



# THE INTERNAL MARKET INFORMATION (IMI) SYSTEM

15 years of  
connecting public  
administrations  
across the EU



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across the EU

Printed by the European Commission in Belgium  
Manuscript completed in November 2023  
1st edition

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Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2023

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Print ISBN 978-92-68-09652-9 doi:10.2873/367708 ET-05-23-428-EN-C  
PDF ISBN 978-92-68-09653-6 doi:10.2873/914815 ET-05-23-428-EN-N

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## FOREWORD

*Kerstin Jorna, Director General of DG GROW (Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs), European Commission.*

Nowadays digital technologies are spreading at lightspeed into every area of our lives, from healthcare and social affairs to the economy and the single market. Europe certainly does not fall short on this trend, thanks to its ambitious digital agenda and vision. There are many areas to be tackled but a successful EU digital transformation can only be achieved if the Commission and Member States work jointly and shift ‘digital’ gears by also accelerating the digital transformation of public services, including the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Strengthening cross-border interoperability and digital cooperation in the public sector in the EU is also a must to secure the functioning of the single market in the digital age, as the world’s largest integrated market with 440 million EU citizens and 23 million businesses, employing 128 million people across the continent <sup>1</sup>.

By joining these pieces of the puzzle together, we should ultimately aim to empower people and businesses to seize a sustainable and more prosperous digital future while being able to seamlessly exercise all the rights, they enjoy in the single market. Public authorities should be there to facilitate this and provide citizens and businesses with fast and high-quality public services.

15 years ago, IMI was a front runner and a visionary tool doing just that: shaping and developing the digital agenda while lifting barriers and ensuring single market rules are correctly applied and enforced. A highly innovative, green and adaptable digital tool, IMI has been facilitating the exchange of information between national authorities, acting as a digital connector in the single market ‘back office’<sup>2</sup> of national administrations.

IMI has helped the Commission and the Member States build the single market on the ground. I am convinced that IMI will continue to facilitate the enforcement of EU legislation in times to come.

I am pleased to wish IMI a happy 15th anniversary, and sustainable growth to help further integrate the single market for the benefit of its citizens and businesses.

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1 Communication from the Commission: The single market at 30 COM(2023) 162 final p. 5.

2 Communication from the Commission: The single market at 30 COM(2023) 162 final p. 3.

# WHAT IS IMI?

*IMI is a generic online application connecting public authorities across borders and languages. Accessible to more than 30 000 users, IMI contains, in a secure environment, harmonised digital workflows and pre-defined communication forms, available in 23 languages that allow exchanges of information for cross-border administrative cooperation.*

*IMI is an indispensable tool in building partnership, cooperation and trust across the EU and in implementing and enforcing single market legislation. IMI pioneered the 'once-only' and 'digital-ready' policymaking principles by developing a single system and making it available for multiple policy areas.*



“IMI is the standard tool for administrative cooperation in the single market; IMI delivers fast, modern and efficient solutions for administrative tasks in the EU single market. IMI is also a source of confidence: for example, when a company wanted to become established in an EU member state, we had to provide additional information, and the responsible authority in that country only accepted the response via IMI. This shows that IMI contributes to the strengthening of trust in public administration and between public administration authorities.”

**Jasna Knežević,  
National IMI Coordinator for Germany**

IMI started to operate in 2008 as an application available through a web browser, allowing public authorities to exchange information with each other every day in any official EU language. In 2012, it was upgraded to a fully-fledged system, formally established by the IMI Regulation<sup>3</sup>.

The concept for IMI was already born in 2004, partly inspired by SOLVIT<sup>4</sup>, when the single market had been in existence for over a decade. At that time, it was already clear that implementing and enforcing single market legislation largely relied on administrative cooperation and, more specifically, on the active exchange of information between national public administrations. In addition, following the enlargement of the EU in 2004, it became extremely important to make available digital support for cross-border information exchanges in a significantly enlarged EU of 27 Member States.

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System and repealing Commission Decision 2008/49/EC ('the IMI Regulation') OJ L 316, 14.11.2012, pp. 1-11.

<sup>4</sup> SOLVIT is the default problem-solving tool in all single market policy areas. It is a service present in all Member States and staffed with national civil servants cooperating across borders to help EU citizens and businesses who encounter problems when exercising their rights under single market rules. See SWD (2022) 325 – SOLVIT's Helping Hand in the single market: celebrating 20 years.

