The single digital gateway – guide for newcomers

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Links to legal documents (EUR-Lex)

Links to pages on the Your Europe portal

Links to the SDG wiki (accessible only for registered SDG national coordinators)

Links to the SDG Dashboard (accessible only for registered SDG national coordinators)

Links to website on technical requirements around SDG implementation

Links to other public websites

PART I – the basics

1. The single digital gateway and its political context

The Regulation on the single digital gateway (SDG) entered into force in December 2018. The SDG uses the existing Your Europe portal as its public user interface. Its users are European citizens and businesses. The SDG aims at helping them to navigate the complexities of the single market. It will assist them in finding and understanding rights and rules at EU and national level, in completing online procedures and in getting assistance where needed. The gateway will also invite its users to give feedback about the quality of the public services and about any barriers they encounter in the single market.

The SDG's implementation is an ambitious programme of public service digitalisation and of full cross-border accessibility of information, procedures and assistance services. The Regulation foresees three important deadlines:

- In December 2020, the SDG was launched with information on rights, rules and procedures, a number of related assistance services, usage data collection and user feedback tools.
- By December 2022, the municipal authorities will have to do the same.
- By December 2023, 21 of the most important procedures for Europeans will be fully online in all Member States and accessible cross-border, supported by an EU wide "once-only" technical system. This system will allow users to request authorities to re-use their data through an automated cross-border exchange system, which will spare users the effort of providing the same information several times.

The management of the SDG is a joint task of the Commission and the Member States, working together in a coordination group based on an implementation work programme.

