý – ?ÁST PRVNÍ	B1	CZ
	Decree 38/2001 of the Ministry of Health on hygienic requirements for products intended for contact with food and dishes - part 2, title VI and annex 12: paper and cardboard	Decree 38/2001 of the Ministry of Health on hygienic requirements for products intended for contact with food and dishes - PART TWO - TITLE VI + Annex 12: paper and cardboard Note: national requirements on food contact material made of paper and cardboard. Detailed requirements and test methods are described in annex 12. Czech: Vyhláška 38/2001 Ministerstva zdravotnictví o hygienických požadavcích na výrobky ur?ené pro styk s potravinami a pokrmý - ?ÁST DRUHÁ - HLAVA VI – PAPI?RU, KARTONU A LEPENKY, p?ílohy ? 12.	B1	CZ
	Decree 38/2001 of the Ministry of Health on hygienic requirements for products intended for contact with food and dishes - part one: general requirements	38/2001: Decree of the Ministry of Health on hygienic requirements for products intended for contact with food and dishes Note: general requirements applicable to all food contact materials Czech: 38/2001 Vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotnictví o hygienických požadavcích na výrobky ur?ené pro styk s potravinami a pokrmý - ?ÁST PRVNÍ - OBECNÉ HYGIENICKÉ POŽADAVKY NA VÝROBKÝ UR?ENÉ PRO STYK S POTRAVINAMI A POKRMÝ	B1	CZ
	Denmark Order BEK 822 (26 June 2013) on food contact materials	Danish national general requirements on food contact materials Danish: BEK nr 822 af 26/06/2013; Bekendtgørelse om fødevarerkontaktmateriale	B1	DK
	Dutch Packaging and Food Utensils Regulations - Paper (Warenwet)	Dutch legislation on Food Contact Materials (FCM) on paper and paperboard. For more information, please take a look at Knowledge Centre.	B1	NL
	Estonia Regulation No. 93 on the requirements for materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs,	Estonian national requirements detailing the requirements for materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs, specific requirements for the groups of materials and articles and methods of analysis for official control Estonian: Põllumajandusministri 03. novembri 2013. a määrus nr 93 "Toiduga kokku puutuda lubatud materjalide ja esemete kohta esitatavad nõuded, nende gruppide kohta esitatavad erinõuded ning nimetatud materjalide ja esemete ohutuse katsetamise meetodid" (RT I, 07.11.2014, 2).	B1	EE
	Finland decision 268/1992 on on heavy metal release from materials that come in contact with food, 20 March 1992	National Finnish regulation on heavy metal release from materials coming into contact with food: applicable to all materials. Ceramics covered by Directive 84/500/EEC (amended by 2005/31/EC) are excluded; with the exception of ceramic products intended for children and parts of the ceramic products coming into direct contact with the mouth (for example the rim) Note: Products intended for children are required to comply with 1/10th of the limits stated in the decision Finnish: Kauppa- ja teollisuusministeriön päätös 268 elintarvikkeen kanssa kosketukseen joutuvista tarvikkeista liukenevista raskasmetalleista, 20 päivänä maaliskuuta 1992 Swedish: Handels- och industriministeriets beslut 268 om tungmetaller som övergår från föremånheter som kommer i beröring med livsmedel, 20 mars 1992	B1	FI

	Food Contact - Decree 2007-766 (France)	(Français) Décret 2007-766 portant application du code de la consommation en ce qui concerne les matériaux et les objets destinés à entrer en contact avec les denrées alimentaires. (English) Decree No. 2007-766 on the implementation of the Consumer Code regarding materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs. French implementation of (EC) 1935/2004	B1	FR
	Food Contact - Decree 2008-1469 (France)	(Français) Décret no 2008-1469 du 30 décembre 2008 modifiant le décret no 2007-766 du 10 mai 2007 portant application du code de la consommation en ce qui concerne les matériaux et les objets destinés à entrer en contact avec les denrées alimentaires. (English) Decree 2008-1469 of 30 December 2008 amending decree 2007-766 of 10 May 2007 on the implementation of the Consumer Code as regards the materials and articles intended to come into contact with foodstuffs.	B1	FR
	Food Contact - Decree of 28/06/1912 on Metals and Alloys, Paper and Board (France)	French legislation of 28 June 1912, which is the first law in Food Contact Materials in France. Applies to both Paper and Board (to measure colorants in food contact papers) and to Metals and Alloys.	B1	FR
	Food Contact - Decreto Ministeriale Materiali a contatto con alimenti (Italy) 19 marzo 2015	Consolidated version per 19 March 2015. Decreto Ministeriale 21 marzo 1973. Regolamento recante aggiornamento al decreto del Ministro della sanità' 21 marzo 1973 recante: "Disciplina igienica degli imballaggi, recipienti, utensili destinati a venire a contatto con le sostanze alimentari o con sostanze d'uso personale" limitatamente agli acciai inossidabili. (English) Hygiene control of packaging, containers and utensils intended to come into contact with foodstuffs or with substances for personal use.	B1	IT
	Food Contact - Ordinance SR 817.023.21 (Switzerland)	Swiss legislation; Ordinance on Materials and Articles in Contact with Food SR 817.023.21 Original title: Ordonnance du DFI sur les objets et matériaux German: Verordnung des EDI über Bedarfsgegenstände	B1	CH
	Foodcontact - DGCCRF Information No. 2004-64	Metal plating or other metallic coating - Foodcontact: DGCCRF Note No. 2004-64 DGCCRF INFORMATION NOTICE 2004 / 64 ON MATERIALS IN CONTACT WITH FOODSTUFFS Information Notice No.2004-64 Subject: materials in contact with foodstuffs Summary: The purpose of this information notice is to specify the rules used to check and control the suitability of many materials to be in contact with foodstuffs It repeals and replaces the information notice No. 2000-155 of 26th October 2000.	B1	FR
	French Decree 2012-1442 Bisphenol A (BPA)	(French) LOI 2012-1442 du 24 décembre 2012 visant à la suspension de la fabrication, de l'importation, de l'exportation et de la mise sur le marché de tout conditionnement à vocation alimentaire contenant du bisphénol A. (English unofficial) Act 2012-1442 of 24 December 2012 to prohibit the manufacture, import, export and placing on the market of any packaging for food purposes containing bisphenol A (BPA)	B1	FR
	Law on amendment and supplement of the Law on Foodstuffs (State Gazette No 31 of 2006, last amend No.8 of 2011)	????? ?? ?????????? ?? ?????? ?? ??????? (??, ??, 31 ?? 2006 ?. ????. ???, ??, ??,41 ?? 2 ??? 2009?). Note: implementation of EC regulation 1935/2004 into Bulgarian national law	B1	BG
	LFGB §30 - Health protection	Lebensmittel-, Bedarfsgegenstände- und Futtermittelgesetzbuch (Lebensmittel- und Futtermittelgesetzbuch - LFGB) §30 - Verbote zum Schutz der Gesundheit. (German legislation) Food, Commodities and Feeding stuff Law. §30 - Prohibitions to protect the health. This paragraph refers to the requirements that are necessary for a safe and healthy product. Its main purpose is to secure that materials that come into contact with human beings do not pose a risk or a hazard.	B1	DE
	LFGB §31 - Food contact materials	Lebensmittel-, Bedarfsgegenstände- und Futtermittelgesetzbuch (Lebensmittel- und Futtermittelgesetzbuch - LFGB) § 31 Übergang von Stoffen auf Lebensmittel (German legislation) Food, Commodities and Feeding stuff Law. § 31 Migration of substances to foods (food contact materials)	B1	DE
	LMSVG - Lebensmittelsicherheits- und Verbraucherschutzgesetz	"Lebensmittelsicherheits- und Verbraucherschutzgesetz" (LMSVG), BGBl. I Nr. 13/2006, which also implements and incorporates the relevant EC-Regulations (e.g. 1935/2004/EC, 882/2004/EC, 1895/2005/EC)	B1	AT
	Norway regulation of 21 December 1993 (last amended 13 November 2014) No 1381 on materials and articles to come into contact with foodstuffs - Chapter VIa Glass, Metals and non-ceramic materials without a coating of .....	NO: Forskrift om materialer og gjenstander i kontakt med næringsmidler (matkontaktforskriften), Kapittel VIa. Metaller i andre materialer enn keramikk. Glass, metals and non-ceramic material in contact with food will not migrate Pb, Cd in amounts exceeding the values set out in Annex IV of the legislation if tested in accordance with the test method in § 26 (Annex V) NOTE: plastic materials need to comply with the requirements set in EU regulation 10/2011 (plastic food contact materials)	B1	NO
	Regulation (EC) 1935/2004 Food Contact Materials (FCM) - Article 3 General requirements	General EU requirements on Food Contact Materials (FCM); these are materials that are intended or foreseeable to come into contact with food.	B1	EU
	Regulation (EC) 1935/2004 Foodcontact (FCM) - Article 16 Declaration of compliance	Generic declarations regarding - Regulation (EC) 1935/2004 of 27 October 2004 on materials and articles intended to come into contact with food and repealing Directives 80/590/EEC and 89/109/EEC	B1	EU
	Regulation (EC) 2023/2006 GMP - Foodcontact	Commission Regulation (EC) No 2023/2006 of 22 December 2006 on good manufacturing practice for materials and articles intended to come into contact with food (Text with EEA relevance)	B1	EU
	Resolution ResAP AP(2002)1			

**ANNEX 16: REPORT ON THE ONLINE PUBLIC CONSULTATION****Executive summary**

The public consultation has highlighted a strong consensus among business and citizens around the main pillars in terms of content of the Single digital gateway, notably:

- The need for online information about rules and procedures in other EU countries: 93% of business respondents and of citizens 92% respondents consider it very important or important;
- Access to e-procedures: 94% of business respondents and 92 % of citizens respondents consider it very important or important;
- Access to services providing assistance upon request: 88% of business respondents and 87% of citizen respondents consider it very important or important.

***Online information on applicable EU and national rules***

Businesses and citizens expressed very similar concerns with regards to online information on applicable EU and national rules. Most respondents in both categories would use the internet as the first source of information on these issues (74% of businesses and 80% of citizens). Most of them have tried to find such information online (78% and 70% respectively) but state that it was difficult (80% and 60.2% respectively). The main difficulties for both groups are the lack of findability (48% and 43% respectively), the quality of the information (40% in both cases) and the language in which the information was presented (24% and 13% respectively).

This is reflected in the opinions of respondents concerning quality criteria for online information. For both categories, the top three elements are that information should be findable (82% and 72% respectively), relevant, practical and up-to-date (77% and 69% respectively) and available in another EU language (72% and 64% respectively). Responding businesses (91%) and of responding citizens (87%) can understand information in a different EU language, the most common one being English (88% and 78% respectively), followed by French and German.

Being up-to-date, being run by an official authority and containing contact details to be considered trustworthy re considered the three most important indicators of trustworthiness for a website by both groups of respondents.

When it comes to improving information provision specifically for cross-border users respondents consider to a great extent that it should be mandatory for authorities to provide minimum information for citizens to carry out cross-border activities (80% and 80% respectively) and that this information should be provided in at least one other EU language (77% and 72% respectively). The most effective means to prevent information gaps is for national authorities in each EU country to provide all (77% of business and 63% of citizens consider it very effective) or at least minimum information necessary for cross-border users (68% of businesses consider it very effective) and in at least one other language (72% and 63% of businesses and citizens respectively consider it very effective). Most public authorities consider that minimum information is already being provided (50%). Most of them consider it challenging but feasible to provide all information needed for cross-border activities (50%), information in a centralised EU database (48%) and information in at least one other EU language challenging but feasible.

As far as existing national sources of information for rules and procedures applying to products and services are concerned, a majority of businesses (81%) would be in favour of merging the contact points for goods and services. This could be a realistic option for respondent public authorities, 70% of which consider it desirable or very desirable, despite considering this integration difficult or somewhat difficult (28% and 48% respectively).

### ***Online procedures to comply with national rules***

About half of responding businesses and citizens have tried carrying out an e-procedure in another EU/EEA country. The main problems faced by businesses are the use of too much jargon, the lack of full transactionality and the need to translate or certify documents. For citizens the main problems are the lack of full transactionality, the lack of findability of the procedure and problems with relating to the languages available. Issues relating to languages and documents provision were identified as the most urgent to address by both groups of respondents.

The most important quality elements of e-procedures for both groups are the online transactionality of procedures (69% of businesses and 72% of citizens), the ease of navigation and presence of step-by-step guidance (80% and 72% respectively), the possibility to carry out the procedure in at least another EU language (65% and 67% respectively) and the presence of a helpdesk (51% and 63% respectively).

The three priority procedures to be put online for businesses are 1) registration of business activity, 2) VAT registration and 3) VAT return, while for citizens they are 1) requesting or renewing an ID or passport, 2) requesting the recognition of professional qualifications and 3) registering a change of address.

When asked which actions would help in improving the provision of e-procedures, respondents agree that it should be mandatory to make procedures available in at least another EU language (78% of businesses, 73% of citizens and 55% of public authorities) and that at least the most important (67%, 69% and 70% respectively) or any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future European law (69%, 67% and 48% respectively) should mandatorily be fully online.