IMI was originally designed as an IT tool to facilitate the implementation of EU legislation by helping competent authorities to comply with their administrative cooperation obligations. Over time, however, IMI has proved to be much more than just a simple IT tool for exchanging information.

### 1. DIGITAL FRONTRUNNER

IMI was already a digital front-runner 15 years ago by providing a pioneering solution to connect Europe's national administrations electronically and securely. IMI continues to promote and improve digital administrative cooperation within the single market, contributing to the smooth functioning of the single market.

### 2. REDUCED ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

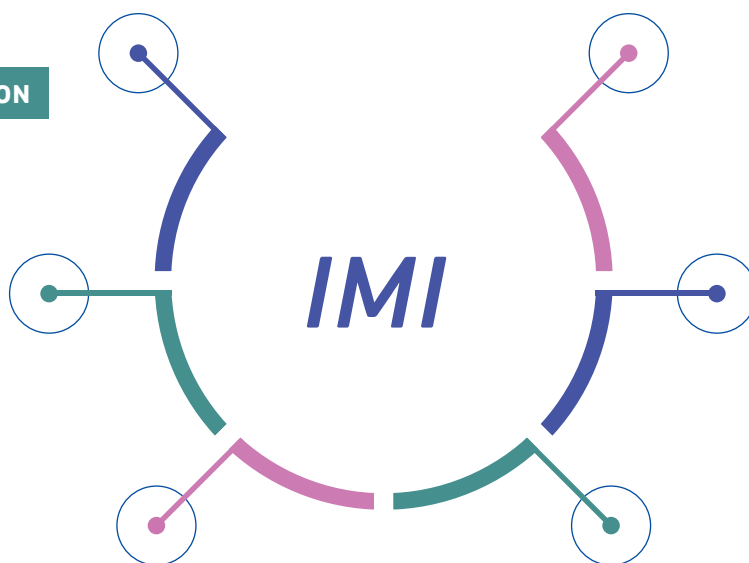
It provides simple, straightforward exchanges in all EU languages in a paperless and fully green environment. Officials can work in their own language when communicating with colleagues from another country; no formal letters are sent or translated between countries. The system saves money, time and resources.

### 3. IT RATIONALISATION

Thanks to IMI's reusable and easy-to-customise components, a single IT tool is used instead of 19 different ones for the various policy areas it covers. This saves resources for European businesses and citizens.

### 4. PROMOTING COMPLIANCE

IMI's structured digital workflows and forms guide authorities on how to comply with cooperation obligations and find where to send queries in other countries. IMI connects authorities for administrative cooperation in 19 policy areas and helps the functioning of the single market.



### 5. DETECTION OF SINGLE MARKET BARRIERS

IMI helps to identify why and how barriers to the single market happen. This can help the Member States and the European Commission decide on appropriate policy actions.

### 6. EVIDENCE & TRANSPARENCY

IMI statistics provide reliable evidence for single market policymaking. They show important aspects and developments in administrative cooperation and information exchanges. For example, as regards the area of posting of workers, the geographical patterns or directions of postings and the number of posted workers can be identified.





“I have been a national IMI coordinator for 15 years. Throughout the years the collaboration with other NIMICs has always been exceptional.

The cross-border cooperation in IMI is of high level: the system provides a top quality service for the public administrations. IMI is easy to use, brings quick responses and increases our productivity. Users can easily see all actions related to handling of cases or what they have to do next, personal data is protected and respected and there is always a person (NIMIC) at the disposal of the users at national level to help on every issue.

In short, for me, IMI is top, unique and easy.”

**Marios Ashikalis,  
National IMI Coordinator for Cyprus**

## WHAT HAS IMI ACHIEVED?

*When public administrations use IMI in the 19 policy areas that it covers, the single market functions better and administrative costs are reduced. Citizens and businesses, the beneficiaries of this digital administrative cooperation, can exercise their single market freedom easily and single market barriers are (more easily) removed.*

*Free movement of people facilitates the cross-border provision of services; this increases competitiveness within the EU and brings a better quality of service at lower price for citizens and businesses.*

Following the launch of IMI, new legislative proposals related to single market policies started to increasingly rely on the cooperation among Member State administrations. Digital exchanges were the easiest solution to facilitate this increased cooperation across borders and languages, and IMI was a ready-made solution that could be easily customised to respond to this need.

