Governance of the DIGITAL Building Block Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs) under the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL)

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to describe the governance model of the DIGITAL Building Block Digital Service Infrastructures[1] (hereafter "DIGITAL Building Blocks") developed under the Digital Europe Programme[2] (hereafter "DIGITAL"). It describes the roles and responsibilities of the European Commission's Directorate Generals (DGs) involved in developing the DIGITAL Building Blocks, the associated funding structure, as well as the governance bodies of the DIGITAL Building Blocks. Thereby, this document ensures transparency towards EU Member States and associated countries[3] (both hereafter referred to as "Member States"), businesses and citizens. This document was prepared based on the Non-paper on the IT Governance of the CEF Building Blocks. The non-paper outlines the Building Block's governance structure under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) (2014-2020), the EU funding programme preceding the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) (2021-2027).

1.2. Scope

The present document describes the IT governance model of those Building Blocks for which the European Commission's Directorate-General for Informatics (hereafter "DG DIGIT"), Unit B.3, has been assigned the responsibility for the Building Block's implementation. Currently, this includes the following Building Blocks**: eDelivery, eSignature, eID, eInvoicing, the Once-Only Technical System (hereafter "OOTS"), and the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (hereafter "EBSI")**. This group of Building Blocks is hereafter referred to as "DIGITAL Building Blocks". A description of the IT governance model for any other Building Block and initiative funded under DIGITAL is out of scope for this document.

1.3. Application

This document has been drafted based on the Commission Work Programme for implementing the Digital Europe Programme in the years 2021 and 2022[4] and 2023 and 2024[5], as well as the corresponding Memoranda of Understanding ("MoUs"), signed between the Commission DGs responsible for implementing the Work Programme. Consequently, it is subject to revision in line with subsequent Work Programmes and MoUs.

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[1] The DIGITAL Building Blocks are basic capabilities that can be reused in any project to facilitate the delivery of digital public services across borders and sectors. More information on the DIGITAL Building Blocks eID, eDelivery, eSignature, and eInvoicing is available on the DIGITAL Website https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/. More information on the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI) is available on the EBSI Website https://ec.europa.eu/ebsi. More information on the Once-Only Technical System (OOTS) is available on the Once-Only Hub https://ec.europa.eu/once-only-hub.

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme and repealing Decision (EU) 2015/2240 (Text with EEA relevance).

[3] European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries that are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement and which have signed the association agreement.

[4] ANNEX to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the multiannual Work Programme for 2021 - 2022 (C(2021) 7914 final).

[5] ANNEX to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the Work Programme for 2023 - 2024 and amending the Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 7914 on the adoption of the multiannual Work Programme for 2021-2022

2. STRUCTURE OF THE DIGITAL EUROPE PROGRAMME (DIGITAL)

This section outlines the Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) and the agreements defining its implementation, which build the framework for work on the DIGITAL Building Blocks and their governance model.

2.1. The Digital Europe Programme and its Work Programmes

The Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) (2021-2027) is an EU funding programme focused on bringing digital technology to businesses, citizens and public administrations. It aims to accelerate the digital transformation of public administrations across Europe and help upskill them. It further aims to facilitate interoperability as a core enabler of Europe's digital autonomy, and foster the uptake of interoperable cross-border and cross-sector public services in alignment with regulatory requirements.

DIGITAL provides funding in five key areas: supercomputing, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, advanced digital skills, and ensuring a wide use of digital technologies across the economy and society. With a planned overall budget of €7.5 billion (in current prices), DIGITAL aims to accelerate the economic recovery and shape the digital transformation of Europe's society and economy, bringing benefits to everyone, but in particular to small and medium-sized enterprises.

DIGITAL sets forth five specific objectives to be achieved through the programme's implementation. The DIGITAL Building Blocks are being developed as part of *Specific Objective 5 - Deployment and Best Use of Digital Capacities and Interoperability*[6]. In total, a budget of €1.07 billion (in current prices) is assigned to this specific objective throughout the 2021 - 2027 programming period, albeit this covers more initiatives than the DIGITAL Building Blocks.