Making the availability of at least one foreign language (77% and 67% respectively) the full transactionality of any relevant procedure required under future EU law (69% of citizens) or at least the most important procedures (65% of businesses) mandatory are considering as the most effective measures in encouraging the transition to e-procedures. Half of the responding public authorities consider these actions as challenging but feasible, the other half being split between those that consider that such procedures are already in place and those that consider them unfeasible or unnecessary.

Most public authorities see their transition to e-government as neutral (50%) or positive (30%). They are evenly split among those that consider making more procedures available online, and in that case they would be fully transactional in 83% of cases and they would be in place over the coming two years, and those that do not.

### *Services for personalised assistance and advice*

Respondents were asked about the most important quality criteria for personalised assistance services and flagged that replies should be quick (70% of businesses and 63% of citizens), answer the specific question/query (75% and 79% respectively), be reliable and legally sound (69% and 60% respectively), clear, simple and in non-legalistic language (64% of businesses), services should be able to receive and process queries in a foreign language (68% and 58% respectively) and users should be able to access the service through different channels (35% of citizens).

### *Feedback mechanism*

A majority of citizens (76%) and businesses (55%) would be willing to give feedback on their experience with the Single Market, so as to orient policy-making.

### **Introduction**

The single digital gateway intends to provide online "everything that entrepreneurs and citizens need" to do business cross-border and/or to travel to, buy from, work, study or reside in another country in the EU Single Market. The single digital gateway would be based on existing portals, contact points and networks, with the aim to expand, improve and better link them up and to enable users to complete the most frequently used national procedures fully on-line. Agreed quality criteria would apply to all services covered by the single digital gateway.

The Commission launched a public consultation on the single digital gateway in order to gather stakeholders' input for the impact assessment of the initiative.

Stakeholders' responses to this survey will help the Commission to better understand their needs and expectations. In particular the survey focused on respondents' views with regards the availability and quality of:

- **Information on applicable EU and national rules**, on issues such as how to register as a resident in another EU country, have your qualifications recognised, obtain a permit to open a shop, register your business activity, selling or manufacturing your products abroad, rights when shopping abroad, how to register your employees in social security schemes of another EU country or register for VAT;
- **Procedures to comply with national rules** (often via national e-government portals), e.g. national procedures for registering as a resident, registering with employment services, registering for VAT and tax payments, registering with social security services, and on the EU level the European professional card procedure;
- **Services for personalised assistance and advice** when online information is not enough, e.g. an authority or (semi) private online help centre or association citizens and businesses can contact when facing problems with rules and procedures, also including problem solving services.

The consultation ran from 26 July to 28 November 2016. The questionnaire was published in 24 languages. The consultation was publicised on the Commission's websites, social media channels as well as in stakeholder meetings. Responses have been published except where respondents asked for confidentiality.

The questionnaire was subdivided into 3 parts targeted to three main audiences: (1) business, self-employed and business representative organizations, (2) citizens, citizens/consumers representative organisations and academics and (3) public authorities. Respondents indicated to which category they belong. While most questions were common to all three parts of the questionnaire, each part also contained questions specifically targeted to the above respondent groups. For a more detailed analysis of respondent perspectives, the respondent groups are broken down into further categories (see Overview of Respondents section).

In total 367 responses were received. The numbers and percentages used to describe the distribution of the responses to the public consultation derive from the answers provided under the EU-Survey tool. In order to avoid that too many respondents would abandon the survey before submitting it due to the number of questions asked, replies to questions were sometimes optional. Respondents often chose not to answer all questions.

### **Overview of respondents**

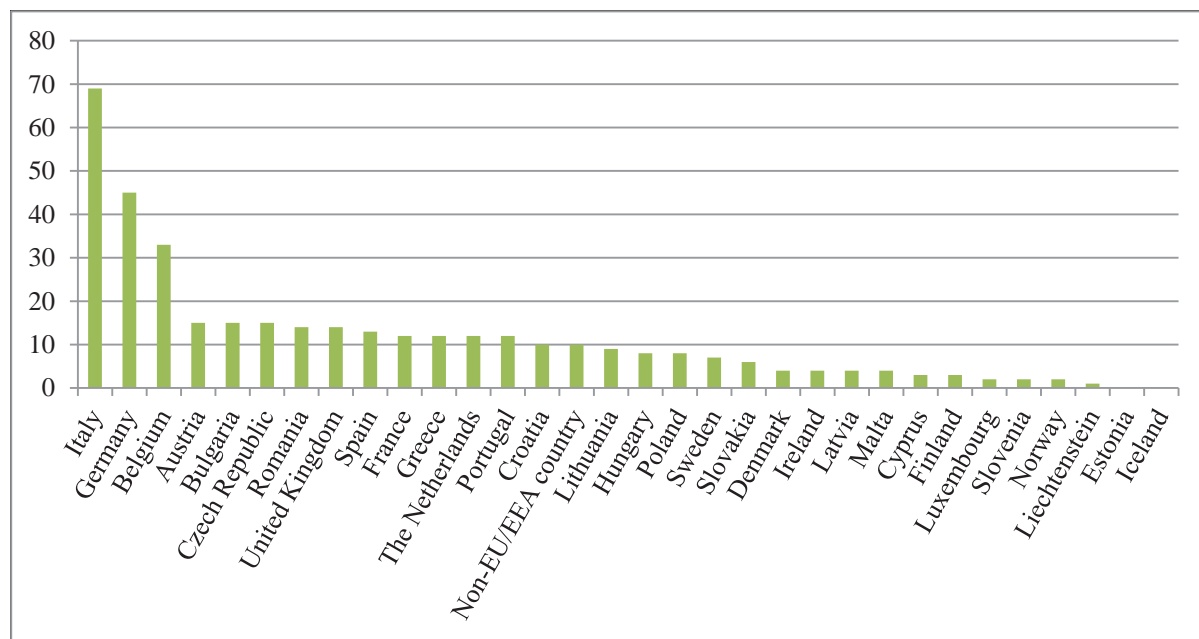
The consultation sought the views of interested parties, hence the sample of respondents cannot be considered to be statistically representative. All percentages have been rounded up.

Views were sought from citizens, citizen/consumer associations, businesses, self-employed and business associations, academics and public authorities. They are presented grouped in 3 categories: (1) business, self-employed and business representative organizations, (2) citizens, citizens/consumers representative organisations and academics and (3) public authorities.

The following overview of respondents details the Commission's classification of all 367 responses to the consultation.

*Table 16.1: Distribution of respondents*

Type of respondent	N° of answers	% of answers
Self-employed	33	9%
Company	94	26%
Of which:		
– SMEs	87	93% of respondent companies
– Firms with more than 250 employees	7	7% of respondent companies
Business representative organisation	35	10%
<b>Total for business category</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>45%</b>
Private individual	147	40%
Organisation representing citizens / consumers	11	3%
Academic / research institution	8	2%
<b>Total for citizens</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>45%</b>
Public authority (including government)	39	10%
<b>Total for Public authority (including government)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF REPLIES</b>	<b>367</b>	

**Figure 16.1: Geographical distribution of respondents**

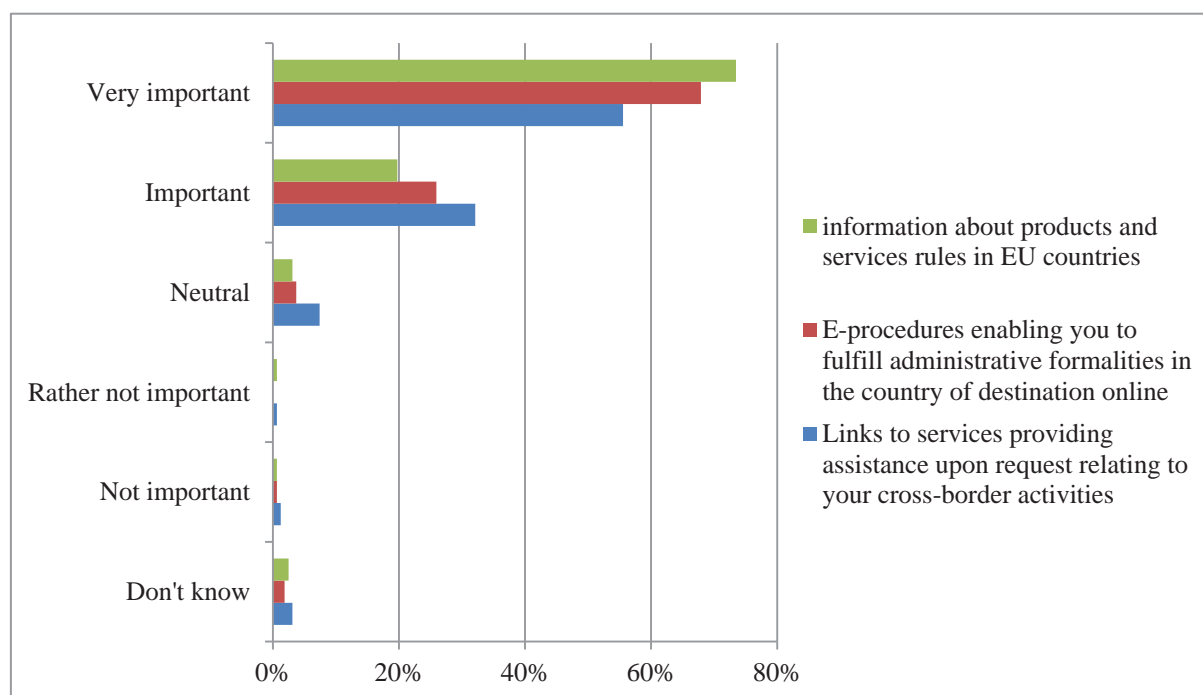
### **Results of the questionnaire for businesses, self-employed and business representative organizations**

Among businesses participating in the consultation, most are micro enterprises with 1-9 employees (43%), followed by SMEs with 10-49 employees (18%) and SMES with 50-249 employees (7%). Most respondents are active in the services sector (50%) or both in the services and goods sector (32%). A majority of respondents are active in more than one European country (48%) or are active in one EU country– but would like to enter other EU markets (35%).

A strong majority of respondents considers very important or important to have access online to information about products and services rules in other EU countries (73% and 20% respectively), e-procedures (68% and 26% respectively) and services providing assistance upon request (56% and 32% respectively) in relation to their cross-border activities.



**Figure 16.2: Analysis of needs for businesses: How important would it be for you to have online access to the following services?**



***Access to information about products and services rules in other EU countries:***

About 78% of business respondents have tried finding which rules they should be following to comply with national requirements in another EU country and the majority of them thought it was difficult (80%).

The main reasons given to justify why finding information was considered difficult were that it was hard to find the right website (48%), that information was hard to understand, inaccurate, or outdated (40%) and that information was in a language the user could not understand (24%). Some respondents also suggested further reasons, such as the ambiguity in the information presented on different official websites, the need for checklists guiding the user through all the steps they should take to find the relevant information for their case, the lack of specialised human resources and the need to better know the national regulatory context in order to put the information into context.

A large majority of respondents are likely to look for information on the internet (74%) while most of the remaining respondents would directly go to a source they know and trust either online or offline (24%).

Over 91% of the respondents can understand information in a language that is not their mother tongue. 88% of respondents can understand information in English, followed by French (28%) and German (16%). When information is found in a language that users cannot understand, more than half of respondents say they use free online translation services, even if the outcome is not perfectly accurate (56%). The second preferred technique is to ask someone they know to help with the translation (23%). Some respondents declared that they would keep looking for information from other sources.

When asked about the most important elements to define the quality of the information found online, respondents answered that the information they are looking for should be quickly findable, information should be relevant, practical, up to date and is written from their point of view and information should be available in English or another commonly used language.

**Table 16.2: Most important quality requirements for online information**

Quality element	Ratio
I can find the information I need quickly	82%
Information is relevant, practical, up to date and is written from my point of view	77%
Information is available in English or another commonly used language	72%
I can get in touch with someone (by phone, email, chat) or there is a list of contact details for national authorities	56%
I can easily find out who owns the website, what it's for and who it's aimed at	19%
I can send feedback or leave reviews or ratings that are published on the website	9%
Other	2%
Don't know	2%
No Answer	0%

Among the elements that make a website trustworthy, it being up to date and being an official government or authority website qualify as the most important elements, as detailed in Table 16.3.

**Table 16.3: What makes a website trustworthy?**

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Rather not important	Not important	Don't know	No answer
<b>Up to date</b>	70%	25%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%
<b>Official government or authority website</b>	57%	31%	9%	1%	1%	2%	0%
<b>Contact details</b>	40%	40%	16%	2%	1%	2%	0%
<b>Website of a private organisation I know and trust</b>	23%	53%	18%	3%	2%	1%	0%
<b>Quality certification (e.g. ISO 9001, Trusted Shops, s@fer-shopping, Confianza Online, Buy with Confidence)</b>	15%	26%	31%	11%	12%	6%	0%
<b>User reviews</b>	12%	35%	32%	14%	6%	2%	0%
<b>Other</b>	5%	2%	6%	3.3%	1%	27%	1%

Extract from the open text replies:

"Built well by today's standards as this demonstrates how seriously the publishing organization takes their website. For example, if a website isn't responsive (meaning that it's fully accessible on different screen sizes and if the user changes the font size because of visual impairments and the like), it seems safe to assume that the organization find it acceptable not to take into account a significant percentage of the population. This in turn suggests that the website is just a "nice to have" rather than the main point of contact and will always be treated second class when it comes to updates and the like." - The Waving Cat GmbH

A consistent majority of business respondents in in favour of integrating existing national portals and contact points for goods and services in one national portal, with 46.3% of them considering it very positively and 35% positively. Only 2% see it negatively or very negatively.