Thus, IMI's remit has grown significantly over the past 15 years, thanks to its reusability and adaptability. Starting with one single policy area and fewer than 100 national administrations registered in the system, IMI has proven to be a resilient tool, which had expanded to 12 policy areas by 2018. It continued developing and currently supports 19 policy areas for 95 administrative cooperation procedures in the single market, connecting more than 12 000 competent authorities across the EU for the ultimate benefit of European citizens and businesses.

## POSTING DECLARATIONS HELPING BUSINESSES

In the road transport sector, businesses such as truck transport and logistics companies can use a single uniform posting declaration (instead of 27 different ones); this can be easily submitted online to the administrations of the Member State where the drivers are posted, via the Road Transport Posting Declaration portal <sup>5</sup>, linked to IMI.

Drivers working outside their home country in providing transport services benefit from the same working conditions as local drivers. The submitted declarations, previously handled manually and having different content, can now be easily checked in IMI by the competent authorities. This reduces time and administrative costs for the businesses, and consequently the services provided by these companies cost less.

By November 2023 more than 30 million standard posting declarations for over 1 million drivers had been submitted by more than 80 000 road transport businesses, since the portal was launched in February 2022.



<sup>5</sup> <https://www.postingdeclaration.eu/landing>



## With a **single digital solution**, IMI:

- serves different administrative cultures and structures;
- easily identifies partners in other Member States;
- promotes cooperation in 23 languages;
- connects different levels of national administration (local, regional and national);
- offers a solution that is efficient and ensures fast communication;
- provides more structured and agreed/harmonised procedures;
- helps national authorities better implement single market rules;
- helps citizens and business exercise their rights easier and faster;
- reduces administrative burden.



“The Internal Market Information system was the go-to choice in 2018 when the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) was created.

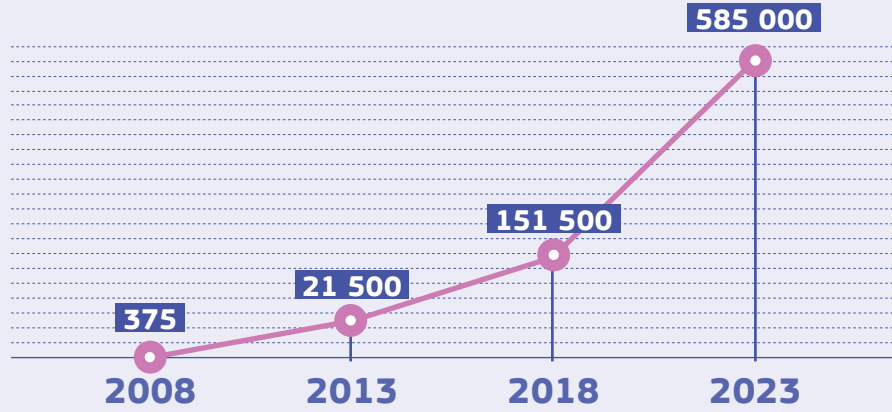
With very few adaptations, IMI proved to be a robust and efficient platform to exchange information between national data protection authorities (DPAs). DPAs have been using this performant tool for more than 5 years now, with very good results. Via IMI, DPAs issue hundreds of exchanges daily and work on dozens of cross-border cases simultaneously. Thanks to, in part, IMI, DPAs have now successfully resolved close to 900 cross-border data protection cases.

At the EDPB, we hope that this tool, which is essential to our work, continues to be improved in the years to come. IMI is crucial for efficient cross-border administrative cooperation. Only if sufficiently resourced and future-proofed, IMI will be able to continue to fulfil this role, of which, ultimately, European businesses and citizens are the beneficiaries.”

