interoperable europe Roadshow

Report on the Interoperable Europe Roadshow in the Netherlands

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document summarises the main presentations and discussions held during the roadshow. It also provides further information and learning material that can be easily accessible to further explore the topics tackled during the event.

- **Section 2** summarises the key highlights of Day 1 of the event (12th of March)
- **Section 3** summarises the key highlights of Day 2 of the event (13th of March)

2. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS: DAY 1

This section summarises the discussions covered during Day 1 of the Netherlands Roadshow, that took place on the 12th of March in The Hague. The sessions kicked off the Interoperable Europe Roadshow and brought together members of the European Commission, Dutch representatives and other stakeholders. The agenda (*Figure 1)* and highlights of the first day's sessions are described hereafter.

Figure 1. Agenda of Day 1 (12th March)

DAY 1 AGENDA (12th of March)

- Opening, welcome and agenda
- EU Digital Regulations and Synergies, and Dutch Digital Government Law
- Roundtable discussion
- Session on Single Digital Gateway (SDG)/OOTS (Once-Only Technical System)
- Presentation and Q&A session with the team of the IBDS

2.1. Opening, welcome and agenda

Leontina Sandu, Head of the Interoperability and Digital Government Unit at the Directorate-General for Digital Services, European Commission, and Lindy van de Westelaken, Head of the Core Infrastructure Unit at the Digital Government Department, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, welcomed participants and acknowledged the significance of the Interoperable Europe Roadshow. The initiative was recognised as an important and valuable platform for cooperation and knowledge exchange between the European Commission (EC) and Member States.

Figure 2. Head of Units from Netherlands and the EU Commission, opening Day 1

LINDY VAN DE WESTELAKEN

Head of the Core Infrastructure Unit at the Digital Government Department, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

LEONTINA SANDU

Head of the Interoperability and Digital Government Unit at Directorate General for Digital Services, European Commission
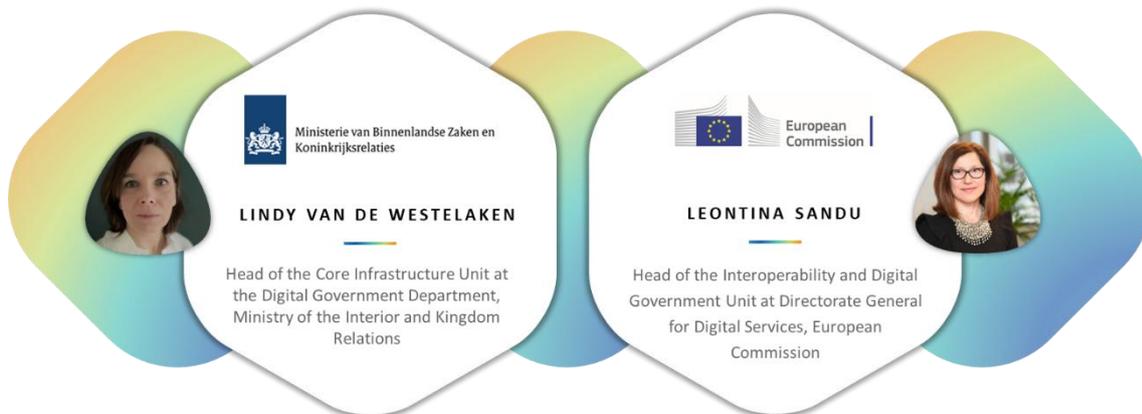
Objectives of the Initial Exchange

The primary objective of this initial exchange was to establish the key goals of the Roadshow. Both parties emphasised that the establishment of the Interoperable Europe Board is crucial for the successful implementation of the Interoperable Europe Act.

Key Discussion Points

1. European Commission's Interest in Cloud Use in the Netherlands

- The EC expressed its interest in understanding the Dutch approach to cloud adoption and identifying potential areas for support in addressing related challenges.

2. Dutch Cloud Strategy and Technological Independence

- The Netherlands aims to reduce reliance on U.S.-based technologies by **prioritising open-source solutions** and promoting the reuse of common standards to address financial constraints.

- The Dutch administration is actively developing a **cloud-focused strategy** and is considering the creation of a white paper on cloud adoption.

- A key goal is to establish a **one-stop-shop offering a portfolio of multiple cloud solutions** tailored to various use cases.

3. Public-Private Cooperation in Cloud Deployment

- The Netherlands promotes strong **collaboration between the public and private** sectors in cloud adoption.

- All cloud providers and solutions must comply with **Dutch government security requirements** and regulations.

- The **upcoming Dutch Digital Strategy** will further formalise these requirements, emphasising pluralism in cloud service selection.