Extract from the open text replies:

Increasingly, entrepreneurs market goods with a service component (e.g. for maintenance), or goods and services are related in other ways. For this reason, some business stakeholders have recently called for the creation of online national business portals covering both goods AND services. – Anonymous respondent

When it comes to improving information for cross-border users, respondents consider to a great extent that authorities in each EU country should be obliged to provide a minimum amount of information (80%) or all information (68%) for businesses to help them carry out cross-border activities and that information should be provided in at least another EU language (77%). Table 16.4 below details how these measures are considered by respondents:

**Table 16.4: How to prevent gaps in online information**

	Should be mandatory	Should be voluntary (guidance)	Not necessary	No opinion
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide a minimum amount of information for businesses to help them carry out cross-border activities.</b>	80%	13%	2%	4%
<b>Information should be provided in at least one other language.</b>	77%	20%	2%	1%
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide all the information necessary for businesses to engage in cross-border business or private activities.</b>	68%	27%	2%	2%
<b>For certain important areas, information on national rules should be collected and made available in a centralised EU database instead of on national websites.</b>	63%	26%	5%	6%
<b>EU countries / national public authorities should provide personal assistance to answer the specific questions from businesses that are not covered by the information online.</b>	43%	48 %	7%	2%

Most respondents agree that the most effective ways of preventing information gaps is for national authorities in each EU country to provide all the information necessary for businesses (77%) or at least minimum information (68%) and in at least one other language (72%). Table 16.5 below provides further details.

*Table 16.5: Most effective actions to prevent gaps in online information*

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Ineffective	Unnecessary	Do not know
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide all the information necessary for businesses to engage in cross-border business or private activities.</b>	77%	18%	2%	1%	2%
<b>Information should be provided in at least one other language.</b>	72%	23%	2%	1%	1%
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide a minimum amount of information for businesses to help them carry out cross-border activities.</b>	68%	25%	4%	1%	2%
<b>For certain important areas, information on national rules should be collected and made available in a centralised EU database instead of on national websites.</b>	66%	23%	4%	3%	4%
<b>EU countries / national public authorities should provide personal assistance to answer the specific questions from businesses that are not covered by the information online.</b>	52%	38%	3%	4%	4%

### *Cross-border online procedures*

Most respondents have never completed an e-procedure in another EU country (52%). Those who tried faced a variety of issues, the most important of them being that there was too much legal or administrative jargon (14%), there were some offline steps (14%) and documents needed to be translated or certified (13%). In particular, issues relating to languages, notably the explanation of the procedure being available only in the national language (69%), online forms being in national language(s) only (57%) and inexistent help-desk or help-desk only available in the national language(s) (38%) and to documents, notably required documents not existing in the country of origin (29%) and required certified translation for foreign documents (24%).

Businesses considered easy navigation with step-by-step guidance (80%), full cross-border transactionality (69%) the possibility to carry out the procedure in one's own language (65.43%) and the availability of a helpdesk (51%) as the most important quality aspects of online procedures.

The suggested procedures were ranked in terms of priority by respondents in Table 16.6.

*Table 16.6: Procedures that should be priority for access online for cross-border users*

	<b>High priority</b>	<b>Medium priority</b>	<b>Low priority</b>	<b>No priority</b>
<b>Registration of business activity</b>	67%	25%	3%	6%
<b>VAT registration</b>	65%	23%	6%	6%
<b>VAT returns</b>	62%	25%	6%	7%
<b>Recognition of qualification</b>	59%	26%	6%	8%
<b>Corporate/business tax declaration</b>	55%	30%	9%	6%
<b>Registration with national insurance scheme as employer</b>	54%	30%	10%	6%
<b>Notification of cessation of activity subject to VAT</b>	49%	35%	8%	8%
<b>Payment of social contributions for employees and payroll withholding tax</b>	48%	36%	9%	7%
<b>Registration for income tax</b>	47%	38%	10%	5%
<b>Applying for public procurement</b>	47%	31%	10%	12%
<b>Registration of employees with pension schemes</b>	44%	37%	12%	7%
<b>Notifications related to data protection</b>	39%	36%	15%	10%
<b>Reporting end of contract of employee</b>	33%	44%	15%	9%
<b>Apply for building planning permits</b>	27%	38%	23%	12%
<b>Apply for environmental permits</b>	27%	41%	22%	11%

*Extract from the open text replies:*

"If it's required to do business, it needs to be doable 100% online." - The Waving Cat GmbH

When considering possible actions aiming at improving the provision of online procedures, most business respondents indicated that all of them should be mandatory, with the provision of procedures in at least one foreign language, the full transactionality of any procedure relevant for cross-border users, and the provision of at least the most important procedures online topping the ranking (see Table 16.7).

*Table 16.7: How to improve the provision of e-procedures*

	Should be mandatory	Should be voluntary (guidance)	Not necessary	No opinion
<b>Procedures should be available in at least one other foreign language.</b>	78%	17%	1%	4%
<b>Any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online. Offline procedures may exist in parallel.</b>	69%	25%	0%	7%
<b>A limited number of the most important procedures for cross-border users should be provided fully online.</b>	67%	23%	4%	6%
<b>All procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online.</b>	60%	31%	2%	6%

All proposed actions for promoting the switch from paper based to electronic procedures are mostly considered to be very effective or somewhat effective, with a preference for the provision of procedures in at least one foreign language, the provision of at least the most important procedures online and the full transactionality of any procedure relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws, as shown in Table 16.8.

*Table 16.8: Most effective ways of improving the provision of e-procedures*

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Ineffective	Unnecessary	Do not know
<b>Procedures should be available in at least one other foreign language.</b>	77%	16%	0%	1%	6%
<b>Any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online. Offline procedures may exist in parallel.</b>	65%	25%	2%	1%	6%
<b>All procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online.</b>	65%	25%	1%	2%	6%
<b>A limited number of the most important procedures for cross-border users should be provided fully online</b>	57%	31%	5%	1%	6%

About 20% of respondents can recommend a well-functioning site for any type of online information and business procedures. Among the most frequently referred to websites are: gov.uk, e-estonia.com, and bmf.gv.at.

### *Assistance services*

When asked about online personalised assistance services, most respondents declare that the 5 most important quality criteria are 1) Quick reply, 2) Reply answers my specific question / query, 3) Reply is reliable and legally sound, 4) Reply is in clear, simple, non-legalistic language, 5) I can use English or another common second language, and will also receive the reply in this language.

Only 10% of respondents can recommend a well-functioning site for online personalised assistance and advice, including [advantageaustria.org](http://advantageaustria.org) and [gov.uk](http://gov.uk).

*Extract from the open text replies:*

"There should be a centralised customer care service where to report platforms and services that are not delivering up to standards. There should be an effective enforcement system to protect the citizens and companies from negligence." Anonymous company, Malta

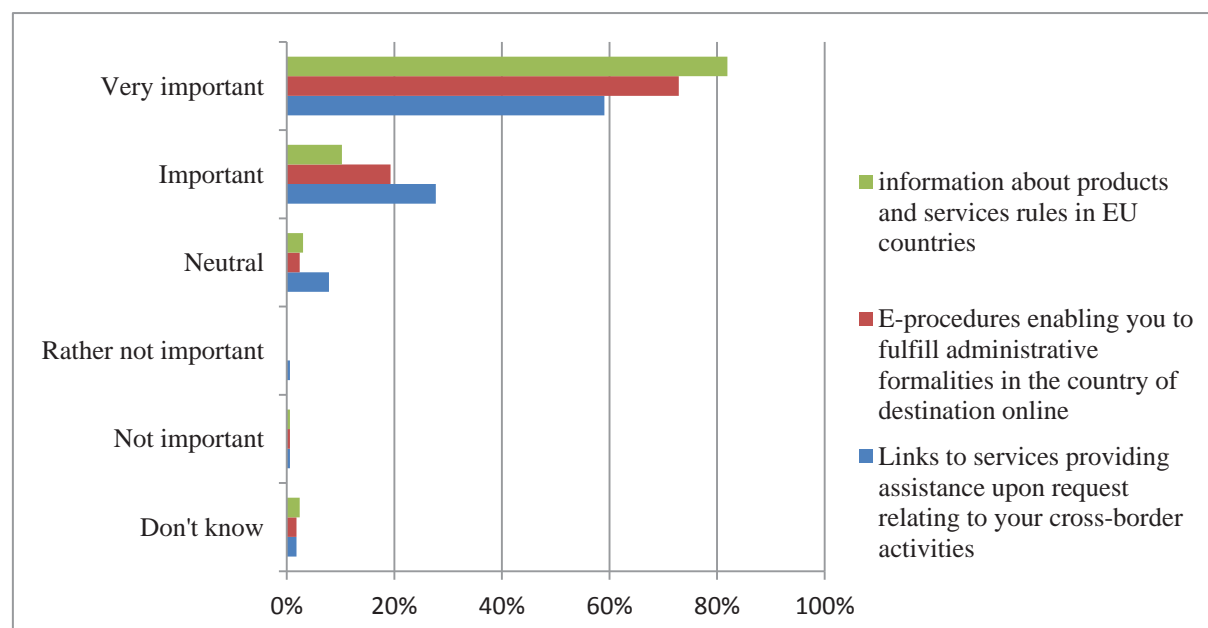
**Feedback mechanism**

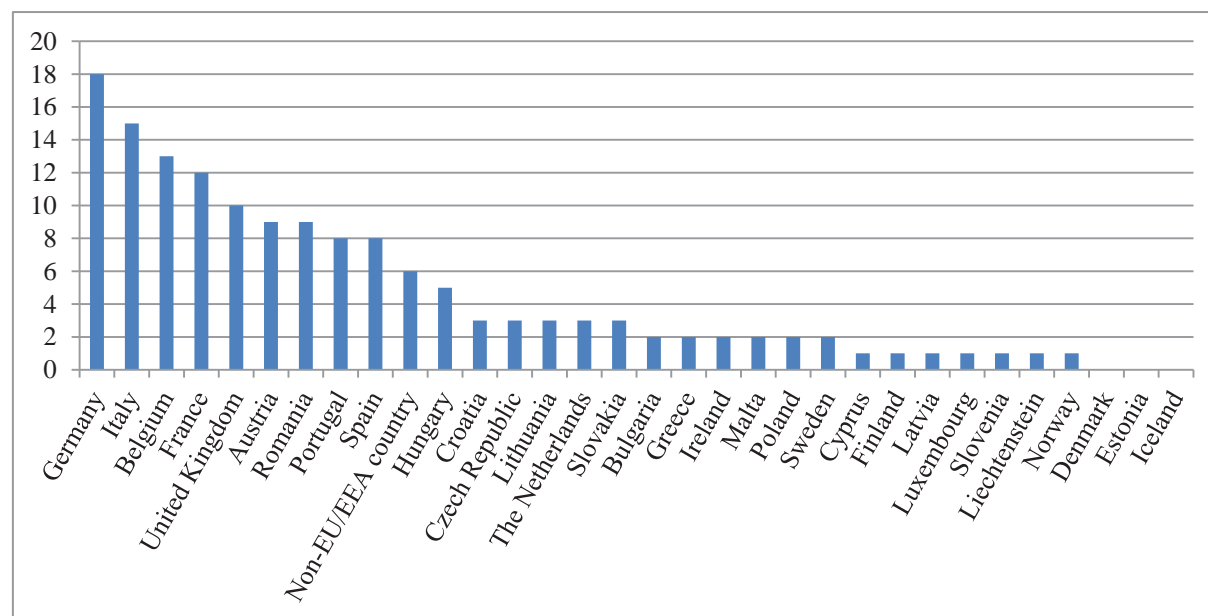
Most respondents (55%) would be willing to give feedback on their experience with the Single Market, so as to draw the attention of policy-makers to recurrent problems.

**Results of the questionnaire for citizens, citizen or consumer representative organisations and academics**

Among citizens, citizens or consumer associations and academics participating in the consultation, a strong majority of respondents considers very important or important to have access online to information about rules and procedures in other EU countries (82% and 10% respectively), e-procedures (73% and 19% respectively) and services providing assistance upon request (59% and 28%) in relation to their cross-border activities.

**Figure 16.3: Analysis of needs for citizens: How important would it be for you to have online access to the following services?**



**Figure 16.4: Geographical distribution of respondents**

Citizens constitute 89% of the respondents in this category, followed by organisations representing citizens/consumers (7%) and academic/research institutions (5%). The geographical distribution of respondents is varied, with respondents from almost all EU/EEA countries, as shown in the figure above.

