European
Commission

The Performance of the Points of Single Contact

An Assessment against the PSC Charter

This study has been prepared by Capgemini Consulting and Eurochambres for the Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.

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The **Services Directive** (2006/123/EC) was enacted in 2006 to facilitate the creation of a single market for services. With the aim to support companies to seize the business opportunities available to them in the EU Single Market, the directive called on the Member States to establish Points of Single Contact (PSCs) by the end of 2009. The PSCs are e-government portals providing information on administrative requirements and access to electronic procedures to complete the necessary formalities online. The setting-up of these "one-stop-shops" for service providers proved to be challenging and, still in 2012, most Member States were struggling to comply with the requirements of the Services Directive. To make the PSCs more responsive to the business's needs and tackle the shortcomings, the Commission and the Member States agreed on a **PSC Charter** in 2013, setting out four standard criteria for improving and benchmarking the PSCs – i.e. quality and availability of information, transactionality of e-procedures, accessibility for cross-border users and usability. These criteria cover both the obligatory requirements laid down by the Services Directive and voluntary commitments of the Member States perceived as essential to starting and running a business - e.g. VAT, social security, etc.

The purpose of the present study is to assess the performance of the PSCs in the 28 EU Member States and 3 EEA Member States - i.e. Norway, Iceland and Lichtenstein - against the PSC Charter criteria.

The methodological approach taken for this assessment combines a quantitative and qualitative research with a strong emphasis on the user-perspective. The data were collected through **mystery shopping**, a method involving users trained to observe, experience and measure the PSC services according to pre-defined scenarios. The mystery shoppers tested their own national PSC(s) and a PSC from another Member States according to three scenarios: new business establishment (home PSC), cross-border establishment and cross-border temporary service provision (foreign PSC). Each scenario was further developed to reflect real-life experience in four different sectors: construction, business services, personal care services and food, beverage & accommodation. The data collected were compiled and processed to produce numerical values of the indicators according to the methodology set out in the PSC Charter. The figures used in the study represent percentages of the maximum value of the indicator.

The qualitative analysis looked into the **link between the PSC and the Member States' e-government strategies**. This entailed analysing the extent to which: the PSCs are reflected in general e-government policies, the general principals of the e-government policies are implemented in the PSCs and the PSCs are supported with the available technical enablers. Follow-up **interviews** were carried out with four Member States – i.e. Germany, Croatia, Denmark and Poland - to get in-depth insights on the key drivers and barriers to the PSC performance.

Results of the assessment

Overall, the performance of the Points of Single Contact in the 28 EU Member States, Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland is mediocre (54%), with considerable scope for improvement.

Most Member States (30) fall in the category of middle ground performers, with scores between 40% and 75%. Germany is lagging behind and classified as poor performer (under 40%), whereas Luxembourg and Cyprus are the only two countries passing the 75% threshold of very good performance.

The performance in relation to the four PSC Charter criteria is relatively even, with the exception of the criterion *measuring* **the accessibility for cross-border users** for which the PSCs are clearly underperforming. ***The best performing PSC features are Usability and Transactionality of e-procedures, with 61%.*** They are followed by Quality and availability of information (57%) and Cross-border accessibility (41%).

With regard to the *Quality and availability of information* provided by the PSCs, results indicate that users have difficulty in finding the information on the portals. The mystery shoppers marked **the degree of information available with 53% and the clarity of the structure with 60%.** These scores are often accompanied by comments that information is missing, not complete or not adapted to the users' need. Furthermore, findings show **a big gap between the availability of information on general requirements such as business registration (71%) and tax formalities (62%) on the one side, and the sector specific information such as licenses (49%) and permits related to operations and location (46%) on the other side.** This finding is also in line with users' comments that the PSCs often provide only general information about specific requirements. In addition, mystery shoppers often complained about the use of legal and administrative jargon and the lack of integration with external sources of information, such as websites of competent authorities. The mystery shoppers reported that structuring information according to the business life cycle helped them to find the information needed. ***Navigation tools, such as search functions and tabs are generally available and score 68%.*** However, they did not always lead the mystery shoppers to the information they needed. The best performing portals in this category are Luxembourg, Cyprus and Ireland. These three countries have developed specific approaches and techniques to collecting, structuring and presenting the information. Greece, Austria and Iceland are the bottom three performers in this category.

Progress related to the *Transactionality of e-procedures* has been made over recent years. However, ***the 61% score indicates that there is still a long way to go to meet the businesses' expectations and the requirements of the Services Directive, both in terms of the number of available procedures and their full online application***, i.e. full transactionality. As it is the case for the *Availability and quality of information* criterion, the key weakness lies with the sector-specific requirements, which cannot be fully completed online in most countries. Estonia, Norway and Sweden are the best performing states in this area, with a score above 80%, whereas Germany, Slovakia and Ireland are the least performing countries.

PSCs are clearly underperforming as regards the criterion *Cross-border accessibility*. ***The problem lies with the availability of information and e-procedures to foreign users.*** Foreigners face linguistic and technical problems in completing administrative requirements online. The mystery shoppers reported that often only rudimentary information is provided in English or other foreign languages and that online forms are merely available in local languages. Although the score for multilingualism is relatively high (70%), the quality of the translation into foreign languages and the extent to which information is translated vary and is reported as problematic. Out of all PSCs which provide information in a language other than the national language(s), ***only one third also provide the forms required to***

complete the procedure in another language. This is reflected in the very low score for the category e-completion by foreign users (32%). Still, significant progress has been made in making clear the distinction between cases of cross-border business establishment and temporary provision of cross-border services.

Looking into the sophistication of the available cross-border e-procedures, it is striking to see that ***only the general business registration can be done fully online in more than 50% of the PSCs***. For the more specific requirements, the PSCs often offer general information about the procedure or no information at all. Furthermore, foreign users more often reported encountering technical problems in accessing e-procedures compared to domestic users. This can be explained by the non-availability of key enablers to foreign users, which is the case in more than half of the countries with key enablers in place.

Overall, ***significant variations are observed regarding the cross-border dimension across the 31 countries assessed***. The best performers– i.e. Cyprus, Luxembourg and Denmark - score more than 65%, while the poorest performers – i.e. Latvia, Germany and Liechtenstein - fall under 30%.

The fourth PSC Charter criterion, *Usability*, measures the user-friendliness of the PSCs, which is a decisive factor in making available information and e-procedures effective to businesses. Although Usability enjoys the highest score among the PSC Charter criteria (61%), mystery shoppers report that the ***portals are not always structured and designed to facilitate the user*** to complete the requirements as swiftly as possible, within a reasonable amount of time.

One of the key elements of usability is the availability and quality of assistance services (64%). Even if all PSCs provide some form of assistance, the mystery shoppers reported that the number of communication channels used and the quality of the assistance provided varies significantly across the Member States. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the assistance to cross-border users scores 15% less than the assistance to domestic users due to the fact that more than half of the PSCs do not provide assistance in languages other than their official one(s).

When it comes to the ease and speed of use (60% and 58% respectively), mystery shoppers complained that ***it is hard to estimate time, effort and resources needed to complete the administrative tasks***. Some of them also faced problems that could be traced to the maintenance of the portal (e.g. outdated information, dead links); thus undermining the credibility of the PSC. The poorest performers in the category of usability are Germany, Romania and Belgium, whereas the top performers are Cyprus, Lithuania and Estonia.

The mystery shopping exercise has not revealed significant variations across the four sectors assessed. Still, the construction industry shows marginally better performance - with an overall score of 57% - than the other three sectors. Although this sector is subject to a complex regulatory framework both at national and EU level, it is a relatively well-consolidated industry, which might make it easier for the PSC to identify regulatory requirements and facilitate them. At national level, the PSC assessment has not revealed any correlation between the variations in overall sector scores and the economic structures of the Member States.

The comparative analysis between the scores associated to the obligatory and the voluntary requirements produced surprising results. ***The PSCs generally score better on the voluntary commitments (56%) than on the obligatory requirements under the Services Directive (53%).*** On the level of the PSC Charter criteria, this difference is the biggest for the accessibility for cross-border users (9%) and transactionality of e-procedures (10%). The reason for such results lies in the fact that the Member States are underperforming on sector related regulatory requirements, which are obligatory features, while the majority of the voluntary requirements are horizontal and thus easier to facilitate through the PSC.

The qualitative analysis has revealed issues related to the integration of the PSCs in a wider e-government policy framework in the 28-EU Member States**. *The PSCs are***

hardly mentioned in national e-government strategies and policies. The lack of political commitment at national level could hamper the further development of the PSC, especially given the wide array of authorities which are often involved in providing government services to businesses. In many countries, the responsibility for dealing with different legal requirements is scattered across government levels and different executive bodies**. *Two of the main barriers identified for successful implementation of the PSCs are the lack of understanding of the purpose and objectives of these portals across government bodies, as well as the silos among these bodies****. By specifically referring to the development of the PSC in the national e-government strategies and policies, national governments would be able to apply more pressure to the different bodies involved. On an operational level, better-structured cooperation is a pre-requisite to breaking through the silos. To assure a comparable level of service provision across government authorities, certain qualitative and quantitative standards should be introduced. Also, governments should make better use of the key enabling technologies they have already implemented. Here, supportive legislation and a clear insight in what key enablers are available and for what purpose, could drive effective implementation of these technologies.

Recommendations

Based the findings, the study puts forward a set of recommendations addressed to the European Commission and the Member States on how to improve the functioning of the PSC.

General recommendations

- ***Zero tolerance for non-compliance****: More than 5 years after the deadline for the implementation of the Services Directive, a considerable number of the PSC specific obligatory requirements are still not in place in the Member States. The Commission should now back up its 'zero tolerance' commitment with a more stringent approach, including the use of infringement procedures in cases of non-compliance.

- The division between the legal obligations under the Services Directive and the voluntary commitments as defined by the PSC Charter has proved to have no significant value to either users or the PSCs themselves, according to the mystery shopping exercise. However, it does hinder the Commission to seek implementation of all requirements and associated e-procedures necessary to set up and run a business in the Single Market. ***In order to achieve a holistic approach to the provision of online services to businesses, a new regulatory framework should be considered*** enlarging the scope of the PSC services so as to effectively cover all administrative requirements for accessing national and cross-border EU/EEA markets.

- In order to deliver truly business-friendly and effective services, the PSCs have to be tailored far more to the needs of the end-users and therefore reflect a business rather than administrative perspective. To this end*, **certain elements of the PSC service portfolio (e.g. design, repackaging of information, helpdesk) should be implemented with the involvement of organizations with strong skills in providing support to companies***.

- A lack of properly functioning cooperation models in decentralised countries can lead to different understandings of the objectives of the PSC. In these cases, **a common governance platform** can align the regions in terms of back-end infrastructure and front-end navigation, look and feel.

- There is a significant heterogeneity in the way PSCs are implemented and run across Europe. Although there is no "one model fits all" and it is not realistic to opt for a single approach, *a stronger engagement in peer-to-peer interaction at EU level* is recommended in order to get direct feedback on the problems/difficulties encountered and the solutions implemented by other countries. The EUGO network should be strengthened by identifying and agreeing on a limited number of focus areas for discussion per year and the establishment of a *system of "rapporteurs"* to steer the debate on individual topics.
- Member states should install *tracking tools and feedback mechanisms* to collect information from the users on the PSC service and feed into the planning of future development of the portals. The Commission should set out a list of *compulsory minimum monitoring features to facilitate comparability and benchmarking* using the PSC Charter as a basis. To help countries set up their monitoring activities, the European Commission could provide the *PSC performance assessment framework as a ready-to-use toolbox* for countries.

PSC Charter criterion "Quality and availability of information"
- The regulatory and administrative business environment is a moving target, which is why PSCs should be considered and managed as an on-going process, requiring *continuous efforts to keep the information up-to-date*, not as a one-off exercise.
- More efforts should be invested in identifying and facilitating *sector-specific requirements* through the PSCs.
- The structure and content of the PSCs should be more business friendly and follow the logic of users, not of administrations. Member states are recommended to engage in *active cooperation with business representatives in identifying and shaping relevant content*.
- In order to ensure more effective use of the PSC portals *the absence of regulatory requirements in certain sectors should be clearly stated on the PSC*.

PSC Charter criterion "Transactionality of e-procedures"
- Member states should *develop a process map* of the customer journey, indicating what data is exchanged by whom (including the businesses) and when. This overview will enable the Member State to *identify opportunities for simplification and pinpoint where the use of key enablers is necessary*.
- Member states should make sure that the key enablers are being used across government levels. Therefore *common agreements on what technical standards key enablers should comply with and on data exchange formats* should be made.
- *Member states should put more pressure on the digitization of government procedures by translating e-government strategies in clear-cut targets*, pinpointing what the required digital sophistication level of procedures is (i.e. at least two-way interaction between businesses and government should be possible), which customer journeys are not sufficiently digitised, where the implementation of key enablers is lagging behind and which government authorities are responsible. Strategies should be accompanied by

implementation plans, national implementation and coordination teams, (joint) financing and consequential measures if targets are not met.

- Member states should ensure that procedures provided at the ***sub-national level comply with certain quality standards*** by developing a set of 'golden rules' for online service provision and by training responsible bodies in how to develop and maintain digital government procedures according to these standards.

PSC Charter criterion "Cross-border accessibility"

- ***Radical improvements should be made as regards the language availability*** related to the content of the website but also the search function and key features of the online procedures such as the online forms.
- ***Member states should make sure they recognise key enablers from other Member States.*** For this purpose they can make use of tools already provided in the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), such as the Digital Signature Service, which provides open source software for the creation and validation of e-signatures in the most commonly used formats.
- ***The European Commission*** should stimulate Member States to use existing solutions developed for cross-border procedures by extending communication and dissemination activities and by providing practical assistance to Member States (e.g. through an implementation help-desk or hands-on training sessions) to help government authorities to operationalize the use of key enablers.
- It is recommended to ***focus more on the provision of information to cross-border users.*** Assistance from the European Commission regarding provision of content should be envisaged (e.g. to create schemes of equivalence important for understanding the local business environment, such as forms of business establishment).

PSC Charter criterion "Usability"

- ***Well-structured overview of the procedures*** that businesses need to go through in order to fulfil administrative requirements is essential to improve the usability of the PSCs. The Member States should consider introducing a ***certain level of standardization in the structuring of the information***.
- Member states should ***train the helpdesk staff*** to provide effective user-friendly support, which excludes overly bureaucratic texts, legal jargon, extensive deliberation on the legislation applied, etc. and instead focus on providing answers to inquiries as practical as possible. The helpdesks should make use of ***interactive tools for communication*** with the users, such as social networks, online fora, etc.
- Member states should provide assistance ***in languages other than the national language***.
- ***The absence of regulatory requirements in certain sectors should be clearly stated*** on the PSC.
- ***A certain level of standardisation as regards the presentation and organisation of the information*** should be considered to improve the user-friendliness of the PSCs.

1. Introduction

1.1 Grasping the opportunities of digital for a single Europe

Elżbieta Bieńkowska - Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, stated in a speech at the Single Market Forum[1]: "*this is not Year Zero for the Single Market. It is Year Twenty-Three. We have accomplished quite a lot. (…) But we have to do more. (…) Many businesses feel let down. (…)We heard about problems accessing information. In one Member State, there are nine different regional laws relevant to the construction sector. How are you supposed to navigate through that?*"

This speech from March 2015 illustrates the state of play of the Points of Single Contact (PSCs), as concluded in previous assessments of the PSCs. These studies[2] underpin that the PSCs do not fully live up to business' needs with substantial differences between Member States regarding their quality. PSCs are a visible and practical benefit of the Services Directive for businesses. They help to release the untapped growth potential of services markets in Europe by providing domestic and cross-border service providers with easy access to information on legal and administrative requirements and the possibility to complete procedures online. Instead of interacting with different national public authorities, PSCs offer the possibility to get all information and complete the whole procedure online. They act as an online interface between the business and the government and are part of the Member States' eGovernment agendas. As such, the PSCs are very important to the internal market for services and for the digital single market.

Article 6 of the Services Directive called upon the Member States to set up fully operational PSCs by the end of 2009. However, the establishment of these "one-stop-shops" for service providers has posed a huge challenge to Member States. It has required significant changes in administrative procedures, in internal cooperation methods and in technical developments. What progress has been made since then?

A key assessment of the PSCs was initiated in 2012, when the Commission conducted an extensive study entitled "The functioning and usability of the Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive – State of Play and Way Forward[3]". The main conclusions revealed that, still in 2012, most Member States were struggling to comply with all requirements of the Services Directive. While progress had been made in the simplification of procedures and authorisation schemes, PSCs had not yet led to substantial simplification in dealing with administrative requirements. Tools like eIDs and eSignatures were seldom accepted across borders on the PSCs and this represented an important barrier for cross-border service delivery. Furthermore, there were significant differences between portals with regards to the availability and quality of electronic procedures. The overall gap between the high performing PSCs and the low performing was considerable. The report concluded that the PSCs should be made

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1 European Commission - Speech - "Making the Single Market work for Europe's citizens and businesses", http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-15-4691_en.htm
2 Series of studies:
Deloitte & Tech4i2 (2012), The functioning and usability of the Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive – State of Play and Way Forward. http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/study_on_points/final_report_en.pdf
EUROCHAMBRES (2010), Mapping the Implementation of the Services Directive in EU Member States.
BusinessEurope (2011), Unleashing cross-border services.
European Commission – SPOCS (2011), Points of Single Contact Research Study.
3 Deloitte & Tech4i2 (2012), The functioning and usability of the Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive – State of Play and Way Forward http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/study_on_points/final_report_en.pdf

more attractive and user-friendly, and that there is still a long way to go in order to move towards truly transactional eGovernment portals.

