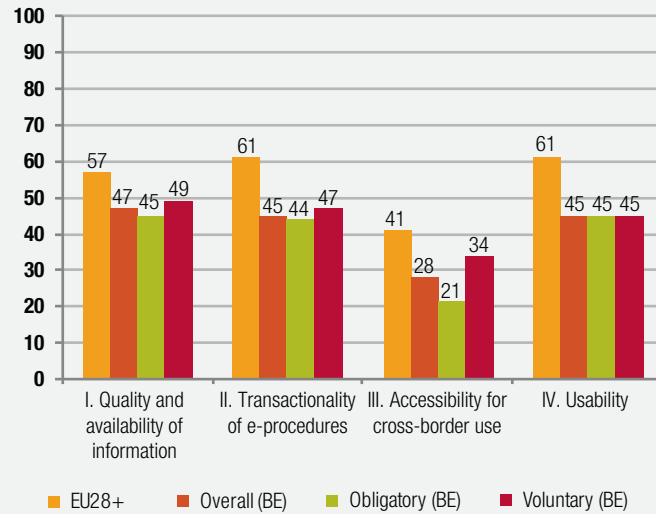




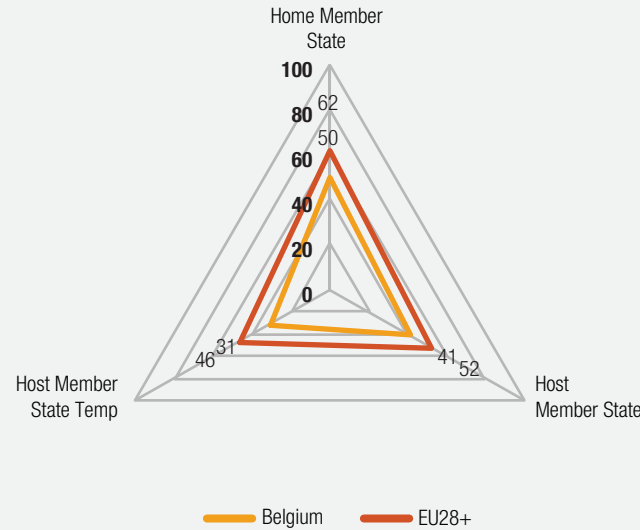
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PERFORMANCE OF THE POINT OF SINGLE CONTACT

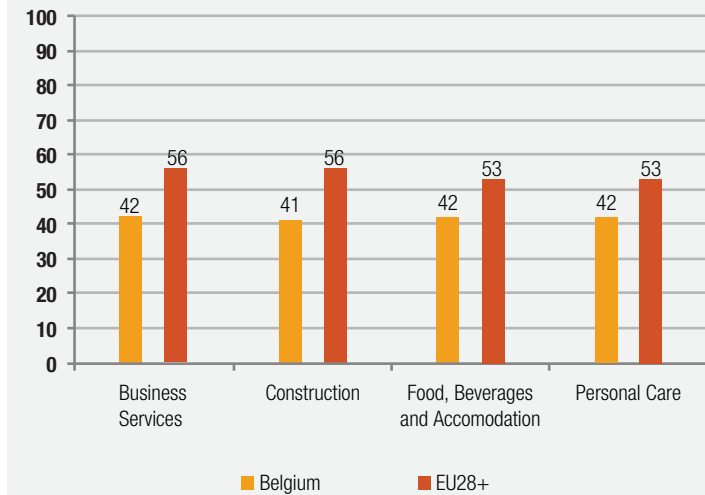
Performance on the PSC Criteria



Gap national - cross-border



Performance per industry



The PSC assessment

The PSCs are assessed by mystery shoppers according to four PSC Charter criteria, which are displayed in the upper left corner:

- 1. Availability of information** indicates to what extent information about a procedure is available online.
- 2. Transactionality of e-procedures** indicates to what extent one can complete a procedure online.
- 3. Cross-border accessibility** indicates to what extent the portal is accessible for foreigners.
- 4. Usability** indicates the ease and speed of use of government procedures.

Mystery shoppers have assessed the PSCs from the perspective of three **scenarios**:

- Permanent establishment of a business in their home country;
- Permanent establishment of a business in another EU28+ country;
- Cross-border provision of temporary services.

Overall scores for these scenarios are presented in the spider chart above, and are benchmarked against the EU28+ average.

The performance of the PSCs is measured across four major industries, which are:

- Business Services;
- Construction;
- Food, Beverages and Accommodation;
- Personal care.