4. Decentralised vs. Centralised IT Components

- While the Netherlands operates a highly decentralised digital governance model, there is a growing recognition of the need for **centralised IT components**.

- A dedicated Board, managing a budget of approximately **€500 million**, is responsible for IT-related expenditures.

- A key challenge remains in balancing the **diverse priorities of Board members**, who represent various sectors and interests.

This exchange marked an important step toward strengthening collaboration between the European Commission and the Netherlands in the field of digital governance, with cloud adoption and interoperability emerging as key areas of mutual interest.

2.2. Joint session: Opening, welcome and agenda

The **Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG)** serves as the advocacy organisation and knowledge platform for all Dutch municipalities. Its mission is to unite municipal strengths and act collectively in the interest of local governments and their residents.

Jonas Oland, Program Leader for Digital Transformation & Europe at VNG, presented insights into the association's role and initiatives.

Key Discussion Points

1. Interest in International Public-Private Partnership Models

- Dutch representatives expressed a keen interest in learning from international use cases at both local and national levels, particularly regarding the implementation of public-private partnerships.

- They highlighted existing doubts within the Act concerning its implementation and suggested that assessments could play a pivotal role in clarifying objectives and methodologies.

2. **EU Digital Regulation Synergies and VNG's Digital Rulebook**

The Netherlands is undertaking an initiative to define the scope of the Digital Rulebook, aiming to structure and analyse how different laws interact with digital governance. This exercise is essential for enhancing legal clarity, improving public sector adaptability, and leveraging AI for better policymaking.

In focus: The Dutch Approach to Structuring the Digital Rulebook

The Dutch government has launched a structured exercise to cluster and assess various laws, ensuring that digital regulations are mapped efficiently across different levels of government. This process involves 160 civil servants working in specialised groups, each focusing on a 12-week analysis of legal clusters to determine their impact on local municipalities.

1. First Layer: Mapping Laws with Responsibilities

- Laws are mapped to the relevant government departments to clarify which parts of legislation fall under which authority's responsibility for implementation.

- The exercise also aims to define the role of future public servants—as currently, HR strategies mostly focus on short-term training rather than long-term digital skill development.

2. Second Layer: Adaptive Digital Infrastructure

- The laws are mapped to the existing digital infrastructure to identify gaps and areas where digital adaptation is needed.

- The integration of AI presents a major opportunity, particularly in quantifying legislation.

- A key challenge identified is the mismatch between laws at different levels of governance, which could be addressed through Large Language Models (LLMs) to ensure consistency.

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3. Multilevel Governance and Collaboration

- For the Digital Rulebook to be effective, there must be clear cooperation between different governance levels.

- Understanding the roles and responsibilities of each entity is a prerequisite for impactful policymaking.

Open Questions

Question 1 from the EU Commission: What is the approach for laws that are not explicitly labelled as digital?

Answer 1 from the Netherlands: The Dutch approach initially focused on core legal clusters, but it is an ongoing process where additional legal areas will be included over time.

Question 2 from the EU Commission: What is the expected final outcome of this legal analysis?

Answer 2: The current output is a textual analysis and documentation of legal interactions. However, the Netherlands envisions a more dynamic, interactive framework in the future that evolves with technological advancements.

Dutch Request for Further Support

The Netherlands is interested in further refining the scope of the Digital Rulebook and seeks guidance from the European Commission on best practices, including:

- **Defining Success Metrics**: What are the key indicators that show a law has been successfully applied in a digital context?

- **Best Practices for Implementation**: How can governments ensure compliance and effective execution of digital laws?

- **Checklists and Frameworks**: Are there established checklists or assessment tools that could be used to validate whether a law aligns with digital governance principles?

Conclusion

The development of the Dutch Digital Rulebook reflects the Netherlands' commitment to structure and modernise digital governance. By combining legal clustering, digital infrastructure mapping, and AI-driven analysis, the Dutch government is taking a proactive approach to ensuring that laws remain adaptive and applicable in the digital era. Further collaboration with the European Commission would be valuable in refining methodologies and ensuring a coherent, actionable Digital Rulebook across the EU.

3. Challenges in Digital Transformation

- **Human-Centric Approach:** Emphasised the importance of considering both human and environmental factors in digital transformation, advocating for integrated solutions rather than isolated approaches.

- **Digitalisation as a Geopolitical Instrument:** Recognised the strategic significance of digitalisation in global geopolitics.

- **Adaptability:** Stressed the necessity for systematic change to enhance adaptability, moving beyond incremental steps.

- **Place-Based Innovation:** Advocated for localised innovation to address multifaceted challenges, utilising digital solutions to tackle issues across various sectors.
- **Interoperability:** Highlighted the critical role of interoperability in ensuring technological adaptability and meeting evolving needs.