DIGITAL is implemented through Work Programmes - multi-annual programmes that define the overall objectives, scope, outcomes and deliverables, as well as budget allocations for one or several of DIGITAL's specific objectives. The current Work Programme for work on the DIGITAL Building Blocks[7] spans the years 2023-2024 and covers these initiatives in the following chapters:

- **EBSI** is covered in chapter 5.1: *Blockchain*. In total, €10 million are allocated to EBSI.

- **eDelivery, eSignature and eID** are covered in chapter 5.2.1.1. *European Digital Identity and Trust Ecosystem (Standards and Sample Implementation)*. A total of €20 million are allocated to the Ecosystem, although it includes more initiatives than just these Building Blocks.

- **OOTS** is covered in chapter 5.2.1.2.: *Support to the implementation of the European Digital Identity Framework and the implementation of the Once Only System under the Single Digital Gateway Regulation*, with a total of €7.5 million available.

- **eInvoicing** is covered in chapter 5.2.1.3.: *eProcurement and eInvoicing*. In total, €3 million are allocated to this topic, albeit it includes more initiatives than just eInvoicing.

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[6] Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 2021/694.

[7] ANNEX to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the Digital Europe Programme and the adoption of the Work Programme for 2023 - 2024 and amending the Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 7914 on the adoption of the multiannual Work Programme for 2021-2022

2.2. Responsibilities of the European Commission and its Directorate-Generals (DGs)

The European Commission is responsible for implementing the Digital Europe Programme, either through direct or indirect management. Within the Commission, the Directorate-General for Communication Networks, Content and Technology (DG CNECT) is the lead service for the Digital Europe Programme and in this capacity assumes overall coordination for all actions covered by the Programme, including budget, Work Programme preparation and the framework for implementation. In order to manage the practical implementation of the programme, DG CNECT has signed several Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with other Commission DGs. These MoUs define the scope, deliverables, and available budget for realising the objectives set out in the Work Programme. They furthermore define the roles and responsibilities of the involved DGs in producing these deliverables. These roles, as well as the governance bodies established to manage the programme's implementation, are outlined in chapter 3.2.

3. THE GOVERNANCE MODEL OF THE DIGITAL BUILDING BLOCKS

3.1. Governance model: Project Organisation and Roles

The implementation of the DIGITAL Building Blocks is organised according to the European Commission's Project Management Methodology[8] PM^2. This methodology enables Project Managers (PMs) to deliver solutions and benefits to the European Commission through the effective management of project work, and to facilitate the management of the complete lifecycle of projects.

The PM^2 methodology provides a project management governance model, which defines the main layers and roles in the project organisation as follows:

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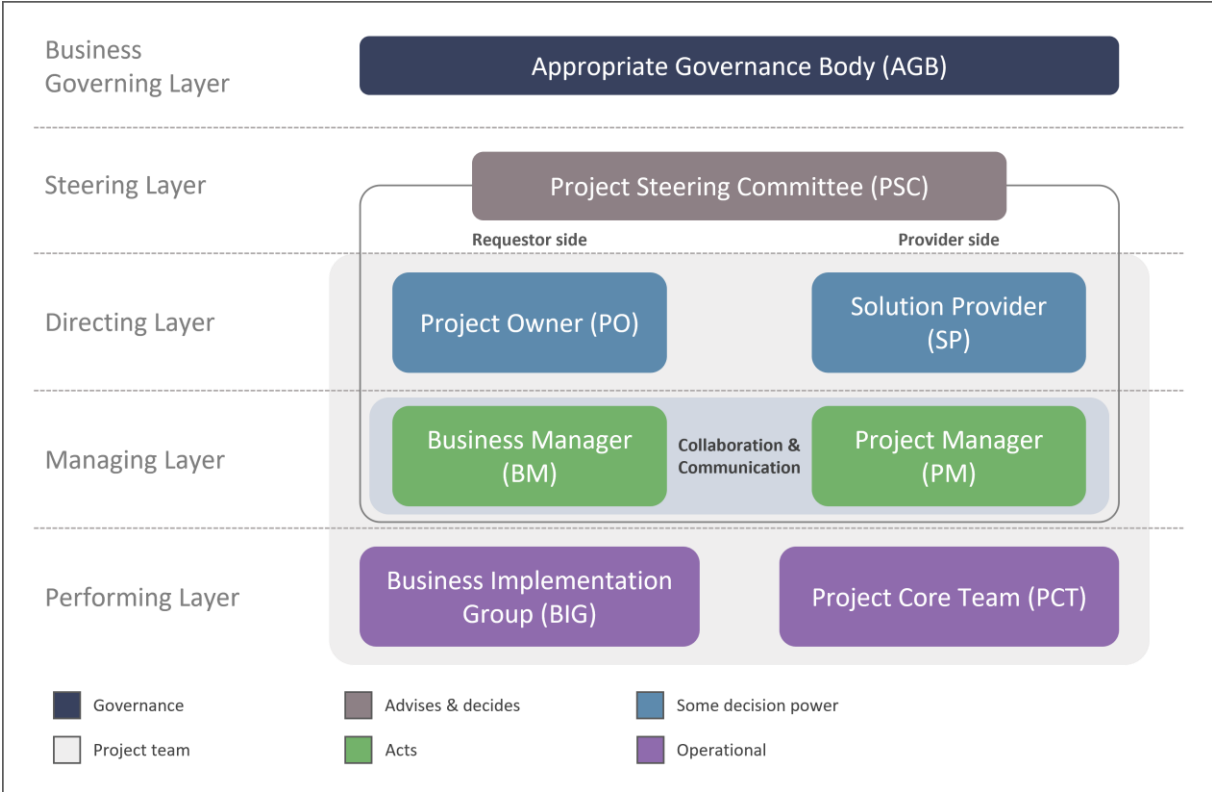
[8] PM^2 Project management methodology. Guide 3.0.1. is available via the European Union's Publications Office at https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b8458be2-821d-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1

3.1.1. *Business Governing Layer*

The Business Governing Layer determines the vision and strategy for the organisation as a whole. It is here that priorities are defined, investment decisions are made, and resources are allocated. The central entity on the Business Governing Layer is the **Appropriate Governance Body (AGB)**, which is responsible for the strategic planning and portfolio management. In terms of projects, this is the body with the authority to approve a project, agree its stated objective and release the funding required to implement it.

3.1.2. *Steering Layer*

The Steering Layer provides general project direction and guidance. It keeps the project focused on its objectives. It reports to the Appropriate Governance Body (AGB). The central entity on the Steering Layer is the **Project Steering Committee**. This Committee is comprised of the project owner and business manager on the requestor side, and the solution provider and project manager on the provider side. Other roles can also participate as per the project's needs. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) is chaired by the Project Owner (PO) and is the key decision-making and issue-resolution body for the project. Any significant decisions that may affect the project or the team's ability to deliver on the objectives will be escalated to the Project Steering Committee (PSC). Approval of key documents, resolution of important project issues or significant change requests will be discussed and decided upon here.

3.1.3. *Directing Layer*

The Directing Layer champions the project and owns its Business Case. It mobilises the necessary resources and monitors the project's performance in order to realise the project's objectives. The Directing Layer comprises the roles of **Project Owner (PO)** and **Solution Provider (SP)**.

- The **Project Owner (PO)** sets the business objectives and ensures that project outcomes are in line with business objectives and priorities. As the key Directing Layer role from the requestor side, the Project Owner (PO) is accountable for the overall project's success, and later becomes the owner of the project's outputs (product or service).

- The **Solution Provider** (SP) assumes overall accountability for project deliverables and represents the interests of those who design, manage and implement the project's deliverables.

