FACTUAL SUMMARY

OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO ASSESS THE IMPACTS OF THE REVISION OF THE

EUROPEAN INTEROPERABILITY FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

1   METHODOLOGY OF THE CONSULTATION

The Commission ran a 12 weeks open public consultation on the revision of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) from 06.04.2016 to 29.06.2016. This consultation, translated in three languages[1] in the form of online questionnaire, targeted (i) citizens, (ii) businesses/ private organisations, (iii) public administrations, and (iv) research centres, academic institutions, standardisation organisations and businesses supplying services to public administrations (referred to as 'academia' in the remaining of the report). It sought to detect the needs and problems faced by stakeholders with regards to interoperability and the implementation of the EIF and EIS, identify the expected revision's impacts, and collect feedback on the EU added-value and coherence of the initiative. The open public consultation was promoted through the ISA website, during conferences as well as on Twitter.

2   RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

In total, 179 replies came through the open public consultations. More specifically, those were:

- 31 public administrations from 16 Member States (MSs): BE(1), CZ(2), DE(1), EE (1), EL(2), ES (4), FR(2), HR (1), HU (2), IT (1), NL(4), PT(1), SK (2), SE (3), SI (1), UK(1), Norway (1) and Turkey (1);
- 113 citizens from 19 MSs: AT (4), BE (4), DE (6), EL (3), ES (11), FI (2), FR (21), HR (1), IE (3), IT (13), LU (1), NL (7), PL (8), PT (2), RO (2), SE (4), SI (1), SK(1), UK (17), Norway (1) and Moldavia (1);
- 13 businesses/ private organisations established in 9 MSs registered in the Transparency register: AT (1), BE(3), DE (2), ES (1), FR (2), HU (1), IT (1), SE (1), UK (1);
- 4 businesses/ private organisations established in 4 MSs not registered in the Transparency register: AT (1), BG (1), DE (1), IT (1);
- 18 answers from academia based in 13 MSs: AT(3), BE (1), BG(1), DE (2), EL(1), FR(1), HU(1), IT (1), NL (1), PT(1), SE (1), SK (1), UK(1), Iceland (1) and one international organisation (OECD).

Prior to presenting the results of the open public consultation, it should be noted that the majority of the stakeholders consulted (139 respondents, 77%) tend to consider themselves as aware of the EIS, EIF and their respective content, at least partially.

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[1] The open public consultation was available in three languages: French, English and German.

3   MAIN ASPECTS AND PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS

The following aspects were addressed by the open public consultation:

- Assessment of the needs and problems on interoperability;
- Future evolution of the EIF;
- Future evolution of the EIS;
- Subsidiarity and coherence at EU level.

The analysis of each aspect includes the main views of each stakeholder group.

3.1   Assessment of the needs and problems on interoperability

Most citizens[2] use digital public services provided by their country's administrations and tend to prefer using these over other means[3] (e.g. post, phone calls or physical presence). Similarly, interoperating with public administrations at national level is considered as very important or rather important for the majority of businesses/ private organisations[4].

On the other hand, most respondents from the citizens group (72 respondents, 64%) declared not having had the need to interact with public administrations located in another country than their own in the last year and a large majority (64 respondents, 57%) never used cross-border public services during that period.

Furthermore, 43 citizens (38%), 13 academia[5] (72%) and 10[6] businesses/ private organisations (59%) agree that public services should become all fully digitised, to have citizens and businesses interacting with the public administrations electronically instead of other channels. Businesses/ private organisations (10[7] respondents, 59%) and academia (11 respondents, 61%) also highlighted the need for a common approach for standards and specifications, from the different digital public services available for use via their IT systems.

Interoperability at national level appears to be a priority for the most of the public administrations (94%). However, 10 public administrations (42%) consider that there is a limited need from their national citizens, businesses and/or administrations for digital cross-border public services. Along with that, 13 public administrations (54%) mentioned that cross-border interoperability was not a priority in the political agenda of their country. This was assessed as a main problem impeding the implementation of interoperability by 14 academia answers (78%).