2.3. Round Table Discussion

Dutch representatives expressed a keen interest in **learning from international use cases at local, regional and national levels**, particularly regarding the implementation of public-private partnerships.

They highlighted existing ambiguities within the Act concerning its implementation and suggested that assessments could play an important role in clarifying objectives and methodologies.

In discussions between VNG (Association of Dutch Municipalities), the Dutch Ministry, and the European Commission (EC), **several key challenges and open questions** regarding the implementation of the EU Digital Rulebook were raised. These issues highlight the complexities municipalities face in ensuring compliance, the role of standardisation, and the need for clear governance structures.

Figure 3. Round Table Discussion Topics

Standardisation

A central concern is the lack of clear and practical standards that municipalities and vendors can follow to ensure compliance with the rulebook. The main challenges include:

- **Unclear technical requirements**: While the rulebook sets broad goals, municipalities need concrete technical standards and best practices to follow in procurement and implementation.
- **Interoperability issues**: Local governments use different digital systems, and it is unclear how standardisation will ensure compatibility across municipalities and national platforms.
- **EU-wide vs. local flexibility**: Striking a balance between harmonisation at the EU level and allowing municipalities to adapt to local needs is an ongoing issue.

Multi-level governance

Another key issue discussed was the division of responsibilities between the EU, national governments, and municipalities.

- **Municipalities' role is unclear**: Local governments are responsible for implementing digital services, but they lack clear guidance on how to apply the rulebook in practice.

- **Lack of coordination**: There is a risk of fragmented implementation, as national governments may interpret EU guidance differently, leading to inconsistencies across regions.

- **Resource constraints**: Smaller municipalities, in particular, may struggle with the expertise and funding needed to implement the rulebook effectively.

The Digital Rulebook: Implementation start

A major challenge identified is how to operationalise the rulebook. Key concerns raised include:

- **Clarity on the Digital Rulebook's content**: Municipalities need a clear definition of its content to avoid confusion with broader Digital Decade objectives.

- **Practical use of the rulebook:** The EC is expected to provide clearer guidance on how municipalities should prioritise implementation steps.

- **Misunderstanding of automatic compliance**: There is confusion about what constitutes "automatic compliance" and whether vendors, procurement bodies, or municipalities must take specific actions to prove compliance.

How to work with municipalities on the Rulebook?

A crucial point raised was the need for a structured approach to supporting municipalities in implementing the rulebook. Key actions needed include:

- **Mapping existing laws and policies**: A thorough analysis of how the rulebook interacts with national and local regulations is necessary.

- **Aligning procurement with compliance requirements**: Municipalities need procurement guidelines that ensure new digital services align with the rulebook.

- **Engaging vendors**: Vendors must be motivated to comply with the rulebook, but there is currently no clear incentive structure. Questions remain on how to certify vendor compliance and how vendors can be encouraged to meet the rulebook's standards without additional costs for municipalities.

Conclusion

While the EU Digital Rulebook represents an important step towards harmonising digital governance, significant challenges remain. Clearer technical guidance, governance structures, and incentives for vendors are needed to ensure a smooth and effective implementation of the rulebook at the municipal level. Further clarification from the European Commission on these issues will be critical to enhance digital-ready policymaking in the Netherlands and in Europe.

2.4. Single Digital Gateway (SDG) and Once-Only Technical System (OOTS): The Netherlands' progress and challenges

The Netherlands' progress on the implementation of the Single Digital Gateway (SDG) and the Once-Only Technical System (OOTS) was presented to the European Commission. Current initiatives, key projects, and faced challenges were presented.

Current Status and Key Initiatives

- **100% convergence:** Ensuring full alignment with the SDG and OOTS objectives.
- **Role of national portals:** Four national portals play a central role in Annex 1[1] implementation.
- **DENILAT pilot:** A production pilot for notifying business activities abroad, focusing on company data exchange.
- **RINIS project:** Covers UX flows, data exchange, eDelivery, and re-authentication improvements.

Sectoral information system integration

- **Bridging sectoral systems** to Once-Only Technical System.
- **EUCARIS**: European Car and Driving License Information System integration.
- **MREX system**: Facilitating diploma recognition across borders, connected with multiple diploma registries.

Drivers of the Netherlands' success in SDG/OOTS implementation

- **Past history:** A long-standing history of government product information management since the early 2000s (national portals, product catalogues, and metadata management through *samenwerkende catalogi*).
- **National portals:** As key enablers for data access and process automation.
- **Collaboration opportunities**: such as with umbrella organisations to ensure a unified approach.
- **Personal involvement:** Including that of key influencers, driving policy and technical adoption.
- **DENILAT pilot**: As a testbed for cross-border business activity notification.
- **Transparency**: All relevant information is publicly available on *sdg.pleio.nl*.

