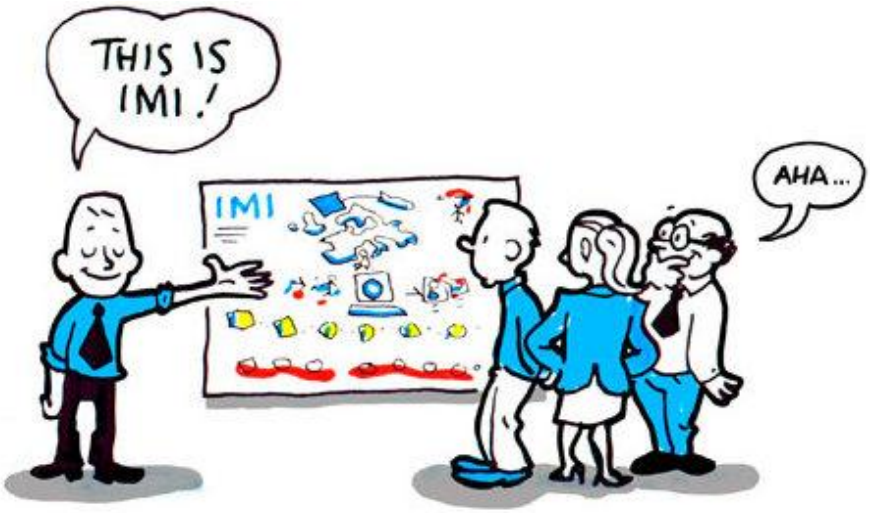
IMI Basics

1. INTRODUCTION 2

2. BASICS 2

2.1. WHAT IS THE IMI SYSTEM? 2
2.2. HOW DOES IMI WORK? 3
2.3. OVERCOMING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER 3
2.4. WHO DOES WHAT IN IMI? 4
2.4.1. COMPETENT AUTHORITIES 4
2.4.2. IMI COORDINATORS 4
2.4.3. EUROPEAN COMMISSION 5



1. INTRODUCTION

The **Internal Market Information System (IMI)** is a secure online tool enabling national, regional and local authorities to communicate quickly and easily with their counterparts in other EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway. This guide outlines how it works and who does what in IMI.

To use IMI, go to: **http://ec.europa.eu/imi-net**.

This website provides the link to the **IMI system** and to **training materials & guidance** on how to use IMI, including:

- **IMI training database** (an identical copy of IMI but without any real data)
- **FAQs** and **glossary**
- a set of **guidelines**.

Because IMI consists of different building blocks, you don't need to read the whole guidelines, but can go straight to the function you need.

Help on specific steps in the process of using IMI is available in the system through a series of 'info points', clickable icons that display additional information about specific fields. For more **help**, or to give **feedback** – contact your **National IMI Coordinator (NIMIC)** – the person responsible for running IMI in your country. Depending on the organisational structure in your country, your NIMIC may have set up a national IMI helpdesk or some decentralised support points. For contact details, see the link to 'Helpdesks' in the IMI application.

If **you are a NIMIC** and cannot solve a problem, you can:

- e-mail the Commission helpdesk at imi-helpdesk@ec.europa.eu
- phone +32-2-29-55470.

2. BASICS

2.1. WHAT IS THE IMI SYSTEM?

It is a tool designed to help authorities in EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway **share information** with each other (and sometimes with the European Commission), as required under certain EU legislation on the single market.

So far, IMI can be used in the **following areas**:

2.2. HOW DOES IMI WORK?

IMI helps authorities **locate their counterparts** in other countries and **communicate** with them quickly and efficiently.

It helps overcome barriers to communication such as differences in administrative structures or language (*see section 2.3 below*) and difficulties in identifying counterparts in other EEA countries[1].

IMI comprises individual building blocks that can be used independently. They are:

- A **directory of authorities** registered in IMI and responsible for exchanging information in the context of particular single market legislation. You can search **in any official EU language**.

- A workflow for **requesting information** from another authority.

  - This uses **standard sets of pre-translated questions & answers** based on the concerned EU legislation.
  - Users can attach documents and monitor and follow up pending information requests.

- A workflow for sending, receiving and disseminating **notifications & alerts**.

- **Information repositories** which are databases containing information relating to different policy areas. They provide a centralised way of sharing information.

2.3. OVERCOMING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

To make it easier for authorities in different countries to communicate, IMI works with standard (predefined and pre-translated) forms and questions & answers, available in **all official EU languages**.

Example – a civil servant working for an Italian authority can select a series of questions in Italian and send them as a request for information to Hungary. The Hungarian authorities read them in Hungarian and select their reply in Hungarian. The Italian authority then receives the reply in Italian.

For more complex cases, authorities can provide further details in **free text**. If you have to do this, write **as clearly as possible** and in **short sentences**.

To help you further, IMI provides 2 types of language support:

- it shows **which languages** the users in each authority **understand** (*try to choose one of these whenever possible*)

- it offers **machine translation** for any free text from and into any official EU language.

[1] EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (EEA = European Economic Area)

⚠ Automatic translations can give you the **rough gist** of a text only. If you need a more precise version for any reason (e.g. legal purposes), you may still need to obtain an official translation.

2.4. WHO DOES WHAT IN IMI?

2.4.1. COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

The main actors in IMI are the competent authorities in the various EEA countries[2], who exchange and share information via the system. These may be public sector bodies or private bodies tasked with applying single market legislation. And they can be national, regional or local.

2.4.2. IMI COORDINATORS

Under the IMI Regulation[3] each EEA country must have one National IMI Coordinator (NIMIC). National governments may appoint additional IMI Coordinators to coordinate part or all of:

- a particular area of legislation
- an administrative division
- a geographical region etc.

IMI coordinators may have the following **responsibilities**:

- **registering** other authorities in the system
- acting as the main **contact point** for IMI users in their country, and also for the Commission
- giving IMI users in their country **information**, **training** and **support**, including basic technical assistance
- making sure IMI operates smoothly (which includes responding appropriately and in good time to requests for information).

Like competent authorities, IMI Coordinators may also exchange information with other authorities registered in IMI.

[2] EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (EEA = European Economic Area)

[3] Regulation (EU) N° 1024/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System and repealing Commission Decision 2008/49/EC ('the IMI Regulation')

2.4.3. EUROPEAN COMMISSION

For IMI, the Commission:

- has a legal obligation to play a role in particular types of information exchange (e.g. notifications about services or professional qualifications)
- hosts and maintains the system
- translates the system's standard questions and responses
- runs a central helpdesk to assist Member States in using IMI.

For more on the various parties involved in IMI, see the guidelines on IMI roles and responsibilities.