Additional problems were identified by stakeholders with regards to interoperability, at national level and/or across borders. The following ones were mentioned by the majority of at least one target group:

- The lack of resources (financial and human) for implementing interoperability;
- The absence of single binding policy within the area of interoperability across sectors;
- The lack of a consolidated view on all the existing interoperability initiatives;
- The lack of standards to sufficiently ensure interoperability, or the fact that standards, even if available, are not enough integrated in the various solutions;
- The fact that costs and benefits of interoperability are not assessed when developing national legislation;
- The lack of monitoring of interoperability initiatives implementation;
- The use of proprietary IT solutions by public administrations, often creating a situation of vendor lock-in; and
- The fact that national portals tend to be fragmented and not sufficiently integrated with EU portals.

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[2] When 'Citizens' is mentioned in this section, it refers to the 113 citizens who replied to the open public consultation.
[3] A total of 48 citizens (42%) declared that they 'occasionally' used the digital public services provided by their country's administrations, 43 respondents (38%) did so 'frequently' and 8 respondents (7%) 'always' used them during the last year.
[4] When 'Businesses/ Private organisations' is mentioned in this report, it refers to all 17 Businesses/ Private organisations who replied to the open public consultation. When applicable the views of the registered and unregistered businesses/ private organisations will be presented separately.
[5] When 'Academia' is mentioned in this section, it refers to the 18 academia who replied to the open public consultation.
[6] This number includes eight businesses/ private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as two unregistered businesses/ private organisations.
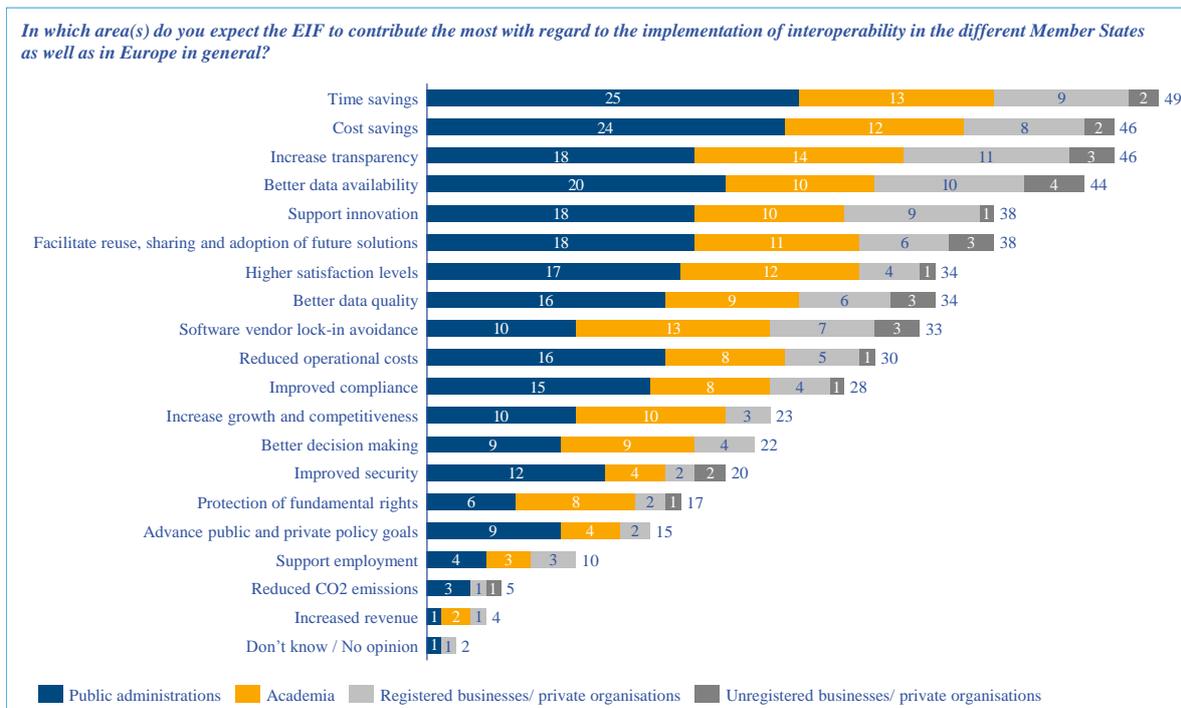[7] This number includes seven businesses/ private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as three unregistered businesses/ private organisations.