Challenges

- **Complexity of EU-wide implementation:** There are 27 Member States (MS) with varying levels of readiness, and there are 21 procedures requiring harmonisation. Defining which evidence is required for which procedure remains a challenge, as well as ensuring the (central) availability of data across different administrations.
- **Network effect / tipping point dilemma:** No clear frontrunner; all stakeholders prefer someone else to take the lead.

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[1] Single Digital Gateway Regulation, Annex 1: L_2018295EN.01000101.xml

- **Competition with other EU digital initiatives:** eIDAS / Digital Wallet, Interoperability Act – While beneficial in the long term, these initiatives are causing delays in the short term, as there are difficulties to understand the local/regional/national responsibilities, dependencies and synergies. More best practices and examples would be useful in this endeavour.

> **Conclusion and outlook for 2025**
>
> - Several new pilots are planned to test and refine the OOTS implementation:
> - Municipalities as evidence providers: Strengthening local-level participation.
> - Finland-EMREX pilot: Improving data exchange for studying abroad.
> - Potential large-scale pilot: Testing the integration of OOTS with the EU Digital Wallet, evaluating real-world feasibility.
> - This session provided insights into the Netherlands' progress and strategic direction, underlining both opportunities and obstacles in the path to full SDG/OOTS implementation.

2.5. Presentation and Q&A session with the team of the IBDS (inter-administrative data strategy)

The Dutch government's Inter-administrative Data Strategy (IBDS) outlines a comprehensive approach to harnessing data effectively and responsibly across all levels of government. Adopted in 2021, the IBDS aims to address societal challenges through data-driven solutions and to establish a cohesive data policy that spans various governmental bodies.

Program Duration and Phases

The IBDS programme commenced in 2022 and is structured to run until 2031, encompassing four distinct phases. This long-term approach reflects the government's commitment to systematically enhancing data management and utilisation over nearly a decade.

Educational Initiatives

To facilitate the effective implementation of the data strategy, the program includes specialised courses designed to equip government personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge. These educational initiatives are crucial for ensuring that staff can adeptly navigate and apply the principles of the data strategy in their respective roles.

Federated Data Space

A key component of the IBDS is the development of a federated data system, evolving from the existing system of base registries. This system aims to provide a government-wide, organisation-agnostic data infrastructure with authentic data, thereby enhancing data accessibility and interoperability across various government entities.

Integration with European Commission Data Models

The Netherlands is actively working to align its data models and assets with those produced by the European Commission. However, challenges arise due to uncertainties about the European origin or EU financing of these models, making their integration into the national strategy complex.

Strategic Oversight

The Inter-administrative Data Consultation (IDO) provides strategic direction to the IBDS, with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) primarily managing the strategy. The centralised management ensures a cohesive approach to data strategy implementation across various governmental levels.

Alignment with Broader Digitalisation Efforts

The IBDS aligns with the broader Dutch Digitalisation Strategy, focusing on accelerating digital transitions, promoting digital innovation and skills, and creating favorable conditions for effective digital markets and services. This alignment ensures that data strategy efforts are part of a comprehensive approach to digital transformation within the country.

Conclusion

The IBDS represents a significant step toward a unified and effective data management approach within the Dutch government. Through structured phases, educational initiatives, and the development of a federated data system, the Netherlands aims to address societal challenges and enhance public services by leveraging data responsibly and efficiently.

3. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS: DAY 2

The second day of the Interoperable Europe Roadshow (13th March) included other sessions to discuss and present the following topics (*Figure 4*Figure 1). Below the key insights from the first day's sessions are described hereafter.

Figure 4. Agenda of Day 2 (13th March)

DAY 2 AGENDA (13th of March)

- Welcome and opening
- Architecture – EIF: Interoperability Architecture Solutions
- Presentation and Q&A on the Interoperable Europe Act (IEA) – Interoperability Assessments (IOPA)
- Discussion on Open Source, Interoperability Assessments (IOPA) with stakeholders involved in Digital Commons EDIC, OSPO, CIO-Rijk (central government)

3.1. Welcome and opening

The opening of the Day 2 started with the summary of the day before, highlighting the main topics, conclusions and take-aways.

3.2. Architecture – EIF: Interoperability Architecture Solutions

The session began with a presentation on the European Commission's portfolio on Architecture tools. In which EIRA (European Interoperability Reference Architecture) was mentioned amongst other initiatives, outlining its role in supporting digital interoperability across Europe. The discussion then shifted to the Dutch digital government architecture, covering key frameworks, sectoral architectures, and the challenges in aligning national and European approaches.