1.2 Moving towards a second generation of PSCs

The underperformance of the PSCs prompted the European Commission to undertake action. The 2012 Communication on the implementation of the Services Directive[4] underlined the need to move to a second generation of PSCs and to set up common criteria with Member States to measure and evaluate the performance of the PSCs in form of a PSC Charter. The PSC Charter[5] proposed by the Commission in 2012 was endorsed by the Member States in 2013. Its ultimate goal is to develop ambitious Points of Single Contact that not only meet the requirements set under the Services Directive but which also offer services and functionalities, which are seen as important instruments for making the PSCs more business-friendly and by which PSCs can be gradually transformed into truly business-friendly e-government tools. The PSC Charter sets out the key features for a successful and business-friendly PSC and the criteria for assessing these. The key features cover the core aspects of the PSCs against which they are rated:

I. *Quality and availability of information provided on the PSC.* Information provided through the PSC takes a holistic approach in terms of scope, is clearly structured and takes into account the different stages of the business lifecycle;

II. *Transactionality of electronic procedures.* Relevant administrative procedures are available online via the PSC, and the entire procedure can be completed online;

III. *Accessibility for cross-border users.* Users from other Member States should be able to complete procedures online. Therefore, the PSC should be multilingual and should distinguish between a permanent establishment and cross-border service provision;

IV. *Usability.* The necessary administrative steps can be completed smoothly and within a reasonable amount of time, and assistance services are at the disposal of users of the PSC.

Under the Services Directive, the Member States shall ensure that it is possible for service providers to obtain all information, forms and documents relevant to their activities, to complete the necessary formalities online (submit their documents/applications) and to receive the decisions/replied by competent authorities. All formalities should be dealt with via one single contact point and available online, including across borders.

The PSC Charter encourages the development of ambitious PSCs that not only meet these obligations of the Services Directive but also **offer additional services** which are necessary for operating a business – e.g. VAT, social security, labour law requirements, etc… As such, the PSC Charter covers both the legal obligations under the Services Directive, as well as voluntary features that go beyond the Directive and are seen as important instruments for making the PSCs more business-friendly and by which PSCs can be gradually transformed into truly business friendly e-government tools.

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4 European Commission (2012), Communication on the implementation of the Services Directive; A partnership for new growth in services 2012-2015, available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0261&from=EN
5 European Commission (2012), Charter for the electronic Points Of Single Contact under the Services Directive, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/psc-charter_en.pdf

The Member States were invited to improve their Points of Single Contact in line with these key features. The PSC Charter is a voluntary instrument – i.e. a 'gentlemen's agreement' between the Member States and the European Commission. It serves as an invitation and guidelines for Member States to develop their PSCs into fully-fledged e-government centres or so-called second generation PSCs by the end of 2014[6].

The goal of establishing a well-functioning PSC should be seen in the wider context of e-government policy, cross-border e-government services and the development of comprehensive e-services for businesses. In this context, the Services Directive plays a key driving role with respect to cross border accessibility of eGovernment service, since it essentially imposed a deadline on Member States for being able to service clients in other Member States, and thus to solve all challenges (including eID, eSignature and eDocument problems), at least to a sufficient degree to allow these points of single contact to operate. This obligation helped drive initiatives through regulations and through policy actions. In this respect, the Commission adopted legal measures to improve the cross-border use and interoperability of certain types of eSignatures[7]. The enhancement of the PSCs should be seen as a catalyst for making e-government services work for businesses cross-border. This is recognised by the EU's eGovernment Action Plan, which states that the PSC are to be developed into fully fledged eGovernment centres or so-called second generation PSC.

1.3 Scope and objectives of this study

This study evaluates the compliance of the Points of Single Contact with the PSC Charter criteria. It provides an assessment of the implementation of the Points of Single Contact in the Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. To provide background to the benchmarking results and to explain them, the e-government policies and their link to the PSCs are analysed, as well as the supporting legislation and applied technical enablers. The assessment results will be presented in light of different criteria. It will show the state of play of 4 PSC Charter criteria, but will also investigate any possible differences with regard to the implementation of voluntary and obligatory requirements, in four different sectors of industry and three scenarios (one home and two cross-borders). Furthermore, the study will provide in-depth country fiches offering an overview of the country's PSC developments and ranking against the PSC criteria and the other countries assessed. Finally, it provides an overview of what those who 'lag behind' can learn from best practices.

The results of this study can be used as an input for further policy development regarding the Point of Single Contact, by both the Member States and the European Commission.

1.4 Scope and objectives of this final report

This document presents the methodology used for the study and the results of the PSC assessment for all Member States, gathered via the mystery shopping. It provides an interpretation of the results which combine insights from the policy analysis related to PSCs with the data from the mystery shopping. It includes a further analysis of the PSCs in the wider e-government landscape, based on desk research, a literature

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[6] Competitiveness Council conclusions on Single Market Policy, 2 December 2013

[7] Commission Implementing Decision 2013/662/EU of 14 October 2013 amending Decision 2009/767/EC as regards the establishment, maintenance and publication of trusted lists of certification service providers supervised/accredited by Member States and by Commission Implementing Decision 2014/148/EU of 17 March 2014 amending Decision 2011/130/EU establishing minimum requirements for the cross-border processing of documents signed electronically by competent authorities under Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on services in the internal market

review and a complete analysis of the Member States' responses to the questionnaire sent out by the European Commission on the interlinks between the PSCs and other e-government initiatives. This final report provides recommendations for further implementation of the PSC Charter and improvements of the PSCs, which are open to discussion with the European Commission. Furthermore, it presents the country fiches, which are attached as a separate annex.

1.5 Structure of the document

This final report is structured as follows:

1. Introduction providing the background and context of the study as well as the scope and objectives of this final report;
2. A detailed assessment methodology;
3. An overview of the results of the PSC mystery shopping-exercise: the results per criterion of the PSC Charter, national and cross-border, for the four selected industries, with particular attention for key-enablers;
4. PSC performance in a wider context;
5. Conclusion and recommendations.

The references are attached in annex 2 and the country fiches annex is attached as a separate document.

2. Overall Methodology

This chapter explains how the performance of Points of Single Contact has been measured and what analyses have been performed to get to valuable insights and evidence based recommendations. The methodology builds on methods used for previous assessments performed in the 2012 Assessment of Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive and in the 2012-2013 European Commission eGovernment Benchmark[8].

2.1   Our approach

To provide the Member States and the Commission with insight on the performance of Points of Single Contact and more in-depth knowledge on why Points of Single Contact perform in a certain way, this study takes a two-fold approach (Figure 2.1).

On the one hand, the PSCs are quantitatively assessed through ***mystery shopping.*** Mystery shopping is a tested method which puts the user experience at the centre of the measurement. It involves the use of mystery shoppers who are trained and briefed to observe, experience, and measure a (public service) process by acting as a prospective user, in this case a potential start-up or actual entrepreneur. In order to achieve comparable results, it is important that the mystery shoppers measure the Point of Single Contact from the same perspective and according to the same criteria. For this reason, a structured process has been followed, which is depicted on the left side of Figure 2.1. The output of this process is a set of weighted scores (percentages) and a ranking of countries according to the four PSC charter criteria.

In parallel to the Mystery shopping process a ***qualitative analysis*** of the background of the PSCs has been performed. We investigated how the PSCs are organised, how they are embedded in national policies and legislation and whether solutions developed elsewhere are implemented in the PSCs. The process followed for this analysis is depicted on the right side of Figure 2.1. The goal of this process is to put the mystery shopping results in context and to be able to explain the scores, identifying the key barriers and drivers of PSC performance.

The results of the quantitative assessment and qualitative analysis are presented in country fiches - providing insights on the national level – and in this final report – providing insights across countries and for the EU as a whole.

The detailed methods are further described in the next paragraphs.

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8 Also see: http://www.capgemini.com/egov-benchmark

Figure 2.1 Overall methodology
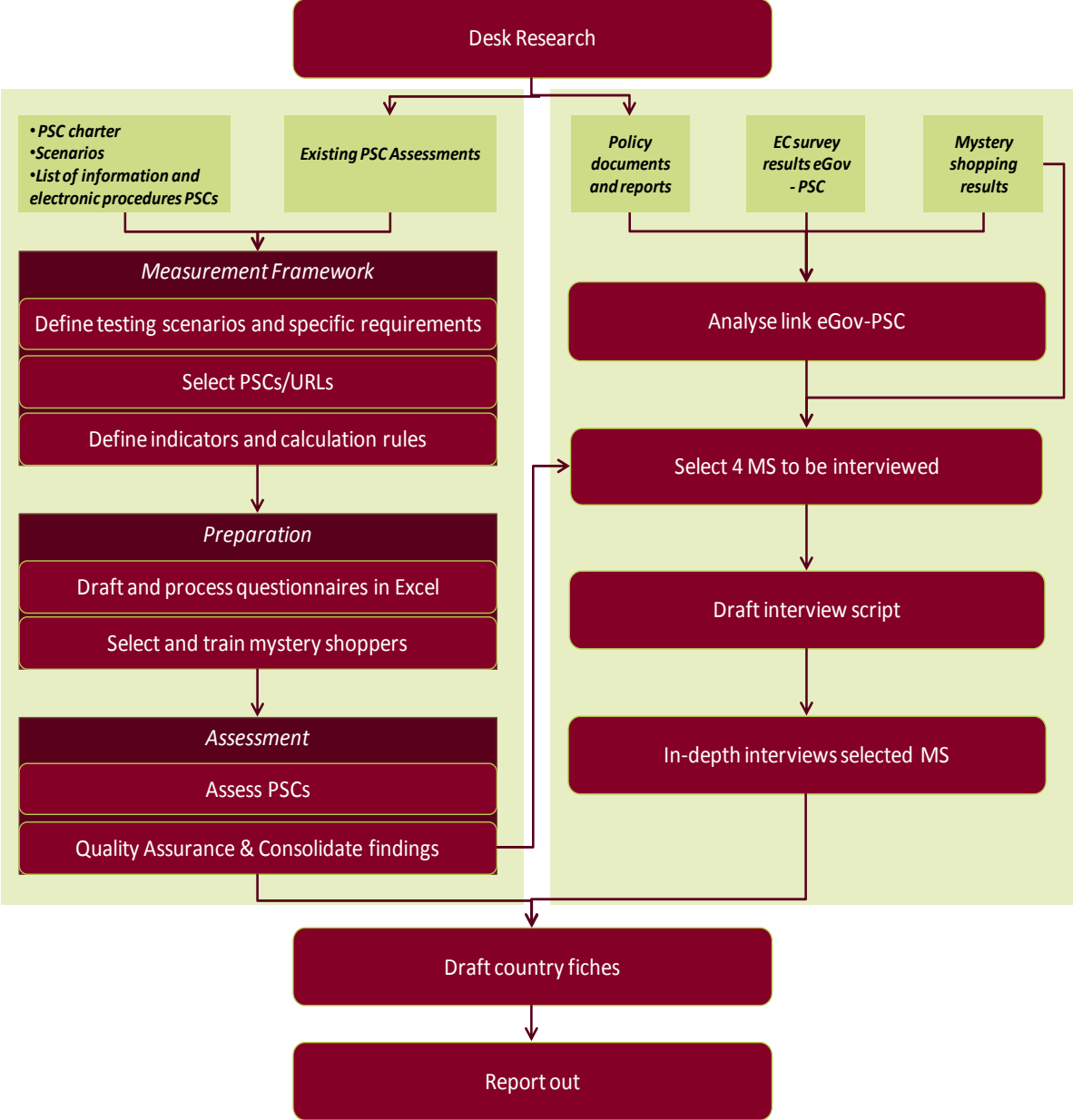
2.2 Assessing the PSCs through Mystery shopping

The PSC assessment process consists of three main phases, which in turn consist of multiple successive steps:

- **Measurement framework:**
  - Step 1- Description of testing scenarios and specific requirements
  - Step 2- Selecting the URLs for assessment and allocating them across mystery shoppers
  - Step 3- Definition of indicators
- **Preparation:**
  - Step 4 - Preparation and programming of questionnaires
  - Step 5 - Engaging and training the mystery shoppers
- **Assessment:**
  - Step 7- Data processing and quality control
  - Step 8 - Computation of indicators

The above steps are elaborately described in this report. Paragraph 2.2.1 shortly summarizes the applied methods.

2.2.1 Measurement framework

Description of testing scenarios and specific requirements

In this phase it was determined *what* the mystery shoppers should measure and from *what perspective* they should measure it. To make sure all mystery shoppers assessed the PSCs from the same perspective, the tender specifications of this study already defined ***testing scenarios*** (also see Annex 3: Assessment Scenarios). The testing scenarios describe in which sector of industry the 'entrepreneur' is active, what kind of company he wants to establish, what services he will provide, and where the services will be provided (i.e. in the home country, in a foreign country on a fixed basis or in a foreign country on a temporary basis). In total 12 scenarios were defined, covering four different industry sectors and three establishment scenarios:

Figure 2.2 Abstract of testing scenarios

Industry sector	Establishment scenarios		
	Home country	Establishment foreign country	Temporary service provision foreign country
Construction	Set up construction company	Set up construction company	Provide heating and sanitary installment services
Food, Beverage & Accommodation	Open cafetaria with B&B	Open cafetaria with B&B	Temporary catering services
Personal care	Open a fitness club	Open a branche of a fitness club	Provide hairdressing and beautician services
Business services	Open a business consultancy	Open a subsidiary	Provide temporary consultancy services

Within each of the testing scenarios, the entrepreneur has to comply with certain *governmental administrative requirements*. Some are general requirements which apply to companies in all sectors, some are sector-specific requirements. Furthermore, on some requirements, countries are obliged to provide information and electronic procedures under the Services Directive (if it concerns services in the scope of the directive), for others they are not (they are thus voluntary).

In order for the assessment results to be comparable, all mystery shoppers assessed the same set of administrative requirements.

Table 2.1and Table 2.2 list the specific administrative requirements that have been assessed[9]. The requirements are ordered according to pre-defined categories of administrative requirements and according to whether they are obliged by the Services Directive or they are voluntary. The tables also show in which scenario the specific requirements have been assessed.

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9 Some specific requirements may not apply in some countries. Therefore, the answering option 'not applicable' has been added to the questions at the requirement level. If a requirement is not applicable, no score will be attributed.

Table 2.1 Obligatory requirements

Obligatory requirements					
Categories of requirements	**Specific requirements**	**Construction**	**Food, beverages & Accommodation**	**Personal care services**	**Business services**
Company registration	General registration of economic activity	X (excl. temp.)	X (excl. temp.)	X (excl. temp.)	X (excl. temp.)
	Registration sector specific register	X (excl. temp.)	X (excl. temp.)	X (excl. temp.)	X (excl. temp.)
Obtaining a general business license	License for plumbing, heating or electrical installations	X			
	License for Food distribution		X	X	
	License for accommodation		X (excl. temp. services)		
	License/certificate for tax advisory				X (excl. temp. services)
	License/certificate for audit or accountancy services				X (excl. temp. services)
Recognition of qualifications & special licenses	Application for the recognition of professional qualifications acquired abroad	X (only CB – est. and temp.)			
	License to serve alcohol		X		
	License for beauty related activities, i.e. a license for massage and special treatment related services (e.g. tanning, beautician)			X	
	Notification on the temporary provision of services			X (only temp. services)	X (only temp. services)
Operations and location	Permit playing music		X (excl. temp. services)	X (excl. temp. services)	
	Permit for external publicity	X (only national)			
	Permit for restaurant terrace		X (excl. temp. services)		

			X (excl. temp. services)	X (excl. temp. services)	
21	Approval of Safety compliances (related to premises)		X (excl. temp. services)	X (excl. temp. services)	
	Approval of Hygiene and sanitary compliances		X (excl. temp. services)	X (excl. temp. services)	

Table 2.2 Voluntary requirements

Voluntary requirements					
Categories of requirements	Specific requirements	Construction	Food, beverages & Accommodation	Personal care services	Business services
Tax and financial	Apply for VAT number	X	X	X	X
	Apply for Tax ID card/number	X	X	X	X
Social and security	Social security registration	X	X	X	X
Employing cross-border	Posting of workers	X (only temp. services)	X (only temp. services)	X (only temp. services)	X (only temp. services)

Selecting PSCs for assessment
In total, 31 countries have been assessed, i.e. the EU28 plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. ***The mystery shoppers have mostly assessed the PSCs as listed by the European Commission on its Internal Market website***[10]. For a few countries an exception has been made:

- As Denmark and the Netherlands have separate PSCs for foreign and national users, the national PSC has been assessed for the home country scenario and PSC for foreigners has been assessed for the two cross-border scenarios.
- Because of their federal structure, there are multiple PSCs in both Germany and Austria. In these countries, the mystery shoppers have assessed the PSCs of the biggest and smallest region in terms of number of citizens. In Germany, the PSC of the smallest region, i.e. Bremen, indicated the website was experiencing a temporary bug. Therefore, the second smallest region, i.e. Saarland has been assessed.