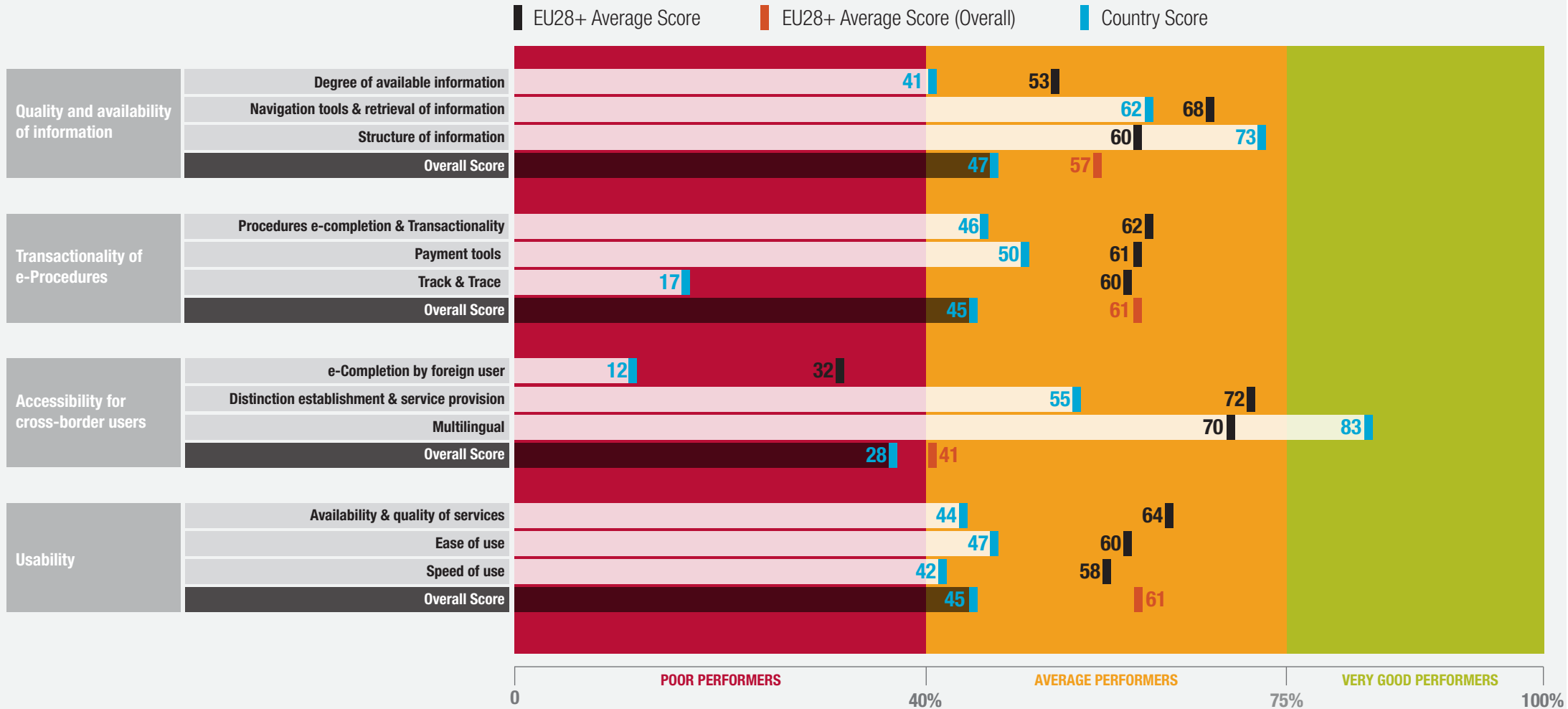
The results per industry are displayed in the column chart above. This chart shows differences per industry and deviations from the EU28+ average.



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Performance per subcriterion



The bar chart above presents the performance of the PSC on the PSC Charter criteria and sub-criteria. The bars and blue figures represent the country score per criterion/sub-criterion.