DUTCH DIGITAL ARCHITECTURE LANDSCAPE
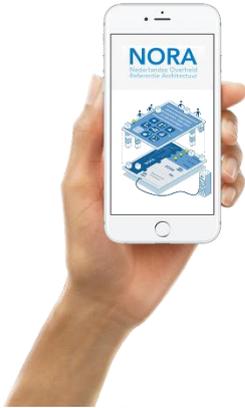
- **NORA** (National Government Reference Architecture): A broad framework ensuring alignment with the European Interoperability Framework (EIF).

- **RORA** (Central Government Reference Architecture): A sector-specific extension of NORA, tailored for central government operations.

ADO 2030 (Architect Digital Government 2030):

- The target architecture for digital government in the Netherlands.
- Defines the structure and functionality of digital governance.

Four domain architectures

The Digital Government Architecture 2030 is further elaborated in 4 domain architectures. The domain architectures contain more detailed elaborations that architects can use in the realisation of building blocks for the digital government and in connecting to these building blocks.

- **Domain access**: Solutions to give citizens and entrepreneurs access to digital services, including when they represent someone else.
- **Domain Interaction**: Solutions for digital information exchange with citizens and entrepreneurs.
- **Domain Data Exchange**: Solutions for data exchange via the GDI between information systems of government organizations among themselves and with information systems of other organizations.
- **Domain Infrastructure**: Solutions of general interest for the GDI that often form a basis for solutions in the other three domains.

Moreover, the Netherlands actively engages in European interoperability efforts and contributes its national expertise to EU-wide initiatives.

Sectoral Base Architectures and Interoperability. NORA vs. EIRA

- The discussion focused on whether NORA is business-agnostic like EIRA. Additionally, it was discussed that there is a need for **clear reference architectures** rather than abstract target architectures.

- The need to establish **synergies and communication between architects and developers** was brought up. This means ensuring that data exchange design is based on principles but underpinned by Archimate models for detailed elaboration.

European Interoperability Initiatives

- The Netherlands is interested in EC's building blocks and aims to contribute its own.

- Questions about smart cities and their role in the Interoperable Europe Initiative.

- European Commission's support tools: Data Spaces Support Centre, Test Bed, DCAT, and EIRA as part of the interoperability framework.

- Middleware development for EIRA usage and standardising language models to scale interoperability across Europe.

Challenges and Open Questions

Communication issues: How to effectively communicate architecture concepts to the broader public, municipalities, and legal professionals?

The operationalisation challenge: How to move from architectural principles to actionable implementation?

Procurement and Agile Development: How to overcome the challenges in procurement and development due to the lack of clear requirements?

The Dutch perspective is to start with architecture, derive requirements, evaluate off-the-shelf solutions, and develop the remaining components.

Standardisation of Business Processes: Could a sixth pillar be added to the European Interoperability Framework (EIF): harmonising business processes across Europe to improve cross-border operations?

EC response: This is implicitly part of existing principles but remains a challenge to explain to legal professionals. Digital checks and assessments could include business process alignment as a criterion.

Future cooperation and next steps

- *EC-NL Collaboration Opportunities*:
  - the Netherlands expressed interest in exploring ways to make architectures more actionable.
  - Improving communication of EC initiatives to local municipalities and different governance levels.

- *Interoperable Europe Academy (IOPEU Academy):*

  - EC plans to develop a certification program to support capacity building in digital interoperability.
  - Efforts to rebrand the interoperability portal and support centre for better accessibility.

- *Digital-Ready Policymaking (DRPM):*

  - EC presented the Digital Act and digital-ready policy framework.
  - Denmark's digital policy model was referenced as a best practice.
  - Plans to set up meetings with policy teams to discuss digital-readiness assessments and portfolio management.

Conclusion

This session highlighted the importance of aligning national and European architecture efforts, fostering interoperability, and improving communication and practical implementation of digital government frameworks.

3.3. Presentation and Q&A on the Interoperable Europe Act (IEA) and Interoperability Assessments (IOPA)

At the beginning of the session, Leontina Sandu shared some reflections on the implementation of the Interoperable Europe Act, particularly in relation to Article 3 (Interoperability Assessment), and emphasised the importance of challenging previous approaches and exploring new strategies for the future. The discussion held through the Roadshow will contribute to defining concrete next steps as well as two potential project collaborations.

EU Digital Regulation and Synergies

Claudia Oliveira presented EU Digital Regulations landscape that contribute to the EU Digital Single Market. Through the definition of the policy problem and a few interactive examples showcasing the practical benefits of cross-border interoperability, the following regulations, frameworks and programmes, were explained:

- **Digital Regulations:** Open Data Directive, Interoperable Europe Act, Data Governance Act, Data Act, eIDAS 2, AI Act.
- **Commission communication:** Competitiveness Compass.
- **Framework:** Digital Decade.
- **Funding Programme:** Digital Europe Programme.