3.1.4. *Managing Layer*

The Managing Layer focuses on day-to-day project management. It organises, monitors and controls work to produce the intended deliverables and implement them in the business organisation. The Managing Layer comprises the roles of **Business Manager (BM)** and **Project Manager (PM)**.

- The **Business Manager (BM)** represents the Project Owner (PO) on a daily basis within the project and helps in defining the project's business objectives via the Project Initiation Request, Business Case and Business Implementation Plan. The Business Manager (BM) collaborates closely with the Project Manager (PM) and coordinates client-side activities and roles (e.g. user and business representatives), ensuring that the project's deliverables fulfil the business and user needs.

- The **Project Manager (PM)** oversees the project on a daily basis and is responsible for delivering high-quality results within the identified objectives and constraints, ensuring the effective use of the allocated resources. More widely, the Project Manager's (PM) responsibility also includes risk and issue management, project communication and stakeholder management.

3.1.5. *Performing Layer*

The Performing Layer carries out the project work. It produces the deliverables and implements them in the business organisation. Members of the Performing Layer report to the Managing Layer. The Performing Layer comprises the roles of the Business Implementation Group (BIG) and the Project Core Team (PCT).

- The **Business Implementation Group (BIG)** consists of representatives of business and user groups. Coordinated by the Business Manager (BM), it is responsible for planning and implementing the business changes that need to be made for the organisation to effectively integrate the project deliverables into its everyday work.

- The **Project Core Team (PCT)** comprises the specialist roles responsible for creating the project deliverables. Its composition and structure depend on the project size and type (e.g. IT project, policy development project, etc.) and is defined by the Project Manager (PM) based on the project's needs.

3.2. The governance model in practice

This section explains how the PM^2 governance model is implemented in practice within the work of the DIGITAL Building Blocks. Each DIGITAL Building Block is responsible for establishing its own governance structure. While all of them are based on the PM2 model outlined in section 3.1., there are differences in the DGs fulfilling each role, as well as in the established governance bodies. The roles assumed by the respective Commission DGs depend on the agreements reached via the MoU. The established governance bodies depend on the agreements between the respective Project Owner(s) and Solution Provider(s).

3.2.1. *Business Governing Layer*

The Digital Europe Programme sets forth the broad goals for work on the DIGITAL Building Blocks. The strategy for reaching these goals and the planning for the strategy's realisation is done through the Work Programmes specifying the implementation of the Digital Europe Programme, as well as the associated MoUs. The European Commission therefore acts as Appropriate Governance Body whenever it negotiates the Work Programmes and MoUs, which generally happens on a bi-annual basis. In this context, it authorises projects (Building Blocks) for implementation, assigns resources to these projects, and monitors the delivery performance of this project portfolio.

EBSI has an additional Appropriate Governance Body, the **European Blockchain Partnership (EBP) Policy Group**. The EBP is an initiative of 29 countries (all EU Member States, Lichtenstein, and Norway) and the European Commission, which aims to develop an EU strategy on blockchain and to build a blockchain infrastructure for public services[9]. It plays a central role in the strategic decisions for EBSI's development, for example by selecting the use cases EBSI focuses on. Both the EBP Policy

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[9] You can find more information about the EBP on the EBSI Website: https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/sites/display/EBSI/About+us.

Group and the European Commission, through the Digital Europe Work Programmes, therefore function as Appropriate Governance Body for EBSI.

For **OOTS**, the project goals and implementation are also directed by the **Single Digital Gateway Regulation**[10] and the **Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2022/1463**[11], in addition to the Digital Europe Programme. The Implementing Regulation sets out the technical and operational specifications of the OOTS and defines the responsibilities of the Commission and the Member States in this regard. The Commission is responsible for adopting and, if needed, amending the Implementing Regulation. In this process, it is supported by an additional Appropriate Governance Body, the **Single Digital Gateway (SDG) Comitology Committee**. This Committee is established by Article 37 of the Single Digital Gateway Regulation and consists of Member State representatives. The Committee is chaired by the Commission. If the Implementing Regulation needs to be amended, the Commission proposes draft amendments before the Committee. The Committee then prepares an opinion on which the Member State representatives vote. If the opinion is positive, the Commission adopts the amendments. Through this mechanism, the Member States, together with the Commission, function as Appropriate Governance body for the OOTS and determine its vision, strategy, priorities and resource allocation.