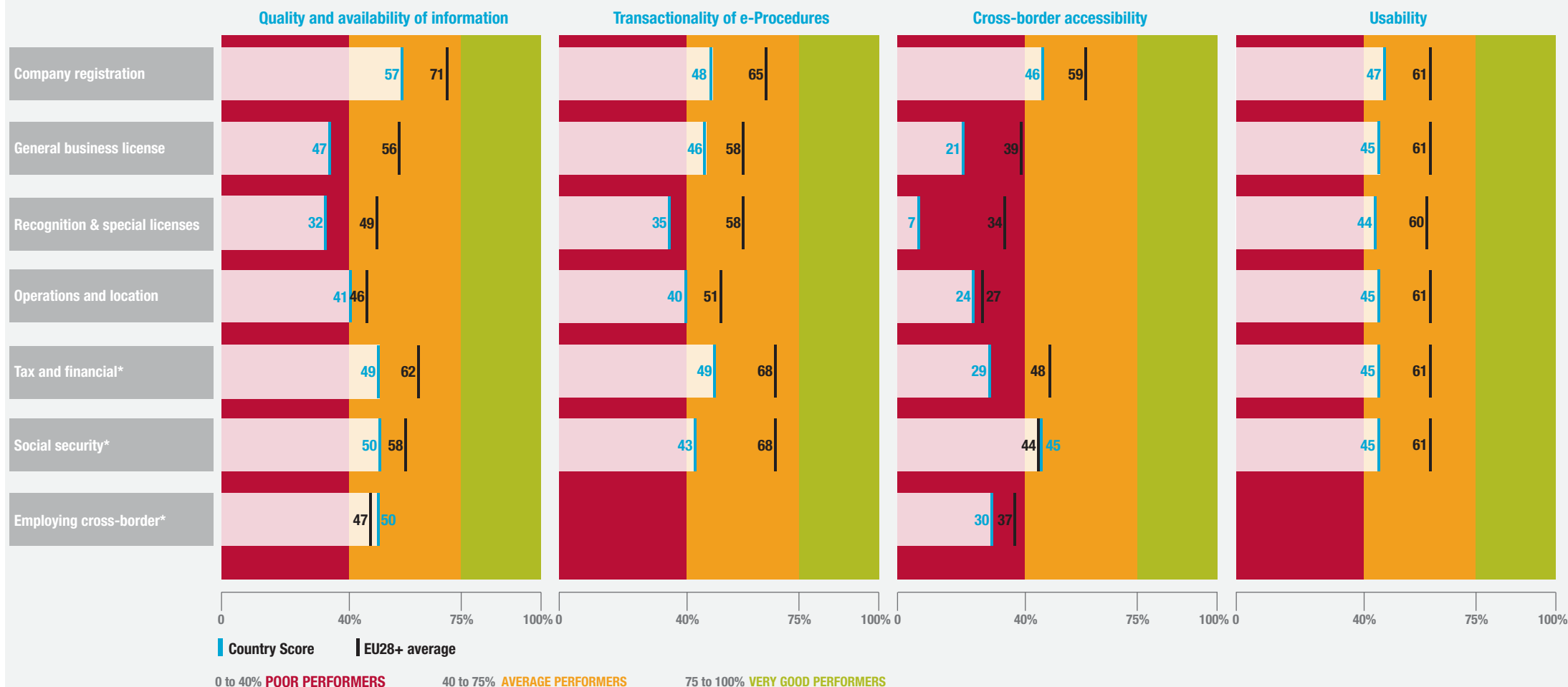
The country scores are benchmarked against the EU28+ average, as represented by the purple figures in each of the respective bars.



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PERFORMANCE OF THE POINT OF SINGLE CONTACT

Performance per requirement



Score per requirement

The graph above presents the scores for the seven categories of administrative requirements per PSC Charter criterion. The categories of requirements are displayed on the left. The score of each of the requirements is benchmarked against the EU28+ average.

* This category of requirements is not obliged under the Services Directive and can thus be perceived as 'voluntary' requirements



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POLICY CONTEXT OF THE POINT OF SINGLE CONTACT

Status and progress



Trend and evolution

Consecutive assessments in 2011/12, 2013 and 2014/15 place Belgium among middle-ground performers with an overall score under the EU average. Throughout the period no significant progress has been recorded vis-à-vis any of the four PSC criteria. In fact, some signs of deterioration could be observed regarding availability of information and usability.

The previous assessments (2011/12 and 2013) have found that availability of information is generally well performing, with some weaknesses in case of specific requirements. With wider scope of requirements, the present study not only confirmed there was no progress in this respect, but has also identified maintenance related problems (outdated information, dead links), which at the end contributed to altogether lower scores in this category.

As for online procedures, the scores are consistently low throughout the period, with repeating reference to the traditional way of handling administrative procedures through so called "business counters".

In relation to cross-border users, the portal continuously records differences on availability of information and e-procedures. As a country with three official languages, it naturally scores well regarding multilingualism, whereas it performs poor on facilitating online procedures, which is partly related to general poor performance in the field of e-procedures.

As regards the portal's usability, the relative Belgian ranking has declined, although the absolute figures stagnated. This could be a result of a general progress of PSCs in this field (this is a best performing criterion on the EU level, which was not the case before), but could also be accounted to omissions in the portal maintenance.