2. Building and running SDG services – the big picture

Watch the video to see the big picture of the implementation process: understand who needs to do what until when. The video is for all authorities or organisations that need to take some action. Sub-titles in most European languages are available. [Video also available on the SDG wiki]
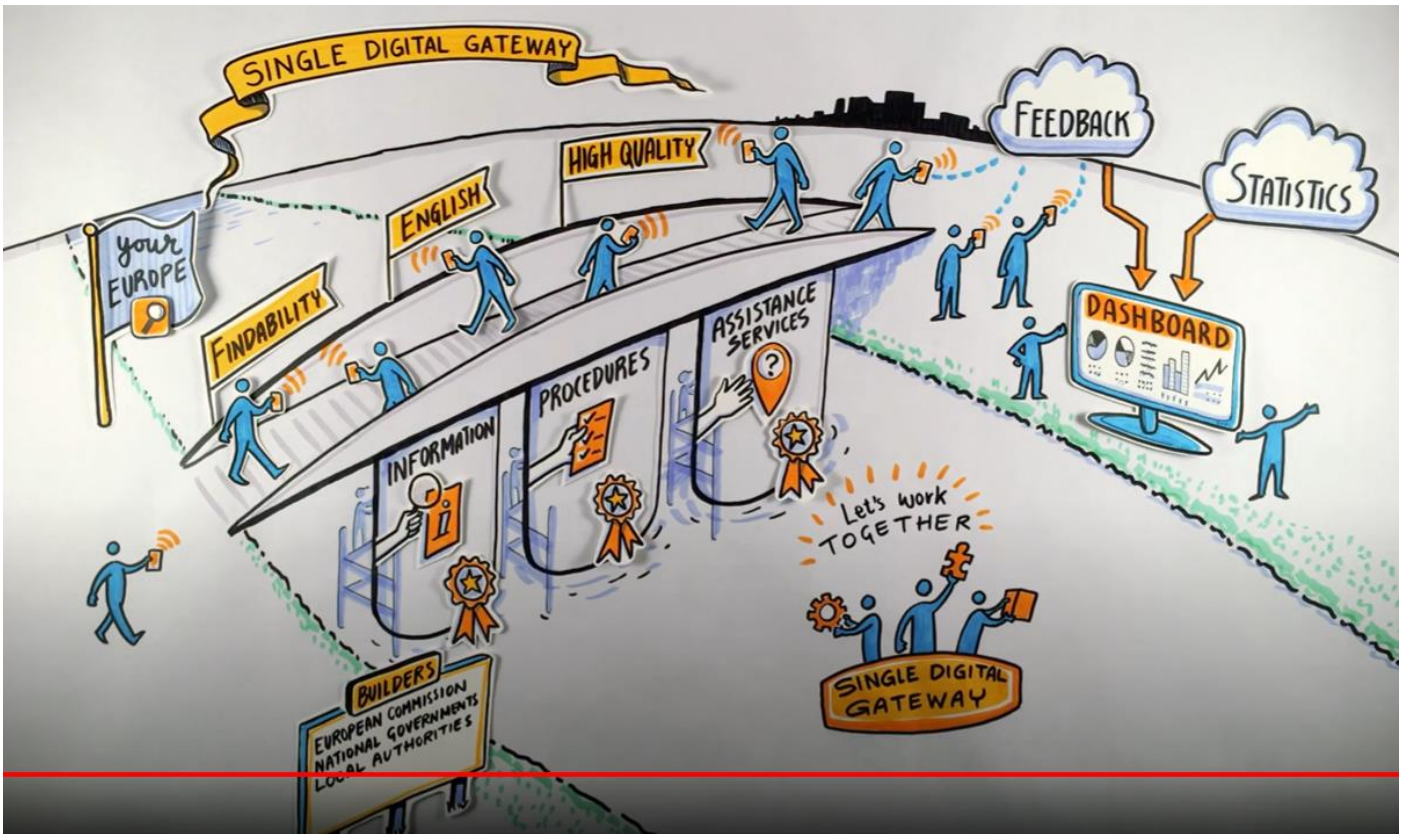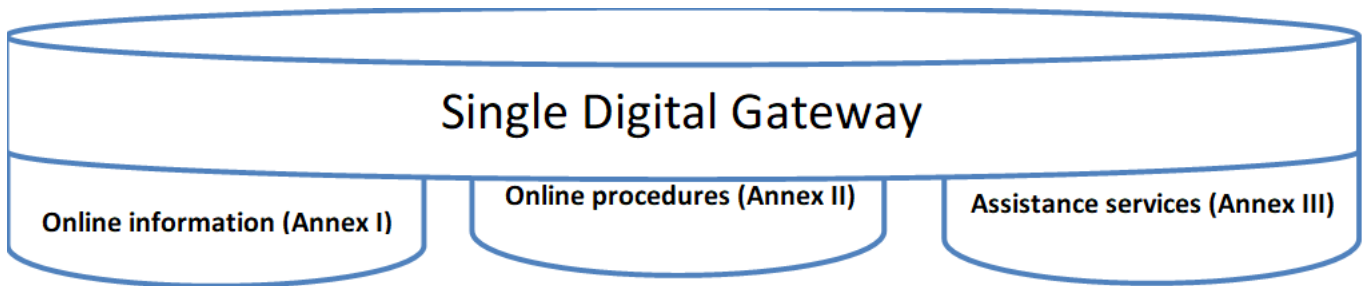
And [this video](#) shows how the SDG was presented for the launch of the first set of services in December 2020; showing more from the end user perspective:

Part II – Getting to the bottom of things

3. The main pillars

Online information

EU citizens and businesses cross borders for many different activities, such as studying, travelling, working or setting up a business. The right to do so is based on the EU single market. Many EU and national laws define the details, with the national laws frequently spelling out principles set by EU law for the national context. The single digital gateway (Art. 2) aims to make sure that good quality online information about these rules and rights is available and findable.

Which cross-border activities are covered?
An Annex to the SDG regulation (Annex I) lists the areas of cross-border activities for which information needs to be provided by the EU Member States or the European Commission. This guidance document gives further details on who is responsible for which areas.

Which quality criteria apply to online information?
Information on webpages that are part of the SDG have to be of high quality. What that concretely means is detailed in the regulation (Art. 9); notably information has to…:

- be user friendly and comprehensive;
- be up to date;
- include references to legal and other background documents;
- indicate contact details of responsible authorities;
- be translated into English (Art. 9 (2)) [for further details about translation see below].

