**Check against delivery**

# <u>Speech of Commissioner Günther H. Oettinger</u>

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to be here and to speak to you today. Today, that we inaugurate officially the new EU programme on Interoperability, the ISA$^2$-Programme.

We live in a world which is becoming more and more complex and interconnected. We live in a world where information is a precious asset. In such an environment, we need to exchange information to move, live and trade in Europe. It is crucial that the means by which we exchange information are interoperable and, obviously, digital.

The Commission has presented in May 2015 the Digital Single Market strategy. It does not come by surprise that the public sector is given a prominent role in it: It is indeed the focus of several priority actions.

The public sector plays a key role in the economy as regulator, service provider and employer. It accounts for over 25 % of total employment and almost 50% of the EU GDP. An efficient and productive public sector can be a strong driver of economic growth – and it can make Europe a more attractive place to invest in.

At a time when governments are trying to ensure financial consolidation, there is a strong justification for efficiency gains, better governance, faster delivery and a more user-centric public sector.

Years of work around themes such as interoperability, digital public services, open data, cloud computing and social innovation have brought within reach a suite of mature concepts and tools. Thanks to the tangible results of the ISA programme, the potential for interlinked, cooperative and open governments is now high.

There is today a common understanding among Member States on interoperability. There is also a stated will to move further and revise and extend the applicable framework to better support Member States in implementing interoperability. It is the foundation for end-to-end digital public services for citizens and businesses without borders and barriers. This is why the Commission will come forward with a revised and extended European Interoperability Framework (EIF) in autumn this year.

Of course, interoperability is also supporting a large number of other DSM actions like the "free flow of data", the "interconnection of business registers", the "track and trace" of cross-border parcel delivery, the "big data interoperability" or the new "e-Government Action Plan".

The ISA$^2$ programme will have an instrumental role to play in the development of interoperability in the next 5 years and, consequently, in the realisation of these and other actions. It will do so by building on the success of previous programmes but will also go a step further, to reach the last link between public administrations, businesses and citizens.

**Public administrations – Industry, SMEs and citizens**

Member States should create an environment for innovation, for SMEs and start-ups to thrive. Public administrations can contribute to that through high-quality digital services to facilitate interactions with the least possible overhead. This will reduce administrative burden and cut down red-tape. It will release resources and increase productivity both for the private and public sectors.

Member States should also modernise their public administrations, open-up their data, digitise their services, upgrade skills and prepare their staff and citizens for the future.

This way, the public sector can create an investment-friendly environment and become part of the recovery of the Union's economy.

I will give you some examples of what I mean.

Companies, domestic or foreign, should have a "single access point" at the national or European public administrations and pick the service they want to use from an easily searchable "catalogue of services".

The delivery of this service should be seamless. By "seamless", I mean that any transaction, for example a request for certificate, is delivered "end-to-end". The administration does all that is necessary to honour the request for service without requiring the contribution of the company again, regardless of how many back-offices are involved in the process. This may include that company data already collected in the past by a public entity are reused if needed and do not have to be submitted again. This way the administration applies the "once-only" principle for data submission.

Citizens, too, should be able to use similar services based on the same principles. Both citizens and businesses should be able to access their own data, often residing in "base registries", online in a secure and trusted manner.

Benefits are obvious. The number of unnecessary transactions with public administrations will decrease. Speed and quality of digital services will build a new culture in the way citizens and businesses interact with the public sector. Access to and management of personal and business data will create trust.

For all this to occur, interoperability is key. It guarantees that administrations are well connected and information can easily flow between them without restrictions, technical, organisational or geographical.

The new ISA$^2$ programme will continue developing and promoting solutions that support interoperability and that are conditional for the delivery of seamless cross-sector and cross-border services.

**Interoperability and Data**

Today, the need of "good quality data" in making decisions, forecasting changes and events, driving innovation, doing business is universally recognised.