Many examples were provided on how the life of an EU citizen can be simplified thanks to these regulations and frameworks. For instance, a hospital would be able to share its capacity of free intensive care beds with hospitals in other countries (cross-border data exchange), improving decision-making and the effectiveness of the system.

The session deep dived into the **Interoperable Europe Act** (IEA), specifically highlighting its key elements, with a particular focus on the following aspects:

- Mandatory interoperability assessments;
- Recognised reusable interoperability solutions;
- Strengthened interoperability support; and
- Structured ad co-owned EU cooperation.

The Act-related **milestones for 2024-2025** were presented, as well as the new requirements for Member States following the Act's entry into force. The audience was encouraged to visit the Interoperable Europe Portal, the one-stop shop for all interoperability and EU digital government content, where several spaces are being created to host useful resources related to the Act's implementation.

IOP Assessments

During the session, Isa Von Kalben presented the **Interoperable Europe Assessments** (IOPAs) introduced under **Article 3** of the Act. These assessments aim to identify barriers to interoperability, facilitate the implementation of digital services, bridge the gap between policy design and IT implementation, and promote the reuse of common interoperability solutions that are user centric.

The Act established that an **IOP assessment shall need to be performed** before taking a decision on new or substantially modified binding requirements set by a Union entity or a public sector body concerning one or more trans-European digital public services and which influences cross-border interoperability. As an example, an IOP Assessment is needed for the European Disability and Parking Card. Another key focus of the presentation was the concept of **binding requirement**, which serves as the trigger for an interoperability assessment.

All the relevant information regarding IOP Assessments can be found under the Interoperability assessments space on the Interoperable Europe Portal. This space includes the **Guidelines for Interoperability Assessments**, developed by a Member State drafting group, which includes six chapters covering the main concepts, the assessment process, reporting, and multiple examples. Additionally, the Portal offers a collaborative space where assessment reports can be drafted, published, and accessed, together with a community section that facilitates discussion and knowledge exchange.

The presentation highlighted the importance of developing smart tooling solutions, actively participating in the Interoperable Europe Community, and adopting a hands-on learning approach to enhance the effectiveness of interoperability assessments. Attendees were encouraged to exchange insights and share feedback after conducting assessments, so as to foster collaboration across the EU.

The Dutch approach

During the session, Patrick Knoester, Coordinating Policy Officer at the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, provided valuable insights on the country's approach as a Member State in implementing the mandatory requirements of the Act. The presentation outlined how the Netherlands is **adapting to the new framework**, detailing the institutional measures taken and the country's **proactive perspective** on collaborating with the European Commission.

As required by the Act, the Netherlands established a National Competent Authority (NCA), the *Nationaal Bevoedge Autoriteit*. As part of this structure, Mark Vermeer, Director of the Digital Government Department, has been appointed as the Dutch member of the Interoperable Europe Board. He will be supported by the Dutch NCA in the tasks described in the figure below:

Raising awareness about the Act and assisting government bodies

In understanding where and how they are affected by its requirements. Since assessments haven't been conducted yet, the goal is to encourage a collaborative approach.

Addressing national challenges and stimulating the adoption of Dutch solutions by the IE Board

The Netherlands seek to encourage government entities to reuse and share interoperability solutions. The country has already identified some existing solutions that are currently being translated to English (e.g. Management and Development Model for Open Standards or *Federatieve Service Connectiviteit*).

Regarding IOPAs, the Dutch presentation recognised the **need of having a centralised platform to share resources** and promote digital-ready policymaking. The Netherlands aims to embed assessment within existing internal tools, such as portfolio management or policy checks mechanisms. Inspired by the UK Government Digital Services model, the Dutch approach seeks to ensure citizens' awareness of the required standards. The country is working on establishing a Technology Code of Practice to further commit to the interoperability principles.

Throughout the presentation, **collaboration** remains a central pillar of the Dutch approach. Cooperation between the government entities and other stakeholders is considered as essential to foster innovation and the adoption of support measures. An example of this is the partnership with Digicampus, or the Dutch Data Protection Authority, which is actively working on regulatory sandboxes.

Looking at a broader European perspective, the Netherlands appreciated the European Commission's decision to apply mandatory requirements to its own institutions, recognising that this facilitates closer cooperation between the EC and Member States.

