

Working towards interoperable European public administrations

By Julian Micallef

National administrations in Europe have a long history behind them. And while contact and cooperation on various fronts was never far away, the EU project has made them work more closely in the interest of European society.

The right to free movement across the Union has encouraged many citizens to travel, work, study, retire or simply move to another Member State. This movement has naturally brought into contact citizens and administrations of different backgrounds, with the consequence that not all procedures can be seen through as smoothly as desired. The introduction of electronic communication has also presented the risk of creating further obstacles, presenting some problems for businesses and citizens on the move.

Most Member States have agreed that cooperation is required on this front. A number of programmes are currently in place in the field of information and communication technology. These mainly consist of the IDABC (Interoperable Delivery of European eGovernment Services to Aministrations, Businesses and Citizens) and the ICT Policy Support Programme within the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP).

The IDABC shall come to a conclusion by the end of December 2009. Given its success, the European Commission has recently proposed a follow-up programme called ISA (Interoperability Solutions for European Public Administrations), which will run until 2015. It shall focus on the facilitation of electronic cross-border and cross-sector interactions between European public administrations, by supporting the implementation of technological solutions already in place. This will complement the CIP-funded programme which is looking for potential solutions.

The amount of EU funding allocated for this programme during the current financial framework is of €103.5 million. In all, by 2015, it is expected to cost more than €160 million.

As e-government practices continue to increase and develop, inter-operability becomes more necessary. It may not be easy, since no singular system exists, but programmes such as these should continue setting the pace to achieve it. The relevant proposal may be accessed online via:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0583:FIN:EN:PDF>.

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