3.2 Future evolution of the EIF

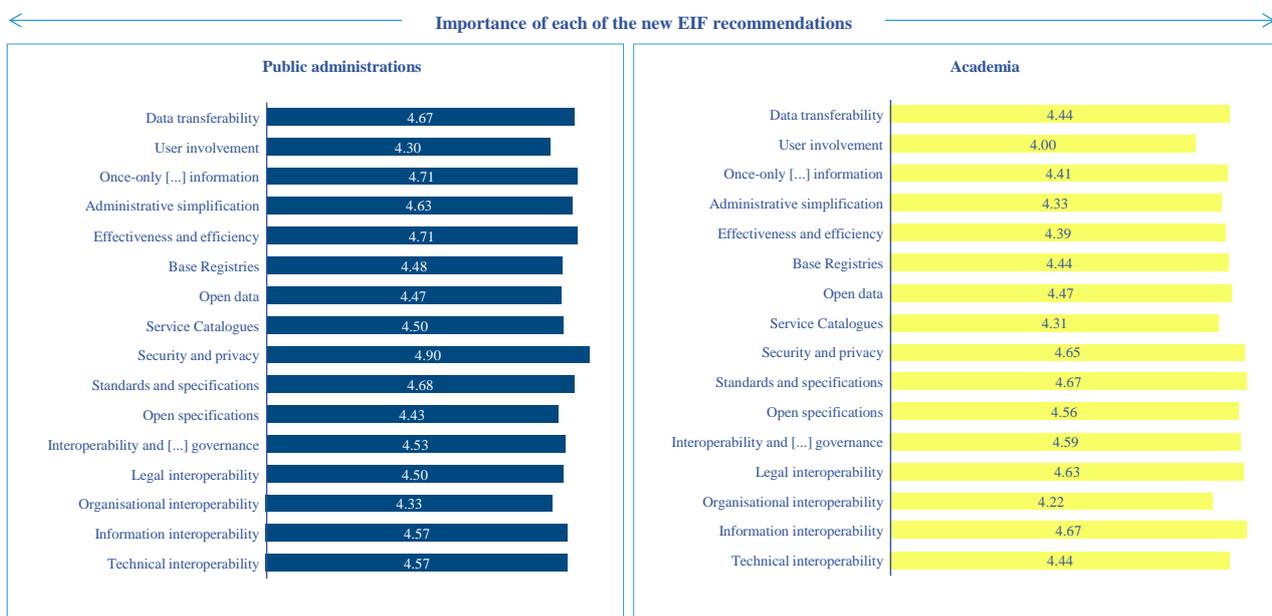### 3.2.1 Level of importance of the EIF recommendations

Overall, more than half of the respondents in each target group expect the new EIF to contribute to (i) Time savings (49 respondents, 74%); (ii) Cost savings and Increase transparency (46 respondents, 70%); (iii) Better data availability (44 respondents, 67%); and Support innovation and Facilitate reuse, sharing and adoption of future solutions (38 respondents, 58%), as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 EIF areas of contribution

In which area(s) do you expect the EIF to contribute the most with regard to the implementation of interoperability in the different Member States as well as in Europe in general?

	Public administrations	Academia	Registered businesses/ private organisations	Unregistered businesses/ private organisations	Total
Time savings	25	13	9	2	49
Cost savings	24	12	8	2	46
Increase transparency	18	14	11	3	46
Better data availability	20	10	10	4	44
Support innovation	18	10	9	1	38
Facilitate reuse, sharing and adoption of future solutions	18	11	6	3	38
Higher satisfaction levels	17	12	4	1	34
Better data quality	16	9	6	3	34
Software vendor lock-in avoidance	10	13	7	3	33
Reduced operational costs	16	8	5	1	30
Improved compliance	15	8	4	1	28
Increase growth and competitiveness	10	10	3		23
Better decision making	9	9	4		22
Improved security	12	4	2	2	20
Protection of fundamental rights	6	8	2	1	17
Advance public and private policy goals	9	4	2		15
Support employment	4	3	3		10
Reduced CO2 emissions	3	1	1		5
Increased revenue	1	2	1		4
Don't know / No opinion	1	1			2