#### ***Access to information about rules in other EU countries:***

Almost 70% of respondents in this category have tried finding which rules they should be following to comply with national requirements when moving to another EU country and most of them thought it was difficult or somewhat difficult (27% and 59% respectively). The main reasons given to justify why finding information was considered difficult are that it was hard to find the right website (43%) and that information was hard to understand, inaccurate, or outdated (40%), followed by the fact that information was in a language the user could not understand (13%). Some respondents commented that it was hard to find the right information when planning to move abroad, for instance when it comes to how their pensions will be taxed, others highlighted that it is not always possible to know whether the information on a website is up to date and reliable. Respondents declared having looked for information concerning how to register their legal partnerships in another EU country, information about taxation, health insurance, social security, but also elements linked to their professional activity abroad, such as how to insure a company vehicle in a different EU country.

Over 80% of respondents are likely to look for information on the internet while most of the remaining respondents would directly go to a source they know and trust either online or offline (16%).

Over 87% of the respondents can understand information in a language that is not their mother tongue. 78% of respondents can understand information in English, followed by French (26%) and German (14%). When information is found in a language that users cannot understand, more than half of respondents say they use free online translation services, even if the outcome is not perfectly accurate (69%). The second preferred technique is to ask someone they know to help with the translation (12%). Respondents also declared contacting the competent authority in the hopes of finding someone who can speak another language.



When asked about the most important elements to define the quality of the information found online, respondents answered that information should be quickly findable (72%), information should be relevant, practical up to date and written from the users' point of view (69%), it should be available in English or another commonly used language (64%) and it should be possible to get in touch with someone or there should be a list of contact details for national authorities (53%).

*Extract from the open text replies:*

"A website is trustworthy when it offers the possibility to understand and get familiarized with the issue and quickly identify the right scheme / administrators." Anonymous citizen, Sweden

The ranking of the elements that make a website trustworthy is presented in Table 16.9.

*Table 16.9: What makes a website trustworthy?*

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Rather not important	Not important	Don't know	No answer
<b>Up to date</b>	78 %	16%	4%	0%	0%	1%	0%
<b>Official government or authority website</b>	66%	27%	5%	0%	1%	1%	0%
<b>Contact details</b>	45%	31%	16%	5%	2%	1%	0%
<b>Website of a private organisation I know and trust</b>	21%	46%	23%	4%	4%	2%	0%
<b>Quality certification (e.g. ISO 9001, Trusted Shops, s@fer-shopping, Confianza Online, Buy with Confidence)</b>	20%	30%	25%	11%	8%	5%	0%
<b>User reviews</b>	13%	34%	35%	13%	4%	1%	0%
<b>Other</b>	4%	4%	4%	1%	1%	30%	57%

When it comes to improving information for cross-border users, respondents consider to a great extent that the authorities should mandatorily provide minimum information for citizens to carry out cross-border activities (81%) and that that information should be provided in at least another EU language (72%). Table 16.10 below details how each proposed measure is considered by respondents.

**Table 16.10: How to prevent gaps in online information**

	<b>Should be mandatory</b>	<b>Should be voluntary (guidance)</b>	<b>Not necessary</b>	<b>No opinion</b>	<b>No Answer</b>
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide a minimum amount of information for citizens to help them carry out cross-border activities.</b>	81%	9%	3%	4%	4%
<b>Information should be provided in at least one other language.</b>	72%	20%	2%	2%	4%
<b>For certain important areas, information on national rules should be collected and made available in a centralised EU database instead of on national websites.</b>	67%	21%	5%	4%	3%
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide all the information necessary for citizens to engage in cross-border business or private activities.</b>	61%	34%	1%	1%	3%
<b>EU countries / national public authorities should provide personal assistance to answer the specific questions from citizens that are not covered by the information online.</b>	55%	33%	3%	6%	4%

Providing information in at least another EU language and providing all information necessary to citizens to engage in cross-border business or private activities are considered as the most effective approaches in reducing the time and costs for citizens to find information online.

Table 16.11: Most effective actions to prevent gaps in online information

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Ineffective	Unnecessary	Do not know	No answer
<b>Information should be provided in at least one other language.</b>	63%	26%	1%	1%	4%	4%
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide all the information necessary for citizens to engage in cross-border business or private activities.</b>	63%	26%	2%	2%	4%	4%
<b>For certain important areas, information on national rules should be collected and made available in a centralised EU database instead of on national websites.</b>	62%	22%	2%	4%	4%	6%
<b>Authorities in each EU country should provide a minimum amount of information for citizens to help them carry out cross-border activities.</b>	58%	29%	4%	2%	4%	4%
<b>EU countries / national public authorities should provide personal assistance to answer the specific questions from citizens that are not covered by the information online.</b>	57%	27%	1%	2%	8%	5%

***Cross-border e-procedures:***

Respondents in this category are almost equally split between those who have (48%) and those who have never completed (52%) an e-procedure in another EU country. Most of those who tried either found it difficult (49%) or had to give up (25%). They faced a variety of issues, the most important of them being that there were some offline steps (21%), It was not possible to do it online (20%) and users could not find out where to do it online (16%). Also issues relating to languages, notably the fact that documents needed to be translated and / or certified (16%), and procedures being in a language the user didn't understand. (11%) were signalled as being important.

***Extract from the open text replies:***

"Often online portals are built for the residents of that country and some of the initial requirements cannot be met by people not living in the country. This is a form of discrimination, because it will not be possible for the non-resident to complete the procedure and obtain what they need. " - M.F., Slovakia.

When asked about the aspects of online procedures that citizens find the most problematic and the most urgent to address, respondents identified the presence of forms in national language(s) only (63%), the need for certified translations of foreign documents (45%), the presence of assistance services only in the national language(s) (38%) and the need to certify foreign documents (37.95%) as the most pressing issues, as shown in Table 16.12.

**Table 16.12: Problematic aspects of e-procedures that should be addressed as a priority**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Ratio</b>
Online forms in national language(s) only	63%
Foreign supporting documents require certified translations	45%
Personalised assistance service does not exist or exists only in national language(s)	38%
Foreign supporting documents need to be certified	38%
The documents required do not exist in my country	35%
Online forms where it's not possible to enter non-national addresses and phone numbers	33%
Means of payment only accessible to national users	25%
Foreign e-signature and e-authentication means are not accepted	23%
No Answer	0%

Respondents in the citizens' category considered full online transactionality (72%), the easy navigation with step-by-step guidance (72%), the possibility to use a known language (67%) and the availability of a helpdesk in case of questions or problems (63%) as the most important quality aspects of online procedures.

The suggested procedures were ranked in terms of priority by respondents in the following way:

**Table 16.13: Procedures that should be prioritised for cross-border online access**

	High	Medium	Low	No priority	Do not know
<b>Requesting / renewing ID card or passport</b>	76%	17%	3%	1%	2%
<b>Request recognition of professional qualifications from a foreign EU national</b>	73%	20%	4%	0%	3%
<b>Registering a change of address</b>	72%	23%	1%	1%	2%
<b>Request recognition of diploma from a foreign EU national</b>	72%	20%	5%	1%	3%
<b>Request a birth certificate</b>	70%	23%	2%	2%	4%
<b>Enrol in university</b>	69%	19%	5%	3%	4%
<b>Declaring income taxes</b>	69%	19%	4%	1%	7%
<b>Register for social security benefits</b>	69%	19%	5%	1%	5%
<b>Apply for a criminal record certificate</b>	64%	22%	7%	2%	4%
<b>Apply for a study grant</b>	63%	27%	3%	4%	4%
<b>Register for child allowances</b>	60%	23%	7%	4%	7%
<b>Register for a pension</b>	60%	27%	5%	4%	5%
<b>Register a car</b>	57%	31%	4%	4%	4%
<b>Registering as unemployed</b>	53%	30%	7%	4%	6%
<b>Registering a marriage</b>	45%	35%	10%	5%	5%
<b>Starting an inheritance procedure</b>	42%	35%	12%	7%	5%

When considering possible actions aiming at improving the provision of online procedures, most citizen respondents indicated that all of them should be mandatory, with the provision of procedures in at least one other foreign language (73%), the provision of a limited number of important procedures fully online (69%) and the provision of any relevant cross-border procedure fully online (67%) topping the ranking.

**Table 16.14: How to improve the provision of e-procedures**

	Should be mandatory	Should be voluntary (guidance)	Not necessary	No opinion	No answer
<b>Procedures should be available in at least one other foreign language.</b>	73%	19%	2%	2%	4%
<b>A limited number of the most important procedures for cross-border users should be provided fully online.</b>	69%	16%	3%	7%	6%
<b>Any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online. Offline procedures may exist in parallel.</b>	67%	23%	1%	4%	4%
<b>All procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online.</b>	53%	36%	4%	2%	5%

All proposed actions for promoting the switch from paper based to electronic procedures are mostly considered to be very effective or somewhat effective, with a preference for putting any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online (69%), making procedures available at least in another EU language (67%) and putting all procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online (63%).

**Table 16.15: Most effective ways of improving the provision of e-procedures**

	Very Effective	Partially effective	Not effective	No need for this action	Don't know	No answer
<b>Any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online. Offline procedures may exist in parallel.</b>	69%	14%	4%	1%	4%	8%
<b>Procedures should be available in at least one other foreign language.</b>	67%	20%	3%	1%	4%	5%
<b>All procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online.</b>	63%	21%	5%	3%	4%	5%
<b>A limited number of the most important procedures for cross-border users should be provided fully online</b>	54%	27%	6%	1%	5%	7%

About 22% of respondents can recommend a well-functioning site for any type of online procedures. Among the most frequently referred to websites are: gov.uk, ucas.com, www.studielink.nl, and several national tax services (e.g. France, Spain and Belgium).

#### **Assistance services:**

When asked about online personalised assistance services, most respondents declare that the 5 most important quality criteria are:

**Table 16.16: Quality criteria for assistance services**

	<b>Ratio</b>
Reply answers my specific question / query	79%
Quick reply	63%
Reply is in clear, simple, non-legalistic language	61%
Reply is reliable and legally sound	60%
I can use English or another common second language, and will also receive the reply in this language	58%
I can access the service in different ways (e.g. email, phone, social media)	35%
It is clear from the start what I can expect from the service, and how long it will take.	27%
I can file a complaint about the service	17%
User feedback visible on the page	7%
Quality certification visible on page	4%
Other	2%
Don't know	2%
No Answer	0%

Only about 15% of respondents can recommend a well-functioning site for online personalised assistance and advice, the most quoted ones being: portaldocidadao.pt, YourEurope and Your Europe Advice.

#### ***Feedback mechanism:***

Most respondents (76%) would be willing to give feedback on their experience with the Single Market, so as to draw the attention of policy-makers to recurrent problems.

#### **Results of the questionnaire for public authorities**

In total 39 public authorities replied to the survey. 21 operate at the national, 8 at the regional, 4 at the local, 1 at the international and 5 at the European level.

Most public authorities consider it desirable (45%) or very desirable (25%) to integrate the services and goods contact points in one national portal, although most of them consider this integration somewhat difficult (48%) or difficult (28%).

In order to improve online information for cross border users, most respondents consider that most of the proposed initiatives should be mandatory. Table 16.17 below details how these measures are considered by respondents:

**Table 16.17: How to prevent gaps in online information**

	Should be mandatory	Should be voluntary (guidance)	Not necessary	No opinion
Authorities in each EU country should provide a minimum amount of information for citizens to help them carry out cross-border activities.	78%	20%	3%	0%
Information should be provided in at least one other language.	43%	45%	8%	5%
EU countries / national public authorities should provide personal assistance to answer the specific questions from citizens that are not covered by the information online.	38%	55%	78%	0%
Authorities in each EU country should provide all the information necessary for citizens to engage in cross-border business or private activities.	40%	45%	15%	0%
For certain important areas, information on national rules should be collected and made available in a centralised EU database instead of on national websites.	35%	30%	28%	8%

Public authorities consider that most of the proposed initiatives in the survey are already being put in place in their administration or would be easy to implement of that they would be challenging to implement, but feasible. Detailed replies are presented in Table 16.18.

**Table 16.18: Feasibility of actions to prevent gaps in online information**

	Easy to do / Already being done	Challenging but feasible	Unfeasible	Unnecessary	Don't know
Authorities in each EU country should provide a minimum amount of information for citizens to help them carry out cross-border activities.	50%	40%	5%	3%	3%
Public authorities should provide personal assistance to answer the specific questions from citizens that are not covered by the information online.	33%	45%	8%	8%	8%
Information should be provided in at least one other language.	28%	48%	10%	8%	8%
Authorities in each EU country should provide all the information necessary for citizens to engage in cross-border business or private activities	10%	50%	30%	8%	3%
For certain important areas, information on national rules should be collected and made available in a centralised EU database instead of on national websites.	10%	48%	15%	23%	5%

The participating public authorities don't appear to have strong views concerning their administration's switch to e-government, with most of them considering it neutral (50%), and followed by those that consider it as a positive experience (30%). Among the most quoted



problems for the transition is the need to coordinate the work of several authorities often across different government levels, the lack of a legal basis and/or political will, as well as the lack of human resources in small administrations. Among the examples of good practices in managing and ensuring the quality of the on-line content on portals, a few examples were quoted, including the Brussels Region Informatics Service one (BE), and the one of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (NL).

Extract from the open text replies:

"We plan to use a standardized procedure description designed by the Walloon region. As a result, procedures described by other government levels in Belgium will be made available by any government. We implemented a form platform called Irisbox that supports virtually any kind of procedure with strong back-office integration and on-line consultation of authentic sources." - Brussels Region Informatics Centre, Belgium.