The complete list of URLs assessed per country can be found in Annex 4: URLs assessed.

Definition of indicators
The assessment indicators are directly derived from the PSC charter criteria[11], which describe the 'key features of a successful and business-friendly PSC'.
The criteria can be split into three kinds of indicators:

- *Synthetic indicators*, i.e. the aggregation of compound indicators into synthetic measurements. The synthetic indicators are derived from the four main criteria.

- *Compound indicators*, i.e. average scores resulting from the elementary questions asked in the questionnaire. The compound indicators are derived from the thirteen sub-criteria.

- *Top level benchmark*, i.e. the second and last level of aggregation of metrics into the overall benchmark of the PSC charter criteria.

Figure 2.3 shows the four synthetic indicators (in red) and the related compound indicators (in light grey). Synthetic indicators I, II and IV (and its related compound indicators) were measured on the portal of the home country. Synthetic indicator I, II, III and IV were measured on the cross-border portals, with the exception of a number of redundant questions under criterion II. The compound indicators can be measured on the portal level (indicated with 'P') or on the administrative requirement level (indicated with 'R'), depending on if the results with regards to this indicator are specific for the requirement/industry sector or not. For example, the search index on a website is the same for all requirements/industry sectors, while the information available or the sophistication can differ per requirement/industry sector. The latter should thus be measured on the requirement level.

Furthermore, some of the compound indicators are voluntary (indicated with 'V'), i.e. not falling under the obligations of the Services Directive, while others are obligatory (indicated with 'O') provided that it regards industry sectors that fall directly under the Services Directive. The obligatory and the voluntary indicators have been scored separately and weighed differently. The only exception is the Usability indicator within which no difference has been made between obligatory and voluntary.

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10 Also see: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/eu-go/index_en.htm
11 Also see: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/psc-charter_en.pdf

The indicators have primarily been measured on the PSCs, but if the PSCs referred to other websites which were necessary to run through all steps in a required procedure, these have also been taken into account.

Figure 2.3 PSC Assessment indicators
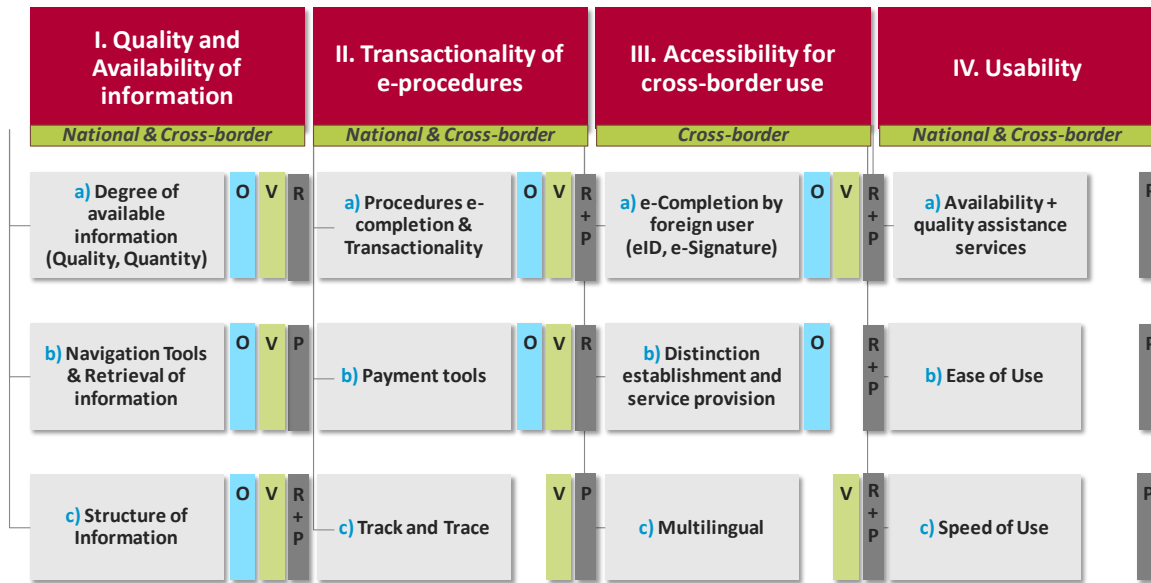
The indicators, including the way they were measured, scored and weighed are further elaborated in Annex 5: Elaboration of indicators.

2.2.2   Preparation

Drafting and programming the questionnaires
The indicators were translated into clear-cut questions (see Annex 6: Assessment Questionnaire). The evaluation questions are most often binary, with two (yes/no) answer options. A few questions require ratings from mystery shoppers, reporting their perception of a service in terms of timeliness and ease of use. For these criteria the System Usability Scale (SUS) and Analysis of Web application requirements (AWARE) methodologies[12] were applied, which means the mystery shopper indicated to what extent he agrees or disagrees with a statement. Furthermore, the mystery shoppers assessed the sophistication level of procedures for specific requirements through a five level maturity scale: not online, only information is online, one-way transaction, two-way transaction and full transactionality[13]. As some specific procedures might not be required in all Member States, the answering option 'not applicable' has been added as a sixth option on the maturity level.

The questionnaire was programmed in Excel. Each mystery shopper received three questionnaires, one for each scenario.

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12 http://www.usabilitynet.org/trump/documents/suschapt.doc
13 This scale is based on the maturity level used in the European Commission eGovernment Benchmark.

Selecting and training the mystery shoppers

For each country (EU28, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) two mystery shoppers were engaged through the network of members of EUROCHAMBRES. In order to be selected, mystery shoppers had to comply with the following requirements:

- Be a business representative or potential start-up;

- Have the national identity of the country assessed, thus having access to a potential eID and mastering the language;

- Have knowledge of the English language in order to assess the cross-border portals and to understand the questionnaire;

- Have a PC/Internet connection;

- Be a regular Internet user;

All mystery shoppers were guided throughout the process by a central coordination team and were briefed extensively beforehand (through telephone calls, a user manual and a set of 'golden rules for mystery shopping').

2.2.3   Assessment

Assessing the PSCs

The actual assessment took place from half December to the end of January. In total, each mystery shopper had to fill in 3 questionnaires, one for the national portal (in his home country) and two for a cross-border portal (in a country other than his home country). *In each country the portal was assessed by four mystery shoppers, two nationals and two foreigners.* This way, cross-checking and validation of the results was possible. All mystery shoppers tested all specific requirements and all criteria in all industries.

As the mystery shopping exercise should represent the real-life situation of a (starting) entrepreneur, the mystery shopper should be able to find the answer to the question intuitively, within a reasonable amount of time. Therefore the time mystery shoppers could spend per question was limited to 10 minutes.

The mystery shopping exercise resulted in 6 data files per country (two mystery shoppers each answering 1 questionnaire per scenario). For Germany and Austria 12 data files were received, i.e. 6 for each region.

Quality assurance and consolidating the findings

Once the questionnaires were completed, a single data set was created and cleaned. *In order to assure high quality data, multiple automated and non-automated checks were done on completeness and inconsistencies* (between mystery shoppers and in answering of questions).

Once the quality check on the data was finalised, the data set was consolidated and the indicators were computed according to the tables in Annex 5: Elaboration of indicators. To calculate the scores, the following steps were taken:

1) Answers were translated in 1, 0 or a score of 0 to 1 (in case of scale questions).

2) The data sets of mystery shopper 1 and mystery shopper 2 were merged into one data set per scenario.

3) Informative questions (e.g. was identification necessary?) were filtered out and excluded from the calculation of scores.

4) Data on specific requirements that are not applicable in the specific country were filtered out and excluded from the calculation of scores[14].

5) Weights were applied to the scores per specific requirement, per question, per country (the weights depend on the indicator and the specific requirement to which the data point applies).

6) The scores per question per country were calculated by taking the average of all scores per specific requirement, per question, per scenario and for Austria and Germany per region.

7) Final scores were calculated per:

   a. Compound indicator per scenario: taking the average of all questions applicable to the compound indicator for a specific country in a specific scenario[15];

   b. Synthetic indicator per scenario: taking the average of all questions applicable to the synthetic indicator for a specific country in a specific scenario[16];

   c. Top level benchmark per scenario: taking the average of all synthetic indicators for a specific country in a specific scenario;

   d. Compound indicator per country: taking the average of all questions in all scenarios applicable to the compound indicator for a specific country;

   e. Synthetic indicator per country: taking the average of all questions in all scenarios applicable to the synthetic indicator for a specific country;

   f. Top level benchmark per country: taking the average of all synthetic indicators for a specific country;

   g. Compound indicator for the EU28+: taking the average of the scores on a compound indicator of all countries;

   h. Synthetic indicator for the EU28+: taking the average of the scores on a synthetic indicator for all countries;

   i. Top level benchmark for the EU28+: taking the average of the scores on the top level benchmark for all countries;

The scores per indicator were then translated into percentages. The percentages presented in chapter three thus show how the country/EU performs as percentage of the maximum score which could be achieved if all criteria were complied with. Finally, the qualitative results, i.e. the comments of the mystery shoppers, were gathered in a comprehensive overview for analysis purposes.

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[14] The determination of specific requirements as applicable or not applicable was based on data from mystery shoppers and was not validated with Member States

[15] For indicator IIA, no score was calculated for the cross-border and temporary service provision scenarios.

[16] For indicator III, no score was calculated for the national scenario.

2.3 Qualitative analysis of the background of PSCs

The qualitative analysis is based on a policy analysis and on interviews with Member State' representatives. The policy analysis aims to analyse the link between the PSCs and the national eGovernment policies and was performed in the first months of this study. The interviews were aimed to get more in-depth insights in why PSCs perform the way they do.

2.3.1 Analysing the link between the PSCs and eGovernment policies

The analysis of the connection between PSCs and e-government policies focused on answering the following questions:

- to what extent PSCs are reflected in Member States' general e-government strategies;
- to what extent general e-government principles (e.g. once-only principle, digital by default) are implemented in the PSCs;
- to what extent PSCs support the use of technical enablers, such as e-Identification and e-signatures.

To answer these questions the results of a *questionnaire* - sent out by the European Commission to the 28 EU Member States – was analysed and extensive *desk research* was carried out.

The results of the questionnaires were first consolidated in a data collection template. The questionnaire results were structured according to pre-defined categories:

- eGovernment Framework, Relevant Legislation and Coordination;
- Technical key enablers;
- PSCs as eGovernment portals for businesses.

Secondly, a knowledge base was set up consisting of the following types of documents:

- European eGovernment policies and strategies;
- national eGovernment policies and strategies (EU28, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway);
- national laws and European directives adopted to support the functioning of PSCs (EU28, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway);
- studies on the functioning of PSCs and e-government service provision;
- studies on the digital Single Market;
- studies on key enabling technologies.

In order to match the questionnaire results with the content in the national government policies and strategies, information was gathered from the documents on the basis of a set of pre-defined questions for each of the categories:

▪ **eGovernment Framework, Relevant Legislation and Coordination:**
  ○ What are the goals and objectives of this strategy?
  ○ Is the Point of Single Contact reflected in this strategy? How?
  ○ What governance model and implementation approach is applied?
  ○ Which departments are involved?
  ○ What is the approach for improvement and evaluation?
  ○ Did Member States adopt separate laws or provisions that support the functioning of the points of Single Contact?

▪ **Technical key enablers:**
  ○ Does the strategy include technical key enablers?
  ○ Are these key enablers linked with service provision for businesses?

▪ **PSCs as eGovernment portals for businesses:**
  ○ Are other initiatives mentioned that support the objectives of PSCs (e.g. reducing administrative burden for businesses)?
  ○ How are the Points of Single Contact structured and organized?

In total, over 60 references were consulted for the policy analysis. A list of these references is provided in Annex 2.

The results help to put the PSC assessment results in a broader eGovernment context and to interpret the mystery shopping data. By correlating the policy analysis results and the mystery shopping results, we have been able to identify key success factors and barriers for PSC performance on both the country and the EU level.

2.3.2 Gathering in-depth information through interviews

The insights retrieved from the policy analysis and the mystery shopping exercise has been deepened by ***interviews with four Member States: Germany, Croatia, Denmark and Poland.*** The selection of these Member States has taken place in consultation with the European Commission and is based on the following selection criteria:

The set of Member States should have
  • two good performers (scoring above average on PSC performance) and two poor performers (scoring below average on PSC performance);
  • centrally and de-centrally organised PSCs/countries;
  • large and small countries;
  • a well-balanced geographical spread;

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning a basic questionnaire has been prepared, but both the interviewee and the interviewer had the chance to elaborate on the topics discussed. The aim was to retrieve in-depth insights from the Member State representatives on how they have organised the PSC and what are the key drivers and

barriers for performance. Also, the interviews provided the opportunity to clarify any uncertainties that may have arisen during the mystery shopping or the policy analysis phase.

2.3.3 Gathering best practices

To stimulate improved PSC performance, best practices were gathered. The countries to provide the best practices were selected in two ways:

1) on the basis of Mystery shoppers' comments: countries were selected if mystery shoppers indicated in their comments that a [part of the] PSC positively stands out.

2) On the basis of the assessment results: countries were selected if they were among the top 3 performers on a specific criteria. The PSC Assessment: results of the mystery shopping

3 Results of the PSC assessment

This chapter presents the results of the PSC assessment conducted by the mystery shoppers on the basis of the PSC Charter criteria. It presents key findings concerning the functioning and usability of the PSCs of the Member States through the eyes of the user. The scores are percentages based on maximum scores of one hundred per cent. First, the results per criterion will be discussed. Second, the results for national and cross-border scenarios will be investigated. Third, the differences between sectors will be discussed. Thereafter, the scores of voluntary and obligatory requirements will be investigated. And last, the results and findings of the national PSC policy analysis will be presented.

3.1 Results per criterion

The PSC Charter defined four main criteria against which the PSCs have been assessed. This paragraph first presents the overall performance of the 31 PSCs and then elaborates on the scores of each of the four main criteria:

I: Quality and availability of information

II: Transactionality of electronic procedures

III: Accessibility for cross-border users

IV: Usability

Figure 3.1 shows the overall scores (EU28+ average) for Europe with regards to the four PSC Charter criteria. The highest scoring criteria are the *usability* of the PSCs and the *transactionality of e-procedures* (both 61 per cent). The first refers to the user-friendliness of the portal: how easy can procedures be found, how much time is needed, and what is the quality of assistance services? The second indicates to what extent a procedure can be completed online. The criterion *quality and availability of information* has the third highest score (57 per cent). This criterion indicates to what extent information for specific procedures is available online, and if this information is structured in a logical and consistent way.

The PSCs are clearly underperforming on *cross-border accessibility* (41 per cent). Cross-border accessibility indicates the functioning of the PSCs in relation to the business needs from a cross-border perspective. It is an aggregated score of two scenarios: setting up a permanent establishment abroad and providing temporary services abroad.

Overall, the performance of the PSCs is mediocre on three of the four PSC Charter criteria and mediocre to poor on cross-border accessibility.

