

Interoperability Reinforcement Plan

As the first deadlines for switching to fully digital inter-institutional agreements (IIAs) and learning agreements (LAs) are approaching, further progress is needed to put an end to the considerable difficulties experienced by many end-users. To respond to this need, a new Interoperability Reinforcement Plan (or Action Plan) sets out the full interoperability of IIAs and LAs as the highest priority for the EWP network for the coming 6 months.

Tackling network difficulties

Making it possible that IT systems exchange context-sensitive data is a formidable challenge, as it requires an entire community of diverse technical stakeholders and IROs to perform in close concert. It is important to acknowledge that huge progress has been made thanks to the outstanding efforts of many colleagues, commercial providers included.

Nonetheless, there's an emerging consensus that vanquishing the challenges ahead will require a transversal change and transitioning into a more closely regulated environment. To accomplish that, the Action Plan, elaborated at the request of the European Commission, will take critical steps in key areas to move towards full interoperability.

Here's an overview of the key steps the interoperability reinforcement plan comprises:

- **A more regulated environment:** Harmonize the network and ensure a uniform quality as to how EWP specifications are implemented. This includes the development of minimum business requirements, the enhancement of the testing protocols and preparation of technical tools to automatically log all communication errors in the EWP Network.
- **No end users left behind:** Increase the support and available resources towards end users to ensure no HEI is being left behind. The aim is to have a better insight into all interoperability problems during the exchange of Erasmus+ data which are affecting end users. To this end, we aim for the expansion of the [ESCI Service Desk](#) towards all users with interoperability issues (irrespective the tools they are using), new Town Hall meetings with end users, and the establishment of [system-specific business user groups](#).
- **Enhanced cooperation with third-party providers:** Current challenges cannot be overcome without the active involvement of third-party providers and in-house system operators. This action plan recognises that a stringent quality assurance framework must be accompanied by extra measures to provide guidance and support to vital network nodes. Workshops will be organized to facilitate the peer-review of the EWP specifications among technical teams members, a relationship manager will focus on enhancing cooperation, and ESCI governance structures such as Infrastructure Forum will facilitate the co-working with the diverse nodes of the network and allow for fruitful information exchange to further enhance the user experience for all the nodes.

Conclusion

In order to benefit from the extra support outlined above, third-party providers and inhouse system operators will be asked for a concrete commitment to support the actions described in the other chapters of this action plan through an amendment of the EWP Collaboration Agreement. We are confident that, taken together, all these actions will provide an effective and impactful enhanced cooperation framework that will serve the higher education community for years to come.

The system-specific business user groups are already up and running. Are you interested in joining? More information can be found [here](#).

The Interoperability Reinforcement Plan was presented during the latest webinars, the recordings can be found on the [ESCI YouTube channel](#).