Along with its areas of contributions, the level of importance of each EIF recommendation was assessed by public administrations, academia and businesses/ private organisations with regard to the benefits they may generate in the context of interoperability at EU level. The scale ranged from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). The allocated importance for public administrations and academia is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Estimated importance of each of the new EIF recommendations

Importance of each of the new EIF recommendations

	Public administrations	Academia
Data transferability	4.67	4.44
User involvement	4.30	4.00
Once-only [...] information	4.71	4.41
Administrative simplification	4.63	4.33
Effectiveness and efficiency	4.71	4.39
Base Registries	4.48	4.44
Open data	4.47	4.47
Service Catalogues	4.50	4.31
Security and privacy	4.90	4.65
Standards and specifications	4.68	4.67
Open specifications	4.43	4.56
Interoperability and [...] governance	4.53	4.59
Legal interoperability	4.50	4.63
Organisational interoperability	4.33	4.22
Information interoperability	4.57	4.67
Technical interoperability	4.57	4.44

For most of public administrations and academia the new EIF recommendations are considered between 'Rather important' and 'Very important'. Some concerns were however raised regarding the recommendations on openness (e.g. only applicable to the public, open specifications should be considered on a case-by-case basis based on users' needs), user involvement (e.g. difficulty to engage the right stakeholders, the added-value of user involvement only stands for some digital services), legal interoperability and base registers (e.g. providing cross-border access to base registers may present a risk for data protection), and technical interoperability (e.g. the focus should be on what is exchanged and not on how it is exchanged).

Similar was the outcome for businesses/ private organisations. The importance of all proposed EIF recommendations was rated at least with 4, in descending order: technical interoperability; effectiveness and efficiency; security and privacy; standards and specifications; interoperability and public services governance; administrative simplification; information interoperability; once-only submission of information; open data; open specifications; organisational interoperability and data transferability. The main concerns related to data transferability, base registers, legal and information interoperability and the application of the once-only principle since some respondents fear that cross-border access to and free transfer of data between base registers can present risks due to major differences with respect to registration procedures, quality and legal value of the data registered in the different national registers as well as legal concepts. In fact, according to them, the free flow of information should be encouraged only if the requirements of data protection are respected and the data safety absolutely guaranteed.

3.2.2 EIF recommendations to implement as a priority

Respondents were further asked to identify the EIF recommendations that should be implemented in priority within their administrations in order to better achieve interoperability during the period 2017-2020. Figure 3 gives a view on the answers received from public administrations, EU institutions/ agencies, academia and businesses/ private organisations.

The EIF recommendations that should be implemented in priority, as quoted by the majority of the target groups, are related to (i) security and privacy, (ii) openness and transparency, and (iii) administrative simplification. On the other hand, the recommendations related to (i) organisational interoperability, (ii) public services governance, (iii) services catalogue, (iv) legal interoperability, and (v) effectiveness and efficiency received (on average) the lowest implementation priority.