Figure 3.1 Performance of PSCs across the EU per charter criterion (EU28+)
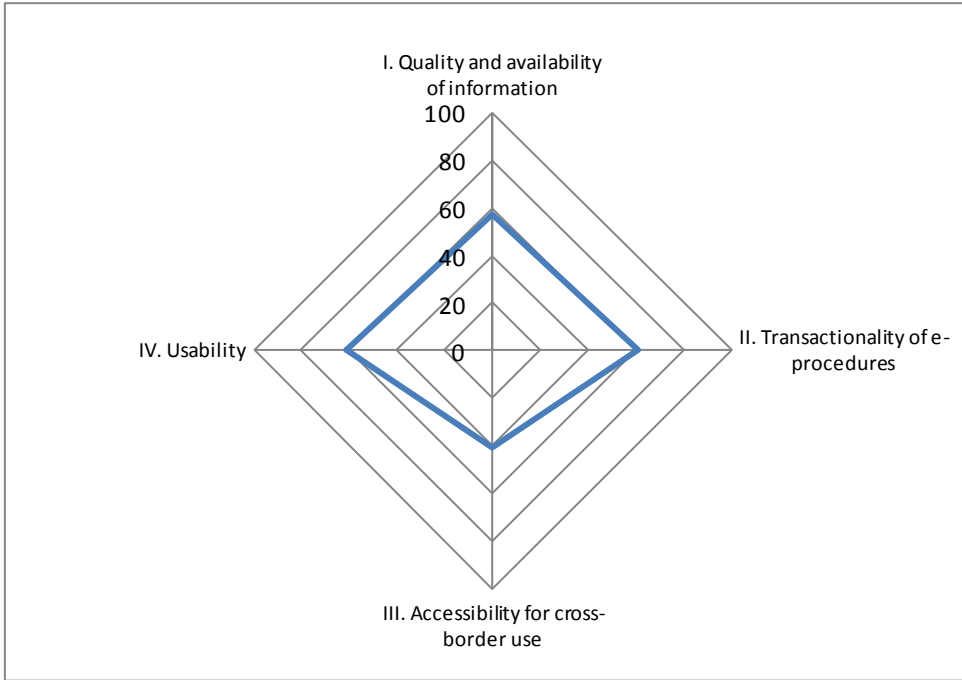
Figure 3.2 Performance on the PSC charter criteria (overall score per country)[17]
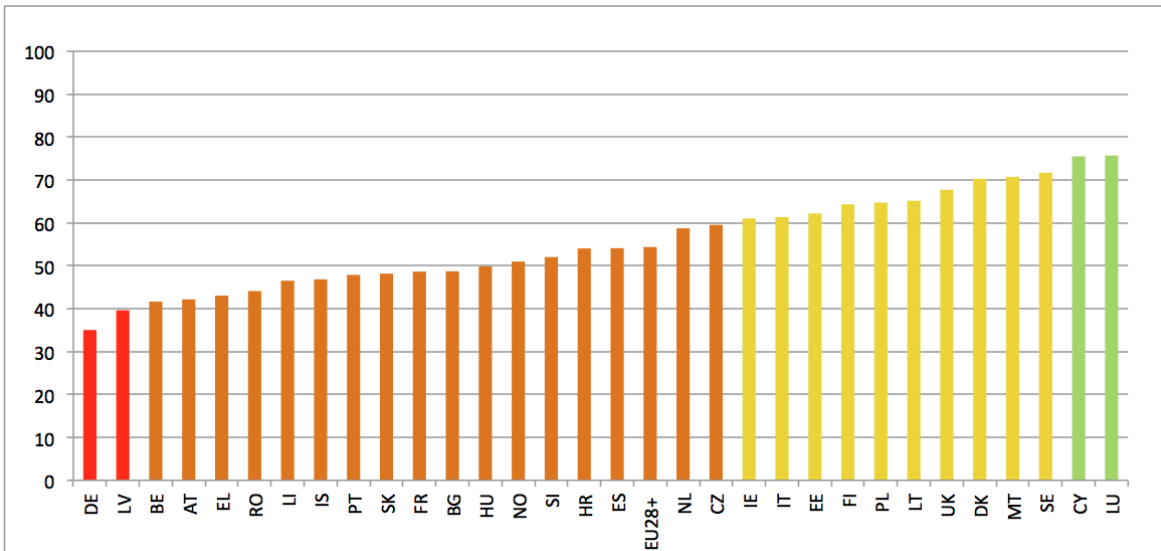
Figure 3.2 presents the composite score of the 31 countries on the PSC Charter criteria. The two most comprehensive Points of Single Contact are those located in Cyprus and Luxembourg, followed by the portals of Sweden, Malta, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The less performing Points of Single Contact are those in Germany,

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17 Red bars denote poor performers (below 40 per cent), Orange bars denote low average performers (between 40 and 60 percent), Yellow bars denote average performers (between 60 and 75 percent) and green bars denote very good performers (75 per cent or higher).

Latvia, Belgium and Austria. **The overall EU28+ average is denoted as being a low average performer**.

3.1.1 Quality and availability of information

Top 3 performers:	Bottom 3 performers:
• Luxembourg	• Greece
• Cyprus	• Austria
• Ireland	• Iceland

The mystery shoppers assessed the extent to which information that is needed to understand the steps to follow for *a certain procedure is available on the portal* (sub-criterion IA). They also examined *the navigation on the portal with regards to convenience* (IB) and clarity of the *structure of information* (IC). The aggregated scores for these three sub-criteria are presented in figure 3.3.

Overall, the results show that users have difficulties finding the information they are looking for despite the presence of supporting navigation tools, such as a search function and an index table. The users indicate that both the degree of information available online and the degree of clarity of the structure are low. For many procedures, users are redirected to other public portals within the country, such as the tax authority website. These external websites are poorly integrated with the PSCs in some cases. Mystery shoppers also found that the structure and language used are not adapted for business users because the jargon and logic implemented are those of the legislators and administrators. For instance, a mystery shopper was looking for "Licence" in the A-Z section of the Bulgarian PSC and did not find it under L but A for "Application for licence in (….)". It is practically impossible to guess which letter the relevant procedure or service will be under, unless the user goes through all of them. A mystery shopper, who assessed the Bulgarian portal, commented: "The general information on business related issues is hidden amongst the tabs at the top of the page and the titles do not really match what you might be looking for (…) To be honest, it is practically impossible to guess which letter the relevant procedure or service will be under, unless you go through all of them. In addition, the information under those four sections is riddled with law-related terminology (constant references to articles in the law, for example)."

Navigation tools are available. However, they are not always functioning well. Mystery shoppers indicated that search engines often do not generate the results they are looking for and that the index tab contains overlapping categories. A mystery shopper for Austria indicated: "*The search function does not refer to the PSC only but is a general search function with no helpful effect at all*". Another flaw identified for most search engines is the difficulty to find information using the everyday language. Here again, the administrative and legal jargon is often the one which is implemented for the search function, while the users will type different keywords – e.g. they will type "hotel" and not "accommodation".

The difference between the scores for the three scenarios shows that *the PSCs respond best to the needs of users from their own countries.* Foreign users rate the quality and availability of information slightly lower than the national users do. When comparing the scores for the cross-border establishment scenario versus the scores for temporary service provision abroad, we see that the latter are again slightly lower, especially with regards to the degree of information available. This could

indicate that it is harder for temporary service providers to understand what is required from them or information on this specific situation is available on the PSCs to a lesser extent.

Figure 3.3 Performance on I. Quality and availability of information (EU28+)

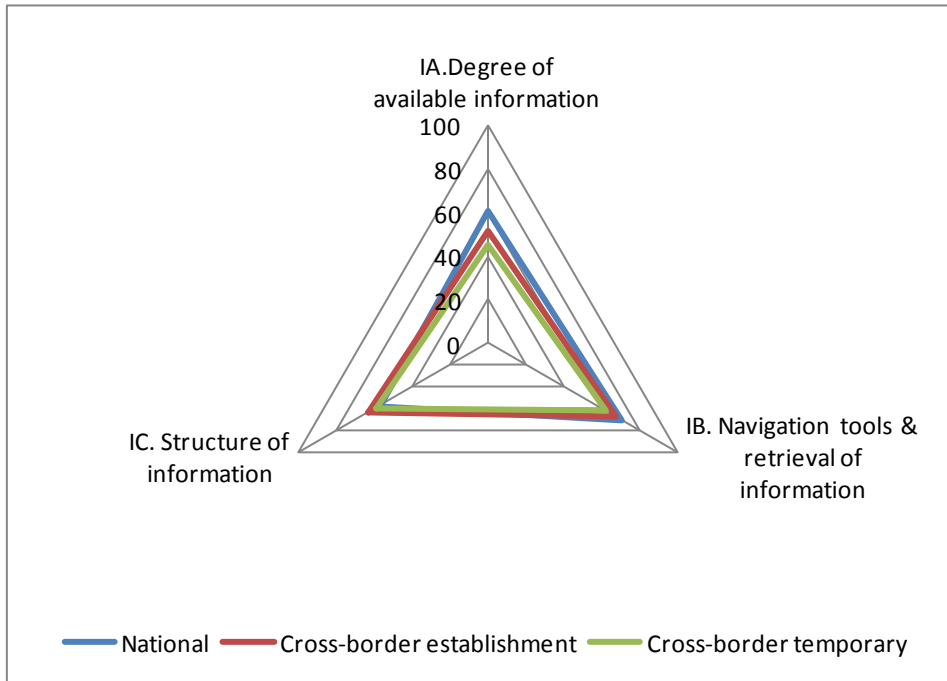Figure 3.4 presents the performance of the 31 countries on criterion I. *Quality and availability of information*. Luxembourg, Cyprus and Ireland outperform other countries in terms of quality and availability of information on the portal (as represented by the trend line). The scores are a result of assessment of both national and foreign users. Greece, Austria and Iceland need to improve their PSC in this respect.

Figure 3.4 Performance on I. Quality and availability of information (per country)
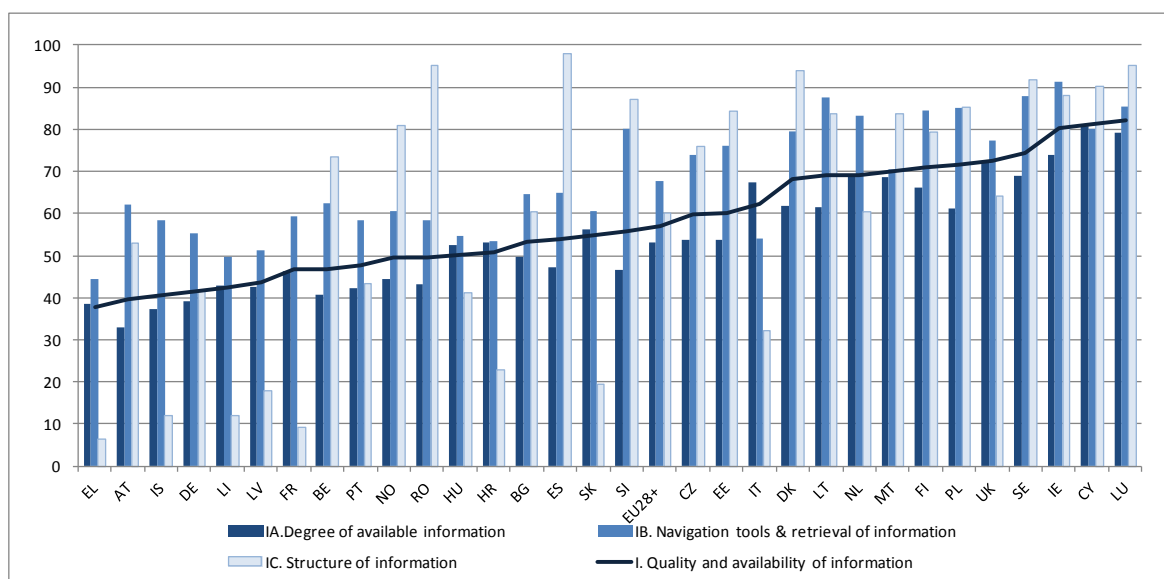
The three bars per country represent the performance of the PSC per sub-criterion: *IA. the degree of available information*, *IB. navigation tools and retrieval of information*, *and IC. structure of information*. Portals that have the greatest extent of *information available online* (IA) are those located in Cyprus, Luxembourg, Ireland and the United Kingdom, while the countries with the lowest extent of information available on the portal are Austria, Iceland, Greece and Germany. *Navigation tools* (IB), such as a search function or an index tab, are available in all countries, although the extent differs. High performers in this regard are Ireland, Sweden and Lithuania, while Greece, Liechtenstein and Latvia need to improve the implementation of these tools. The information is well structured (IC) in Cyprus, Denmark, Spain, Luxembourg, Romania and Sweden. Greece, France, Lichtenstein, Iceland, Latvia and Slovakia need to improve in this respect. **According to the mystery shoppers, twenty-two of the countries displayed information following the business life cycle.[18]** In general these countries have a better score for the sub-criteria *structure of information (IC)* and also although to a lesser extent on the *navigation tool and retrieval of information (IB)*.

Based on the scores and the mystery shoppers' comments, it seems that **general information on business procedures is available online, such as company registration**. **However, as the procedure gets more (sector) specific and in-depth information is required (e.g. to get a specific license), this is not always available or it is not clear where to find this information.** This is illustrated by a comment from a mystery shopper, who assessed the Portuguese portal: *"I found that the website lacked most - if not all - of the information I was looking for. I couldn't find anything in relation to gas/electrician installers. It's not very sector specific. The whole website is very generic and does not give information about a specific topic. I emailed the support office to see if they could advise me about the steps needed to obtain a license for plumbing and heating. They responded with a link to the website and told me that I could find it there, which I did not"*.

Figure 3.5 shows the degree of information that is available on the PSCs per specific requirement across countries. The general requirements, such as general registration

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[18] The twenty countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

of activity or applying for a VAT number, score better than the sector specific requirements related to obtaining licenses or permits, which score low. This is probably because permits and licenses are dealt with at a lower governmental level. It is alarming to see that for every specific requirement, at least one country has no information available and that on about half of the requirements, more than 20 per cent had no information available.

Figure 3.5 Degree of information online per specific requirement (EU28+)
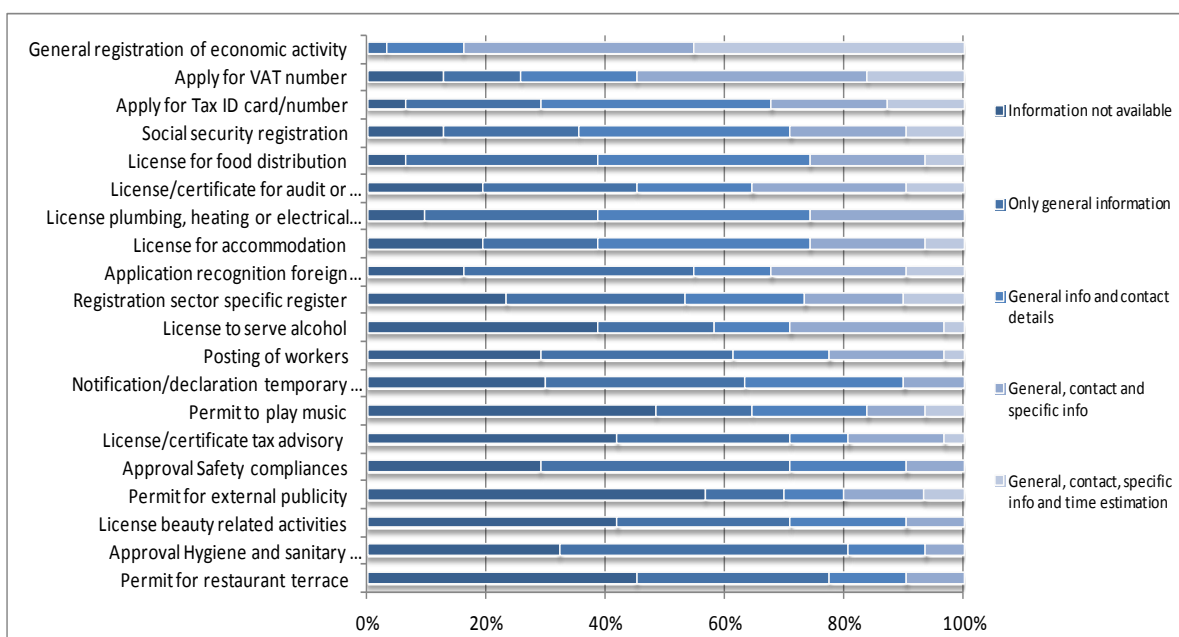
In summary, the mystery shoppers had difficulties in finding information on more specific issues, usually sector related, such as obtaining licenses and permits. This is mainly due to a lack of information available and the way the information is structured and organised. Furthermore, the use of jargon not suited for business users made it difficult for the mystery shoppers to find what they were looking for. Structuring the information according to the business life cycle helped the mystery shoppers to find the information needed. Navigation tools are in place on most portals, but did not always lead the mystery shoppers to the information they needed.

3.1.2   Transactionality of electronic procedures

Top 3 performers:
- Estonia
- Norway
- Sweden

Bottom 3 performers:
- Germany
- Slovakia
- Ireland

Figure 3.6 presents the scores for the PSC Charter criterion 'Transactionality of electronic procedures' and its three sub-criteria. These scores are based on the assessment from the perspective of the national user. Accessibility of e-procedures for foreign users is discussed in paragraph 3.1.3.

Figure 3.6 Performance on II. Transactionality of eProcedures for the national scenario (EU28+)
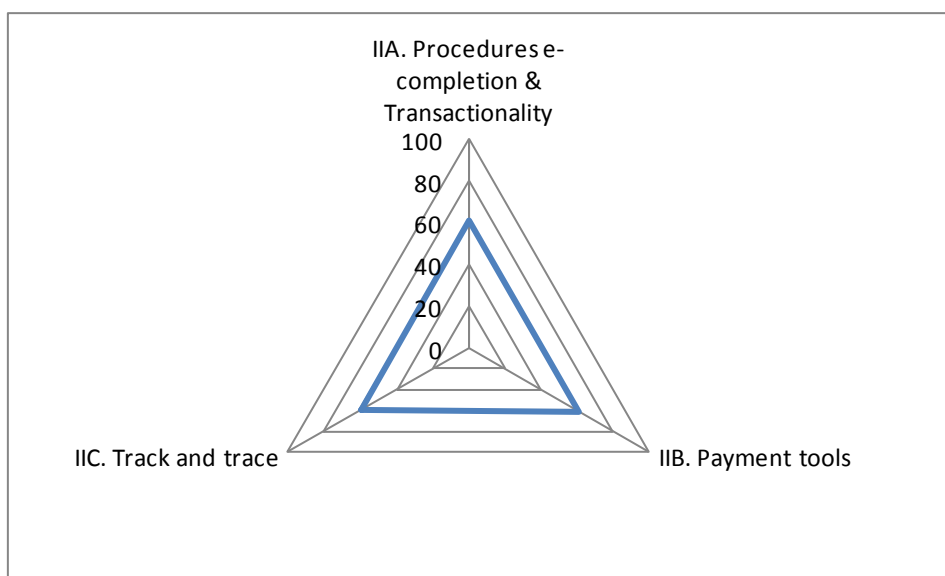
For criterion II, the PSCs are assessed on:

- The *availability and sophistication of procedures* (IIA).This criterion covers questions such as: To what extent can the procedure be fulfilled online, is authentication required, is it possible to obtain data automatically from authentic sources?

- The availability of *payment tools* (IIB), referring to the extent to which details are provided on how and where to pay for a certain procedure.