"In order to ensure the quality of online content it is crucial to engage the various government and non-government bodies that are involved in (online) procedures for services and goods. Processes, procedures, national laws, and EU-regulations change over time, therefore, it is a challenge to ensure the quality and the utility of the online content. Due to this fact, the ministry of economic affairs has set up an editorial team for the PSC ([www.ondernemersplein.nl](http://www.ondernemersplein.nl)) in which the experts of various bodies and contact points work together to ensure the quality of the online content of the PSC." - Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Netherlands.

All the proposed actions to encourage the transition to on-line procedures are mostly considered by respondent public authorities as actions that should have a mandatory effect (Table 16.19).

*Table 16.19: How to improve the provision of e-procedures*

	Should be mandatory	Should be voluntary (guidance)	Not necessary	No opinion
<b>A limited number of the most important procedures for cross-border users should be provided fully online</b>	70%	18%	13 %	0%
<b>Procedures should be available in at least one other foreign language.</b>	55%	33%	8%	5%
<b>Any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online. Offline procedures may exist in parallel.</b>	48%	30 %	8%	5%
<b>All procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online.</b>	30%	48%	23%	0%

Replies concerning the feasibility of these actions highlight that despite some challenges to their implementation, the actions are considered as being feasible by most respondents (Table 16.20).

**Table 16.20: Feasibility of actions to improve the provision of e-procedures**

	Easy to do /Already being done	Challenging but feasible	Unfeasible	Unnecessary	Don't know
<b>A limited number of the most important procedures for cross-border users should be provided fully online.</b>	35%	48%	0%	15%	3%
<b>Procedures should be available in at least one other foreign language.</b>	20%	50%	5%	15%	10%
<b>Any procedures relevant for cross-border users required under future EU laws should be fully online. Offline procedures may exist in parallel.</b>	13%	50%	10%	20%	8%
<b>All procedures relevant for cross-border users should be fully online.</b>	8%	33%	40%	15%	5%

Most of the responding public authorities accept electronic documents as part of their on-line procedures (25% for all procedures and 58% for some).

The three most used criteria used to decide which administrative procedures to put online are:

- a) Presence of a legal requirement (65%),
- b) Maximum benefit for users (63%) and
- c) Maximising benefit for the authority, in terms of expected savings and increased efficiency (60%).

Some countries, such as Norway, have developed guidelines defining the criteria for the digitalisation of procedures. When carrying out the transition, only half of the authorities specifically take into account the needs of users from other EU countries (50%). Those that do, mostly make an explanation of the procedure available in at least one frequently used foreign language (30%) or have a help desk service that can deal with questions and provide replies in at least one frequently used foreign language (20%). The reasons for not taking users from other EU countries into account seem to be limited demand from foreign users (23%) and the fact that it was never considered by the administration (15%). Some authorities also indicated that the lack of recognition of eIDs or the need for a notary act, which requires the physical presence of the user, limit the possibility to provide services to cross-border users.

Extract from the open text replies:

"A prerequisite for this initiative is the recognition of eID across Member States, otherwise efforts to obtain an overview and accessibility across countries could not be realized in addition to the pure information needs." – Local Government Association, Denmark.

Respondents indicated to what extent important procedures for businesses and citizens are online in their administration. Results are presented in Table 16.21 for businesses and Table 16.22 for citizens).

**For businesses:****Table 16.21: To what extent are the following business procedures online?**

	Fully online	Partially online	Not at all online	Do not know /not applicable
Registration for income tax	35%	8%	3%	55%
Corporate/business tax declaration	35%	5%	3%	58%
Reporting end of contract of employee	35%	10%	8%	48%
Payment of social contributions for employees and payroll withholding tax	33%	10%	8%	5%
VAT returns	30%	8%	3%	60%
Registration of employees with pension schemes	28%	15%	5%	53%
Applying for public procurement	28%	20%	3%	50%
VAT registration	25%	13%	3%	60%
Registration with national insurance scheme as employer	25%	20%	5%	50%
Notification of cessation of activity subject to VAT	23%	8%	3%	68%
Registration of business activity	20%	35%	13%	33%
Apply for building planning permits	15%	13%	25%	48%
Notifications related to data protection	15%	13%	8%	65%
Recognition of qualification	10%	28%	15%	48%
Apply for environmental permits	5%	28%	13%	55%

Extract from the open text replies:

"We feel that establishing a business is one the most important life events in the business lifecycle. A complex, offline-only procedure may be a particular hurdle in fostering entrepreneurship which is what we aim to abolish." Point of Single Contact, Enterprise Lithuania - Lithuania

*For citizens**Table 16.22: To what extent are the following citizen procedures online?*

	Fully online	Partially online	Not at all online	Do not know / not applicable
Declaring income tax	40%	20%	5%	35%
Apply for a criminal record certificate	38%	13%	10%	40%
Apply for a study grant	28%	18%	3%	52%
Registering a change of address	25%	30%	10%	35%
Request a birth certificate	25%	25%	5%	45%
Enrol in university	23%	23%	5%	50%
Register for child allowances	20%	13%	15%	53%
Register for a pension	20%	15%	10%	55%
Registering as unemployed	18%	25%	10%	48%
Register a car	18%	20%	23%	40%
Register for social security benefits	15%	20%	13%	53%
Request recognition of professional qualifications from a foreign EU national	13%	8%	15%	55%
Requesting / renewing ID card or passport	8%	35%	28%	30%
Request recognition of diploma from a foreign EU national	8%	23%	18%	53%
Registering a marriage	5%	23%	35%	38%
Starting an inheritance procedure	3%	15%	28%	55%

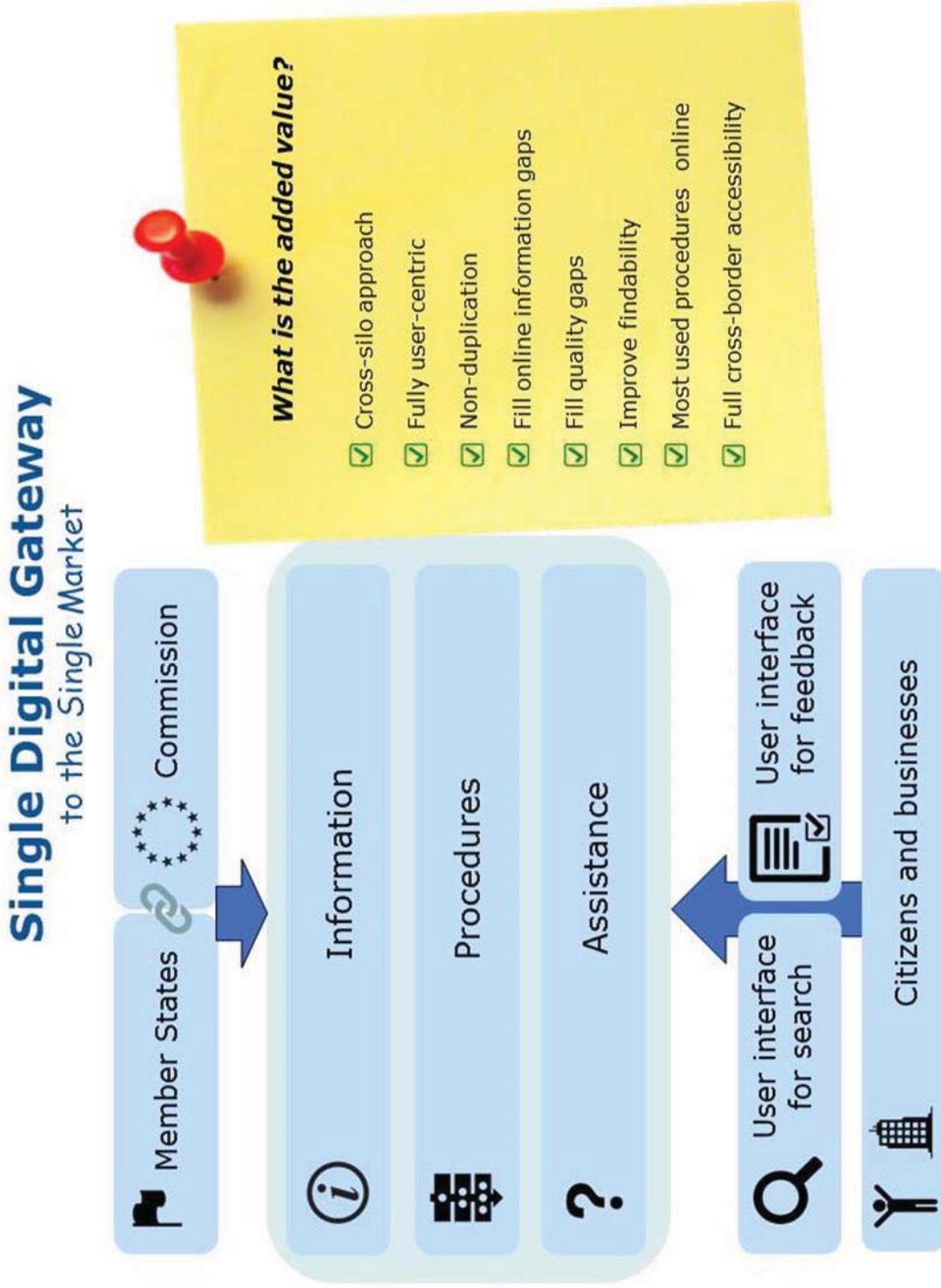
Public administrations appear to be split concerning their plans to make more procedures available online, as 43% have plans of putting more procedures online, while 40% does not currently have any plans to do so. 83% of the administrations that plan on having new procedures online aim at having fully transactional procedures, while only 17% aim at having them partially transactional. Among the procedures mentioned by some public authorities as possible candidates for the on-line transition are: digital trade tax codes, Application for pupil public transport ticket, and other procedures ordered by specific life events, e.g. "become a farmer". The timeframe for the entry into force of such procedures goes from 2017 to 2019. Among the reasons for further digitisation of procedures are: interest of the users, very good technical implementation possibilities, high number of cases, the presence of an incentive at EU level (e.g. eIDAS) and through national policies that aim to assist citizens and companies faster and better, and to make the government more efficient.

When it comes to the promotion of on-line services, different strategies are employed by public authorities, both online and offline. Some authorities carry out promotional activities as part of their overall E-government strategy.

*Extract from the open text replies:*

"We promote digital self-service via the joint municipal digital strategy for 2016-2020 and the eGovernment strategy, where the focus is on the further development of the digital service and user experience agree." – Local Government Association, Denmark.

ANNEX 17: VISUAL OUTLINE OF THE SINGLE DIGITAL GATEWAY



## ANNEX 18: FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES OF THE RELEVANT SERVICES

	Financial resources (per year, all sums are in €)				Budget line	National	Human resources (FTEs)			Size of the network	Number of users/visits
	EU		National				EU (FTE)	DG/Agency	National (FTE) (average per 28 MS)		
<b>SOLVIT</b>	30 000	Trainings and expert group meetings	Combined with Your Europe	IMI	02.030400 [Internal Market governance tools]	Not available (difficult to distinguish from other activities)	4	GROW.R.4	From 0.1 to 4	31 SOLVIT centres in EEA MS	2414 eligible complaints
<b>Your Europe Advice</b>	1 900 000		Combined with Your Europe		02.030400 [Internal Market governance tools]	None	1.5	GROW.R.4	0	60 legal experts in all EEA MS	24 454 enquiries
<b>Your Europe citizens</b>	500 000	2 x year meetings of Editorial Board and 2 x year meetings of interservice group	Internet, Facebook, chats, campaigns for single market tools	YE team YEST online content management tool	02.030400 [Internal Market governance tools]	None	5,5	GROW.R.4	n/a	Not applicable	13 600 000 visits on the portal
<b>Your Europe business</b>	4 450 000		EU co-ordination (external contractor)		0202 [COSME]	None	4.5 (EASME)	EASME (Parent unit GROW.R.4)	n/a		3 500 000 visits on the portal

	Financial resources (per year, all sums are in €)				Size of the network	Number of users/visits
	EU		National			
Enterprise Europe Network	50 million/year delegated to EASME for grants in EU and COSME participating countries. 15-20% of the resources of each consortium are allocated to single market advisory services. 3 million delegated to EASME for network animation (annual conference, IT cooperation databases, intranet,	Grant agreements with about 90 consortia; framework contracts for the animation budget	EU/EASME co-ordination for the partnership agreements/grants. Network partners are expected to provide integrated services to SMEs, incl. promotion and advice on EU finance schemes. to local business	Policy guidance by the Commission; operational support from EASME staff to EEN partner for the various services provided ; EASME IT Help Desk for the databases	535 Centres in EU and COSME countries; 101 cooperation centres in 29 third countries.	435 000 SME per year receiving support from EEN
	Budget line	National	EU (FTE)	DG/Agency		
		COSME budget delegated to EASME	Maximum EU co-financing is 60% to the eligible costs	2,5 H2 + 40 EASM E	EASME (Parent unit GROW.H.2)	About 4000 staff equivalent to 1 500 FTE. 15-20% of these FTE are working on single market advisory services