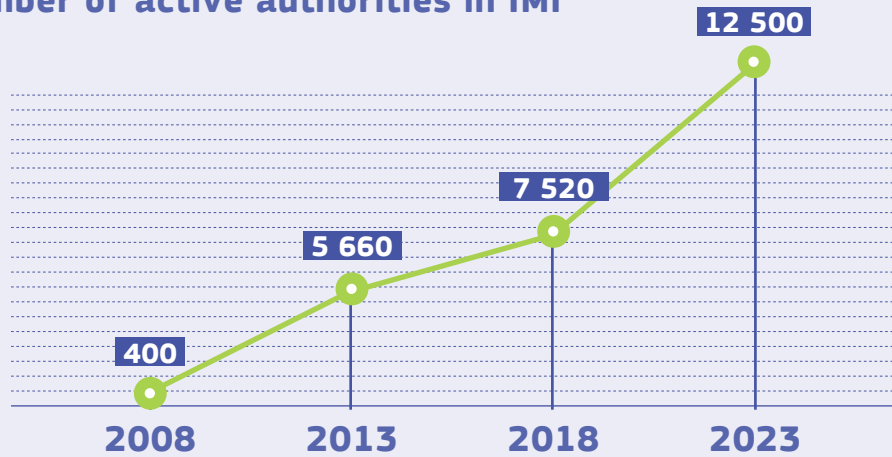
**Anu Talus,**  
**Chair of the European Data Protection Board**

# 15 YEARS OF IMI IN NUMBERS

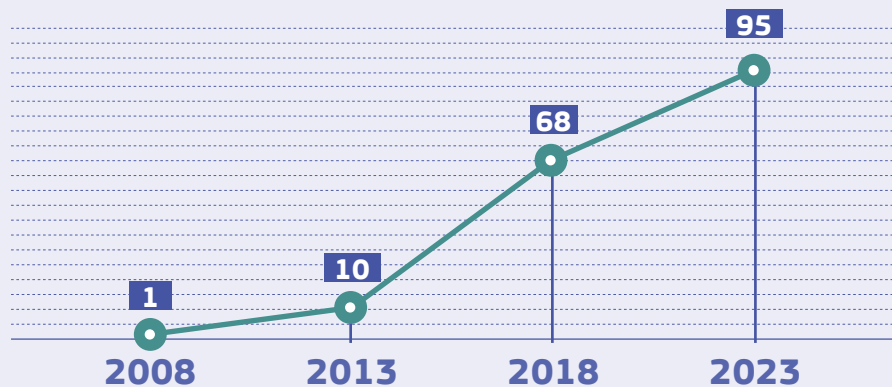
## Total number of information exchanges in IMI



## Total number of active authorities in IMI



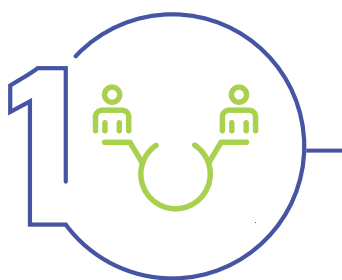
## Administrative cooperation procedures supported by IMI



# HOW DOES IMI WORK?

*From a technical point of view, the concept of IMI is simple: it offers a catalogue of versatile workflows, which can be reused and adapted according to various policy needs with no – or minimal – IT development.*

*Special forms are developed in these workflows, including policy specific questions, fields and values. This flexibility and adaptability of the technical solution is what continues to ensure that IMI can meet the requirements for administrative cooperation in new policy areas in the single market, in much shorter timeframes than building a completely new IT system for each new policy area.*



**REQUESTS** allow a national authority to exchange information with another authority. This exchange can include predefined questions, answers and messages or free-text communication and clarification requests.

Deadlines apply, reminders can be sent, and requests can be forwarded or split to ensure the correct authority replies to the request.

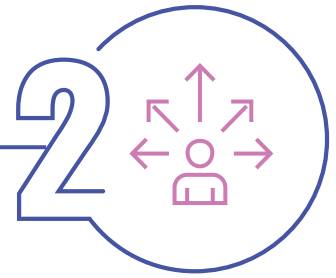
## **A REQUEST ABOUT PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

A Polish hairdresser goes to Vienna, Austria and wants to work as a hairdresser and wigmaker. The Landes Government Office of Vienna (LGOV) does not know if the hairdressing profession (“Friseur und Perückenmacher” in Austria) in Poland involves wig-making. It also wants to check if the professional’s qualification certificate attests the knowledge and skills to pursue these professional activities.

Instead of asking the professional to explain the situation, translate his document, and certify that his certificate and/or professional experience entitles him to carry out all the professional activities mentioned, the LGOV simply performs a search in IMI for the competent IMI-registered Polish authority, and sends a request with its questions, attaching the Polish hairdresser’s certificate. The reply arrives in 2 days. The use of IMI saves time, money and resources for both the public administration and the citizen. Free movement of people and services becomes a reality.