Finally, the country's key priorities were outlined:

- **Promoting Dutch standards and interoperability solutions**, as well as increasing awareness of the Interoperable Europe Portal;
- **Reducing costs**;
- **Simplifying public services** through a streamlined digitalisation process;
- **Foster innovation** within public administration.

The presentation underscored the importance of **community building** in fostering collaboration. The Netherlands has developed a dedicated online platform and is organising recurring virtual meetings with experts and practitioners to address community questions, maintain an FAQ repository, and facilitate knowledge sharing. This initiative is designed to build an aware, active and engaged community, enabling the exchange of best practice and collaboration.

Q&A and discussion

After the presentations, an interactive session was held to allow participants to share their insights and questions.

Question 1: Is there any link or alignment between the Interoperable Europe Board and the Board of the Data Governance Act?

Answer 1: While there are no formal links between the two Boards, both operate within the European Union framework, and synergies exist between their areas of work. Although they remain distinct entities, there is an ongoing exchange of best practices, and opportunities for collaboration may arise.

Question 2: How does the Interoperable Europe Community will interact with other similar communities?

Answer 2: The various interoperable related communities all aim at leveraging expertise and collaboration across its members. While each has its own specific focus, there is indeed the opportunity for them to work together under a common umbrella, the Interoperable Europe Community.

Question 3: How should interoperability be addressed in the healthcare sector, given that it includes both public and private entities?

Answer 3: The scope of the Act extends beyond public administrations to include publicly owned entities, such as those in the healthcare sector. This ensures flexibility and effectiveness for public-private governance structures.

Question 4: A major challenge is the lack of financial cooperation mechanisms and governance structures that link local, national, and European levels. How can we ensure that interoperability solutions extend beyond individual municipalities?

Answer 4: The Act encourages the use of open-source solutions, fostering a more accessible approach. GovTech initiatives and frameworks such as the Competitiveness Compass also emphasise a collaborative approach. The Board then serves as a platform for Member States to address, among other issues, governance gaps, facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration efforts, even if it doesn't provide funding opportunities.

Leontina Sandu further emphasises that the incentive should come from the fact that solutions will bring better services for citizens and businesses. As an example, she highlighted the importance of cross-border data, noting that increased data volume flows will improve the efficiency of public services, ultimately benefiting both governments and users.

Question 5: Does the European Commission envision the Interoperable Europe Board as a solution to governance gaps at the national level?

Answer 5: While the primary role of the Board is to build closer links between the EC and Member States, and to ensure a collaborative approach, the final decision remains within the Member States. The Board's objective is to support the achievement of interoperability goals while respecting national sovereignty and policymaking.

3.4. Discussion on Open Source, Interoperability Assessments (IOPA) with stakeholders involved in Digital Commons EDIC, OSPO, CIO-Rijk (central government)

The European Commission (EC) is preparing to release its updated Open Source Strategy by Q4 2025. This strategy aims to reinforce the role of open source software (OSS) within the European Commission, promoting innovation, collaboration, and digital sovereignty.

Discussion Highlights

- **Open Source as a Standard Practice**

  Dutch representatives expressed strong support for making open source software the standard within governmental operations. They believe that mandating OSS would enhance reusability and interoperability across public sector services. This perspective aligns with recent initiatives in countries where legislation now requires all government software to be released as open source.

- **Open Source Strategy and Action Plan**

  The session highlighted the importance of the EC's Open Source Programme Office (OSPO) in coordinating OSS initiatives. Establishing a unified communication platform and ensuring that all stakeholders convey a consistent message about OSS benefits were discussed as critical steps. The proposal for the OSPO network to serve as an advisory body to the Interoperability Board was also considered.

- **Inner Sourcing Practices**

  The concept of inner sourcing—sharing code internally across different teams—was explored. Dutch representatives suggested developing guidelines to facilitate internal code sharing, promoting collaboration, and reducing redundancy within governmental agencies.

- **Sovereignty and Code Responsibility**

  The Netherlands emphasised the need for digital sovereignty and accountability in code development. They advocated for the establishment of a dedicated code platform to manage and oversee open source projects, ensuring security and compliance with EU standards.

- **Security and Compatibility**

  The EC underscored the necessity of conducting security scans and compatibility checks for OSS to maintain integrity and interoperability within the EU's digital infrastructure.

- **Open Source Labs and Outreach**

  The creation of Open Source Labs was proposed to foster innovation and provide a testing ground for OSS initiatives. Enhanced outreach efforts were deemed essential to raise awareness and encourage OSS adoption across various sectors.

- **EDIC Digital Commons**

  A presentation was done on the Digital Commons initiative, driven by the European Digital Infrastructure Consortium (EDIC) – which includes the Netherlands - that aims to develop, maintain, and expand digital commons in Europe. The consortium aims to coordinate existing initiatives and provide support to the European community. This includes technical assistance, legal aid, and fundraising support for projects. One of the key activities is establishing a central hub (both a physical location and an online platform) where projects can seek assistance.

