

NIFO Factsheet – Malta

The main online sources related to interoperability in Malta are

- The National ICT interoperability framework:
https://mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/Interoperability/Documents/NIF_framework.pdf
- The GMICT Policies: <https://mita.gov.mt/en/GMICT/Pages/General-GMICT-Policies.aspx>
- Digital Malta, National Digital Strategy 2014 – 2020:
<http://www.digitalmalta.gov.mt/en/Pages/Landing-Pages/GuidingPrinciples.aspx>

Main interoperability highlights

The Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) is the agency in Malta responsible for information technology in the public administrations. MITA is responsible for the follow-up of the **National ICT Interoperability Framework**¹ and the on-going Maltese initiatives regarding interoperability.

Summary of the NIF

As specified within MITA's last strategy and business plan², the agency is responsible for the development of an Interoperability Framework which facilitates the delivery of Government Public services to citizens, businesses and European Member State administrations. MITA is also the entity which develops, builds and manages Corporate (e.g. Payroll, Accounting System) or government business Information systems (taxation, social policy, etc.) and Core services (e.g. email for Government, Government network, internet service, etc.). In essence, the objective of the National ICT Interoperability Framework (NIF) is to guide the Public Sector in maximising the benefits from all technology investments by introducing ICT resources that are flexible, reusable and interoperable. This version of the NIF mostly focuses on the identification of technical enablers for the exchange of meaningful information and the ability to reuse existing ICT resources. It considers organisational challenges, but does not directly take into consideration the legal perspective of public services.

The policy, regulation and compliance perspectives of the NIF have been issued as separate documents under the ICT Governance and the Compliance Management Frameworks. Relevant policies include the Interoperability and Open Specifications Policy, Formalised Specification Adoption Procedure, Adopted Specifications that can be found online on the GMICT Policy portal³. The NIF takes into account the European context by, among other things, specifically adopting the definitions and introducing the principles and recommendations issued by the EIF.

¹ https://mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/Interoperability/Documents/NIF_framework.pdf

² https://www.mita.gov.mt/MediaCenter/PDFs/1_MITA%20Strategic%20Plan%202009-2012%20%28web%29.pdf

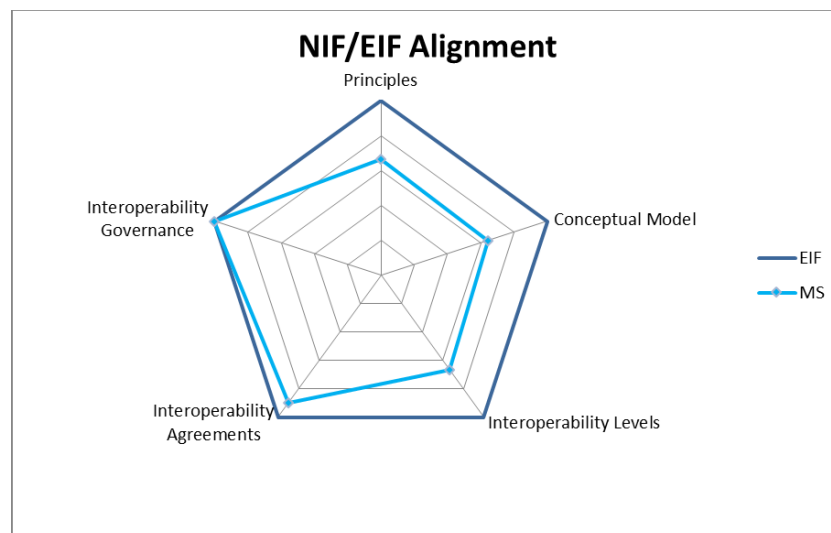
³ <https://mita.gov.mt/en/GMICT/Pages/General-GMICT-Policies.aspx>

The NIF provides a series of tools and guidelines to support Public Sector organisations undertaking interoperability initiatives. It is structured as follows:

- Introduction to the NIF purpose, objectives, key principles and main definitions used throughout;
- A conceptual model for an Interoperability Architecture that identifies key Interoperability Agreements across the Public Sector to reduce the interoperability gap in a connected Government paradigm. This section sets the scene for more in depth organisational (including business processes), data (semantic) and technical discussions;
- Organisational interoperability principles and recommendations for service attributes to contribute in designing interoperable business processes;
- Introduction to the concept of semantic interoperability and identification of steps to discover and standardise Government's data assets. This section contributes to evolving data into meaningful and reusable information by introducing, among other things, data provisioning principles, typical characteristics of reusable data and potential sources for reuse;
- A standardisation approach to technical interoperability, including contextualisation through Interoperability Profiles.

Alignment NIF/EIF

NIF/EIF alignment shows that the Maltese NIF is well aligned with the EIF.



The Maltese NIF fully aligns with four of the twelve EIF principles. These principles are openness, security and privacy, reusability and user-centricity. The Maltese NIF partially aligns with the eight other principles.

Four of the items relating to the conceptual model are partially aligned with the EIF: a components-based service model, a common scheme, an infrastructure to connect loosely coupled



2016 update.

service components, the access and control mechanisms and the development of interfaces to authentic sources. Malta has a formal conceptual model as presented in the NIF and encourages making authentic sources of information available.

The interoperability levels described in the Maltese NIF are fairly aligned with the ones described by the EIF. Half of the items are fully aligned with the EIF: they relate to the business processes, a common taxonomy and communities on semantic interoperability and the usage of formalized specifications to ensure technical interoperability. Two of the items are partially observed: the four levels of interoperability and detail on the business processes (interaction among the different levels of government). Three items were not observed: the consideration to note all relevant legislation related to data exchange, the clarification of organisational relationships and, a change management process. Generally, the four levels of interoperability are described, together with the political level.

Four of the items relating to interoperability agreements are fully aligned with the EIF – they are the basis for interoperability agreements to be based on formalised specifications, encouragement for public administrations to use open specifications, the minimum service requirements for secure data exchange as well as the usage of a structured, transparent and objective approach to assess and select formalised specifications. One is partially observed: relating to leading or participating to standardization work.

There is full alignment for the governance framework. The process exists (GMICT policies and the ICT Governance Framework⁴), interoperability is considered as one of the elements of any given ICT solution. ICT solutions acquired by government are part of the overall enterprise architecture and are therefore governed by the EA policy. Architects assessing solutions, shall use the NIF and relevant policies to guide solution designers accordingly.

More detailed information on NIF / EIF alignment is provided on the NIFO Community on JoinUp on the [Compare NIFs](#) page.

⁴ http://mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/Interoperability/Documents/NIF_framework.pdf

Example of alignment –EIF principle 10: Reusability

In Malta, the National ICT Interoperability Framework (NIF) is driven, among other things, by the following objective: shared and reusable information and communication technology (ICT) assets owned by the public sector are discoverable and can be used by public services with minimal effort.