**NOTIFICATIONS/ALERTS** allow a national authority to send information to one or more Member States and, if EU law requires it, also to the Commission.

The notified authorities can take action accordingly. All parties involved can also communicate in IMI until the notification is closed. An alert is a specific notification type that can be used in case of an urgent situation or if public health or safety is at risk.



### **ALERT ABOUT FALSIFIED DIPLOMAS**

On the basis of a national court judgement, the German Health Authority in Hamburg realises that a German professional has used falsified evidence of his qualifications when applying for recognition of his health-related professional qualification. It goes into IMI, creates an alert, and broadcasts this information to all Member States. They are then alerted so they can take this into account, should the same person intend to practice the profession concerned in their country.



**REPOSITORIES** allow national authorities to share specific information in the system that might be of general interest to other Member States.

The information is stored in an IMI repository which can be easily checked by other competent authorities.

### **REPOSITORY FOR MODELS OF THE MOST USED PUBLIC DOCUMENTS**

A Slovak IT expert wants to start his own business, establishing it in Belgium. The Belgian authority asks him to present a public document proving that he doesn't have a criminal record. He presents his document issued in Slovakia, which should be accepted by the Belgian authority.

However, the authority has doubts about the authenticity of the stamp certifying the documents validity, so it goes to IMI and checks the Slovak sample in the repository of the most commonly used public documents.

Based on the image and the details accessible in IMI, the doubts are not confirmed, and the certificate can immediately be accepted.



“In our policy area, IMI is used to check the authenticity of a public document. Thanks to this, we have an excellent overview of when and how our policy legislation is applied. In addition, IMI also provides a repository that is very much used, simplifies the work of authorities and prevents the need to ask another authority in another Member State if a public document is authentic or not.

Security of exchange, transparency, removal of the language barrier, data protection and an extremely helpful statistical overview of the activities: these are for us the key assets of IMI.”

**Marie Vautravers,**  
**Policy expert in the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers**

**SPECIFIC PUBLIC PORTALS** for the European Professional Card and the Road Transport Posting Declaration areas, customised online portals have been created to act as a ‘front office’ to allow businesses and citizens to directly submit applications or declarations to public administrations. In addition, SOLVIT <sup>6</sup> – also supported by IMI – provides a public online form through which EU citizens or businesses facing obstacles in another country can submit a complaint. These applications, declarations and complaints submitted by the public are then further processed in the IMI ‘back office’, which is accessible to public officials only.



### **THE PUBLIC PORTAL FOR THE EUROPEAN PROFESSIONAL CARD**

An Irish geriatric nurse plans to move to Spain and exercise her profession there. Having looked at the ‘Your Europe’ portal, she realises that she is eligible for the European Professional Card (EPC) procedure. She finds out what documents she will need to submit online and the cost of the procedure.

She submits her application via the EPC portal, which is linked to IMI. Her application reaches the Irish competent authority immediately through IMI.

Having checked that the file is complete within the 1-week deadline, the Irish authority then verifies the submitted documents and confirms their authenticity before transmitting them to the Spanish authority.

