Cutting the bureaucratic red tape using the once-only principle

By applying the once-only principle to the field of public sector digitisation, the EU-funded TOOP project aims to help facilitate the digital single market.

Nobody likes red tape. For many, the hassle of having to repeatedly provide one’s identity and such basic information as certifications and contact information makes doing business across EU Member States challenging – at best.

The European Commission has adopted a Digital Government policy, including the objective of reducing the administrative burden on citizens and businesses when interacting with public administrations, and taken a number of initiatives. For example, the eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020 presents an ambitious vision and set of actions to make EU public administrations and public institutions open, efficient, participative and inclusive through the provision of borderless, personalised, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services. Implementation of the vision is supported by EU legislation such as the eIDAS regulation, Single Digital Gateway Regulation and EU funding of a series of research, innovation and infrastructure projects – including the TOOP (The Once Only Principle Project) project.

The once-only principle

Applying the once-only principle (OOP), the TOOP project aims to reduce the administrative burden when engaging in cross-border business activity. “By applying this principle to the field of public sector digitisation, we aim to make the digital single market a reality,” says Prof. Robert Krimmer, TOOP project...
The OOP focuses on reducing the administrative burden for individuals and businesses by re-organising public sector internal processes, as opposed to making citizens and businesses adjust to existing procedures. Applied to the field of public sector digitisation, citizens and businesses only have to provide public administrations with data once. The public administration then takes actions internally to share and reuse this data – even across borders – and always in compliance with relevant rules and regulations.

Sharing and reusing data

To help facilitate the sharing and reuse of data between public administrations, the TOOP project is developing a federated technical architecture. "Using already existing systems and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) building blocks, our aim is to connect registries and e-Government architectures in 21 countries across Europe," adds Prof. Krimmer.

The project, which has been extended to March 2020, is currently conducting pilot programmes to demonstrate the OOP in the areas of e-Procurement, general business mobility, and ship and crew certificates. The objective of the pilot programmes is to demonstrate how the OOP can be used to simplify procedures for sharing business-related data.

"Certain information about a business, such as company mandates, registrations and licenses, for example, is already available in dedicated national registers," says Prof. Krimmer. “From here, public administrations located in participating countries can access this information as needed.”

Six countries have launched pilot programmes (Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden), with more to follow.

Enabling the digital single market

According to Prof. Krimmer, the project’s overall legacy will be the uptake of the TOOP technical architecture and components by Member States as they work to implement the once-only principle as specified in the EU’s new Single Digital Gateway Regulation. As a result, businesses and administrations alike will benefit from the solutions being developed by TOOP.

“Businesses, for example, will be able to fulfil their legal obligations with less administrative burden – bringing both time and cost savings,” adds Prof. Krimmer. "Administrations will also benefit in the same manner, thanks to new levels of administrative efficiency, which will certainly improve customer satisfaction.”

Keywords

TOOP, once-only principle (OOP), digitisation, digital single market, European single market, Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), e-Government, Single Digital Gateway
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