



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

120751/EU XXVII.GP
Eingelangt am 18/11/22

Brussels, 21.01.2022

SEC(2022) 720 final

REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD OPINION

Impact assessment / Proposal for a strengthened EU governments'
interoperability policy

{COM(2022) 720 final}

{SWD(2022) 720 final}

{SWD(2022) 721 final}

{SWD(2022) 722 final}



Brussels,
RSB

Opinion

Title: Impact assessment / Proposal for a strengthened EU governments' interoperability policy

Overall opinion: POSITIVE WITH RESERVATIONS

(A) Policy context

Interoperability is the ability of organisations to interact, share information and knowledge at all levels in a seamless manner through their IT systems.

A European Interoperability Framework (EIF) has been in place for more than 15 years. It supports governments to build integrated public services. Its guidance is non-binding and is supported by the Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA²) programme. The EIF seeks to establish a holistic approach to interoperability in the EU. However, the evaluations of EIF and ISA² show that a non-binding EIF has not been sufficient to establish interoperability in practice.

This initiative aims to support the development of an integrated and coherent approach to public sector interoperability throughout the EU.

(B) Summary of findings

The Board notes the additional information provided in advance of the meeting and commitments to make changes to the report.

However, the report still contains significant shortcomings. The Board gives a positive opinion with reservations because it expects the DG to rectify the following aspects:

- (1) The report is not clear on the scope of the initiative and its links to the proposed legal base. The report does not sufficiently explain the interaction of the interoperability policy with other related policies.**
- (2) The report does not provide sufficient evidence of the identified problems nor of their evolution in the future. It does not explain why some Member States have chosen not to implement an EIF-inspired interoperability framework.**
- (3) The content of the options is not sufficiently clear. The report does not explain how the policy options, in particular the preferred one, would be implemented in practice. In particular, the role and decision-making power of the envisaged**

This opinion concerns a draft impact assessment which may differ from the final version.

governance bodies remains too vague.

- (4) The report does not sufficiently explain the differences between the different estimates of potential savings. In particular, the report overestimates the savings from interoperability, as it does not disaggregate them from savings of other simplification and digitalisation policies.**

(C) What to improve

(1) The report should more clearly define the scope of the initiative and be more precise whether it is designed to promote only EU cross-border interoperability or interoperability between government levels within Member States. It should also clarify whether it covers interactions with citizens and enterprises. It should ensure that the scope is in line with the proposed legal base and it should clearly demonstrate the respect of the subsidiarity principle of the chosen scope. The problem description and objectives should reflect the scope of the initiative accordingly.

(2) The links and complementarity with the Data Governance Act should be further explored.

(3) The report should provide more evidence on the existence and scale of the problems. It should explain why some Member States have chosen not to implement an EIF-inspired interoperability framework. The report should also provide more evidence on the relation between open-source software and interoperability.

(4) The report should clarify the content, functioning and practical implications of the envisaged policy options. It should define more completely the role and authority of the governance mechanism under the different options, in particular of the preferred option. It should also clarify the status of the interoperability framework for smart cities and communities and how this relates to the scope and impacts of the initiative. The report should also be more precise on the need and possible measures to better integrate interoperability in EU policy making. It should also consider to what extent the policy options are future-proof.

(5) The report should explain how the two estimates (JRC and CEPS) of potential savings of this initiative relate to each other and what explains the big difference between them. It should discuss the assumptions and potential uncertainties associated with the estimates of costs and benefits. The impact analysis should avoid overestimating the potential cost savings of interoperability and try to disaggregate them from the wider benefits of digitalisation. This should be based on the analysis of some examples or case studies, including those presented in the technical reports. The report should also analyse possible impacts on innovation.

(6) The report should better explain the views and positions of different stakeholder groups. It should report on both the majority and the dissenting views and explain how it has taken the latter into account.

The Board notes the estimated costs and benefits of the preferred option in this initiative, as summarised in the attached quantification tables.

Some more technical comments have been sent directly to the author DG.

(D) Conclusion

The DG must revise the report in accordance with the Board's findings before launching the interservice consultation.

If there are any changes in the choice or design of the preferred option in the final version of the report, the DG may need to further adjust the attached quantification tables to reflect this.

Full title	Proposal for a strengthened EU governments' interoperability policy
Reference number	PLAN/2020/7507
Submitted to RSB on	17 December 2021
Date of RSB meeting	19 January 2022

ANNEX: Quantification tables extracted from the draft impact assessment report

The following tables contain information on the costs and benefits of the initiative on which the Board has given its opinion, as presented above.

If the draft report has been revised in line with the Board's recommendations, the content of these tables may be different from those in the final version of the impact assessment report, as published by the Commission.

<i>I. Overview of Benefits (total for all provisions) – Preferred Option</i>		
<i>Description</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Comments</i>
<i>Direct benefits (total EU-27)</i>		
Saved hours	2,381,071	The yearly average of saved hours for citizens in the EU using interoperable digital public services both nationally and cross-borders
Administrative costs savings	EUR 3,744,537,503	The yearly average of administrative costs savings for businesses operating cross-borders in the EU-27
Administrative costs savings	EUR 4,167,811,294	The yearly average of administrative costs savings for public administrations in the EU-27 from reducing duplications in their work and being better equipped to interact with one another.