3.2.2. *Steering Layer*

Each DIGITAL Building Block has a project steering committee. For eDelivery, eID, eSignature, eInvoicing and EBSI, this role is fulfilled by the Operational Management Board (OMB). The objective of the OMB is to provide a platform for participants to discuss all matters regarding the operational side of the Building Block. This includes the following activities (the list is not exhaustive):

- Scope management:

  - Confirm and validate Building Block baseline definition;

  - Confirm and validate vision, project charter and roadmap of the Building Block;

- Reporting:

  - Follow-up of Project Results, Work Programme realisation, Project Management realisation and Financial Management.

- Lifecycle management:

  - Provide guidance and decisions on change requests and releases;

  - Launch and review relevant consultations.

- Risk and issue management:

  - Provide guidance on escalated risks and issues.

The OMB is comprised of the Building Block Owner (accountable for the policy and functional side of the Building Block), the Building Block Solution Provider (accountable for the project deliverables),

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[10] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32018R1724

[11] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?toc=OJ%3AL%3A2022%3A231%3ATOC&uri=uriserv%3AOJ.L_.2022.231.01.0001.01.ENG

representatives of the respective DGs of Building Block Owner and Solution Provider, as well as representatives of public or private bodies that may be invited to participate in the OMB.

OOTS does not have an Operational Management Board. Instead, project steering is done through three governance bodies:

- o **Gateway Coordination Group:** The Gateway Coordination Group is composed of one national coordinator from each Member State and chaired by a representative of the Commission. The group oversees the establishment and launch of the OOTS, sets priorities for development and improvement, maintains and recommends changes to the technical design documents, organises peer reviews to promote exchanges of experiences between Member States, and approves or rejects operational modalities submitted by the OOTS sub-groups (expert groups) [12].

- o **OOTS Project Steering Committee**: This body has the purpose of coordinating the project work between the involved DGs and work streams, and to determine the strategic direction of the project. The Project Steering Committee consists of the Head of Units of each DG involved in implementing the OOTS, as well as representatives of the respective DGs.

- o **OOTS Project Management Board**: This body has the purpose of discussing the operational and tactical dimension of the project, which includes reporting on project progress, risk and issue management, and stakeholder management. The Project Management Board consists of the Head of Units of each DG involved in implementing the OOTS, as well as representatives of the respective DGs.

3.2.3. *Directing Layer and Managing Layer*

Each Building Block has a Business Owner and a Solution Provider. These roles are assigned based on the MoUs and are fulfilled by different DGs and units across Building Blocks.

The **Business Owner** is the unit within a DG that is responsible for the policy and operational steering of the Building Block implementation. This means it outlines its objectives, scope and outcomes/deliverables and is accountable for their achievement. For high-level decisions (for example when negotiating an MoU), the unit is generally represented by its Head of Unit, which then functions as "Project Owner" as per the PM^2 methodology. The day-to-day project work is done by a designated representative of the unit, referred to as "Business Owner". The tasks of this "Business Owner" generally correspond to those of the Business Manager described in the PM^2 methodology.

The **Solution Provider** is the unit within a DG that is responsible for the technical implementation of the project. As such, it assumes the overall accountability for project deliverables and services requested by the Business Owner, including monitoring and reporting. Similar to the Business Owner, the Solution Provider is represented by its Head of Unit for high-level decisions. The day-to-day project work is managed by a designated representative of the unit, generally referred to as "Solution Provider". This "Solution Provider" corresponds to the role of Project Manager as described in the PM^2 methodology and is responsible for managing the work of the project core team and for overseeing the day-to-day implementation of the Building Block.