	Financial resources (per year, all sums are in €)				Human resources (FTEs)			Size of the network	Number of users/visits
	EU	National	Budget line	National	EU (FTE)	DG/Agency	National (FTE) (average per 28 MS)		
	communication, training)								
<b>EURES</b>	20-23 million		EaSI, 04 03 02 02	Not available	12	EMPL.D1	n/a	28 EU MS + EEA + some cooperation with CH	Not available
<b>European Consumer Centres Network</b>	6 million €	Grants	Consumer Programme Budget line 330401	5 million €	2	JUST E.3/CHAFE A	From 2 to 8 in each ECC	28 EU MS+ Norway +Iceland	over 110.000 contacts from consumers, 45.000 complaints and 4.7 million visits on national websites
<b>Points of Single Contact</b>	30 000	2 meetings x year of the EUGO Network	Implementation and development of the internal market 120201	Not available	0.5	GROW.E3	n/a	28 MS + EEA	Over 12 000 000 visits on PSCs websites and 200 000 enquiries
<b>Product Contact Points</b>	15 000	1 meeting per year	Implementation and development of the internal market 120201	405 348 (COM estimate)	1	GROW.B1	1-2	28 MS + EEA	Over 1645 enquiries



	Financial resources (per year, all sums are in €)				Human resources (FTEs)			Size of the network	Number of users/visits
	EU		Budget line	National	EU (FTE)	DG/Agency	National (FTE) (average per 28 MS)		
<b>Construction Product Contact Points</b>	15 000	1 meeting per year	Implementation and development of the internal market 120201	Not available	0,2	GROW.C1	2	28 MS + EEA	Not available
<b>Professional Qualification Assistance Centres</b>	15 000	1 meeting per year	Implementation and development of the internal market 120201	Not available	0,5	GROW.E5	Not available	28 MS + EEA	Not available
<b>IPR Helpdesk</b>	1 000 000	-	COSME budget delegated to EASME	None	0,5 + 0.25 F5	EASME (Parent unit GROW.F5)	0	Not applicable	100 000 visits on portal, 10 – 12 000 users registered, 2 000 – 3000 trainings, 1000 requests
<b>Europe Direct</b>	14 700 000	2 meetings x year	16030103	None	6 (+ 0,20 – 1 in COM representations in MS)	COMM.C3	Not relevant	28 MS	Not available

	Financial resources (per year, all sums are in €)			Human resources (FTEs)			Size of the network	Number of users/visits
	EU	Budget line	National	EU (FTE)	DG/Agency	National (FTE) (average per 28 MS)		
<b>Online Dispute Resolution</b>	1 700 000 (covering: hosting, translation, helpdesk and maintenance)	Consumer Programme and Connecting Telecoms Europe Facility (CEF)	Not available	3.5 FTE (Unit) + 9 IT (external contractors)	JUST.E3	27 ODR contacts points (at least 2 ODR advisors working full or part-time)	28 MS (+ EEA to join in 2017) 261 ADR entities from 24 MS to date (07/02/17)	20 000 complaints submitted (from 15/02/16 to 31/12/16) 1 500 000 visitors during 2016 communication campaign

**ANNEX 19: METHODOGY OF COST AND BENEFIT CALCULATION****Methodology of cost calculation**

Where possible, studies that estimated costs for comparable tasks have been used. A recent Deloitte study assessed the costs for the development of an EU VAT web portal. The content-related costs were used as a cost basis for developing content for the information part of the gateway. The IT-related cost estimates of the study were used to assess the costs of a search engine.

Other cost assumptions were made by relevant Commission staff, based on their many years of experience with running portals and assistance services and dealing with IT issues. This is the case with the number of human resources necessary for particular tasks at national and EU level, the necessary promotion budget and for developing the common repository of links, the development of the user feedback tool on Single Market obstacles, translation costs, hosting costs and IT development costs. These assumptions are nevertheless very imprecise and may in practice vary a lot.

Cost figures provided by Member States were used as much as possible. These concerned the costs for setting up a new portal, savings per transaction completed online, and costs for digitalising procedures. However, as table 6.4 shows, costs are not easily comparable and vary very much. Therefore, an estimate was made based on high-end figures that might be lower in reality.

Certain costs turned out to be very difficult to estimate. This was the case for the IT effort necessary for merging the three contact points. Views expressed by some national authorities on this in the framework of a study<sup>442</sup> varied and there was no consensus whether this would be cost-intensive or not. Therefore, the assumption was made that overall, this would be cost-neutral, as the initial costs would be offset by the expected savings.

A further assumption was made with regard to the voluntary roll-out of procedures. Based on Commission experience it was assumed that under a voluntary scenario, Member States would digitalise fewer procedures. Although the extent of this is completely unknown, the figure of 50% of the 20 procedures foreseen under option 2, where this is obligatory, was chosen for demonstration purposes.

The costs for the common user interface for cross-border use of documents and data (option 2) were assessed in a very rough way and as far as possible at the current point in time. This element would depend on a very advanced technical solution, for which an implementing act with a separate impact assessment will be necessary. This separate impact assessment will assess all the costs more in detail and with greater precision.

When costs for human resources were calculated, the official Commission annual rate of EUR 138 000 was used whenever Commission resources were concerned, and EUR 120 000 for an IT developer paid for by the Commission. The EUR 120 000 rate comes from a Commission framework contract. EUR 53 000 was used whenever Member State administration resources were foreseen. The rate of EUR 53 000 is based on Eurostat public sector labour cost survey

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<sup>442</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/21401/attachments/2/translations>

figures<sup>443</sup> covering EU average public sector labour costs and their main components (wages and salaries; direct remuneration, bonuses and allowances; employers' social security contributions and other labour costs) amounting to EUR 40 000, as well as an additional EUR 13 000 in overhead costs.

### **Methodology of benefit calculation**

#### ***19.1.1 Benefits for administrations from digitalising procedures:***

Benefits for national administrations from digitalising procedures proved difficult to assess, as the benefit figures provided by Member States varied a lot (see tables 6.4 and 6.5 for the savings through digitalised procedures). The estimate for the cost savings as a result of digitalisation of nine business procedures was based on one Member State, i.e. Denmark (see also IA table 6.5). The Danish Agency for digitisation has published a comparison of costs between different channels of service provision<sup>444</sup>:

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Cost per transaction</b>
Counter service	€14
Letter (physical)	€11.70
E-mail	€11
Telephone	€7.80
e-Services/Self Services	€4.20

The cost savings of ca. EUR 10 for a shift from counter service to e-service and of ca. EUR 7 for a shift from letter to e-service were taken as a basis for calculating the savings for each Member State. The largest part of these savings figures can be attributed to savings in staff costs. But this also means that the cost savings will be much smaller for Member States with smaller average public official salary costs than Denmark. The average calculation of savings will most likely be over-estimated for this reason.

In a next step, the cost saving (in comparison to an online procedure) for value 4 of table 6.3 of the study about administrative formalities was established as EUR 10 (as office visit required), and the cost saving for value 3 (postal letter required) was established as EUR 7. This was multiplied by the number of domestic and cross-border businesses going through each procedure whenever value 4 or 3 was indicated.

<sup>443</sup> Labour cost, wages and salaries, direct remuneration (excluding apprentices) by NACE Rev. 2 activity ) - LCS surveys 2008 and 2012 [lc\_ncost\_r2]

<sup>444</sup> Digitaliseringsstyrelsen, 2012, as referenced in the Study on Analysis of the Needs for Cross-border Services and Assessment of the Organisational, Legal, Technical and Semantic Barriers, 2013

Table 19.1: Study about administrative formalities: Complexity category of submitting documents

Member State	Procedure									
	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Bus reg	VAT reg	VAT return	BTax reg	BTax return	Empl reg	Job start	Job end	Wages	
AT	4	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	
BE	4	3	2	1	2	3	2	1	2	
BG	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	
CY	2	4	4	4	2	4	4	1	4	
CZ	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	
DE	4	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	
DK	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	
EE	4	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	
ES	4	1	2	1	2	4	2	2	3	
FI	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	
FR	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
GR	4	1	4	1	2	4	4	4	2	
HR	4	3	2	3	3	2	1	1	3	
HU	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
IE	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	
IT	2	1	3	1	3	2	1	1	3	
LT	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	
LU	2	3	2	4	2	3	3	1	3	
LV	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
MT	4	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	
NL	4	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	2	
PL	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	
PT	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	3	
RO	2	4	2	3	2	1	1	1	2	
SE	2	4	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	
SI	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	
SK	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	
UK	2	2	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	

- 1: Simple (procedure included in another procedure or no documents to be submitted)  
2: Medium (documents can be uploaded or emailed)  
3: Complex (documents must be submitted by post)  
4: Very complex (documents must be submitted in person)

Table 19.2: Study about administrative procedures: Number of domestic businesses going through procedures

Member State	Procedure									
	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Bus reg	VAT reg	VAT return	B Tax reg	B Tax return	Empl reg	Job start	Job end	Wages	
AT	53,312	43,000	215,840	0	215,840	17,794	243,593	243,593	243,593	
BE	45,211	25,835	288,575	0	288,575	3,981	285,290	0	367,248	
BG	68,833	39,333	163,752	0	163,752	0	0	0	191,249	
CY	5,906	3,375	24,681	3,375	24,681	2,026	31,662	0	31,662	
CZ	163,380	93,360	484,311	93,360	484,311	11,836	440,757	0	440,757	
DE	355,222	0	1,486,228	0	1,486,228	154,240	0	0	2,937,340	
DK	42,495	24,283	108,149	0	108,149	0	0	0	266,840	
EE	15,104	8,631	39,657	0	39,657	0	46,368	46,368	46,368	
ES	503,319	0	1,475,908	0	1,475,908	132,682	1,601,826	1,601,826	1,601,826	
FI	40,607	0	145,628	0	145,628	0	0	0	160,410	
FR	593,381	0	1,592,214	0	1,592,214	0	1,620,744	0	1,620,744	
GR	105,000	0	400,000	0	400,000	30,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	
HR	19,969	11,411	72,900	11,411	72,900	25,035	125,095	125,095	101,586	
HU	91,177	0	257,963	0	257,963	0	314,919	0	314,919	
IE	28,450	16,257	92,484	16,257	92,484	0	106,450	0	106,450	
IT	480,356	0	2,104,031	0	2,036,550	114,297	0	0	1,991,806	
LT	76,200	12,756	95,674	0	164,904	0	84,289	84,289	103,076	
LU	5,485	4,437	23,234	3,134	23,234	1,886	18,442	0	18,442	
LV	13,015	0	108,429	0	108,429	0	55,649	0	55,649	
MT	5,470	13,654	15,247	0	15,247	733	9,743	9,743	15,089	
NL	190,376	0	525,715	0	525,715	0	0	0	480,734	
PL	442,857	253,061	1,007,625	0	1,007,625	88,845	1,005,238	0	1,005,238	
PT	205,044	0	395,092	0	395,092	0	304,713	304,713	609,426	
RO	130,534	26,671	272,773	126,435	835,402	0	0	0	1,380,695	
SE	92,061	52,606	359,753	0	359,753	26,688	0	0	370,903	
SI	39,000	8,355	67,301	0	203,344	5,877	74,635	64,425	74,635	
SK	151,676	15,266	290,176	79,160	290,176	23,322	0	0	212,618	
UK	562,343	316,535	1,063,390	0	1,063,390	287,200	1,495,003	1,859,895	1,495,003	
EU28	4,525,782	968,826	13,176,725	333,132	13,877,146	926,442	8,314,415	4,789,946	16,694,303	

Table 19.3: Study about administrative procedures: Number of cross-border businesses going through procedures

Member State	Procedure									
	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	Bus reg	VAT reg	VAT return	B Tax reg	B Tax return	Empl reg	Job start	Job end	Wages	
AT	185	1,850	6,646	738	1,108	222	222	222	2,954	
BE	90	900	3,600	87	131	86	86	0	349	
BG	196	1,960	7,038	782	1,173	235	0	0	3,128	
CY	7	70	152	17	25	5	5	0	68	
CZ	73	730	9,087	1,010	1,515	303	303	0	4,039	
DE	424	4,240	15,263	1,696	2,544	509	0	0	6,784	
DK	59	590	2,110	234	352	70	0	0	938	
EE	16	160	560	62	93	19	19	19	249	
ES	210	2,100	7,571	841	1,262	252	252	252	3,365	
FI	49	490	1,781	198	297	59	59	0	792	
FR	424	4,240	15,252	1,695	2,542	508	508	0	6,779	
GR	39	390	1,394	155	232	46	46	46	620	
HR	76	760	2,750	306	458	92	92	92	1,222	
HU	319	3,190	11,491	1,277	1,915	383	383	0	5,107	
IE	49	490	1,766	196	294	59	59	0	785	
IT	209	2,088	11,265	766	2,283	230	0	0	3,065	
LT	24	242	963	264	571	79	79	79	963	
LU	130	1,288	3,333	594	891	128	299	0	2,445	
LV	52	237	6,163	442	662	132	26	0	1,766	
MT	4	41	95	11	16	570	5,695	5,695	5,695	
NL	173	1,730	6,224	692	1,037	207	0	0	2,766	
PL	136	1,360	4,907	545	818	164	164	0	2,181	
PT	110	1,100	3,967	441	661	132	132	132	1,763	
RO	333	144	2,906	191	1,454	631	0	0	459	
SE	182	1,820	6,551	728	1,092	218	0	0	2,912	
SI	144	1,435	2,854	317	312	95	95	95	1,268	
SK	69	734	4,232	1,292	460	92	0	0	1,228	
UK	218	2,180	7,831	870	1,305	261	261	261	3,480	
EU28	4,000	36,559	147,752	16,447	25,503	5,787	8,784	6,893	67,169	