- **Advocacy for Mandatory Open Source Adoption**

  The Dutch representatives diplomatically conveyed their interest in seeing open source software adoption become a mandatory practice across the European Union. They believe that such a policy would significantly enhance collaboration, innovation, and digital autonomy within the EU.

- **Need for Real-Life Use Cases and Proven Benefits**

  To support the integration of OSS into legislation, the Netherlands expressed a desire for concrete use case scenarios and business cases demonstrating the tangible benefits of open source adoption. They emphasised the importance of showcasing real-life examples where OSS has led to improved efficiency, cost savings, or enhanced service delivery.

Conclusion

The session underscored a collective commitment to advancing the use of open source software within the European Union. The discussions highlighted the need for strategic planning, shared guidelines, and concrete evidence of OSS benefits to foster widespread adoption and integration into public sector operations.

3.5. IOPEU Monitoring session

During the parallel session on IOPEU Monitoring, Claudia Oliveira and Noémie Custers provided an overview of the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) and introduced the **new Monitoring Mechanism** (MM) established under the Interoperable Europe Act (IEA). Their presentation highlighted the key changes in monitoring and evaluation following the entry into force of the Act with a focus on three main areas:

- **Data collection** – prioritisation of existing data sources and the implementation of automated data collection process.
- **Scope** – an expanded focus on monitoring progress in cross-border interoperability, with a focus on five specific elements, and a total of ten indicators.
- **Reporting** – introduction of a new annual report to be presented to the European Council and to the European Parliament, providing insights on progress, barriers, drivers and overall results.

To illustrate these changes and facilitate a clearer understanding, the session included a comparative table between the EIF and the new Monitoring Mechanism, showcasing the evolution of the new monitoring scheme in terms of expansion of targeted groups and a broader scope of assessment.

The session then focused on the **four-year monitoring and evaluation timeline**, outlining the cycle for its implementation. The monitoring phase of the five indicators began in 2025 and will continue until 2027, when there will be the synthesis of findings and the preparation for the evaluation phase. While initial details on the Monitoring Mechanism were given to Member States during the Permanent Expert Group call on 13 November 2024, the official version will be presented to the Interoperable Europe Board in May 2025. A key obstacle identified for the initial monitoring is the limited availability of data for the first annual report. However, the report will incorporate valuable insights on good practices to complement the limited available data.

The session also provided an overview of the five elements included in the new Monitoring Mechanism, each of which include an output (short term effects), and outcome (intermediate effect and change):

- **Element 1** – Progress on trans-European digital public services cross-border interoperability.
- **Element 2** – Progress towards EIF by the Member States.
- **Element 3** – Take-up of interoperability solutions.
- **Element 4** – Cooperation with GovTech for public sector innovation.
- **Element 5** – Enhanced public sector interoperability solutions.

Figure 5. Overview of proposed indicators for the IoP MM

The session further emphasises the connection between the first three elements and the **interoperability assessments**, thus showing the role of monitoring in tracking interoperability progress across the EU.

The speakers reminded that the relevant resources and information on the EIF and on the new Monitoring Mechanism are available in the IOPEU Monitoring collection on the Interoperable Europe Portal.

Q&A and discussion

Following the presentation, an interactive discussion was held to allow participants share their insights and questions. One of the key suggestions raised was the importance of **percentage-based comparisons**, which will allow for an easier assessment of progress within a country, as well as comparisons between Member States. Although the European Commission is not aiming at ranking the Member States, it will still be possible to compare the levels of interoperability across Europe.

Another key point discussed was the need to incorporate **contextual data** to provide a comprehensive overview of the digital landscape. Claudia Oliveira and Noémie Custers confirmed that contextual data will play a fundamental role in the monitoring process, mainly through the reuse of existing data sources, such as the eGovernment benchmark.

Question 1: What are the incentives for other administrations within a country to carry out assessments and how to encourage them to do so?

Answer 1: A way to encourage local/regional and national public administrations to conduct interoperability assessments (IOPA) is to emphasise their benefits linked to reducing administrative burden, increased efficiency, etc. For example, by assessing interoperability before binding decisions, vendor lock-ins can be avoided, data exchanges among administrations can be smoother and more efficient, etc. The European Commission can support this by providing guidelines, templates, and best practices to simplify the process. Additionally, political endorsement at various levels of government, together with a strong national commitment to interoperability, can drive engagement. Finally, the benefits of assessments must be clearly and effectively communicated to ensure that public administrations recognise their value and impact.