Structure of the PSC

The government information for businesses is centrally organised on the federal level at the general PSC. It is not yet possible to complete fully electronic procedures at the central PSC portal. The user can select the procedures he needs and send the list to one of the eight (physical) private business offices ('les guichets d'entreprises'). They are responsible for answering queries, handling procedures and integrating e-procedures in their own websites. They will contact the user by email in order to complete the procedure.



Governance

The governance model can be characterised as fragmented. The responsibility for the central PSC is shared between the Federal Public Service Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the Agency for Administrative Simplification. The Federal Public Service of Economy, SMEs, Self-employed and Energy' is competent for the accreditation and control of the private business offices. Belgium is a federal state where competencies are distributed amongst different levels, which makes it difficult to implement an effective PSC strategy.

There are different competent authorities at Federal level and at regional level in charge of e-government related policies.

Background



Strategy and policy objectives

- Optimal service delivery and simplification of administrative procedures for citizens and businesses. Service delivery should be faster, more open, convenient and less constraining.
- Make the maximum use of building blocks and key enablers. Ensure back office integration.
- Cooperation among all levels of Government so as to provide integrated services.
- Protection of personal data: develop a common vision for information security and protection of privacy.

Based on:

The federal eGovernment Strategy (2009). Regional authorities have developed their own eGovernment Strategies.



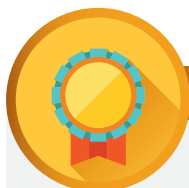
Initiatives

Belgium uses a system of private 'physical' PSCs that have their own website and are responsible for developing e-procedures. Currently, e-procedures are not integrated in a federal eGovernment policy and there is little contact regarding these matters between the stakeholders. Belgium is currently examining the possibilities to adapt their PSC-model. They are now in the last phase of implementing structured collaboration between authorities involved.



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POINT OF SINGLE CONTACT – THE WAY FORWARD



Strengths

- Users experience the set-up of the PSC as intuitive and easily find their way on the general PSC portal: the information on the PSCs is well structured and it is easy to navigate;
- Information on the central PSC is available in Dutch, French, English and German, which leads to a score above the EU28+ average regarding language availability. However, mystery shoppers indicate that not all relevant information is available in foreign languages: “General information on different points is available in English, but most of the specific information is only in the official languages”



Weaknesses

- The PSC serves primarily as an information gateway that redirects users to other administrative offices. The degree of information available on the PSC is below average;
- Specific information on how to comply with procedures is often only available in local languages: “The headings it generated were perfect, in terms of what I was looking for, and in English but once you clicked on them, all information was in French or Flemish”;
- Mystery shoppers found it difficult to complete electronic procedures online: the transactionality of procedures is relatively low, specifically for users from abroad. Applying for specific licenses and recognition of professional qualifications are procedures that cross-border users experienced as difficult in particular
- The user experience needs considerable improvement: users consider the usability of the PSC as relatively bad, which might be related to the different stakeholders and websites involved;
- Users have to comply with many business procedures via private parties: “a large part of the formalities is done through social secretariat that does the work for you. There exist several of those secretariats which are private”;
- A decentralized structure of the PSC increases the importance of a solid governance model. However, responsibility for the PSCs is shared between the Federal Public Service Chancellery and the Ministry for Administrative Simplification, and most eProcedures are managed by the eight social secretariats. Government representatives indicate that there is little contact regarding the development of e-procedures and integrating these in a federal e-government policy: governance seems to be a major weakness.



Recommendations

Overall, Belgium’s PSCs is a low performer. Belgium is among the three countries that need most improvements.

Areas of improvement are:

1. Build on the outcomes of the current examination of the PSC-model. Critically review the system of using different private PSCs in an already decentralized system, and align stakeholders involved. A lack of communication and existing ‘silos’ among government departments now create misunderstandings and inefficiencies in the current model. Focus on alignment of the federal eGovernment strategy with the regions and set up a governance structure to enable further development of the PSCs;
2. Belgium should increase the transactionality of procedures. Currently, many of them cannot be completed online. This affects in particular also users from abroad. In this respect, Belgian PSC should use the existing e-government tools (in particular key enablers) and make sure that when required key enablers from other Member States are accepted and recognised.
3. Important information about specific procedures and legal requirements is difficult to find and to comply with for users, especially for users from abroad. Belgium should focus on improving the availability of information.
4. Consider the implementation of a certain level of standardization to align navigation, look and feel of the PSCs and related websites.
5. Consider the integration of procedures in the general PSC itself, rather than completing procedures at other websites or physical locations: a fully-fledged business portal rather than an information gateway.