What else do webmasters of SDG online information have to do?
- Information has to be also easy to find for users. Therefore, webmasters of SDG pages have to provide links to all pages. These are stored in the repository for links and searched by the SDG search facility. Further details on this below.
- The same information should not be duplicated on several webpages, but follow the principle 'one topic, one webpage'. This video prepared for a coordinators meeting on 28 April 2020 provides more details.
- All webpages belonging to the SDG have to display the Your Europe logo; further details on this below.
- Webmasters CAN syndicate (i.e. republish) content from the Your Europe portal on national webpages. This is optional and can facilitate avoiding duplication and saving resources. This wiki page explains how this works.

Information about product requirements – the Commission's approach to this special challenge
The SDG regulation provides that Member States and the Commission have to publish on the SDG pages information about rules and requirements around the selling of products on the single market Annex I (section M). These rules are often complex because EU and national legislation overlap and one product can be subject to several laws. And the applicable rules therefore can vary from one Member State to another for the same product. This wiki page explains the Commission's current proposal how to deal with this.

Online procedures

When a citizen or business has found out which rules apply to his or her cross-border project often (s)he needs to interact with public administrations in order to get some kind of decision or service, such as a VAT number, a license, an emission sticker, a study place or a birth certificate. The SDG aims to make these procedures findable, available online and accessible for non-national users.

Which procedures are covered? Which quality criteria do they have to fulfil?

A first requirement (Art. 10) is that public administrations must inform users online in detail about how a procedure works. Such a website must specify among others:

- what the steps to be taken are,
- how long it takes,
- which documents need to be provided,
- which authority is responsible,
- how a user can identify him-/herself,
- how much it may cost and how you can pay.

Whenever a procedure belongs to a topic listed in Annex I this information needs to be there, no matter if the procedure is (fully or partially) online or not.

For a list of particularly frequently used procedures (Annex II and 4 Directives about services and public procurement (Art. 1)) the regulation goes further. This guidance document explains what Annex II exactly covers. These procedures must be fully online by December 2023 (Art. 6). This means that a user can do all steps online at a distance. Member States have to justify when users still must come physically to an office. Such exceptions must be listed in a special repository so that they can be checked (Art 6 (3)).

What does 'accessible for cross border users' mean?

In addition, Member States must ensure that cross border users can access and fulfil the steps of a procedure as easily as national users. This means among others

- that the instructions need to be available also in English,
- that users can log in with their national eID,
- that they can pay electronically and
- that the result of the procedure is delivered as for national users (Art. 13).

This guidance document helps Member States to identify and prevent typical obstacles for cross border users in online procedures that lead to discrimination.

What else do mangers of SDG online procedures have to do?

- Procedures under the scope of the SDG must be easy to find for users. Therefore, the authorities managing them must provide links to the pages with the information about the procedure, which is usually where a user can start the procedure. These links are stored in the repository for links and searched by the SDG search facility. Further details on this below.
- All webpages belonging to the SDG have to display the Your Europe logo; further details on this below.

Side note: EU funding available to finance investments for digitalising procedures – the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF)

Putting procedures online sometimes requires substantial investments, especially when they are still paper-based. Member States can receive co-funding from the EU for this, in particular through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF). Here is guidance on how to do this.

Assistance services

The third 'layer' that the SDG offers are assistance services. They can help in particular in the following situations.

- A user has found information on an SDG webpage, but it is not sufficient for his/her specific situation.
- A user is stuck with an online procedure.
- A user needs help with a cross border activity when interacting with a public authority or e.g. for an online purchase with a commercial company.

Which assistance services are covered?

Seven assistance services (listed in Annex III) based on EU legislation form part of the SDG from its beginning. In addition, other assistance services can opt to join the SDG if they fulfil certain criteria regarding their quality, relevance and affordability (Art.7). Such services can be part of a European network of assistance services or not and they can under certain conditions be provided by private or semi-private organisations. This wiki page explains details about the procedure for opting in.

SDG assistance services should be easy to find, either through direct links on webpages or via the assistance service finder. That is an IT tool guiding users through a short decision tree to the best service for a specific problem.

Which quality criteria apply to assistance services?

Like for procedures a first requirement is that assistance services must inform in detail on a webpage about what they offer (Art.11). This needs to include

- the purpose and expected results,
- how long it will take,
- available languages,
- relevant contact details and
- possible fees and available payment methods.