Albeit the roles of "Business Owner" and "Solution Provider" are based on those of Business Manager and Project Manager set forth in the PM^2 methodology, their precise tasks may be slightly different across Building Blocks. They are, for instance, the main representative of the requestor and provider side during Operational Management Board meetings. Here, they fulfil the roles of both Project Owner

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[12] The gateway coordination group is established by Article 29 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 and carries out responsibilities defined in Article 18 of Regulation (EU) 2022/1463.

and Business Manager (i.e., Solution Provider and Project Manager), as the Head of Units of the involved DGs are generally not present in OMB meetings.

3.2.4. *Performing Layer*

The **Project Core Team** is responsible for the practical implementation of the Building Block, which covers a wide span of activities, ranging from technical development to stakeholder management, marketing activities, technical support, and legal advisory.

Since the Building Blocks are primarily being developed to be used by external stakeholders (Member States, businesses, and citizens) and not the organisations requesting them (the Commission DGs acting as requestors), they do not change the way of working of the organisation requesting their production. Instead, their implementation impacts the way of working of the stakeholders listed above. For this reason, the Building Blocks do not have a Business Implementation Group (which would manage the implementation within the requesting organisation). Rather, they have dedicated **expert groups and user communities**, comprised of stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Building Block in one way or another. These stakeholders can be, for example, Member State representatives, representatives from the private sector, or researchers working in areas affected by the Building Block. The expert groups and user communities are a place for stakeholders to exchange opinions, share ideas, cooperate, exchange information, and interact with the Building Block team. The interaction between stakeholders and the Building Block team is managed by the dedicated **stakeholder management teams** of each Building Block. These teams guide stakeholders through the "onboarding process" – the journey an organisation passes through when reusing the Building Block –, foster the dialogue between the Commission and stakeholders, and ensure that stakeholder views and feedback are taken into account. This interaction is pivotal for ensuring that the developed services meet stakeholder needs, and that stakeholders receive the necessary support for enabling them to reuse the services.

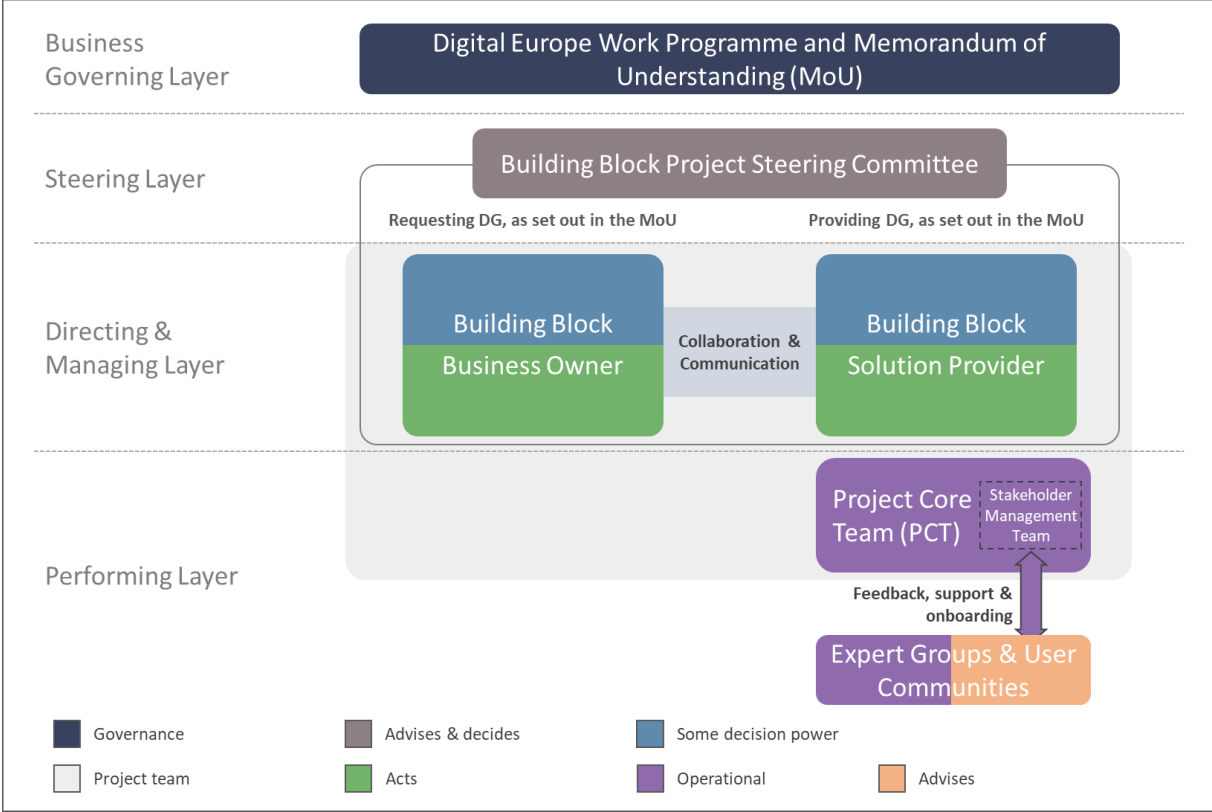The general governance model for the DIGITAL Building Blocks can therefore be depicted as follows:

Figure 2: Governance model of the DIGITAL Building Blocks

3.3. Governance structure of the respective Building Blocks

This section depicts how the governance model described above is implemented for the respective Building Blocks by illustrating the involved DGs, units, and governance bodies.

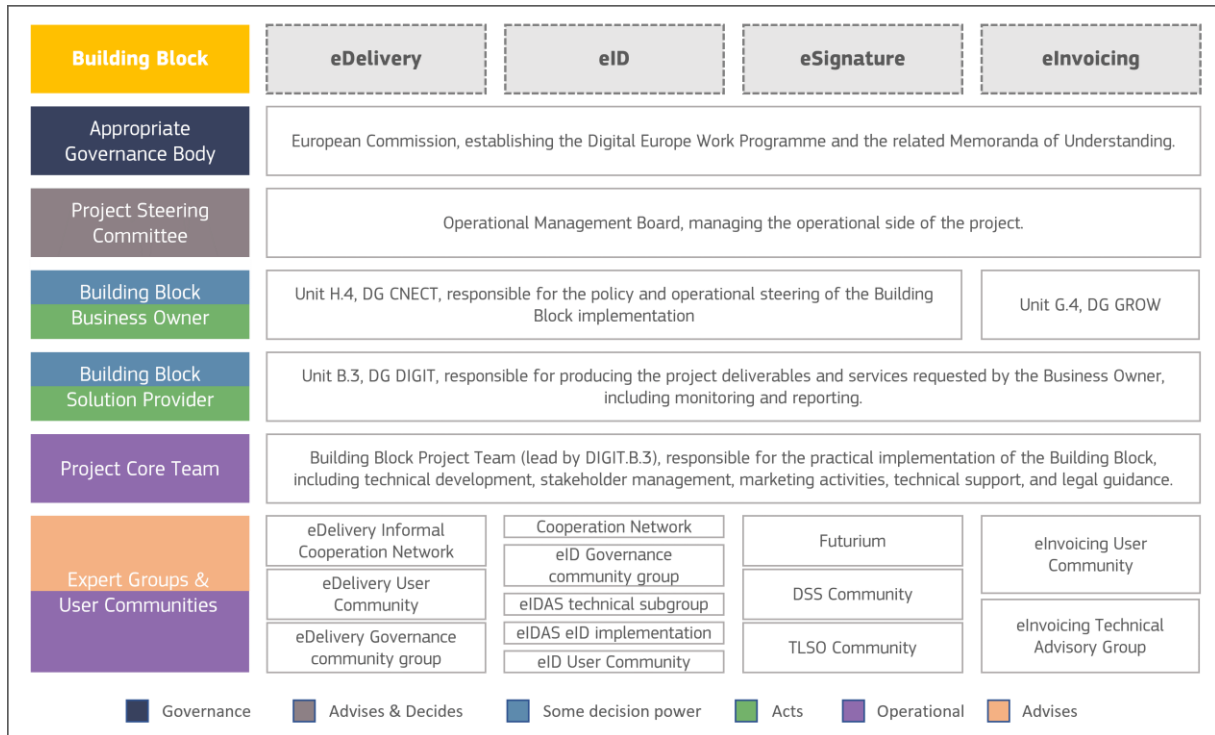### 3.3.1. Governance structure for eDelivery, eID, eSignature, and eInvoicing

