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REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD OPINION

Evaluation of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF)

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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)

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