- *Track and trace*(IIC),indicating whether it is possible to save work as a draft, whether progress is tracked during the fulfilment of procedures, and whether a delivery notice will be sent when a procedure is completed successfully.

The EU28+ scores for the three sub-criteria are similar, ranging from 60 to 61 per cent.

Figure 3.7 presents the results at a country level, and shows the overall score of the main criterion *Transactionality of electronic procedures*. This criterion refers to the extent to which a certain procedure can be completed online. Estonia, Norway and Sweden are the high performers, enabling users to complete procedures fully online. They are followed by the Czech Republic, Denmark and the United Kingdom. Countries that need to improve their PSC on this criterion are Germany, Slovakia, Ireland and the Netherlands. Often, one has to visit a physical office in these countries to complete procedures.

Figure 3.7 presents the score of the 31 countries per sub-criteria. For the sub-criterion *IIA. Availability and sophistication of procedures,* the leading countries are Estonia, Spain, Norway, Czech Republic, Denmark and Sweden, while Germany, Ireland, Slovakia, and the Netherlands lag behind.

The variety in the scores on payment tools (IIB) could be partially explained by the fact that it is not necessary in all countries to pay for the specific procedures. Countries in which entrepreneurs are not required to pay are indicated with an asterisk. For these countries, this sub-criterion has not been taken into account to calculate the scores for criterion II.

Figure 3.7 Performance II. Transactionality of e-Procedures (per country)[19]
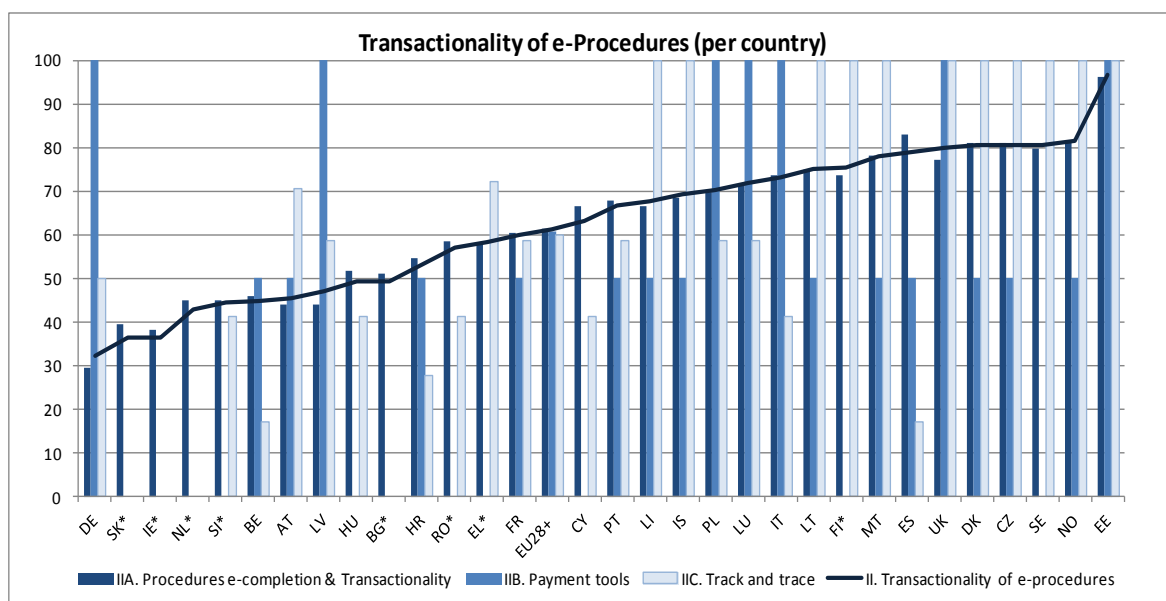
The mystery shoppers have assessed the sophistication level of procedures for specific requirements through a five level maturity scale: not online, only information is online, one-way transaction (download, print and sign forms), two-way transaction (download forms, upload, e-mail) and full transactionality (procedure can be completed within the portal environment). Figure 3.8 presents the overall scores on this question per specific requirement.

Figure 3.8 shows that the most general specific requirements, such as general registration of economic activity or applying for a Tax ID card, score best, since these procedures are fully transactional in about half of the countries investigated. This is in

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19 This graph reflects the answers of the mystery shoppers in the national scenario

line with the extent to which information is online as presented in Figure 3.5. There is however a lot of room for improvement when investigating the more sector specific requirements, especially when trying to obtain permits. In most countries the majority of sector specific requirements cannot be fully completed online (two way interaction and full transactionality).

Figure 3.8 Extent to which national users can complete procedures for specific requirements online (EU28+)
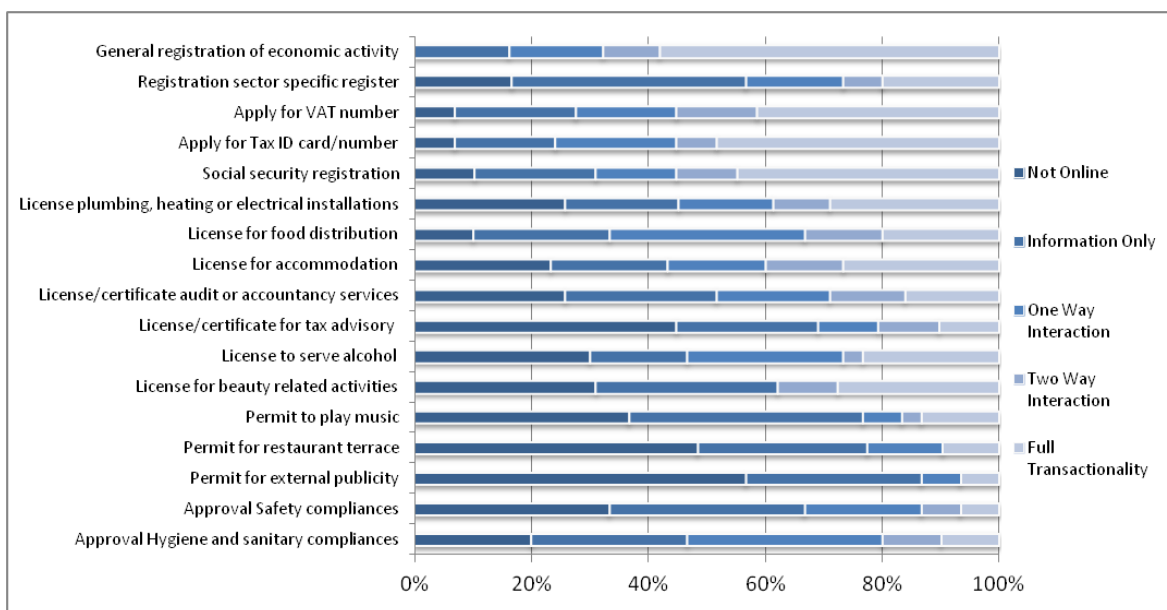
It is relatively easy to complete more general procedures online. For most PSCs more specific registrations, such as applying for permits, still require a physical visit at an office or sending forms by post.

3.1.3   Accessibility for cross-border users

Top 3 performers:
- Malta
- Cyprus
- Luxembourg

Bottom 3 performers:
- Liechtenstein
- Germany
- Latvia

This study also assessed the overall accessibility of the PSCs specifically for users from abroad. What is the availability and quality of services offered by the PSCs from a cross-border perspective? This examination was conducted for only two scenarios:

1. Setting up a permanent establishment in one of the EU28+ countries;

2. Providing temporary services in one of the EU28+ countries.

Portals were assessed on three broad criteria, as shown in figure 3.9: *IIIA. investigating the degree to which it is possible for users from abroad to complete procedures online at the PSCs*, *IIIB. whether the portal makes a distinction between a permanent establishment and temporary service provision* and *IIIC. assessing the linguistic support offered to cross-border users (multilingualism)*.

From these three criteria, the two that perform best are *IIIB. the distinction between permanent establishment and temporary service provision* and *IIIC. multilingualism*[20]. In most countries, the information is available in another language besides the native language. However, the relatively high score for multilingualism does not mean that there are no language issues for foreign users of PSCs anymore. Although in most cases at least parts of the website are translated, mostly in English, the quality of the translation and the extent to which information is translated vary. Out of all PSCs which provide information in a language other than the national language(s), only one third provide the forms required to complete the procedure in another language. Furthermore, when asked to what extent the information provided in the other language is consistent, mystery shoppers indicated in 27 per cent of the cases that the information provided was not consistent, i.e. only the minimum of information was provided in other languages and/or information provided was not sufficient to understand how to comply with the requirement.

As the ***information provided in another language often is not sufficient*** to be able to complete an e-procedure or to understand what a procedure entails, the accessibility of the PSC services to foreign users remains low.

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20 Besides questions on the availability of information in a different language than the national language, questions on consistency were also posed. If a mystery shopper did not speak any of the languages provided, the question was not taken into account for calculation of the final scores. As all mystery shoppers were required to speak English, this is only the case if PSCs are provided in languages other than English.

Figure 3.9 Performance on III. Accessibility for cross-border use (EU28+)
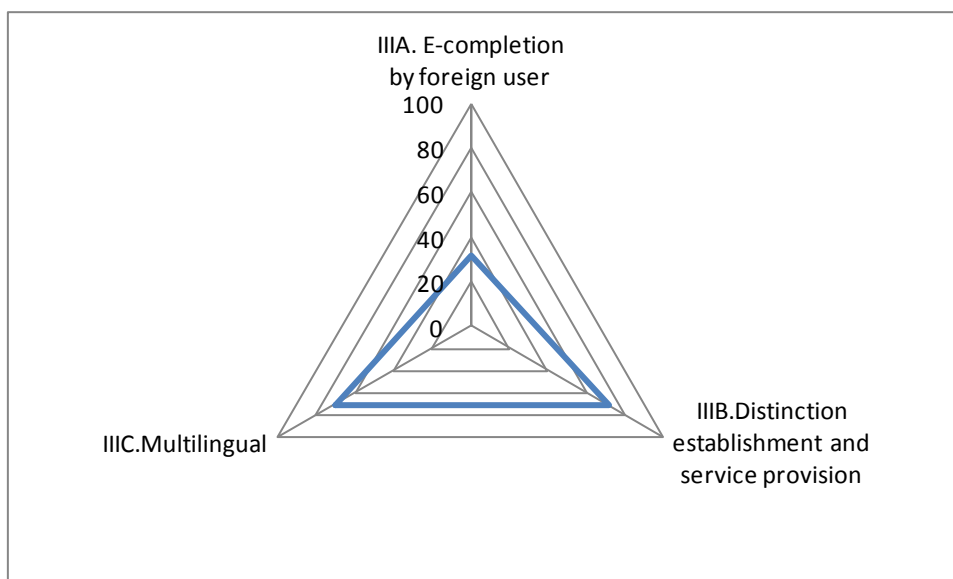
Countries have responded properly to the request of the European Commission to make a clear *distinction at their portal between permanent establishment and temporary services* (IIIB). In most cases, users have to select the scenario that applies to them by clicking on separate buttons at the PSC homepage. This is perceived as intuitive and well-structured by the mystery shoppers.

The third sub-criterion, *cross-border completion of procedures* (IIIA), scores low: 32 per cent. **It is difficult to complete certain procedures online from abroad, for both permanent establishment and temporary service provision**. Being an important element in achieving a second generation PSC, the underperformance on this sub-criterion indicates that barriers for cross-border trade and establishment still exist.

There are significant differences regarding the cross-border dimension across the 31 countries under assessment. The overall score on the main PSC Charter criterion is represented by the trendline in figure 3.10. Countries, which respond the best to the needs of cross-border users, are Malta, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Denmark and Sweden. Latvia, Germany, Liechtenstein, Norway, Romania and Belgium are underperforming and need to tailor their PSC better to the needs of cross-border users.

Figure 3.10 Performance on III Accessibility for cross-border use (per country)
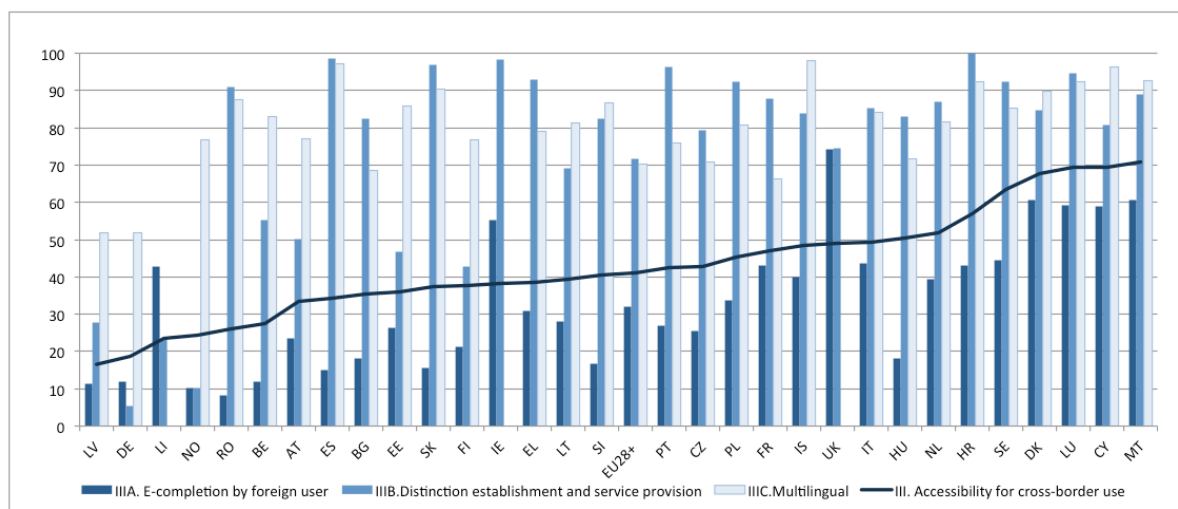
As regards *multilingualism* (IIIC), the portals of Liechtenstein, the United Kingdom and Ireland have the lowest scores. The first two countries only provide information in their native language, respectively German and English. The latter do provide translation, but through Google Translate. Mystery shoppers have indicated that the use of Google translate considerably decreases the quality of information. A mystery shopper of the French portal states: "*The portal offers a Google translation. The quality of that varies. However, all the specific information in the section: create your business, is available in French mainly, the translation sometimes does not work*". Due to the limited quality and consistency of translation, no score (for indicator IIIC) has been attributed to countries *only* using Google translate/automated translation. Countries using Google translate as an *addition* to manually translated information (i.e. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, the Netherlands and Poland) have been attributed a score. The top performers on multilingualism are Iceland, Cyprus and Spain.

Concerning the *eCompletion by cross-border users* (IIIA), the United Kingdom, Malta, Denmark and Sweden have the highest score. Cross-border users can complete many procedures electronically at their Point of Single Contact. On the contrary, Romania, Norway, Latvia, Germany and Belgium score low. If we compare these scores with the scores these countries have on transactionality of e-procedures for *national* users, we see that Romania, Latvia, Germany and Belgium are poor performers for both types of users (on both indicators). For Germany and Belgium, this might be explained by the decentral way in which they have organised their PSCs. In Belgium for instance, users are redirected from the central PSC to the physical offices of one of the eight private organisations that deal with handling the procedures for entrepreneurs. In Germany, the implementation of the PSCs is done by Bundesländer or at the local level. Norway, however, seems to encounter specific barriers with regards to cross-border service provision, as it is one of the top countries on transactionality of e-procedures for national entrepreneurs, while at the bottom for foreign entrepreneurs.

Figure 3.11 zooms in on indicator IIIA, showing the extent to which government procedures are transactional. To assess the transactionality, mystery shoppers were asked to make an assessment of the sophistication of the portal on the following scale: not online, only information is online, one-way transaction (download, print and sign forms), two-way transaction (download forms, upload, e-mail) and full transactionality (procedure can be completed within portal environment). **Most PSCs**

are lacking good cross-border transactionality (figure 3.11). Only general registration of economic activity could be done fully online (Two Way interaction or full transactionality) in more than fifty per cent of the PSCs. For the other specific requirements most PSCs only show some information about the procedure or no information at all. This shows that there is room for improvement in this regard.