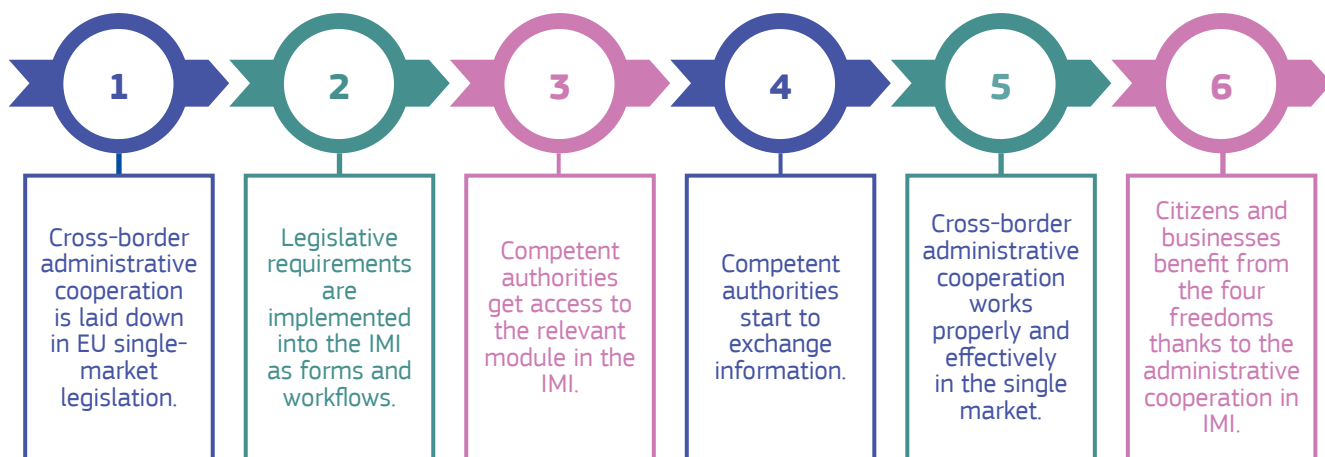
The Spanish authority checks the content of the nurse’s training against requirements applicable in Spain, and then approves and issues the EPC. The Irish geriatric nurse can immediately start working in Spain, and the free movement of workers has become a reality.

6 See footnote 2, and [https://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/solvit/index_en.htm) for more information.

# HOW TO MAKE IMI WORK ON THE GROUND?

*A wide network of experts from the European Commission, other EU bodies and Member States ensure that IMI can be used as a daily tool of the single market by more than 12 000 authorities in national and European bodies.*

*The dedication and commitment of these experts together with their close well-established cooperation is what makes IMI run and continuously expand, from identifying that IMI can be used for a policy area to ensuring the successful exchange of information every day.*

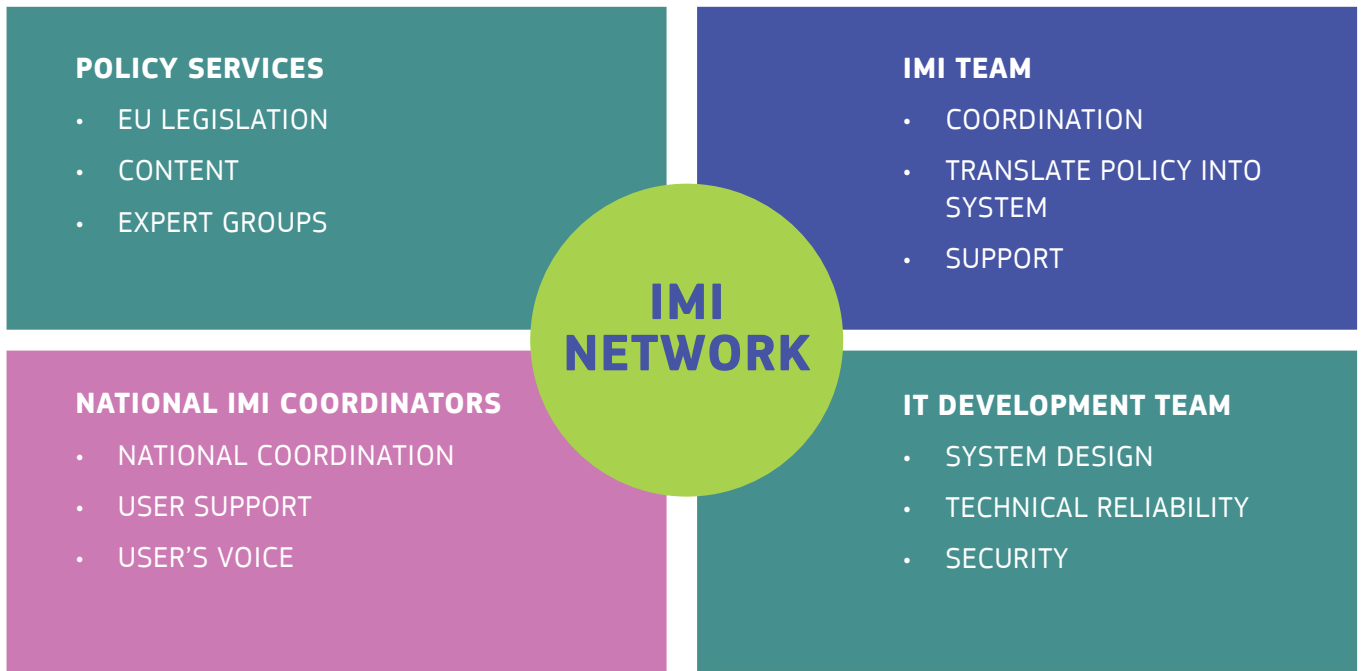


It is the **officials from national authorities using the IMI system who**, at the end of the day, make the system tick and come to life everyday by helping citizens and businesses.