The result is the following table:

*Table 19.4: Savings for public administrations from e-services instead of office services and by post*

Member State	Procedure										For all procedures
	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	Wages	
	Bus reg	VAT reg	VAT return	B/Tax reg	B/Tax return	Empl reg	Job start	Job end			
AT	533,120	301,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	834,120
BE	452,110	180,845	0	0	0	27,867	0	0	0	0	660,822
BG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CY	0	33,750	246,810	33,750	0	20,260	316,620	0	0	316,620	967,810
CZ	0	0	0	0	0	82,852	0	0	0	0	82,852
DE	3,552,220	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,552,220
DK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EE	151,040	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	151,040
ES	5,033,190	0	0	0	0	1,326,820	0	0	0	11,212,782	17,572,792
FI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GR	1,050,000	0	4,000,000	0	0	300,000	4,500,000	4,500,000	0	0	14,350,000
HR	199,690	79,877	0	79,877	510,300	0	0	0	0	711,102	1,580,846
HU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IT	0	0	14,728,217	0	14,255,850	0	0	0	0	13,942,642	42,926,709
LT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LU	0	31,059	0	31,340	0	13,202	129,094	0	0	129,094	333,789
LV	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MT	54,700	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	54,700
NL	1,903,760	0	0	0	3,680,005	0	0	0	0	0	5,583,765
PL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PT	2,050,440	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,265,982	6,316,422
RO	0	266,710	0	885,045	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,151,755
SE	0	526,060	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	526,060
SI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SK	0	0	0	0	0	233,220	0	0	0	0	233,220
UK	0	0	0	0	0	0	14,950,030	0	0	0	14,950,030
<b>EU28</b>	<b>14,980,270</b>	<b>1,419,301</b>	<b>18,975,027</b>	<b>1,030,012</b>	<b>18,446,155</b>	<b>2,004,221</b>	<b>19,895,744</b>	<b>4,500,000</b>	<b>30,578,222</b>	<b>111,828,952</b>	
<b>Total EU28</b>	<b>111,828,952</b>										



This table shows the total savings (covering domestic and cross-border businesses going through each of the nine procedures) from digitalising these 9 procedures for each Member State, with the caveat that the savings are based on Danish figures (high end staff costs), as outlined before. The total EU savings would come up to EUR 111.8 million. The figure per Member State ( $111.8 / 28$ ) comes up to EUR 4 million – but this average figure hides the large variations in cost savings and differences in public officials' staff costs.

Population  
Migration and migrant population statistics

Table 19.5: Immigration by citizenship, 2014 (1)

	Total immigrants		Nationals		Non-nationals						Stateless (thousands)	Stateless (%)	procedure offline? (0=no, 1=yes)	cost saving per migrant for MS [in EUR]	total cost for administration saved by online procedure
	(thousands)	%	(thousands)	%	Citizens of other EU Member States		Citizens of non-member countries		(thousands)	%					
					(thousands)	(%)	(thousands)	(%)							
Belgium	124.8	17.6	14.1	84.9	64.6	51.8	41.3	33.1	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Bulgaria	26.6	9.5	35.7	64.0	1.4	5.4	15.3	57.4	0.3	1.2	0	10.00	0		
Czech Republic	29.9	5.8	19.3	80.7	14.8	49.3	9.4	31.4	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	148000		
Denmark	68.4	19.3	28.3	71.7	23.8	34.9	24.5	35.8	0.7	1.0	0	10.00	0		
Germany	884.9	88.4	10.0	790.2	415.9	47.0	372.4	42.1	1.9	0.2	0	10.00	0		
Estonia	3.9	2.6	65.5	34.4	0.2	4.0	1.2	29.6	0.0	0.8	0	10.00	0		
Ireland	67.4	12.4	18.4	81.6	26.2	38.8	28.7	42.6	0.1	0.1	1	10.00	262000		
Greece	59.0	29.5	50.0	50.0	16.0	27.1	13.5	22.9	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	160000		
Spain	305.5	41.0	13.4	264.5	100.0	32.7	164.4	53.8	0.1	0.0	1	10.00	1000000		
France	339.9	126.2	37.1	213.7	83.5	24.6	130.2	38.3	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Croatia	10.6	4.8	45.3	54.6	2.3	21.9	3.5	32.6	0.0	0.1	0	10.00	0		
Italy	277.6	29.3	10.5	248.4	68.1	24.5	180.3	64.9	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	681000		
Cyprus	9.2	1.4	15.3	84.7	3.7	40.8	4.0	43.9	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Latvia	10.4	5.9	56.6	42.9	0.9	8.9	3.5	33.9	0.0	0.1	0	10.00	0		
Lithuania	24.3	19.5	80.4	19.6	0.7	2.7	4.1	16.8	0.0	0.1	0	10.00	0		
Luxembourg	22.3	1.3	5.9	94.0	16.5	74.1	4.4	19.9	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Hungary	54.6	28.6	52.4	47.6	10.5	19.3	15.5	28.3	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	105000		
Malta	8.9	1.8	20.5	79.5	4.4	49.6	2.7	29.9	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Netherlands	145.3	37.4	25.8	107.8	58.4	40.2	47.8	32.9	1.6	1.1	0	10.00	0		
Austria	116.3	9.2	7.9	106.9	67.0	57.6	39.4	33.9	0.5	0.4	1	10.00	670000		
Poland	222.3	127.8	57.5	94.3	27.2	12.3	67.0	30.1	0.1	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Portugal	19.5	10.2	52.4	47.6	3.4	17.3	5.9	30.3	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	34000		
Romania	136.0	123.9	91.1	12.1	1.2	0.9	10.9	8.0	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	12000		
Slovenia	13.8	2.5	18.3	81.7	3.3	23.6	8.0	58.1	0.0	0.0	1	10.00	33000		
Slovakia	5.4	2.9	54.9	45.1	2.0	36.8	0.4	8.3	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Finland	31.5	7.9	24.9	73.4	9.5	30.1	13.6	43.1	0.1	0.2	0	10.00	0		
Sweden	127.0	20.9	16.4	105.6	28.1	22.1	70.7	55.7	6.8	5.3	0	10.00	0		
United Kingdom	632.0	81.3	12.9	550.7	263.6	41.7	287.1	45.4	0.0	0.0	0	10.00	0		
Iceland	5.4	1.9	35.8	64.2	2.9	53.2	0.6	10.3	0.0	0.8					
Liechtenstein	0.6	0.2	26.7	73.3	0.2	39.8	0.2	33.5	0.0	0.0					
Norway	66.9	6.9	10.3	89.6	35.1	52.5	24.3	36.3	0.6	0.8					
Switzerland	156.3	26.2	16.7	130.1	94.4	60.4	35.7	22.9	0.0	0.0					
												<b>total savings</b>	<b>3,105,000</b>		

(1) The values for the different categories of citizenship may not sum to the total due to rounding and the exclusion of the category 'unknown citizenship' from the table.  
Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr\_imm1ctz)

### **Benefits from putting information online**

The savings for administrations from putting information online were calculated based on the assumption that in the absence of online information, citizens and businesses would need to contact administrations directly, which is a more expensive channel. A cost comparison between Your Europe (online information) and Your Europe Advice (individual assistance) was used to show the difference and potential for savings.

#### ***Benefits for citizens***

According to European Commission own research, a minimum of 1.5 million hours are lost every year by citizens trying to find where information is available on their rights and obligations in order to live, study or retire in another Member State. These 1.5 million hours are an indication of the benefits of the initiative to citizens in the area of information. This figure cannot be converted into a monetary estimate as it does not relate to an actual expenditure but rather to citizens' spare time lost, which is difficult to put into monetary terms. In addition to the time lost, there is also a certain annoyance factor (hassle costs) related to these activities, which cannot be quantified either.

The calculation was made in the following way:

1.3 million people migrate from an EU Member State to another each year. In this process, citizens at least have to:

- register the change of address,
- register for social security benefits,
- register for pension,
- declare income taxes,
- register their car and possibly register for child allowance,
- enrol in university if student, request recognition of their diploma if active worker or register as unemployed.

According to EC own research (see annex 4 for details), just finding information on the above procedures takes on average (simple average across Member States) 1h40min for a citizen speaking at least 3 languages and already being aware of a variety of information sources. The average was calculated as follows: 35 minutes for each of the 15 Member States with the best information offer<sup>445</sup>, 1h15 for of the 7 Member States with a medium information offer<sup>446</sup>, 5h for each of the 6 Member States with the lowest information offer<sup>447</sup>. This was then adapted to EU migratory flows according to Eurostat data (Eurostat online data code: migr\_imm1ctz).

In order to calculate the citizen benefit of a solution where each Member State has made available on its portal high-quality and complete information (option 1), the assumption was made that in this case, the time spent to research the 6 topics would be the 35 minutes currently needed for the Member States with the best information offer. Under this scenario, the aggregate hours will be half of the current situation: 768 367 instead of 1.5 million (saving of 50% as compared to the current situation). For option 2, an additional assumption was made, namely that with the common search tool, citizens would find the information more

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<sup>445</sup> Estonia, Luxembourg, Finland, France, UK, Spain, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Portugal, Austria

<sup>446</sup> Latvia, Greece, Ireland, Germany, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia

<sup>447</sup> Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary

quickly, i.e. after 28 minutes. The aggregate number of hours under this scenario would be 614 693 instead of 1.5 million (saving of 60%). For option 3, it was assumed that with harmonised information contained in a database, the time to find the information would be 18 minutes. The aggregate number of hours under this scenario would be 395 160 instead of 1.5 million (saving of 75%).

### *Benefits for businesses*

The benefits for businesses of very good and accessible online information were assessed through an external study<sup>448</sup>. The methodology used is the following:

In order to estimate the number of EU businesses that are searching for online information, the number of enterprises involved in intra EU exports of goods has been used as proxy variable<sup>449</sup>.

Based on EUROSTAT<sup>450</sup> statistics in 2013<sup>451</sup> 1.8 million businesses (8% of the overall active enterprises at EU level) were involved in intra EU exports of goods.

Interviews with business representatives from 15 different EU companies<sup>452</sup> who have experience in cross border operations were used to map behaviours of businesses when they are searching information about another Member State's rules online.

Results from these consultations indicated that businesses:

- Search for online information (on average) on 9 topics and each of them performs from one to nine online searches per year, namely:
  - Minimum one online search per nine topics (i.e. 9 online searches per year)
  - Maximum one online searches per nine topics (i.e. 81 online searches per year)
- are spending from one to eight hours each time they do an online search, namely
  - Minimum one hour per one online search per nine topics (i.e. 9 hours per year)

<sup>448</sup> Study on information and assistance needs of businesses operating cross-border within the EU, including gap and cost analysis, Ernest & Young for the European Commission, 2017

<sup>449</sup> From one side this approach under estimate the number of companies that are potentially interested in searching online information because it does not include companies that are providing services in another EU MS and companies that are planning future cross border operations; on the other side not all companies that are doing or planning cross border activities are searching information online.

Therefore, we consider this estimation as reasonable while being mindful of the inherent limitations.

<sup>450</sup> International trade Statistics (Trade by partner countries and size-class, [DS-058476]) .

<sup>451</sup> EUROSTAT provides the number of enterprises involved in intra EU exports in 2013 for 11 countries (AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE,HU, LT, NL, PL, RO, SI). From this data it emerges that on average 8% of active enterprises are involved in intra EU exports for these 11 countries. The same percentage (8%) have been applied to countries for which statistics are not available.

<sup>452</sup> Multiple feedbacks from 15 companies based in 5 different MS have been collected. Companies involved had different size and different experience in doing cross border operations. They were asked:

- to select from a list of 29 topics the ones for which they have searched online information while doing business in another MS
- to declare how many online searches they have performed per each searched topic
- to declare the duration of each online search (in hours)
- to declare for how many topics they have required external support and the cost incurred.

- Maximum eight hours per nine online searches per nine topics (648 hours per year)

Combining these data, and considering the hourly average labour cost at Member State<sup>453</sup> level is it possible to draw:

- a “minimum scenario” where each company is spending nine hours<sup>454</sup> per years searching for online information;
- a “maximum scenario” where each company is spending 648 hours<sup>455</sup> per years searching for online information.

The annual cost at EU28 is between € 0.42 and €30.2 billion, that means an average annual cost for each company of between € 233 and € 16,813.

N. of enterprises Involved in intra EU exports of goods (2013)	Hours spent doing online searches		Average hourly Labour Cost (EUR)	Costs for searching online information (EUR)	
	Min	Max		Min	Max
1,797,355	9 hours	648 hours	≈ 26 <sup>456</sup>	419,718,503	30,219,732,248

However, this does not take into account the potential “outsourcing cost” (e.g. when businesses require additional external support).