Figure 3: Governance structure of eDelivey, eID, eSiganture and eInvoicing
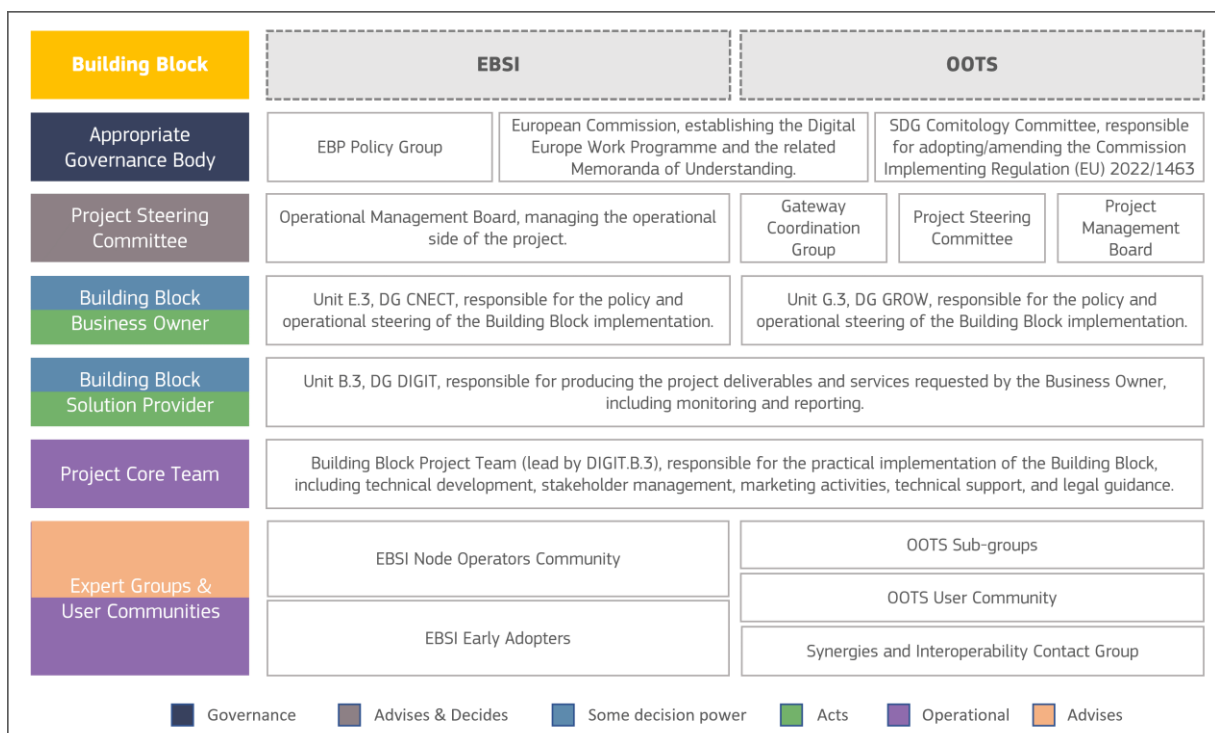
3.3.2. Governance structure for EBSI and OOTS

Figure 4: Governance structure of EBSI and OOTS