But to make it all work on the ground, the IMI extended network is there: several teams and skilled professionals across the European Commission, the European Labour Authority and the European Data Protection Board cooperate to keep IMI running and ensure it fulfils the required policy aims. Teamwork, knowledge sharing, close coordination and extensive regular communication are key ingredients to IMI's continued successful operation and development.

The IMI-PROVE program developed by the European Labour Authority for more effective use of the IMI modules in the areas of posting of workers and road transport is a compelling example of how cooperation and mutual assistance between competent authorities is fostered in the IMI network.





**National IMI coordinators (NIMICs)**, working in national administrations, are the main contact points for the Commission for issues relating to IMI <sup>7</sup>. These coordinators - as part of the IMI Working Group - regularly meet the European Commission to assist and advise it on the development, expansion and smooth functioning of the system. In addition, Member State representatives can formally express their opinions on new policy areas to be supported by the system by voting on the necessary implementing legislation in the formal IMI Committee.

National IMI coordinators also provide and coordinate the first-line support (including basic technical assistance) for the more than 30 000 IMI users as well as spreading knowledge and overseeing training. They, or their delegates, register the competent authorities in their Member State in the system and serve as the main contact point for these authorities.

“The remarkable and knowledgeable national IMI coordinators provide insight into national administrative structures and into the support needs of users. This enables them to suggest targeted improvements. There are NIMICs who have held this position since 2008 and, by working together over the past 15 years, the active and committed NIMICs network acquired invaluable understanding and experience in dealing with the system on a daily basis. They have a direct link to the European Commission, giving them a unique role in the IMI project. Through all their work, national IMI coordinators are key and essential to the efficient functioning of the IMI.”

**Zoltán Magyar,**  
**System coordinator, working on IMI since 2005**

<sup>7</sup> A network of national IMI coordinators has been in place since the beginning of the IMI project. Their functions and responsibilities were formalised and set out in EU law in 2012 with the entry into force of the IMI Regulation.

The Commission's services responsible for developing policies for specific areas – referred to as **policy services**<sup>8</sup> – ensure that the IMI system correctly reflects the content of the administrative cooperation required in the underlying EU legislation.

They liaise with experts from the Member States for their policy area in the context of expert groups. The knowledge and the commitment of the policy services are pivotal for ensuring that the content in IMI system is correct.

IT experts and developers in the **European Commission's central IT service** ensure the IT development, maintenance, and availability of the system (e.g., designing reusable or customised workflows, generic functionalities and improvements, technical features for the performance and stability of the system). They also provide technical support, specialised helpdesk services, and support for security. The team plays an invaluable role that brings longstanding knowledge of the IMI system.

The **IMI team** in the Commission's department for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) is a dedicated team, exclusively dealing with this system. Its work entails every aspect of running of IMI successfully, from technical development, security to legal, data protection, knowledge sharing, monitoring and cooperation.

It coordinates the overall IMI activities and acts as an intermediary between the policy and IT experts. This team helps shape the legal texts together with the policy unit and identifies what needs to be implemented in the system for each policy area. It also builds the policy forms, by reusing available standard workflows, or requests specific developments from the technical team.

The IMI team also provides second-line helpdesk support, gives training on newly launched areas, monitors the functioning of the system, provides statistics to support policy making and analyses the possibility of including new policy areas in the IMI. The variety and complex nature of the work done by its members makes the IMI Team's contribution to the single market unique and special.

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<sup>8</sup> Currently IMI supports policy services in 8 different European Commission departments (Directorates-General) as well as the European Data Protection Board.

# WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE?

*IMI will pursue its path of being the default digital tool for administrative cooperation between Member States by expanding to new policy areas while enhancing its capacity to deliver data for evidence-based policy making.*

*It will continue to renew its technology and adding new features to serve its users at the highest standards and ensure smooth functioning of the single market.*



“We take pride in IMI for the role it plays in accelerating the digital transformation of Europe’s public sector and reaching important objectives of Europe’s Digital Agenda: ensuring cross-border interoperability and interconnected digital public administrations.

By standardising and harmonising communication processes, IMI makes the application of EU legislation across Member States easy and transparent: all authorities use the same form, in their own language and are guided throughout the procedure they work on.

On the IMI system, we work hard to constantly improve the functionalities, technical robustness and security of the application. The feedback from the user community helps us to continuously develop new features to further facilitate exchanges and ensure that IMI remains effective and efficient. We also constantly apply the highest standards of quality and security to protect the data being exchanged.”

**Pierri Vercheval,  
Head of the IMI Development Team in  
Directorate General for Digital Services**

There have been tremendous changes in digital technologies over the past decades. Ensuring that policymakers have accurate and up-to-date **data for policy making** is now at the heart of EU policy development and is the main policy objective of the EU’s digital transition. Making data available is also necessary to further promote transparency in decision-making.

In line with these goals, focus is already on improving and facilitating the extraction, presentation and manipulation of IMI statistics, including through business intelligence solutions, to make more evidence-based data available to policymakers and experts looking at single market compliance.

In the coming years, IMI can contribute to the **digital revolution** introduced by AI, by feeding in data to other systems using AI. This would be another step forward in ensuring that the information exchanged in IMI is exploited to either facilitate the processing of requests from citizens and businesses or to identify new and better ways of supporting the single market.

IMI is continuously reinventing itself by **renewing** its technology and increasing its security, including the security of personal data processing. Its interface has recently changed, making the user experience more intuitive and user friendly.

**New features** are constantly being added to the existing range of system functionalities, responding to the continuously evolving needs of users and ensuring the system can be used to its maximum capacity. Work is also ongoing, with the help and contribution of Member States, to ensure that IMI can ‘communicate’ with national IT systems, thus facilitating the reuse of national data and making the exchanges of information easier for users.

**Exploiting synergies** between IMI and other IT tools supporting the smooth functioning of the single market in a rationalised way will continue to be in the focus for IMI. In this sense, new and innovative solutions such as the Once-Only Technical System (OOTS <sup>9</sup>), which shall be launched in December 2023, should also be considered. Since IMI has been a forerunner of IT rationalisation, it will be deemed to deliver on synergies with this latter tool, as well as on building further on integrating IT solutions for the benefit of its users.

IMI will continue to follow its path and maintain its vision of being the **default digital tool for administrative cooperation** between Member States authorities when implementing rules regarding the single market by continuing to **expand** to new policy areas <sup>10</sup>. With its strong delivery track record, IMI offers a safe and secure option for enhancing the cross-border cooperation and providing innovative ways to help citizens and businesses.

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9 Established by Regulation (EU) 2018/1724 establishing a single digital gateway to provide access to information, to procedures and to assistance and problem-solving services and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012

10 The IMI team is currently analysing the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on European cross-border associations (COM/2023/516 final) as a potential new policy area to be supported by the system.



As Director for Enforcement, I firmly believe that enforcement and implementation of the single market is about ensuring that rules are consistently and correctly applied across the EU. This is only feasible if there is trust between the actors in the single market. IMI is a powerful digital tool that builds partnerships and cooperation between public administrations who implement EU rules every day. The use of IMI has helped to build trust between public services, and it is an important tool supporting the Member States in their daily work of implementation.

Initially, IMI was doing something truly new. It was the first time that the European Commission was offering an IT solution to promote direct dialogue between Member States, supporting administrative cooperation among national authorities. Ever since, the system has been consistently delivering on this objective in a growing number of policy areas.

IMI has proven to be a resilient and adaptable tool over the past 15 years and has become one of the biggest IT systems offered by the European Commission. Looking back on its rapid digital transformation, I am confident that IMI will continue growing to serve the needs of the digital transition.

I thank all those that made and continue to make IMI a success. The single market remains as important as ever. I am convinced that IMI will continue to reinforce its indispensable mission of supporting the smooth operation of the single market in the future. Connectivity is at the heart of the digital transformation of public administrations. Let's excel together!

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY, IMI!**