A large amount of data is being created, hosted and archived by public administrations. This data should be made openly available, subject of course to certain confidentiality conditions.

The importance of Open Data is globally recognised by the G8 in their Open Data Charter. And the European Union is at the forefront of opening up public sector resources for reuse with the "Public Sector Information" Directive.

Opening up the data in a meaningful way for everyone requires an increased level of interoperability.

ISA has been supported the Public Sector Information Directive and has delivered solutions for opening, sharing and exchanging data and metadata. ISA² will now continue and enforce these activities.

The Member States and the industry are also active in this field, for example:

- Austria has a web portal to which private actors can contribute, with data they want to make openly available;
- The Digital Republic law in France requires certain private actors to make data available as Open Data;
- Commercial transportation companies such as "Transport for London" or "Lufthansa" are opening up their data for applications' developers;
- In the pharma industry, the EU-funded OpenPhacts platform encourages sharing of pre-commercial data among pharmaceutical industries so as to speed up innovation.

However, the rise of the Open Data era comes along with certain deficiencies.

Different Open Data initiatives are accompanied by the development of dedicated web-portals, "**Open Data Portals**", throughout Europe. Today, there are more than 300 of them, mostly in their national language and often using incompatible descriptions of the data they host.

Finding and exploiting public Open Data is particularly difficult for smaller companies and individual developers. This is due to data disparity, bad quality and incompatible formats and descriptions.

The pan-European Open Data portal is an answer to this. Thanks to the support of the ISA programme, it aggregates and publishes information about all public Open Data in Europe in one single multilingual web-portal.

**Interoperability and standards**

Interoperability together with standardisation have been recognised in the Digital Single Market Strategy as key factors for boosting competitiveness in the Union.

Standardisation plays an important role in the development of the European industry. Domains such as manufacturing, construction, data-driven services, cloud services, cybersecurity, e-health, e-transport and mobile payments make vast use of standards.

The EU Rolling Plan for ICT Standardisation is an essential instrument in this regard and interoperability solutions are part of it. Indeed, standardisation is a precondition for interoperability, a "must" to ensure effective communication between digital components and applications, devices and networks, to connect better along the supply-chain and between the industry and the public administrations.

The use of existing standards can be increased by integrating them in the market solutions. Suppliers need to embrace this approach.

Public procurement plays an important role in promoting standards and Member States have created national catalogues of ICT-standards and interoperability specifications to guide public procurers and accelerate the adoption of standards on national markets.

Integrating these catalogues at EU level would avoid market fragmentation in the European Union.

The ISA$^2$ programme will link with standardisation bodies so that interoperability specifications for the public sector are considered for standardisation and taken on board by market players.

**Interoperability and security**

As you have heard this morning from our Japanese invitees, interoperability shows all its relevance when public administrations are faced with crisis situations, where working in silos is not an option. No matter whether it is about natural or human-

triggered catastrophes, cyber-attacks and the like, interoperability is crucial to join the forces of the various administrative entities involved in the handling of those crises.

Interoperability among actors in the same policy sector is a reality today. Where it has to be further developed is when it comes to situations requiring diverse public entities from different sectors to work together.

**Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, there is huge potential for the $ISA^2$ programme to deliver interoperable solutions supporting the modernisation of European public administrations at all levels. This way we shall enable the implementation of user-centric seamless digital public services.

Public sector was and will always be part of the solution and a key success factor for building the Europe we want. With the new programme we have to provide the right tools to public administrations to deliver efficient and effective digital public services across sector and borders.

Representatives from the private and the public sector have shown us how interoperability has enabled the implementation of solutions in a wide spectrum of domains.

Global challenges require multidisciplinary approaches. And these multidisciplinary approaches must be supported by interoperability. I am happy to say that this fact is today widely recognised and embraced at all levels.

I have high expectations for the $ISA^2$ programme that we launch today and I will be following closely the developments on interoperability.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I call on all of you to help us boost interoperability as a valuable asset for the European economy.

Thank you.