This webpage must also be available in English.

Regarding the service itself the regulation obliges assistance service managers to deal with requests in a reasonable timeframe, they have to inform users when deadlines are extended and any fees have to be payable online and with payment methods available across borders (Art.16). This checklist explains in a compact way the quality requirements in the regulation. This guidance document goes broader and explains for every obligation on the assistance services who needs to do what, and this spelled out for each assistance service currently being part of the SDG.

Case statistics

One of the objectives of the SDG is to gather information about obstacles in the single market. For this purpose – and for the purpose of monitoring their usage – assistance services must send twice per year data about the requests they have dealt with. The implementing act on user feedback and statistics specifies (Art.4) most of the details. Though, some technical details are described in this guidance document, in particular how assistance services have to categorize requests when reporting them. These harmonised 'subject matters of requests' make the case statistics comparable over time and across assistance service providers.

What else do mangers of assistance services have to do?

- Managers of assistance services must keep the information about their service offer and their contact details up to date in the assistance service repository. This makes them findable through the assistance service finder.
- All webpages managed by SDG assistance services have to display the Your Europe logo; further details on this below.

How is findability, understandability and branding guaranteed?

Provision of links and tags

As mentioned before, the SDG aims to make it easy for users to find information, procedures and assistance services. Therefore, the managers of these services have to provide links (URLs) to the European Commission by uploading them in the repository for links (Art. 19). Either national coordinators or webmasters or national service providers themselves can manage the upload and keep links up to date, depending on the arrangements made in the country. This user manual explains the functionalities of the link repository. The links can be notified manually in the user interface, uploaded in bulk with the help of an excel file, using a web service or with the help of a crawler managed by the Commission. If you choose to register your links in the system with the help of the crawler, this guidance document contains the technical details about the metadata tags that need to be included on your pages in order to be recognized by the crawler. More details about how the crawler and the search facility work are at the end of this slideshow presented at the coordination meeting on 29 April 2021.

When the search facility does not deliver the expected webpages as top ranked results national webmasters should check a few points highlighted in this troubleshooting checklist.

Translation into English of national webpages

The Your Europe portal managed by the Commission offers information in all EU languages. In order to help cross border users, national service providers must translate their webpages that belong to the SDG into English[1]; at least the basic information (Art.12). The Commission offers a translation service through which – up to an annual budgetary limit – Member States can receive translations of texts they submit. As part of the SDG dashboard, the translation service also allows Member States to view their allocated, consumed and remaining budget.

The Your Europe logo as a quality label and brand - promotion

Users have more trust in websites with visual elements such as logos that they recognise as a trustful source. The SDG aims to establish as such a source among European citizens and businesses. And it uses 'Your Europe' as its main public interface and brand name. The Your Europe logo has been designed (in line with article 22 of the regulation) as a visual element that must be integrated on all webpages that form part of the SDG. In addition, the logo has to contain a link to the main Your Europe landing page. In this way, all webpages – be they managed by the EU or the Member States – form a recognisable network. The Your Europe visual identity manual describes all available forms of the logo and how it should be integrated on SDG webpages.

The SDG regulation aims to make Your Europe known as a high-quality brand of online services. Therefore, it foresees (Art. 23) that the Commission and the Member States (through the national coordinators) promote Your Europe in their areas of competence and that they coordinate their promotion activities. In practise, the Commission runs promotion campaigns, including e.g. production of promotion material ready to use by Member States or the organisation of a digital roadshow where Member States organise – in close cooperation with the Commission – national events targeting specific audiences/topics and leveraging national stakeholders/influencers.

Once-only technical system (OOTS)

When going through an administrative procedure users frequently have to provide documents or other evidence to the responsible authority. Such evidence is increasingly available in electronic format. When the user is located in another Member State than the authority managing the procedure then the user often must follow cumbersome steps such as sending certified documents by paper mail. Therefore, the SDG regulation (Art. 14) foresees the setting up of a technical system that can transfer such documents between authorities in different Member States. Article 14 specifies among others that:

- such transfers happen only at the explicit request of the user;
- the user can preview the evidence before deciding if it should be transferred;

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[1] In duly justified cases translation into another language can be requested (Art. 12 (3) and (4))

- the system should be available also for a cross border user wherever a Member State issues for its national users evidence in an electronic format allowing automated exchange;
- only the evidence needed for the given procedure should be transferred;
- the system must ensure confidentiality.