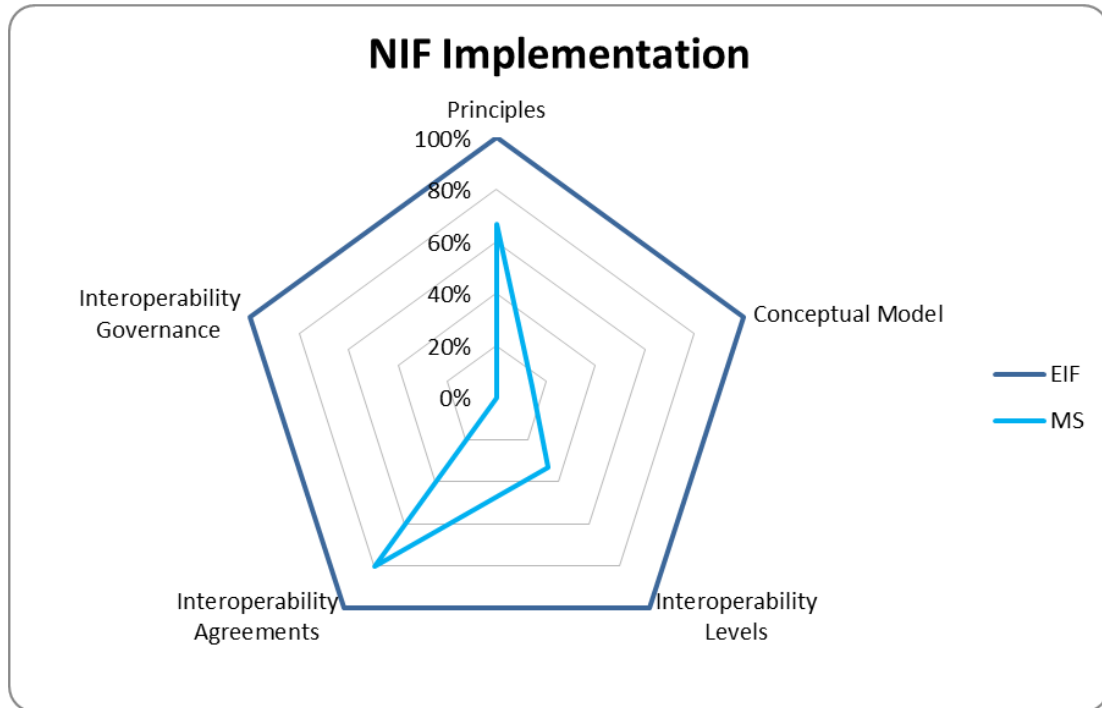
- The Framework includes a Section 2.3 "Share, discover and reuse" which specifies that ICT solutions, based on multilateral agreements, can be viewed as shared or common services of a generic nature which meet common user requirements across multiple sectors and policy areas. It is a consumable service that can be used without modification, in support of the implementation of the public service being offered. An example of a common service (from a technology perspective), provided and managed by the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA), is MAGNET - the Government's own private IP-based network. MAGNET offers a telecommunications interconnection platform that responds to the growing need for secure information exchange between public sector organisations. To be effective, services and tools need to be:
 - 1. Created with reusability in mind and are shared by their owners;
 - 2. Discoverable by and meaningful to their consumers.
- There are also plenty of opportunities for reuse beyond our borders. International best practice, data schemas and even entire software solutions can be found from reputable sources and adopted as-is or with minor modifications.

See NIF Framework, chapter 2, section 2.3 Share, Discover and Reuse

http://mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/Interoperability/Documents/NIF_framework.pdf

Implementation of NIF

Examples of implementation of principles, conceptual model, interoperability levels and interoperability agreements have been identified.



For the principles dimension, eleven out of twelve are implemented, ten at a large scale. The principle not implemented enough to be evaluated is preservation of information.

Concerning the conceptual model, the Government has established an Enterprise Service Bus with associated Service Provisioning API and governance, while EIDAS / SUNFISH are key projects at scale which show the use of loosely coupled and interconnected principles.

For the interoperability levels, three out of the nine criteria are implemented: change management, cross-sectoral communities supporting semantic interoperability and a list of adopted formalised specifications⁵ used when establishing public eServices.

As regards the interoperability agreements, this is implemented through the Formal Specifications suite in the GMICT Policy section of the MITA website⁶: Formalised Specifications Adoption Procedure, Formalised Specification Adoption Guidelines, and Formalised Specification Adoption Request Form. Moreover there is an internal repository of application forms, analysis and results.