<i>II. Overview of costs – Preferred option</i>							
		Citizens/Consumers		Businesses		Administrations (total EU-27)	
		One-off	Recurrent	One-off	Recurrent	One-off	Recurrent
Action (a)	Direct costs	0	0	0	0	Between EUR 475,195,045 and EUR 518,515,101 ¹	Between EUR 95,039,009 and EUR 103,703,020 ²
	Indirect costs						

¹ There is a range depending on the degree of alignment of the Member State with the current EIF, for the countries which are already fully aligned costs are lower than for those not yet aligned. See method in the [CEPS - Study supporting the impact assessment for a future interoperability strategy](#) p. 136 Table 36, and p. 138 for Policy Option 2

² Recurrent costs are estimated at 20% of initial costs in line with practices in the ICT industry



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 21.01.2022

SEC(2022) 720 final

REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD OPINION

Evaluation of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF)

{COM(2022) 720 final}

{SWD(2022) 720 final}

{SWD(2022) 721 final}

{SWD(2022) 722 final}



Brussels,
RSB

Opinion

Title: Evaluation of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF)

Overall opinion: POSITIVE

(A) Policy context

Interoperability is the ability of organisations to interact and share information and knowledge at all levels in a seamless manner, in particular through their IT systems. Member States and the EU have been working for more than two decades to support the modernisation of administrations through digital transformation.

A European Interoperability Framework (EIF) has been in place for more than 15 years. It aims to support governments in building integrated public services. It contains a set of principles, models and recommendations to guide public administrations in the design and provision of interoperable public services. The latest EIF was put in place in 2017. In parallel, the Interoperability solutions for public administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA) and ISA² programmes were in place in 2011-2015 and 2016-2020, aiming to implement the EIF at operational level.

This evaluation of the EIF was carried out simultaneously with an impact assessment for a proposal for a strengthened interoperability policy to extend the EIF.

(B) Summary of findings

The Board notes the additional information provided in advance of the meeting, as well as the commitments to make changes to the report.

The Board gives a positive opinion. The Board also considers that the report should further improve with respect to the following aspects:

- (1) The scope of the EIF is unclear. The report does not clearly outline the areas covered by interoperability principles and solutions, in particular whether the focus is on cross-border interoperability or on national frameworks, and which stakeholders the initiative targets.**
- (2) The evaluation lacks concrete examples to illustrate the achievements of the EIF, whether in a specific sector, policy area or Member State, or at EU level.**
- (3) The evaluation does not clearly identify the specific contributions of interoperability, and of the EIF specifically, as opposed to broader benefits of the**

This opinion concerns a draft evaluation which may differ from the final version.

digitalisation of public services.

- (4) The analysis of costs and benefits does not sufficiently explain why cost data are difficult to quantify, and whether this is the case for all aspects of interoperability.**

(C) What to improve

(1) The scope of the EIF and the definition of the concept of interoperability, as understood in this context, should be made clearer and presented in more detail. In particular, the report should clarify whether the EIF aims to cover mainly cross-border interoperability between Member States, or also within national frameworks and with citizens and enterprises. It should clarify possible dependencies between different levels of interoperability and to what extent spillover effects were envisaged. The fields covered by interoperability should also be outlined better, including not only IT systems but also broader organisational, legal and governance elements and how these are impacted by the adoption of the framework. The report should also discuss citizen and business needs, in line with the rationale of the ‘once only’ principle.

(2) The evaluation should illustrate interoperability and its effects with concrete examples, drawing on achievements from particular sectors or from Member States, which can be directly attributed to interoperability and the implementation of the EIF. More generally, the report should aim to make the link between high-level definitions and concrete outcomes, ideally including measurable outputs stemming directly from the initiative.

(3) While recognising that interoperability is not implemented on its own, the evaluation should try to better distinguish between the effects of interoperability and of digitalisation in general. It should also distinguish between the effects of EU cross-border interoperability and of national or local interoperability. In the econometric analysis presented, the evaluation needs to clarify possible correlations between digitalisation and interoperability and the extent to which it is possible to disentangle the two effects in the estimates. Following the above, the report should be clearer about the limitations of estimating the costs of interoperability, as opposed to the costs of digital transformation in general. Where costs can be identified, they should be presented clearly and where they cannot, the reasons for this limitation should be analysed.

(4) The tools that allow monitoring and measurement of the level of implementation of the EIF principles should be presented and used to analyse or illustrate progress in concrete sectors or Member States.

Some more technical comments have been sent directly to the author DG.

(D) Conclusion

The DG may proceed.

The DG must take these recommendations into account before launching the interservice consultation.

Full title

Evaluation of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF)

Reference number	PLAN/2020/7507
Submitted to RSB on	17 December 2021
Date of RSB meeting	19 January 2022