**Figure 3 Priorities among EIF recommendations**
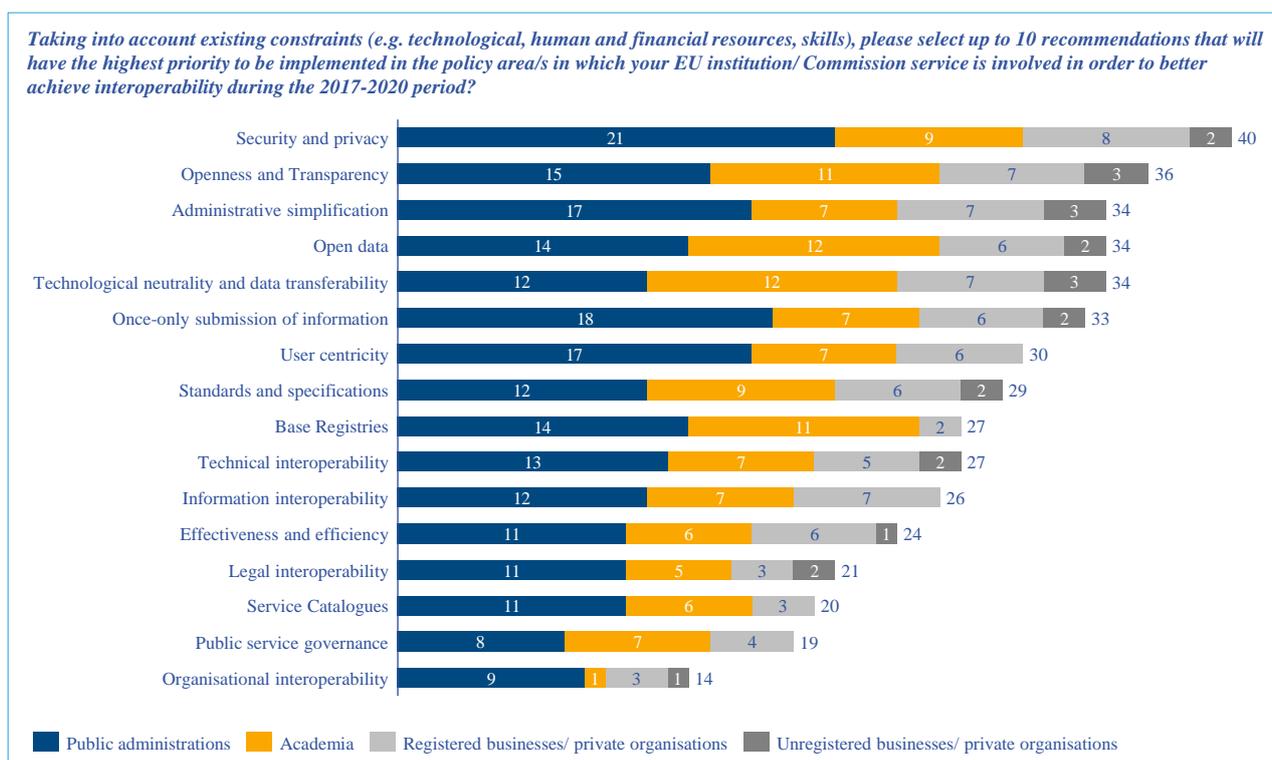
3.2.3 Users' needs

The majority of the comments raised by citizens on the draft revised EIF were related to the need for openness (i.e. open data, open standards, open file formats, open source projects) and transparency. Three businesses/ private organisations (18%), two public administrations (6%) and two academia (11%) also mentioned the importance to refer to open standards, conforming to the definition presented in the current version of the EIF.

Furthermore, one business/ private organisation (6%) and one public administration (3%) believe that further inputs could be added on standardisation, by e.g. making a reference to the European Catalogue of ICT Standards or encouraging public administrations to adopt best practices in the field of standards.

3.3 Future evolution of the EIS

Most of the public administrations (25) and academia (16) agreed that the vision for a revised EIS should be "*By 2020, citizens and businesses should benefit by interoperable user-centric digital public services, at national and EU levels, which support the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons throughout the Union*" as shown on Figure 4. Those disagreeing with the vision perceive the timeline as too ambitious considering the target objective. Another respondent stated that "in many cases it would be more efficient to build EU-level central digital public services instead of interoperable national digital public services".

Figure 4 EIS Vision[8]

Do you agree that the vision for a revised EIS should be "By 2020, citizens and businesses should benefit by interoperable user-centric digital public services, at national and EU levels, which support the free movement of goods, services, capital and persons throughout the Union"?