For which procedures does the OOTS apply?

The scope of the technical system is the same as for the digitalisation of procedures. Member States together with the European Commission must set it up for all procedures in Annex II and for the four Directives about services, recognition of professional qualifications and public procurement (Art. 1).

How will the technical details of the OOTS be determined?

The Commission will adopt in 2021 an implementing act that specifies the technical details of the OOTS (Art. 14 (9)). Since 2019, the Commission is working intensively (starting with the blueprint of the OOTS architecture) with the SDG national coordinators and other national experts to prepare this implementing act. They do this among others in small, dedicated groups focussing on specific topics in 'work packages', e.g. on "high level architecture", "user centricity" or "semantic mapping". This collaboration is supported by a wiki platform.

On which preparatory work does the OOTS build?

The OOTS will build on and re-use a number of existing technical solutions from the so-called CEF building blocks. These are standards and pieces of software that allow for instance Member States to recognise each other's electronic identification systems (eID) or to safely transmit information between public authorities (eDelivery). The feasibility of the OOTS has been proven in large-scale pilot projects, in particular 'The Once-Only Principle' (TOOP) project' and 'Digital Europe for all (DE4A)'. The European Commission has also carried out a number of studies to prepare the construction of the OOTS. They assess among others the readiness of Member States and make a semantic mapping.

Side note: EU funding available to finance investments for the OOTS – the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF)

Building the national infrastructure that will form part of the OOTS may require substantial investments, depending on the situation of a Member State. They can receive co-funding from the EU for this, in particular through the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RFF). Here is guidance on how to do this.

4. How to ensure user centricity – data based continuous quality assurance

The SDG aims to be user centric (i.a. recital 13). Therefore the managers of its services need to be able to continuously monitor how services are used and how they perform. The regulation (chapter VI) foresees two mechanisms for this: the collection and analysis of 1) user statistics and 2) user feedback.

Collection of user statistics

National providers of SDG services and the Commission have to collect data about the frequency and type of use of the services. This includes among other things

- number of visits of webpages,
- users' country of origin,
- type of devices used,
- for assistance services: response times and subject matters of received requests.

The regulation (Art.24) and the related implementing act (Art.3) detail the related tasks and mechanisms. All data collection and transmission are anonymous, in an aggregated format, automatic (machine-to-machine communication) and retention is limited to 3 years (Art.5). They are stored in a common data repository that is accessible through the dashboard. There the Commission, national coordinators and service providers can filter, visualise and extract data in line with their needs and competences. Annex I of the implementing act specifies details

of the tags to be included in metadata of SDG webpages. This webpage contains documentation of technical specifications such as API keys and URLs for data transmission. Art.4 of the implementing act defines details about the collection of case statistics by assistance services such as what a 'cross-border situation' is, how response times must be calculated and the frequency (2 times per year) and timing of data submission (by 28 February and 31 August respectively). The categories of subject matters for each assistance service are detailed in this document on "Arrangements with assistance and problem-solving services".

Collection of user feedback

Users need to be able to give anonymously feedback about the quality of the webpages and services of the SDG, no matter whether they are managed by the Commission or national webmasters (Art. 25 of the regulation). The idea is to use the feedback to continuously monitor and improve service quality. The legal details of who needs to do what are set in Chapter III of the implementing act.

How is feedback collected – common or alternative feedback tools

There are two types of feedback tools between which national service providers can choose.

1) The common user feedback tool (Art. 6 of the implementing act) is offered by the Commission and has the following features:
   - contains simple questions, ratings and free text boxes (some of them formulated in Annex III of the IA); free text boxes are optional for pages on information or procedures;
   - surveys (e.g. on online information) with detailed questions about service quality a user is invited to after submitting the basic feedback;
   - automatic transmission of the feedback to the common data repository;
   - automatic transmission of the URL of the webpage to which the feedback relates, which is needed to be able to act upon it;
   - available in all EU languages.

