

Factsheet Malta

Main interoperability activities

The “Malta Information Technology Agency” (MITA) is the agency in Malta responsible for information technology in the public administrations. MITA is currently reviewing the results of the public consultation on the drafted NIF, the National ICT Interoperability Framework. Next to this, Malta has a considerable number of on-going initiatives regarding interoperability (see ‘other initiatives on interoperability’).

Summary of the NIF

As specified within MITA’s three year strategy and business plan¹, the agency is responsible for the development of an Interoperability Framework which shall facilitate the delivery of Government Public services to citizens, businesses and European Member State administrations.

In essence the National ICT Interoperability Framework²’s (NIF) objective 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 (currently in advanced draft under review after the public consultation) shall mostly focus on the identification of technical enablers for the exchange of meaningful information and the ability to reuse existing ICT resources. It shall consider organisational challenges, but shall 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 etc. and 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 European Interoperability Framework (EIF) as directed by the European Interoperability Strategy (EIS).

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 shall contribute in 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;

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

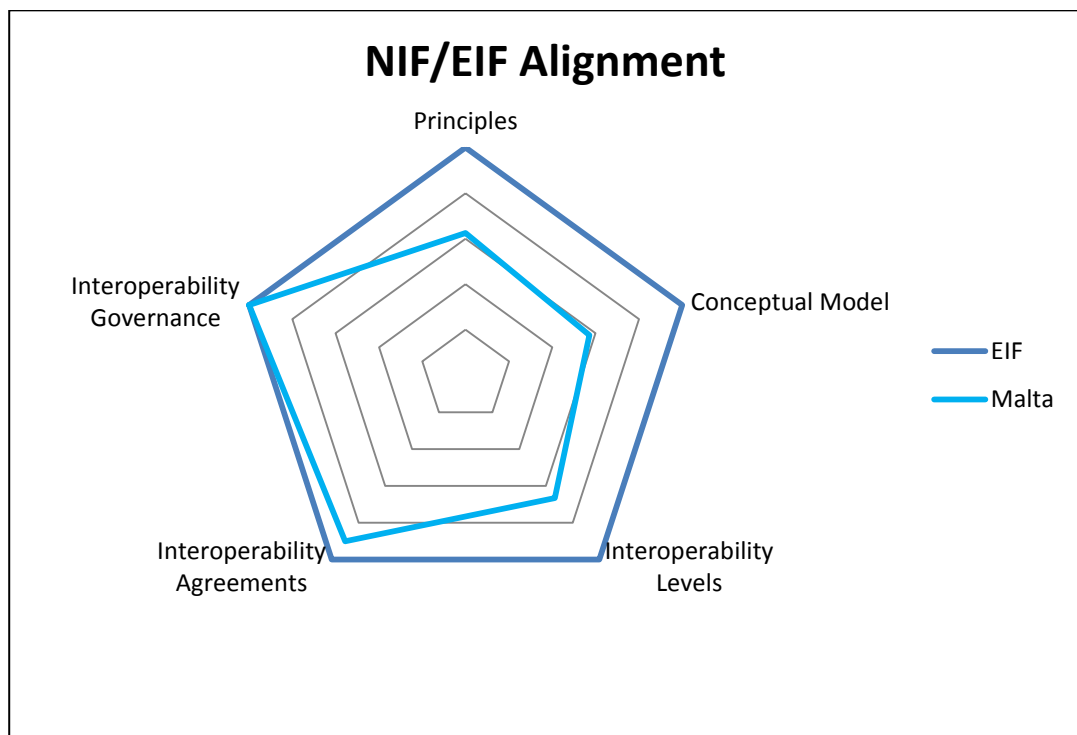
² <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=275>

³ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=217>

- A standardisation approach to **technical interoperability**, including contextualisation through Interoperability Profiles.

Alignment NIF/EIF

No officially published NIF exists yet. MITA is currently implementing the feedback of the public consultation on the NIF for Malta. The NIF/EIF alignment is made for this draft.



The Maltese NIF fully aligns with three of the twelve EIF **principles**. These three principles are openness, reusability and user-centricity. The Maltese NIF partially aligns with the nine other principles.

Five of the items relating to the **conceptual model** are partly aligned with the EIF – they are the general conceptual model, a components-based service model, a common scheme, infrastructure to connect loosely coupled service components, access and control mechanisms and the development of interfaces to authentic sources. Malta does encourage 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, communities on semantic interoperability and the usage of formalized specifications to ensure technical interoperability. Two of the items are partly 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 processes.

Generally, the four levels of interoperability are described, together with the political level. The legal framework is merely noted in the document (it is not referenced with a precise naming nor a clear indication on where this legislation could be found).

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: they relate to leading or participating to standardization work.

There is partial 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.

Other initiatives on interoperability

Open Standards⁵: MITA, the central driver of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Malta, is leading an initiative to disseminate the culture of Open Standards within Government and the local ICT industry. In May 2011, MITA has updated the Open Standards policy and directive to harmonise Government's direction with the guidance given by the European Interoperability Framework version 2.0 document published by the Commission on December 2010. This includes the definition and approach towards formalised specifications and "openness" characteristics. In 2012, the Open Standards policy and directive have been consolidated with other interoperability related policy statements in the Interoperability and Open Specifications Policy.

GMICT policies⁶: MITA is responsible for the upkeep of the Government of Malta ICT Policies, Directives, Procedures and Standards, collectively referred to as the GMICT Policy Framework.

Open recommendations: In August 2011, MITA published a Formalised Specification Adoption procedure, a set of guidelines and a request form template⁷ to provide the public sector, business community and the general public the opportunity to request the consideration for the application of formalised specifications within Government.

Catalogue of formalised specifications: In the following years, the current list of adopted specifications will evolve into a more effective catalogue that is in line with today's public procurement approaches. This forms part of the overall ICT Standardisation lifecycle capturing the overall Interoperability principle of inter-operation through standards.

ICT Vocabulary Standard: MITA is also trying to create common, formal, recognised taxonomies and vocabularies across Government.

Re-use of data and infrastructure services: MITA is also promoting the concept of re-use of corporate shared and/or common data and infrastructure services across Government by formalising "data registries" and identifying "core" enterprise architecture components. A notable example are the eGovernment Shared Services package⁸ which provides Government entities or departments with a centralised suite of components to be used within their public facing processes and services. The package provides a variety of common functionality including secure authentication mechanisms, form management and processing, notifications and secure online payments. eGovernment Services may interact with, customise and integrate such functionality according to their business requirements, without having to recreate their own functionality and at the same time promoting a consistent user experience throughout.

⁴ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=217>

⁵ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=269>

⁶ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=216>

⁷ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=217>

⁸ <https://www.mita.gov.mt/page.aspx?pageid=230>

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