In particular the representatives from the consulted companies declared that

- for six topics (included in the nine for which they were searching online information) they also needed external support
- they paid between less than € 1,000 and € 3,000 to external consultants (per each researched topic).

Also in this case it is possible to identify two scenarios<sup>457</sup>:

N. of enterprises doing cross border operation (2013)	Costs for searching online information (EUR)		Costs for External support	
	Min	Max	Min	Max
	€ 500 x 6 topics x each company	€ 2,500 x 6 topics x each company		
1,797,355	419,718,503	30,219,732,248	5,392,064,976	26,960,324,878

<sup>453</sup> Labour cost levels by NACE Rev. 2 activity (lc\_lci\_lev).

<sup>454</sup> 1 online search of 1 hour for 9 topics = 9h.

<sup>455</sup> 9 online search of 8 hours for 9 topics = 648 h.

<sup>456</sup> The exact average value at EU level is ≈ EUR 25.95

<sup>457</sup> a “minimum scenario” where each company is spending the minimum cost (€ 500) for external support for each searched topic (6); a “maximum scenario” where each company is spending the maximum cost (€ 2,500) for external support for each searched topic (6).

Based on the information presented so far it is possible to conclude that the total costs of finding online essential information about another Member State' rules are between € 3,233 and € 31,813 for one enterprise, that means an aggregate cost between € 5.8 and € 57.2 billion at EU28 if we consider that around 1.8 million EU enterprises are doing or are planning to do cross boarder operations.

### **Potential benefits**

Cost for businesses were computed using the following parameters:

- topics for which they require online information (a)
- number of online search for searched topic (b)
- time spent for each online search (c)
- hourly labour cost (d)
- number of topics for which they require external support (e)
- costs of the external support (f)

(a)	(b)		(c)		(d)	(e)	(f)	
	Min	Max	Min	Max			Min	Max
9	1	9	1h	8h	≈ 26 <sup>458</sup>	6	EUR 500	EUR 2500

The assumption was made that with better online information (e.g. higher quality, higher accessibility) there will be an impact (e.g. reduction) for parameters b, c, e and f. In the case of perfect accessibility of online information we can compute the benefits for businesses as time saved. In particular the maximum time saved might be computed in different scenarios characterised by a radical reduction for parameters b and c, a reduction in the number of topics requiring external support (e), and a 50% reduction for parameter f<sup>459</sup>.

Scenario	(a)	(b)		(c)		(d)	(e)	(f)	
		Min	Max	Min	Max			Min	Max
Baseline	9	1	9	1h	8h	≈ 26	6	€ 500	€ 2,500
1	9	1/9	1/9	1h	1h	≈ 26	5	€ 250	€ 1,250
2	9	1/9	1/9	40 min	40 min	≈ 26	4	€ 250	€ 1,250
3	9	1/9	1/9	30 min	30 min	≈ 26	3	€ 250	€ 1,250

<sup>458</sup> The exact average value at EU level is ≈ EUR 25.95

<sup>459</sup> This hypothesis is related to a possible reduction of the complexity of the required support.

Scenario	Total internal cost (EUR)		Costs for External support		Total Costs	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
<b>Baseline</b>	419 718 503	30 219 732 248	5 392 064 975.69	26 960 324 878.45	5 811 783 479	57 180 057 126
1	48 967 159	48 967 159	2 246 693 740	11 233 468 699	2 295 660 899	11 282 435 858
Diff. with Baseline	-370 751 345	-30 170 765 089	-3 145 371 236	-15 726 856 179	<b>-3 516 122 581</b>	<b>-45 897 621 268</b>
2	31 090 260	31 090 260	1 797 354 992	8 986 774 959	1 828 445 251	9 017 865 219
Diff. with Baseline	-388 628 244	-30 188 641 988	-3 594 709 984	-17 973 549 919	<b>-3 983 338 228</b>	<b>-48 162 191 907</b>
3	23 317 695	23 317 695	1 348 016 244	6 740 081 220	1 371 333 939	6 763 398 914
Diff. with Baseline	-396 400 809	-30 196 414 553	-4 044 048 732	-20 220 243 659	<b>-4 440 449 541</b>	<b>-50 416 658 212</b>

In the case of the **Scenario 1** the total costs of finding online essential information about another Member State' rules will be between € 1 277 and € 6 267 for one enterprise, that means an aggregate cost at EU28 level between € 2.3 and € 11.3 billion if we consider that around 1.8 million EU enterprises are doing or are planning to do cross border operations. This means a saving between 60.5% (minimum scenario) and 80.3% (maximum scenario) that is € 3.5 billion (minimum scenario) and € 45.9 billion (maximum).

Scenario 1 represents option 1, where it is assumed that with complete, high-quality national information, one online search of 1 hour will be sufficient, and the number of topics requiring external support can be reduced by 1.,

In the case of the **Scenario 2** the total costs of finding online essential information about another Member State' rules will be between € 1 017 and € 5 017 for one enterprise, that means an aggregate cost at EU28 level between € 1.8 and € 9 billion. This means a saving between 68.5% (minimum scenario) and 84.2% (maximum scenario) that is € 3.9 billion (minimum scenario) and € 48.1 billion (maximum).

Scenario 2 represents option 2, where it is assumed that the common search engine solution will reduce the time of the search as compared to option 1, namely from 1 hour to 40 minutes. Furthermore, the assumption is made that, in comparison with the baseline, the number of topics requiring external support can be reduced by 2.

In the case of the **Scenario 3** the total costs of finding online essential information about another Member State' rules will be between € 763 and € 5 017 for one enterprise, that means an aggregate cost at EU28 level between € 1.4 and € 6.8 billion. This means a saving between 76.4% (minimum scenario) and 88.1% (maximum scenario) that is € 4.4 billion (minimum scenario) and € 50.4 billion (maximum).

Scenario 3 stands for option 3, where it is assumed that the harmonized database solution will even further reduce the time of the search as compared to option 1 and 2, namely to 30 minutes. The harmonized structure should allow users to understand the information more easily than under the other two options. Furthermore, it is assumed that the number of topics requiring external support can be reduced by 3.

The benefits for businesses of using fully online procedures that are accessible to foreigners were calculated through another external study<sup>460</sup>. The methodology used for this study was:

### ***Objective and scope***

The objective of the study by Ecorys for the European Commission was to identify the administrative requirements of various important procedures for businesses and to assess the costs of the different steps that are needed to comply with them. The study covers all EU28 Member States.

In total ten procedures in the areas of business registrations and tax returns were examined: (1) general registration of economic activity, (2) VAT registration, (3) VAT returns, (4) request for VAT refund, (5) registration for income tax, (6) corporate/business tax declaration, (7) registration with national social insurance scheme upon establishment, (8) registration of employees with pension and insurance scheme, (9) payment of social contributions and payroll withholding tax for employees, (10) reporting end of contract of employee.

### ***Methodology – collecting data***

Information about administrative formalities was collected from the competent national authorities of the 28 Member States (inventory). All authorities were asked the same set of questions covering over 80 items for each of the administrative procedures covered by this study for which they are responsible. The information was filled partly in advance with publicly available information, for the authorities to check and complete. In total approximately 100 different authorities have been contacted of which approximately 40 have responded. Most of them fully completing the questionnaires for all procedures. In those cases where items were overlooked or information was not clear, the authorities were contacted for further information. The authorities were asked to complete the information on administrative procedures for limited liability companies, with one overall question per procedure about the most important differences for other legal forms of businesses.

In addition, 61 businesses (limited liability companies and sole traders) operating in 14 selected countries were consulted by means of an online survey from end of November 2016 until early February 2017 (business survey). These countries included both small and large countries and were also spread geographically across the EU. Two different questionnaires were developed, one for domestic firms and one for cross-border firms which covered some additional items such as the cost of translations. The businesses that were consulted included both existing relations and random firms. The businesses were asked to provide information on working time and expenses incurred for each of the ten procedures they had gone through. These data were only filled in by the persons that had gone through the procedures within the last year. Of the responding businesses, 39 were domestic and 18 operated cross-border and responded concerning procedures in another EU country. Each of the 57 businesses responded about one up to six procedures they had gone through.

### ***Methodology – analysis, cost per occurrence***

Based on the business survey, costs of various activities and expenditures were classified in up to five categories of “complexity” with greater complexity corresponding to higher costs.

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<sup>460</sup> Study about administrative formalities of important procedures and administrative burden for businesses, Ecorys for the European Commission, 2017



For each degree of complexity, the characteristics of the administrative formalities causing the costs were examined in order to link costs with types of formalities.

For each country and each of the ten administrative procedures, the same average hours corresponding to that degree of complexity were allocated. This was done to reduce the impact of random differences in for example language proficiency or travel distances. A similar approach was adopted for expenses (after conversion into euros) with one difference. For the relevant degree of complexity, the expenses were calibrated for a reference group of countries with a similar general price level (consisting of the six countries Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden), so that costs in the other eight countries covered by the business survey reflect lower general price levels only. This enabled a separation of differences in costs caused by different administrative requirements and differences caused by general price levels respectively.

This approach not only enabled to reduce the impact of random differences between respondents, but also enabled to estimate the costs involved for countries not covered by the business survey, based on similarities of administrative requirements. One exception is made to costs where differences between firms are not random but structural, namely the translation of company statutes which logically does not apply to sole traders. In this case, costs and numbers of businesses involved (see later) were differentiated by legal form of the business as well.

#### ***Methodology – analysis, frequency***

In some countries, some procedures must be gone through more than once per year. The frequency of the procedure was based primarily on the authorities survey. However, in some countries different businesses must or may go through the procedures at different frequencies. Hence, a relation between reported frequencies in the business survey and the authorities survey was examined, to convert multiple optional frequencies into one average frequency.

#### ***Methodology – analysis, number of businesses***

Lastly, the business population is based on a mix of authorities survey and Eurostat data. From the authorities survey, the number of applications (domestic and from other EU countries) is divided by the frequency estimated in the previous step. For each procedure, the authorities of only a handful of countries reported the number of applications.

To estimate the number of businesses involved for all countries and procedures, Eurostat data on numbers of businesses (old and new, domestic and cross-border, with and without employees) were used. These numbers were related to known numbers of applications (typically for 3 to 5 countries for each procedure), where procedure 1, 2 and 5 apply to all new firms, procedure 7 applies to new employers, procedures 3, 4 and 6 apply to all firms (old and new) and procedures 8, 9 and 10 apply to all employers (old and new). For cross-border firms, an additional assumption needed to be made, namely that 2.5% of the businesses is a new firm. This is confirmed for some countries where Amadeus data is accurate and also for Denmark where all business registrations (including from other EU countries) can be freely accessed.

#### ***Methodology – extrapolation to aggregate costs***

As a last step, aggregate costs were calculated by multiplying the cost per occurrence, the frequency (number of times per year) and the number of businesses involved.

## ANNEX 20: GLOSSARY

Abbreviation/technical term	Explanation
BRIS	Business Registry Interconnection System
CEF	Connecting Europe Facility
DG SANTE	European Commission Directorate General for Health and Food Safety
Digital-by-default	The principle that public services should be provided through digital channels whenever possible and cost efficient
EC	European Commission
ECC/ECC-Net	European Consumer Centres. EU co-funded network of centres that promote the understanding of EU consumers' rights and assist in resolving complaints about cross-border purchases.
EEN	Enterprise Europe Network. An EU co-funded support network that provides advisory and partnership services to help small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) to strengthen their competitiveness, innovate and do business on European and international markets.
eID	electronic identification
eIDAS	EU Regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market
EMPSS	European Mobility Portal on Social Security (feasibility under assessment)
EN	English
EPC	European Professional Card. The first EU-wide fully online procedure for the recognition of qualifications for nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, real estate agents and mountain guides.
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
e-signature	Electronic signature
EURES	European Employment Services. A cooperation network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU
EUR-lex	Official website of published EU legislation and EU case law
FTE	Full time equivalent
ICT	information and communication technology
IMI	Internal Market Information System. An IT-based information network that links up national, regional and local authorities across the EU.
ISA/ISA2	Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations. An EU funding programme that sets out to improve digital solutions that enable public administrations to become inter-operable across borders.
IT	Information technology
MS	Member State
OOP	Once only principle. The principle that citizens and businesses should supply a piece of information only once to a public administration who should then internally share this data with other public administrations, avoiding burdens on users from providing the same information several times.
PCP	Product Contact Points

PCPC	Product Contact Points for Construction
Points of Single Contact Charter	A charter that encourages EU countries to develop business friendly Points of Single Contact. It establishes criteria about in particular quality and availability of information, completion of electronic procedures, accessibility for cross-border users and usability.
PSC	Point of Single Contact
REFIT Platform	REFIT stands for regulatory fitness. The platform is a forum that brings together the European Commission, national authorities and other stakeholders in regular meetings to improve existing EU legislation.
SDG	Single digital gateway
SEPA	Single European Payments Area
SME	Small or medium-sized enterprise
SOLVIT	A service set up by the EU that assists citizens and businesses to ascertain their EU rights when they experience problems with authorities in another EU member state.
SWD	Staff working document of the European Commission
TRIS	Technical Regulations Information System
VAT	Value added tax
YEA	Your Europe Advice. EU funded advice service for citizens and businesses about their EU rights.