The collected feedback is stored in the common data repository accessible through the dashboard. Depending on needs and responsibilities the Commission, national coordinators and national service providers have access to it and can filter, visualise and download it (Art. 11 of IA).

2) Alternatively, national service providers can use a national feedback tool if it fulfils several criteria (Art. 7 of IA) such as that it
   - contains similar questions and ratings,
   - links to the surveys of the common feedback tool with detailed questions for 'second level feedback',
   - sends feedback to the common data repository (except for free text feedback) in real time or in bulk every month,
   - automatically transmits the relevant URLs with the feedback (more details on transmission in Art. 10 of the IA).

Annex II of the implementing act defines technical details for the transmission of feedback from alternative feedback tools. Further details on e.g. APIs and technical URLs mentioned in Annex II are on this webpage.

For online procedures, service providers have to offer access to a feedback tool where users have submitted their request (Art.8 of IA) whereas users of assistance services must receive an invitation to give feedback together with the final response (Art. 9 of IA).

Analysis of user feedback

The different actors managing the SDG services are responsible for analysing and acting upon user feedback in line with their roles (Art. 11 of IA):

- Service providers/webmasters have access to the feedback about their services including free text comments if applicable. A service provider using the common feedback tool receives regular emails informing that feedback is available on the dashboard (Art.7 of IA).
- National coordinators have access to feedback about the services of their country (except free text comments) so that they can be in dialogue on it with the national service providers.
- The Commission has access to all feedback (except free text comments) as a basis for dialogue with national coordinators.

5. How to use the SDG to analyse and remove obstacles in the single market

A complementary objective of the SDG is to gather information about obstacles in the Single Market so that EU and national policy makers can act to remove them where relevant and possible (Art.26). There are two sources of information:

1. The so-called single market obstacles tool. Users find it through the Your Europe portal managed by the Commission and national SDG webpages wherever webmasters integrate a link to it because they expect a significant number of non-national users on a page. Its purpose is to collect directly 'on the ground' feedback about obstacles to cross border activities. Its purpose is not to react to or solve specific complaints. The tool invites the user to indicate the target country, the single market area (corresponding to the categories of Annex I), if (s)he is a citizen or a business and to describe the obstacle in free text.
2. The aggregated information from the SDG assistance services (see above) about subject matters of received requests and the given responses.

The input received through the single market obstacles tool for end users is stored in the 'obstacles' tab of the dashboard. The Commission and national coordinators have access to it with a view to analysing it and passing the conclusions to EU and national policy makers as appropriate. The Commission will publish an overview of the reported obstacles online (Art.27).

6. The SDG IT tools

Most of the IT tools have already been mentioned when explaining the SDG services. Below is an additional summary that shows front-end and back-end services.

What the user sees (front-end)	Behind the scenes (back-end)
N/A	Dashboard; gives access to the data bases of (most) IT tools; several extensions are in development
Search facility on the Your Europe landing page – to find SDG webpages with information, procedures or assistance services	Repository for links accessible through the dashboard; depending on their respective responsibilities the Commission, national coordinators and national service providers must upload links, categorise them as 'information', 'procedure' and/or 'assistance service', include tags and keep them up to date
Assistance service finder – accessible through the Your Europe portal and (selected) national SDG pages	Assistance service repository accessible through the dashboard; in line with responsibilities (detailed in this checklist) the managers of assistance services make sure that the links, contact details, service offer descriptions etc. are correct and up to date.
Single market obstacles tool - accessible through the Your Europe portal and (selected) national SDG pages	'obstacles tab' of the dashboard; where all reported obstacles are stored, further linking and combining is planned with sources such as the aggregated case statistics from all SDG assistance services
Common user feedback tool - accessible through the Your Europe portal and national SDG pages in 5 different	Common data repository on feedback accessible through the dashboard

variations: [Feedback on information pages with free text box](#) [Feedback on information pages without free text box](#) [Feedback on procedures with free text box](#) [Feedback on procedures without free text box](#) [Feedback on assistance services](#) (with free text box)	
N/A	Common data repository on web analytics accessible through the dashboard
N/A	Translation service managed by the Commission and accessible through the 'translations' tab on the dashboard; on the 'translation budget' tab the consumption of available budgets can be tracked

Part III – Collaboration workflows around the SDG services

7. Governance: WHO is building and running the SDG services? HOW do they collaborate?

Numerous public authorities are collaborating to build and run the SDG services; and this across the different levels of governance (EU, national, regional, local) and within each level (collaboration across departments/ministries).