	Public administrations	Academia	Total
Yes	25	16	41
No	4	2	6
Don't know / No opinion	2		2
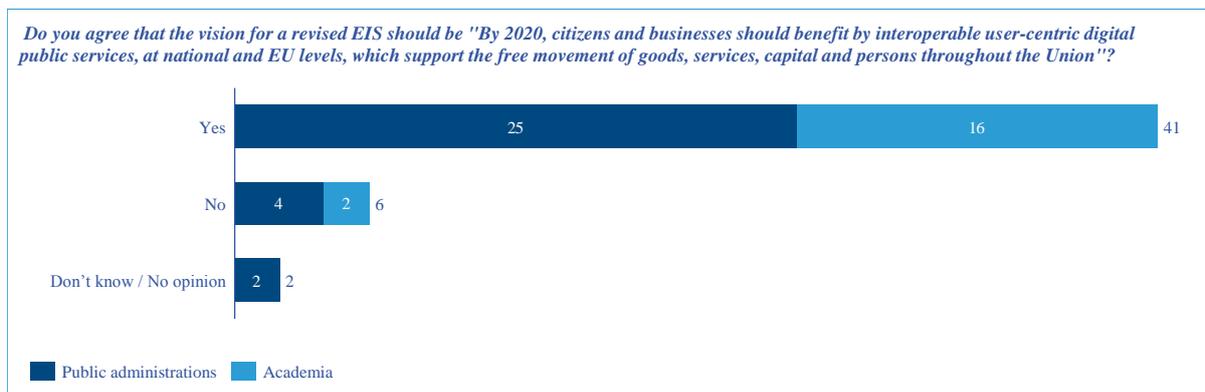
When asked how important it would be for their businesses/ private organisations to benefit from interoperable digital public services, at national and EU levels by 2020, the majority of businesses/ private organisations answered 'Very important' (nine[9] respondents, 53%) and 'Rather important' (seven[10] respondents, 41%). The remaining business/ private organisation having answered to the open public consultation (6%)[11] consider it as 'Neither important nor unimportant'.

When it comes to the actions that may generate benefits in the context of interoperability at EU level, public administrations consider all actions between 'Rather important' and 'Very important', with security and privacy support activities receiving the highest score. As for academia, these are (i) actions to ensure that interoperability requirements and solutions are taken into account when preparing and evaluating legislation at EU and national level and (ii) data is transferrable between the European public services without restrictions, as well as (iii) support activities related to access to European/national Base Registries and to security and data protection issues of public services.

As for the actions proposed by the EIS, on average, for public administrations and academia most actions to be implemented at national level were considered between 'Rather important' and 'Very important'.

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[8] The question was not addressed to Citizens and Businesses/ private organisations.
[9] This number includes eight businesses/ private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as one unregistered business/ private organisation.
[10] This number includes five businesses/ private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as two unregistered businesses/ private organisations.
[11] This number refers to one unregistered business/ private organisation.

Businesses/ private organisations were given a shorter list of actions[12], i.e. those considered relevant to the target group. Businesses/ private organisations consider that the most important actions to be applied, whether in their country or in the context of cross-border interoperability, with regard to the benefits that it will generate for them, is to support activities related to security and data protection of public services. Such action would facilitate the flow of information among national, regional and local administrations and between them and businesses and citizens.

Finally, the stakeholders suggested 10 additional actions to be included in the strategy:

- Demonstrate the benefits of interoperability (via real-life examples and success stories) for public administrations, citizens and businesses;
- Define measurable service targets and put in place the necessary organisation and legislation to reach them;
- Include a reference to the EIS in every REFIT of EU legislation;
- Promote the use of (true) open standards and support of standards in new technologies;
- Improve and extend the use of common and shared services;
- Align public procurement practice with the ICT projects' needs;
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation methodology for assessing published interoperability solutions available on Joinup;
- Reinforce follow-up and accompanying initiatives during the implementation of interoperability solutions at national level;
- Use user-research to define the use cases where interoperability is needed to deliver better, specific services that support delivery of the Digital Single Market Strategy and the eGovernment Action Plan;
- Ensure that accessibility is a mandatory criterion when developing interoperability policies, legislation and solutions between public services, citizens and businesses.

3.4 Subsidiarity and coherence at EU level

The revision of the EIF/EIS is perceived as coherent with other EU initiatives and provides a clear added value compared to an action taken at Member State level. 74% of the respondents (26 public administrations, 10 EU institutions/ agencies, 11 academia and 11[13] businesses/ private organisations) agree that the revision of the EIS and the EIF provides a clear added value compared to an action taken at Member State level.

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[12] The list included six actions applicable at national level and seven in the context of cross-border interoperability.
[13] This number includes nine businesses/ private organisations registered in the Transparency register, as well as two unregistered business/ private organisation.