Figure 3.11 Extent to which cross-border users can complete procedures for specific requirements online (EU28+)
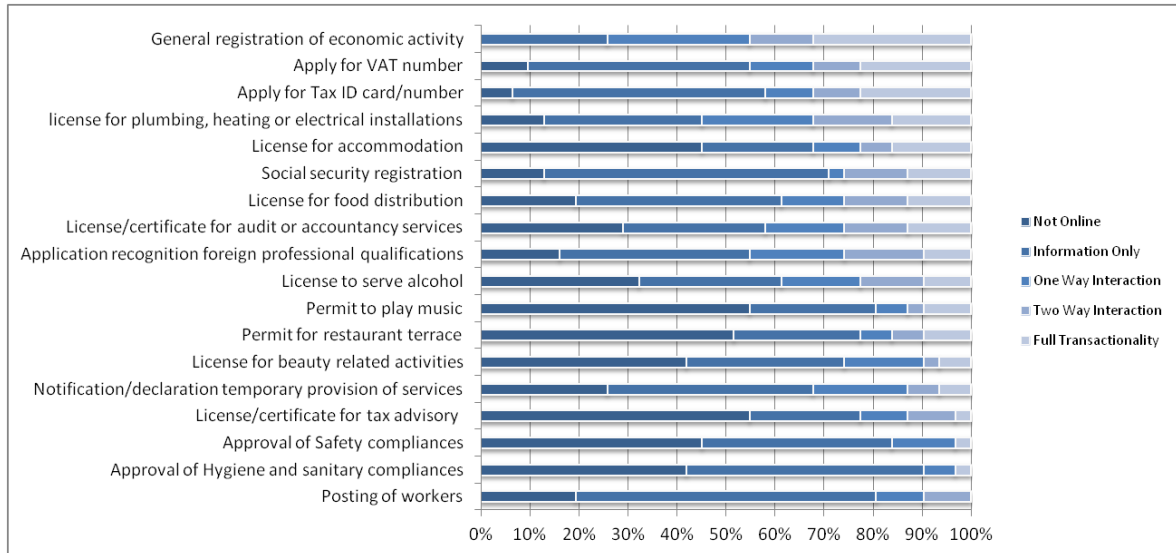
Comparing the transactionality of government procedures for foreign users with those for national users on a more aggregated level (figure 3.12), we see that for all categories of specific requirements, **electronic government procedures are more transactional for national users than they are for foreign users.** Whereas national users in many cases can at least download forms, the feature for foreign users stops at mere information provision. One of the barriers for transactional e-procedures for foreigners might be the limited cross-border accessibility to technical key enablers. The European Commission's questionnaires filled in by Member State representatives show that **more than half of the countries that have key enablers in place for their national users, have not made the key enablers accessible for foreign users**[21]. This particular issue was emphasised by one of the mystery shoppers using the Finnish portal: *"The portal contains a lot of information. It is structured like a matrix with many windows and forms to open - online and pdf; some were only in Finnish and Swedish. It is possible to create an account at My Enterprise Finland and use services there but it is available only if you have a Finnish ID,bank account or mobile number."*

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[21] European Commission, Questionnaire for the PSC study: "The performance of the Points of Single Contact: an assessment against the PSC Charter", filled by the EU Member States in December 2014.

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Figure 3.12 Performance on e-Completion of procedures per category of requirements national establishment versus cross border establishment (EU28+)
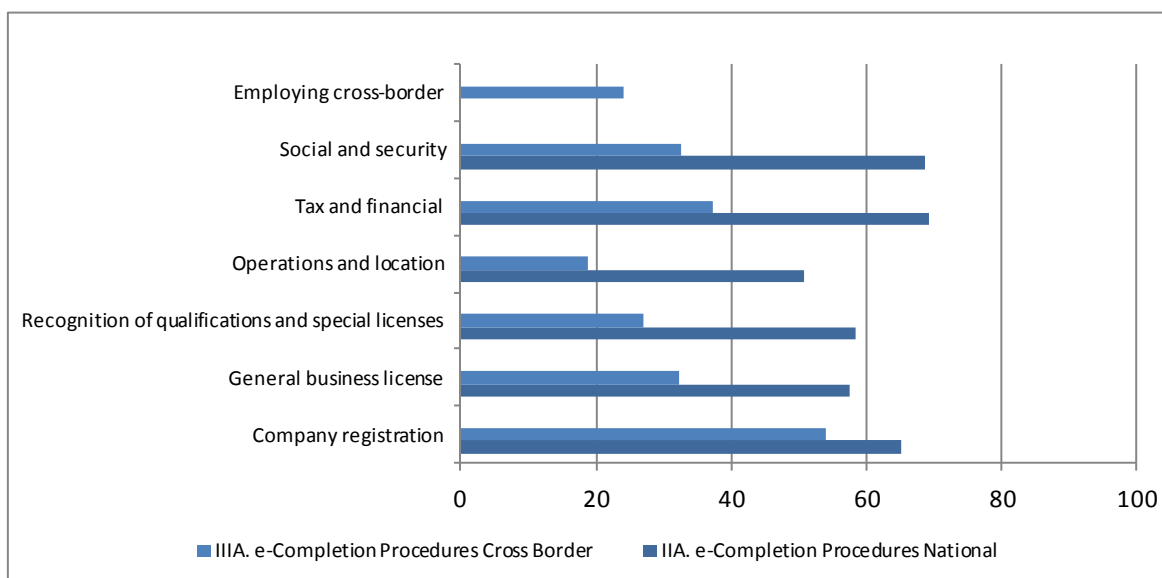
The results for criterion III show that **barriers still exist for cross-border trade and establishment.** E-government procedures for foreign users are still lagging behind compared to national users and although most PSC provide information in multiple languages, the quality and consistency of the translations is insufficient. Mystery shoppers complain about procedures being only partially translated into English, which make it hard or impossible to complete the procedure. Cross-border accessibility thus remains one of the key development points in order for PSCs to fully support the European Single Market.

Cross-border services for businesses according to the eGovernment benchmark

The EC eGovernment Benchmark 2015 found as regards cross-border services for businesses start-ups that:

- More services have become online available in Europe (+9 points). However with a score of 65 there is still much room for improvement, in particular in facilitating cross border online transactional services.

- Online support and help functionalities for entrepreneurs that want to start their business in another country have increased too (+13 points) reaching up to 81.

- The ease and speed of using these services for foreign users remains insufficient, with values of 47 points on average.

The eGovernment Benchmark will be officially published on June 18th, by DG CONNECT. The report will contain highly relevant insights into eGovernment performance in Europe, the journey of Member States towards a Digital Single Market, and where Europe stands as regards implementing disruptive technologies - such as mobile – in public services.

3.1.4   Usability

<table>
<tr><td>Top 3 performers:
• Cyprus
• Lithuania
• Estonia</td><td>Bottom 3 performers:
• Belgium
• Romania
• Germany</td></tr>
</table>

User-friendliness of the Points of Single Contact is an important aspect, as it is a key feature of the second generation PSC. User-friendliness does not simply mean providing a list of websites where information can be found, but is about completing the necessary administrative steps within a reasonable amount of time and in a smooth way. It also implies that there are assistance services at the disposal of the user that are of high quality. Mystery shoppers have assessed these aspects on three broad criteria: *IVA. availability and quality of assistance services*, *IVB. ease of use* and *IVC. speed of use*.

Improvements are needed on all three criteria, all scoring average, with little variation between them (figure 3.13). For national users, the *availability of assistance services* (IVA) scores best with 65 per cent, while *ease of use* (IVB) and *speed of use* (IVC) have scores around 60 per cent. With regard to the availability of assistance services the mystery shoppers are moderately satisfied with the assistance provided. The average response time of assistance services was 19 hours.

Although the Usability scores are highest in comparison to the other criteria, the user friendliness of the portals should still be improved to match the expectations and needs of the entrepreneur. Procedures are not always structured and designed to facilitate the user to complete the requirements as swiftly as possible, within a reasonable amount of time. Complying with the requirements is not always an easy process, as illustrated by a mystery shopper who assessed the Norwegian portal: "*In general the PSC has a long way to go in terms of user friendliness, logic, on-line services, structure, etc. It was not easy to search, not easy to follow the steps, to a large extent rather poorly explained*".

Figure 3.13 Performance on IV. Usability (EU28+)
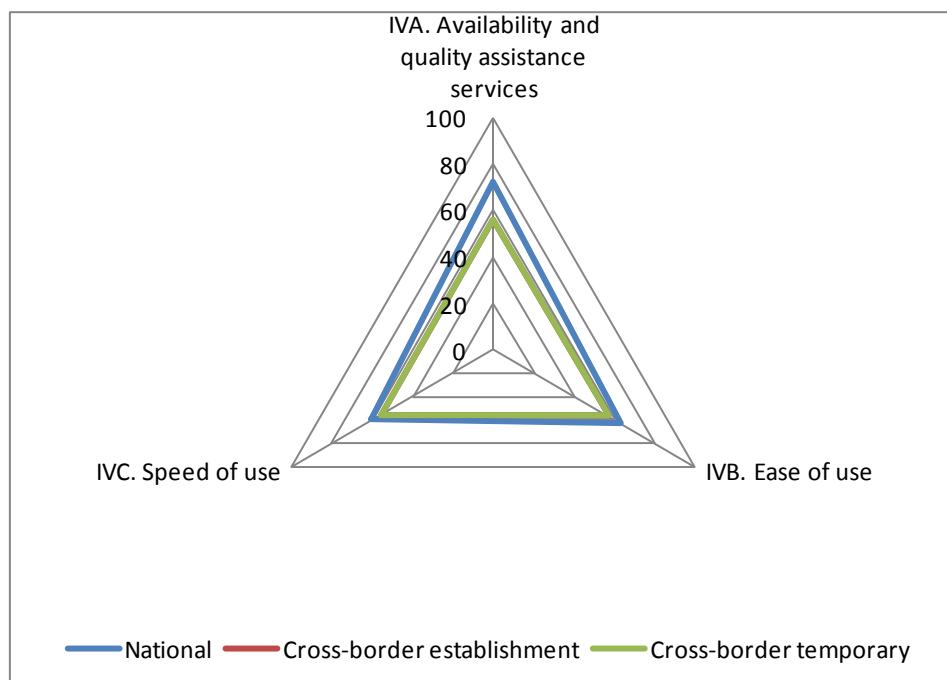
There are some minor differences in the results of the questions of sub-criteria 'ease of use' (IVB). Various activities for trying to comply with the requirements were to a lesser extent integrated. Mystery shoppers were scarcely confronted with technical difficulties while trying to comply with the requirements. A few mystery shoppers encountered technical difficulties: links were not working, or parts of the website were under construction.

With regards to the sub-criterion 'speed of use' (*IVC), m*ystery shoppers are relatively dissatisfied about the degree in which they were able to estimate how much time would be needed to complete the required steps (based on available information). Dissatisfaction continues on the insufficient use of prefilled data. A mystery shopper, who assessed the portal of Spain, noted: "*A lot of information is available, but only after you choose a region, a sector and the legal form. Then, you get so much information that you feel lost. You have to read all this information and this takes a lot of time. […] This isn't a page for impatient people. In another setting I would never have spend so much time on this website as I did now*".

From the perspective of foreign users (assessed from the cross-border establishment and temporary service provision scenario), all three sub-indicators score low. Although the difference between the foreign and national scores for *Ease of use* and *Speed of use* is minimal (5 percentage points), the assistance services are rated considerably lower by foreign users, with a difference of 15 percentage points. This could be explained by the fact that more than half of the PSCs do not provide assistance in languages other than the national language.

Figure 3.14 shows the sub-criterion scores across scenarios per country. Cyprus and Lithuania lead, followed by Estonia, Liechtenstein and Slovenia. The group of followers includes Poland, Luxembourg and Denmark. Countries who need to improve the usability of their PSC are Germany, Romania, Belgium and Iceland. When looking at the sub-criteria on country-level, the *quality and availability of assistance services* (IVA) is performing well in most countries, although there is variety: Romania and Iceland have low scores (20 per cent and 22 per cent respectively), while the

assistance services of Poland, Cyprus and Liechtenstein are perceived as good. The assessment does show that only half of the PSCs provide interactive assistance services, such as chat functionalities. If interactive assistance services were provided, about two third of the PSCs actually answered after a question was posed.

There is a correlation between the sub-criterion 'ease of use' and 'speed of use'. Countries that score high on *usability* (IV) also tend to score high on the other PSC criteria as well. This is to be expected since good availability of information and easy accessibility allows users to go through the procedures in an easier and faster fashion than they would otherwise.

Figure 3.14 Performance on IV. Usability (per country)
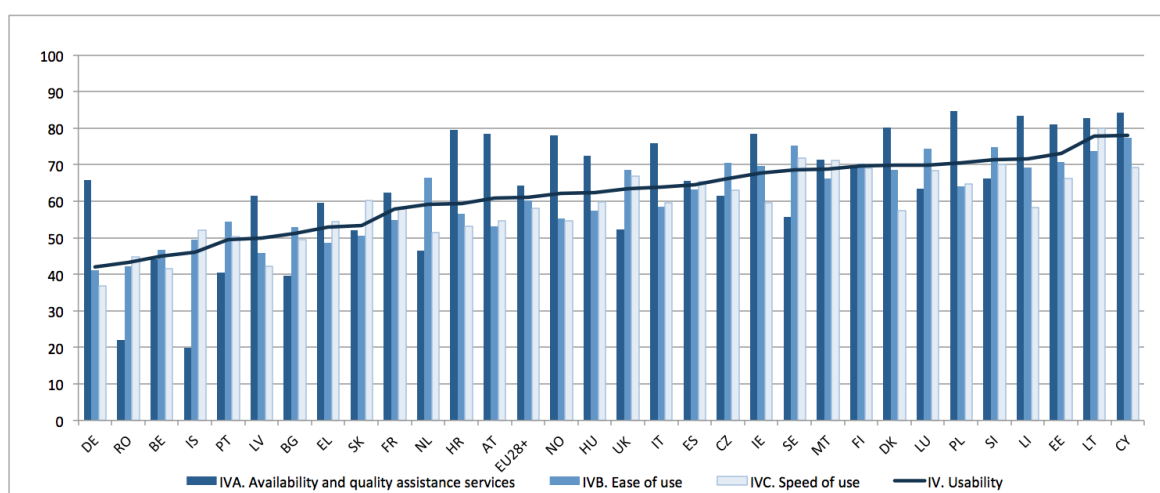
Sweden has one of the highest scores regarding ease and speed of use. This is best illustrated by comments of two of the mystery shoppers, from which the first one stated: "*The website is extremely user-friendly. It is build up according to the business life cycle, and it makes it easy to find subjects regarding which state the business is in. Regarding the search for permits, this has been made very efficient by gathering them all at one page, which is accessed directly from the front page by the link 'find permits'. Everything is well translated and well structured*". Mystery shopper 2 commented: "*In general the site is an excellent tool for someone who would like to start a business in Sweden. Everything under my fingertips and if it is not there always a reference to somewhere else where the information can be found, alternatively a helpful support desk*".

There is room for improvement regarding the usability of the PSCs. The mystery shoppers found the manner in which information was structured generally poor. Especially overviews of procedures and information can be improved in this regard. Furthermore, the portals could be designed in such a manner that it makes it easier to complete procedures more swiftly.

The comparison between the results obtained through the assessment by national entrepreneurs and the results obtained through the assessment by foreign entrepreneurs shows that the PSCs still have a long way to go to truly support the European Single market.

3.2   Results across industry sectors

Figure 3.15 shows the performance of the PSC for the four sectors under assessment. The figure shows that the mystery shopping exercise has not revealed significant variations across the four sectors assessed: construction, food, beverage & accommodation, personal care and business services. With relatively small deviations

it is safe to conclude that the PSC services have been consistently developed across these four sectors. Still, the construction industry shows marginally better performance - with an overall score of 57 (national) and 47 (cross-border) per cent than the other three sectors, which vary between 40 and 57 per cent. Although this sector is subject to a complex regulatory framework both at national and EU level, it is a relatively well-consolidated industry, which might make it easier for the PSC to identify regulatory requirements and facilitate them. A positive factor could also be the strong emphasis put by the European Commission on this sector during the implementation process of the Services Directive. Conversely, the least performing sectors, the personal care and the food, beverage and accommodation industry, cover a wide variety of service activities often affected by diverse regulation. No correlation has been found between the PSC performance and the size of the sector: the business services sector and the construction sector account for more than a fourth and 1.5 per cent of the intra-EU trade of services, whereas food, beverage and accommodation and personal care account for respectively more than a fifth and 1.3 per cent of the intra-EU trade of services.[22] The cross-border scores are consistently lower than the national scores. In each of the assessed sectors, the cross-border score is roughly 10 percent lower.

Figure 3.15 National and Cross Border performance per sector (EU28+)

Note: This graph solely incorporates questions which gave possibility for different scores among sectors
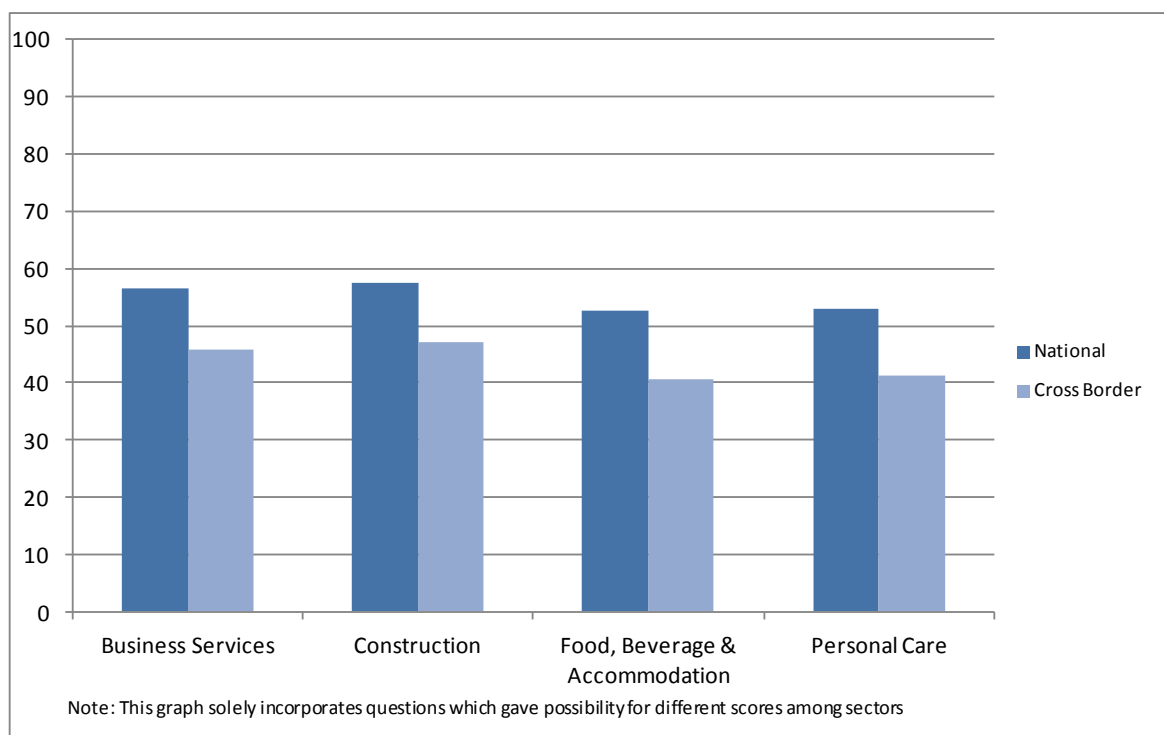
Figure 3.16 shows the PSC performance per sector per country. On the national level, the PSC testing shows no sector-specific drivers in the development of the PSC services, which is illustrated by relatively uniform assessments by users. Furthermore, there is no sector specific pattern between the economic structure of the Member States and the performance of the PSC per sector. However, it is noteworthy that in cases where there are considerable differences between sectors within a country (such as in Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Luxembourg, Malta and Slovenia), the PSC is always better developed with regards to the construction and the business services sector.