Contributing services of the European Commission

The following directorates-general contribute to the management of the SDG:

- DG internal market (GROW): overall coordination; management of several assistance services (Professional Qualification Assistance Centers; Points of single contact; Product contact points; Contact points for construction products; IPT helpdesk; SOLVIT; Your Europe advice; Enterprise Europe Network)
- DGs for Informatics (DIGIT) and Communication Networks, Content and Technology (CNECT): building and maintaining the common IT tools and the once-only technical system
- DG Health and food safety (SANTE): management of the National contact points for cross-border healthcare
- DG Employment (EMPL): management of the European network of employment services (EURES)
- DG Justice (JUST): management of the Online dispute resolution (ODR) service and the European Consumer Centres (ECC-net)
- DG Trade (TRADE): management of the trade helpdesk which is part of the concept for organising information on products
- DG Communication (COMM): management of the Europe direct centres
- DG Financial markets (FISMA)
- DG Taxes and customs union (TAXUD): assisting in organising information and data bases on taxation
- DG REFORM: management of the Recovery and Resilience Fund (RRF)

Contributing actors from the Member States

The national coordinators are the key actors because their task is to coordinate all actions in their country and to inform and involve numerous actors in the different work streams (Art.28). While Member States are free to have several coordinators and/or supporting teams there must be one contact person as interlocutor for the Commission (see here for contact details). Next to the national coordinator there are – depending on the national administrative structure – numerous actors and authorities involved, frequently at different levels of government; such as managers of

- portals with online information and procedures,
- online procedures,
- assistance services,
- base registries,

- digitalisation agencies.

How do the Commission and the Member States cooperate?

The main forum for collaboration is the coordination group, composed of the Commission and the national coordinators (Art.29). In its meetings, mostly more than one person per Member state can participate, subject to room capacity. The tasks of the group are listed in Article 30. An important frame for the work of both Member States and the Commission is the Annual work programme, also publicly available here. The Commission adopts it after discussion in the coordination group (Art.31).

Communication and collaboration channels

Platform	Purpose	Link
Wiki of the coordination group	• share internal documents such as guidance documents, draft implementing acts, studies, meeting documents • meetings calendar • contact details • FAQs of coordinators • Announcements from the Commission to national coordinators on "What's new"	https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/SDGCOORDGROUP
Once-only collaborative space	• share internal documents such as guidance documents, draft implementing acts, studies, meeting documents • meetings calendar • contact details • FAQs of coordinators • Collaboration platform around work packages	https://ec.europa.eu/cefdigital/wiki/pages/viewpage.action?spaceKey=SDGOO&title=SDG+OOP+-+Home+Page
Webpage on technical requirements	Publicly accessible page with technical documentation, e.g. on • Guidelines on use of IT tools and the logo • URLs to IT tools • Specification of APIs • Manuals/documentation of IT tools For sharing with national authorities that have no access to the wiki platforms	https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-digital-gateway-requirements_en
MS Teams	For meetings (upcoming) of the coordination group (plenary and ad hoc working groups on specific topics such as communication or practical IT matters)	https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3a7fee43432d6a413d85b8812a5f3f30d8%40thread.tacv2/conversations?groupId=550983b5-e91e-4641-b101-e373fb88c81b&tenantId=b24c8b06-522c-46fe-9080-70926f8dddb1
Email	For bilateral contacts	DG GROW: GROW-SINGLE-DIGITAL-GATEWAY@ec.europa.eu DG DIGIT: CEF-BUILDING-BLOCKS@ec.europa.eu