⁵ http://mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/Interoperability/Documents/NIF_framework.pdf

⁶ <http://mita.gov.mt/en/GMICT/Pages/General-GMICT-Policies.aspx>

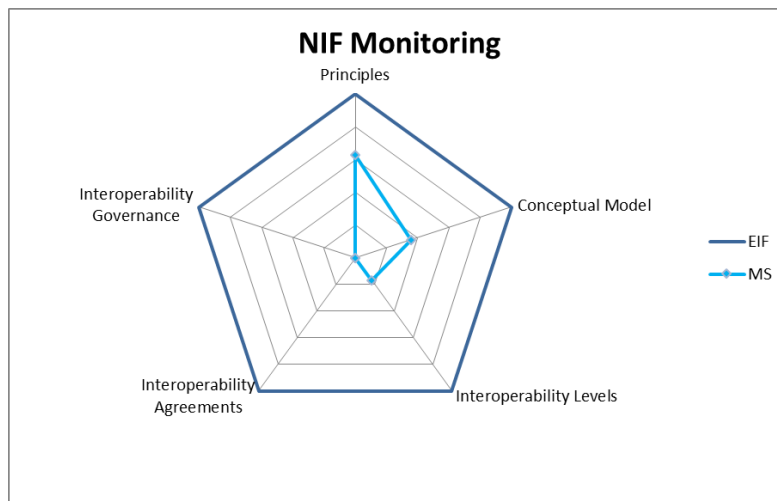
Example of implementation – Change management

The ICT Change Management within MITA controls the lifecycle of all Request For Changes (RFCs), with the main objective being that to facilitate the whole implementation process whilst ensuring minimum disruption to IT Services.

MITA manages changes through a centralised ICT service, offering interfaces (such as the use of the MITA Call Centre), so CIOs and other stakeholders can raise and monitor calls.

MITA's ICT Change Management Procedure is ITIL based.

Monitoring of NIF



All principles are monitored, through the MITA architecture assessment but also through the digital strategy for Malta 2014 – 2020⁷. All actions and initiatives defined in the Digital Malta Strategy are monitored and reported publicly. Reports are made available through the Digital Malta portal⁸.

The conceptual model and the interconnection of service components are monitored through the MITA architecture assessment.

⁷ <http://www.digitalmalta.gov.mt/en/Pages/Home.aspx>

⁸ <http://www.digitalmalta.gov.mt/en/Pages/Home.aspx>

Example of monitoring – Conceptual Model

In Malta, the conceptual model is monitored as follows:

- MITA uses an architecture assessment process to establish and influence the technology strategy aspects based on the Government's vision and drive through governance, the relevant implementations. These aspects include, amongst others, strategy, operational alignment, governance and architecture.

See

https://mita.gov.mt/en/Technology/Initiatives/Interoperability/Documents/ISF_framework.pdf

More information on all the implementation and monitoring examples is provided on the NIFO Community on JoinUp on the [Compare NIFs](#) page.

Other initiatives on interoperability

The Open Data Malta (<http://opendatamalta.com/>) is managed by the Local Councils' Association (LCA), an organisation that represents all 68 Local Councils in Malta and Gozo. This is the first governmental portal aimed at making the Public Sector Information (PSI) in Malta available and re-usable.

The Digital Strategy 2014 - 2020⁹ sets out the vision for “a digitally-enabled country empowering its people, communities and entrepreneurs through the intelligent and universal use of ICT” that aims to improve citizens' life, to improve community services and to help enterprises grow and become more competitive through ICT.

MITA is responsible for the upkeep of the Government of Malta ICT Policies¹⁰, Directives, Procedures and Standards, collectively referred to as the GMICT Policy Framework.

Back in June 2015, Malta's Information Technology Agency (MITA) together with Denmark's Digital Agency (Digitaliseringsstyrelsen) organised trainings and workshops for local council officials and citizens on eGovernment solutions. This initiative was part of Malta's Public Services Online project, which aims to improve government efficiency and effectiveness¹¹.

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⁹ <http://digitalmalta.org.mt/en/Pages/Home.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://mita.gov.mt/en/GMICT/Pages/General-GMICT-Policies.aspx>

¹¹ <http://www.gov.mt/en/Pages/banner%20pages/2015/Public%20Services%20Online/Public-Service-online-in-depth.aspx>