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22 Eurostat, International trade in services (since 2010) (BPM6) [bop_its6_det], data for 2013

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Figure 3.16 Overall performance per sector (per country)
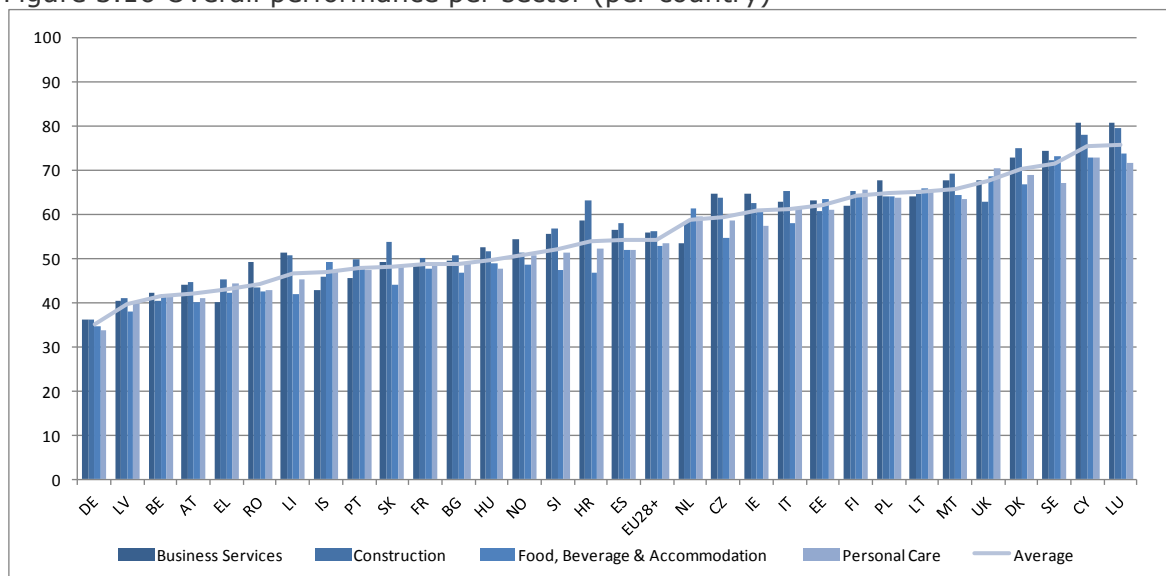
3.3 Services Directive: obligatory and voluntary services

The Services Directive sets out a list of obligatory features of the Points of Single Contact that the Member States need to implement. The PSCs also provide a framework for more advanced e-government services aimed at creating a more business-friendly environment. Following the methodology laid down in the PSC Charter, the assessment looked at both the obligatory and voluntary features (such as the ones related to tax, social security, posting of workers and employment) of the PSCs.

Figure 3.17 shows that the users grade the voluntary features of the PSCs (56 per cent) slightly higher than the obligatory ones (53 per cent), indicating that the Member States take the PSCs as a tool for assisting businesses overcoming regulatory barriers in a holistic and effective manner.

Figure 3.17 Criterion and overall scores for voluntary and obligatory requirements (EU28+)
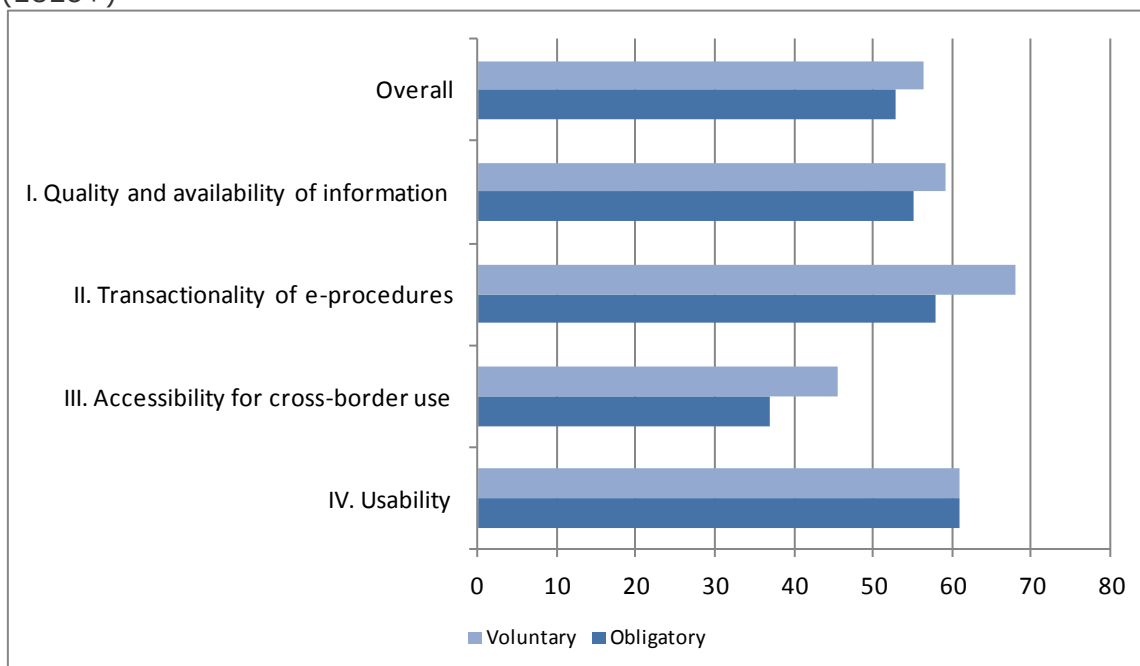
The difference between voluntary and obligatory requirements is similar at the indicator level. Figure 3.17 shows that voluntary requirements score consistently higher across indicators, although the difference does not exceed 10 percentage points). This might be due to the horizontal nature of the voluntary requirements. As mentioned several times before, the Member States have found it easier to facilitate general requirements (with a large target group and often organised on the national level) than more specific ones (with smaller target groups and often organised on the sub-national level). This is especially true for the transactionality of e-procedures (II) and the accessibility for cross-border use (III).

As the criterion *usability* (IV) of the PSC services was only assessed on the portal level (i.e. not on the specific requirement level where the difference between obligatory and voluntary was made), the scores for obligatory and voluntary are identical (61 per cent).

Figure 3.18 shows the performance on obligatory versus voluntary requirements per country. Fourteen countries have more than 10 percentage points difference between the obligatory and voluntary PSC features (Austria, Denmark, Latvia, Iceland, Norway, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, Ireland, Malta, Luxembourg and Cyprus), with only three of fourteen (Austria, Greece and Iceland) scoring higher for the obligatory requirements. This could be an indication that these eleven countries have successfully connected their e-government services to the PSC portal, but should invest more efforts in upgrading services for sector specific requirements with limited target clients. On the other side, countries such as Finland and Lithuania with a low score gap between the obligatory and voluntary requirements and a high overall score, provide examples of systems based on relatively integrated e-government services with a wide scope.

Figure 3.18 Overall scores for voluntary and obligatory requirements (per country)
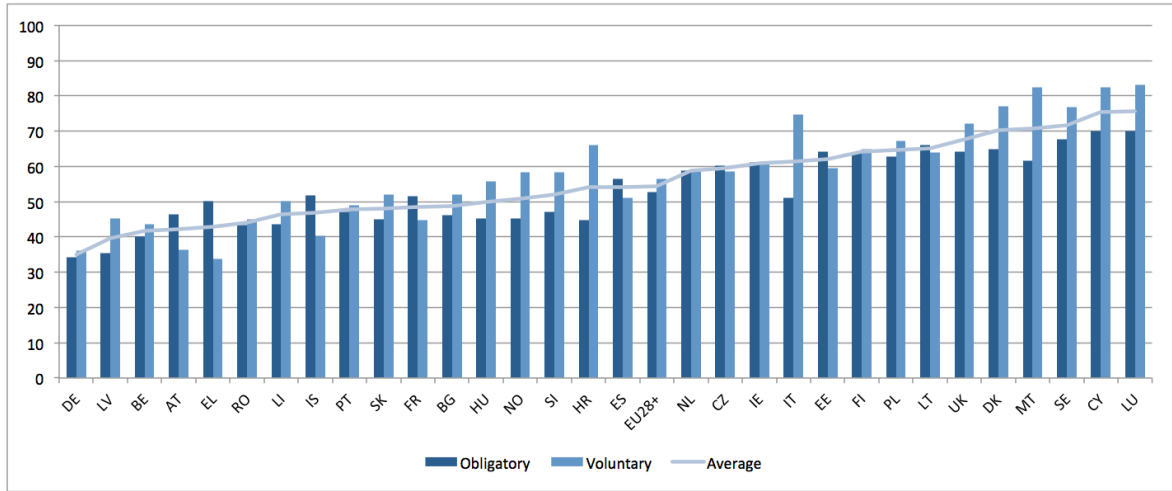
Member states have embraced PSC portals as a single window for their e-government services to business but still face challenges in levelling up their sector-related regulatory requirements (obligatory features) to the horizontal ones which dominate the scope of voluntary features.

3.4 Comparing the PSC performance with previous years

Consecutive assessments of the Points of Single Contact in 2011/12, 2013 and 2014/15 show **continuous but slow progress** towards fulfilling the requirements of the Services Directive and becoming an effective tool for further integration of the Single Market. The most visible improvement has been made with regards to the availability of online procedures, although the gap is still significant. Furthermore, efforts to improve general usability of the web portals and accessibility to foreign users are recorded, but still insufficient to produce needed effects. Finally, the recommendations made in the past two studies seem to be only partially implemented.

As regards the first PSC Charter criterion, the overall results throughout the 2011-2015 period consistently point out the gap between the requirements set by the Services Directive and the **real availability and quality of information** provided by the Points of Single Contact. Taking into account that the 2011/12 study found that only 19% of the identified procedures were not covered by the PSCs, and this criterion scored 72 out of 100 in the 2013 study, it might come as a surprise that the performance in 2014/15 (i.e. 57 out 100) is even lower than for the criterion on e-procedures. The underlying reason for such difference might be the methodology used for this study. Whereas previous studies primarily checked the mere availability of the information on the PSC, this exercise mimics the real life experience in which it is the quality of the content and the effectiveness of the portal which is under the particular scrutiny of the users. Having said that, it is interesting to note that some progress has been made in relation to the availability of navigation tools as well as the structure of the information, which could be associated to the implementation of the recommendations made in the previous two studies. Zooming in the results at the level of requirements, the situation has not changed significantly from 2011. It is still the requirement "company registration" that performs the best, followed by tax related requirements, whereas employment related issues, in particular the ones involving foreign workers are at the bottom. However, some improvement has been recorded as regards the social security requirements.

Some progress has been made regarding the **transactionality of e-procedures**, but the overall performance still remains far from the objectives of the Service Directive. The score for availability and sophistication of the e-procedures echoes the key findings from 2011/12 and 2013 that full online handling of the administrative procedures remains far from the mainstream. Looking at the Member State level, progress can be seen with a decreasing number of poor performers from 7 to 3 and a slight increase in the number of high performers (from 9 to 10). As for the requirements, no significant changes are observed. The general requirements "company registration" and "tax formalities" are leading the way with sector specific requirements lagging behind. Social security related procedures seem to be more available online now than in 2011, following the positive trend regarding the available of information for this requirement.

Accessibility of PSC services to **cross-border** users remains the key weakness of the PSCs. Both availability of information and transactionality of e-procedures represent important barriers for foreign users. Some progress has been made regarding the availability of information in foreign languages, but this is often limited to the general level. Documents, forms and websites users get signposted to, are still offered primarily in local languages. No progress has been made with regards to the e-completion by foreign users. This indicator continues to perform rather poorly. However, following the recommendations from both the 2011/12 and 2013 assessments, there are significant improvements regarding the distinction between

permanent establishment and temporary service provision in the scope of the cross-border scenario.

No visible progress has been recorded in the perception of **usability** of the PSC portals. The overall score still remains somewhat below the threshold of user-friendly web portals. Looking at the scores at the level of Member States, no significant changes have been detected in comparison to 2013: the large majority of the portals falls in the group of average performers and only two are recognized as truly easy to use. Interestingly, many countries reported some developments in this field, e.g. introducing the life-cycle model, but users still face problems emanating from the general approach in the way PSC services are delivered, which remains to be dominated by the logic of the administration, rather than the logic of the users.

4 PSC performance in a wider context

The performance of PSCs depends on many different factors. In this chapter we take a closer look at potential influential factors by examining to what extent PSCs are reflected in wider e-government strategies, if PSCs are supported by national legislation, how countries have organised their PSC (in terms of governance models used), if other portals are available besides the PSC and to what extent key enablers are applied in the PSC. The analysis is based on extensive desk research, questionnaires filled by all EU Member States, in-depth interviews with four Member States (i.e. Croatia, Denmark, Germany and Poland) and previous reports published on e-government and/or the points of single contact (see Annex 2 for the complete list of references).

4.1 PSCs within the e-Government landscape

PSCs can be strengthened by making them part of a wider e-government strategy, as opposed to keeping them a stand-alone initiative. Our assessment shows that in the majority (17 out of 27) of the Member States the e-Government strategy does reflect the Point of Single Contact. **The PSCs are primarily reflected through common strategic objectives, i.e. the strategies define objectives that match the purpose of the PSCs.** In Figure 4.1, an overview is provided of the most common strategic objectives as described in policy documents.

Figure 4.1 Reflection of PSCs in eGovernment strategies
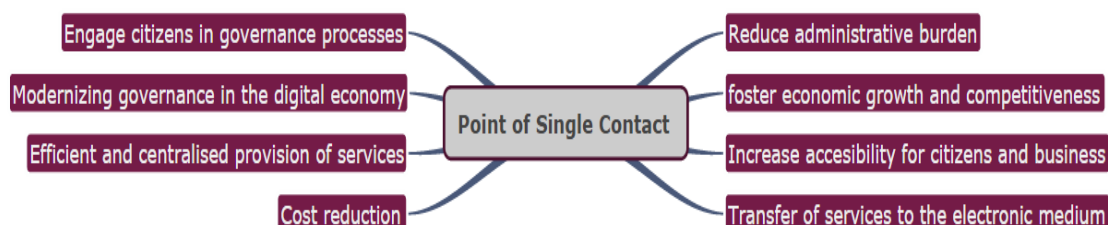
The listed objectives are in line with the PSC philosophy, as stated in the Services Directive[23] and the PSC Charter[24]. For instance, when taking the objective 'increase accessibility for citizens and business' in Figure 4, it corresponds with Article 7 of the Services Directive, 'Right to information'. The same goes for the objective 'transfer of services to the electronic medium', which corresponds with Article 8 of the Services Directive on 'Procedures by electronic means'.

In stating their objectives national governments do take a more generic approach to e-government. In contrary to the Services Directive, the national e-government

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23 Directive 2006/123/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 12 December 2006, on services in the internal market. Available on http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006L0123&from=EN
24 PSC Charter (2012), Available on http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/implementation/points_of_single_contact/index_en.htm#charter

strategies aim to improve government procedures for both business *and* citizens. In multiple countries, we see this combined approach is underlined with the objective of portal integration, i.e. having one state-of-the-art platform which presents all government procedures in the same look and feel, supported by a shared back-end infrastructure. A concrete example of this shift from separate initiatives and portals to integrated, government wide solutions can be seen in the United Kingdom, where the previous portals Directgov and Businesslink.gov.uk (responsible for providing government information for citizens and business) was replaced by the integrated government portal Gov.uk. Other countries do distinguish between citizens and businesses, but do not distinguish between businesses for services and businesses for goods, as the Services Directive does. Austria for example has a chapter on business in their e-government strategy "Administration on the Net - The ABC guide of eGovernment in Austria[25]", with a paragraph specifically dedicated to the Business Service Portal. However, this Business Service Portal is not the PSC.

Governments' more generic approach to e-government, not distinguishing between e-government for citizens and for business or not distinguishing between business for services and business for goods, might explain why the PSC as such (i.e. a portal specifically for business) is only specifically mentioned in a few of the national strategies. Cyprus for example, adopted the objective of modernizing public administration and providing public electronic services in its "Digital Strategy for Cyprus" (2012[26]), One of the measures to be taken within this objective, is the measure "Paperless Government and eGovernment Services". This measure is divided in several key actions, of which one is "Expand the Point of Single Contact".

The federal government and the 'Länder' of Germany developed a joined initiative in June 2014, to align the Points of Single Contact with e-Government (Projekt EA2.0). This initiative is part of the Federal Government Digital Agenda[27]. However, on the Länder level the incorporation of the PSC in the e-government strategies is more fragmented. While for instance the Länder Hamburg, Hessen and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have clearly reflected the Point of Single Contact in their e-Government strategy, Rheinland-Pfalz has not yet incorporated the Point of Single Contact in their e-Government strategy. A new e-Government strategy for Rheinland-Pfalz is currently in the planning stage, and in this strategy the Point of Single Contact will be taken into account.

The other countries, assessed, including Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, do not explicitly mention the Point of Single Contact in their e-Government strategy. The more generic approach to e-government and the shift in focus (i.e. from targeted portals to common e-government portals) earlier described, might partly explain the limited reference to PSCs. Another explanation, mentioned by countries (i.e. Belgium, Bulgaria and Germany), might be the decentralised governance structure of the Point of Single Contact. With tasks and responsibilities divided between different levels of authorities, national governments often leave the strategy for the Point of Single Contact to lower level authorities. This can decrease the effectiveness of implementation, as Belgium for instance stated: "Belgium is a federal state where competencies are distributed amongst different levels (federal, regional, …). Therefore

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25 Available on http://www.digitales.oesterreich.gv.at/DocView.axd?CobId=56936
26 Available on
http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/dec/digital_cyprus/ict.nsf/3700071379D1C658C2257A6F00376A80/$file/Digit al%20Strategy%20for%20Cyprus-Executive%20summary.pdf
27 www.digitale-agenda.de, dort: http://www.digitale-genda.de/DA/Redaktion/DE/Standardartikel/Handlungsfelder/3-1_Digitale-Dienstleistungen-der-Verwaltung-mit-Nutzen-fuer-Buergerinnen-und-Buerger-sowie-Unternehmen-anbieten.html

it is very difficult to implement an effective PSC strategy". Other reasons mentioned as to why the PSC is not incorporated in the eGovernment strategies, include a comparatively low transaction volume (United Kingdom) and the need to renew the e-Government strategy (Czech Republic).

4.2   Supporting the Point of Single Contact with legislation

In addition to embedding it in a wider e-government strategy, the implementation of PSCs can also be strengthened by the adoption of supporting laws or provisions. Therefore, we have analysed if the countries under assessment have adopted specific laws and regulations, and if they did, what type of laws and regulations were adopted.

The assessment shows that in almost all Member States (26 out of 27), the Point of Single Contact is covered by at least some laws and regulations (e.g., legislation related to the implementation of the Services Directive, e-government related legislation). Finland is the only Member State under examination that indicates that there is no legislation that supports the functioning of the PSC. However, the results of our desk research contradicts that statement, showing that Finland does have in place legislation concerning e-government (also see below paragraph).

Roughly there are three important ways in which countries support the implementation of their PSC through legislation. *The first* is through implementing a specific eGovernment Act. Based on a thorough examination of national legislation[28], 15 out of the 31 countries under consideration of this study have an eGovernment Act in place. The 15 countries that have a specific eGovernment Act include Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden. The content and implications of this Act varies across the countries, but there are some general aspects that are covered by each of these eGovernment Acts:

- It grants both citizens and businesses the right to contact public authorities electronically.
- It grants freedom of choice for users in selecting the means of communication when contacting public authorities.
- It grants the same legal status to email as that of traditional paper-based correspondence.

An example of the eGovernment Act of France is provided below.

"The 'Ordinance on electronic interactions between public services users and public authorities and among public authorities' ('teleservices ordinance') was adopted on 8 December 2005 on the basis of the Legal Simplification Law of 9 December 2004. It aims to establish a comprehensive legal framework for the shift to 'electronic administration' creating simple and secure electronic interactions between citizens and public authorities. The text covers all exchanges of electronic documents, email or digital communications among public authorities and among citizens and central administration, regional governments and private organisations. Lastly, the text lays down provisions on both the security of exchanges and the interoperability of information systems.[29]"

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28 This analysis is based on country factsheets, provided by the European Commission through ePractice.eu: http://www.epractice.eu/en/factsheets
29 http://www.epractice.eu/files/eGov%20in%20FR%20-%20May%202014%20-%20v.16.0.pdf

Secondly, when indicating which specific laws or provisions were adopted to support the functioning of the Point of Single Contact, Member States refer to a law established for implementing the Services Directive or to a law on the freedom of establishment for service providers and the free movement of services. Countries that indicate these or similar laws and regulations include Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Slovenia for instance transposed the Service Directive into national legislation in the Act on Services in the Internal Market[30], and the Czech Republic is also referring to the Services Directive: "The functioning of the Points of Single Contact is covered by the Free Movement of Services Act (222/2009 Coll.) by which the Services Directive was transposed into the Czech legal system".

Thirdly, countries support the functioning of the Point of Single Contact by adopting laws and regulations on certain key enablers. All countries have adopted an Act on Electronic Signatures. Member States implemented this act following the EU Directive 1999/93/EC on a Community Framework for Electronic Signatures[31]. This Directive stipulates that fully qualified electronic signatures shall have the same force as handwritten signatures. The Digital Signatures Act provides the conditions necessary for using digital signatures and digital seals, and the procedure for exercising supervision over the provision of certification services and time-stamping services[32].

In only a few cases, countries provide evidence of laws and regulations that were implemented specifically for the functioning of the Point of Single Contact. These include:

- A resolution of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania "on the functioning of the Single Point of Contact for Services and Products and the co-operation with the competent authorities of the Republic of Lithuania[33]";

- A Government Decision 922/2010 regarding the organisation and functioning PSC in Romania;

- An Act Concerning the Management, Information Availability, Development, Usage Requirements and Procedures of the State Portal eesti.ee[34] in Estonia;

- On a state level, there are specific regulations in Germany regarding the Point of Single Contact.

The Points of Single Contact are thus often supported by national legislation. However, it differs per country how specific this legislation is on the Point of Single Contact. Some countries only have legislation in place because it was required due to an EU Directive, while others go further and install PSC-specific regulations.

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30 http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO5508
31 Directive 1999/93/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 1999 on a Community framework for electronic signatures was published in the EC Official Journal on 13 December 1999 (OJ No L 13 p. 12 19/1/2000)
32 More about this Act on https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/530102013080/consolide
33 http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=381472 in Lithuanian.
34 Found (in Estonian) at https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/104102013008

4.3   Improving the Points of Single Contact with other e-government initiatives

To improve the performance of PSCs, countries might build on other e-government initiatives. The assessment shows that most countries have planned e-government initiatives which directly contributes or could potentially contribute to the Point of Single Contact (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Other e-government initiatives in Member States that impact the Point of Single Contact
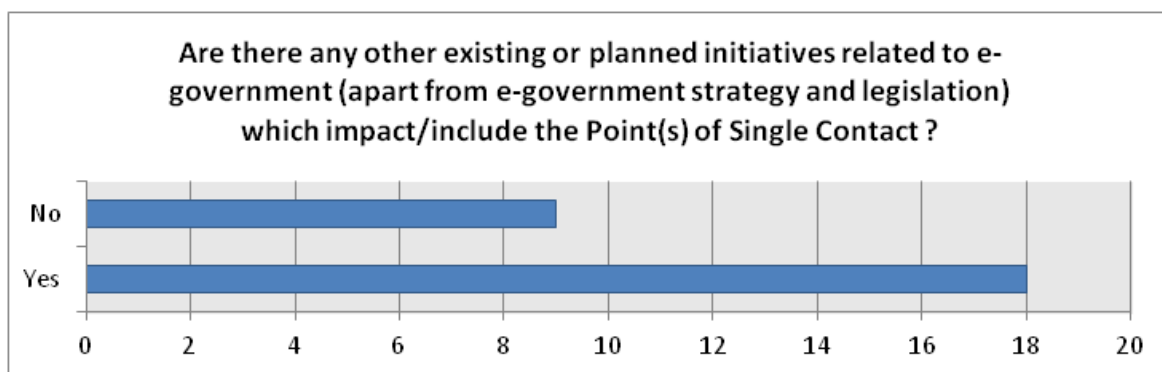
These initiatives range from improvements on the existing PSC portal, to further development of technical key-enablers as the eID and the transactionality of e-procedures. Some countries will adopt new regulations that are related to the Point of Single Contact. Below an overview is provided of the Member States that indicated that they have existing or planned initiatives in place, apart from e-government strategy and legislation, that impact or include the Point of Single Contact.

Table 4.1 e-Government initiatives related to the Points of Single Contact

Country	Initiatives include (as indicated by Member States)
Croatia	"E-citizen" project www.gov.hr and e-services will be extended towards business, especially for the sake of PSC. Certain legislation needs to be changed to be in line with e-government.
Cyprus	eGovernment interoperability framework; the Government Secure Gateway enables users to access the electronic services (eServices), aiming to full electronic completion of a service; Improving the PSC.
Czech Republic	The Free Movement of Services Act is planned to be also revised during 2015 and it should include also the area of Points of Single Contact and particularly the electronic procedures.
Estonia	Opening of E-Estonia to the rest of the world, improving cross-border access
Finland	The ongoing National Services Architecture Initiative by Ministry of Finance will strongly guide the development of e-procedures in Finland. Improvements are foreseen for the national EID and authorization in e-procedures.
France	Implementation of the once only principle (Tell-us-Once)
Germany	Massive expansion of e-services is foreseen. This includes, amongst others, further development of EID and interoperability standards. Furthermore, the states and federal state are anticipating a joint strategy on the PSC.
Ireland	The PSC the site was recently redeveloped and redesigned incorporating a number of significant improvement
Latvia	Latvia foresees a new Public Service Law and the resulting Cabinet regulations.
Lithuania	Preparatory works underway for the launch of the "2nd generation PSC", which will integrate all e-services for business into one portal, covering the whole business lifecycle and enabling cross-border users to access these services.
Luxembourg	A Point of Single Contact for Citizens; A secure interactive platform that allows administrative formalities to be carried out online with the competent administration in a safe and secure manner via a LuxTrust certificate; www.vosidees.lu, an Internet platform dedicated to administrative simplification and reform. The website allows citizens and businesses to interactively contribute to the improvement of public services
Poland	Taking part in the e-SENS pilots for business procedures.
Portugal	There is the intention to make the PSC also the single point of contact for all the permit and authorizations regarding construction and see exploration. The Only Once Principle will be developed and the PSC will take an important part of this strategy.
Slovakia	"ESO reform" – it is a state driven reform of public administration. Number of physical PSCs will increase.
Slovenia	Amongst others: Action plan for establishment of Point of Single Contact; Launch of the project Single Business point; Preparation of the new Strategy for e-Government development; Participation in e-SENS, STORK 2.0 pilots for Business life-cycle
Spain	"Emprende en 3" Initiative. Cabinet of Ministers approved this initiative of regulatory simplification.
Sweden	One initiative is to make it simpler for business to report data to government agencies and reducing the need to report the same data to several agencies (once only principle).
United Kingdom	Extend online authorisations to those not in scope of the Services Directive and implementation of the new Professional Qualifications Directive

When we categorise these initiatives, we see that half (nine out of 18) of the initiatives relate to projects dedicated to the expansion or improvement of the existing Point of Single Contact. Six of the initiatives include key-enablers and four have to do with legislation. Three of the countries explicitly mention that they have the objective

of applying the 'once only' principle, reducing the need to apply the same data to several agencies. Furthermore, six countries explicitly mention their aim to significantly increase the accessibility of PSCs to cross-border users which, according to the 2012 PSC study, requires specific attention.

All of these initiatives contribute to the aims of the PSC charter and could improve the functioning of PSCs in the future.

4.4 Implementation of Points of Single Contact: Governance and Cooperation

An important element in the implementation of the Points of Single Contact, is the governance model that is used. The governance model encompasses the organisational structure and coordination behind the implementation, functioning and development of the Point of Single Contact. The previous PSC-study clearly showed that coordination among the different competent authorities has not always been simple[35]. In a dozen cases, competent authorities have been quite reluctant to cooperate with the Point of Single Contact.

The results of this year's Member State survey underpins this finding. Government representatives 21 countries[36] indicate that authorities face difficulties when cooperating with other authorities within the country. Figure shows that besides financial, political and technical interoperability and legal issues (other), they especially experience problems with the lack of communication among the different government departments and a lack of understanding of the objectives of the Point of Single Contact by other government departments.

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35 Deloitte & Tech4i2 (2012), The functioning and usability of the Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive – State of Play and Way Forward
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/study_on_points/final_report_en.pdf

36 Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom

Figure 4.3 Main reasons for difficulties in cooperating with other authorities
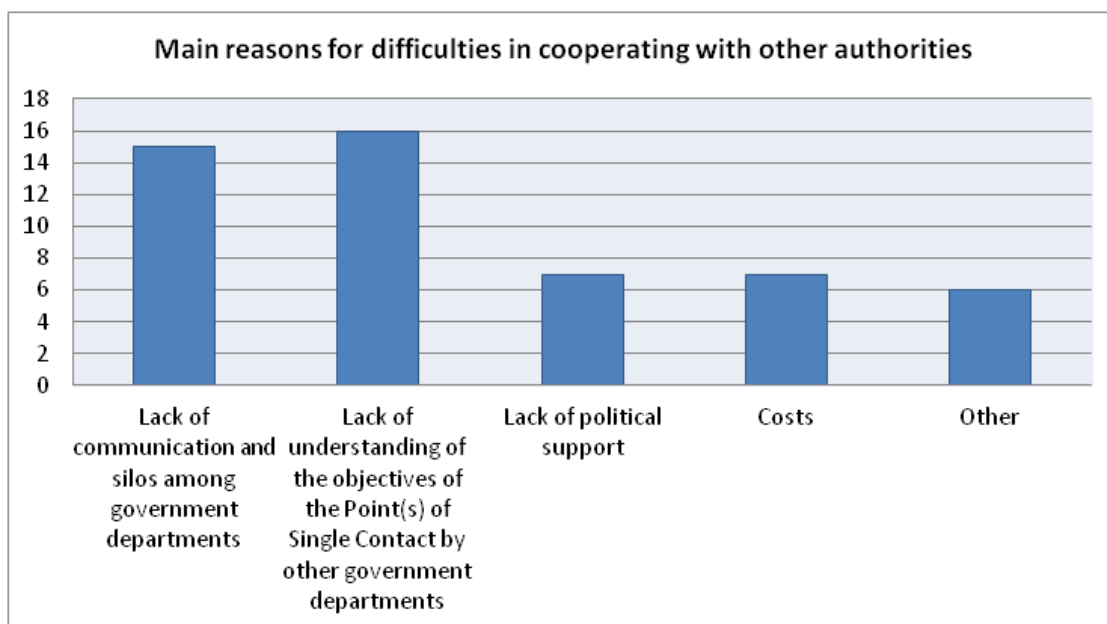
The previous PSC study noted that cooperation appears to be more difficult with municipalities and lower level administrations and for procedures regarding operations and locations.

Taking a closer look at the division of responsibilities across government levels, the assessment shows that in most countries, the responsibilities for the e-government policies on the one hand and the electronic Point of Single Contact on the other, are allocated at different government bodies and business authorities. Multiple government representatives indicate that there is a range of different authorities involved in the Point of Single Contact and the e-government policy implementation. In only eight countries the authority in charge of the e-government policy is the same or is related to the authority responsible for the Point of Single Contact.

To illustrate how complicated governance models for the PSCs can be, we will elaborate on the situation in Italy. In Italy, The Italian Agency for the Digital Agenda is in charge of the e-government policy. For the Point of Single Contact, they have two responsible authorities: the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry for Simplification and Public Administration. The Chambers of Commerce, municipalities and other local authorities are responsible at the administrative and operational level.

From this example we can filter out two barriers for efficient implementation and functioning of the Point of Single Contact:

▪ A discrepancy between the policy level and the operational level;

▪ Fragmentation on the operational level.

In four of the countries examined by the Commissions' questionnaire, the managing body of the Point of Single Contact is a regional authority, while the policy making body is national. Often this is due to the federal structure of the respective countries. This is true for Austria, Belgium, Germany and Italy. Fragmentation and discrepancy does not only occur between public authorities. In a number of countries, private organisations play a role in managing the Point of Single contact. This is the case in

Belgium, Croatia (Chamber of Economy) and Italy (Chamber of Commerce). In Belgium, eight private organisations are responsible for answering queries, handling procedures and integrating e-procedures in their own websites.

The complex governance models make it more difficult to cooperate smoothly, which in turn can slow down the development of the Point of Single Contact, as well as the proper integration of key enablers.

However, a discrepancy between the policy level and the operational level does not have to be a problem, nor should fragmentation on the operational level. In order to stimulate smooth cooperation, some countries have established fixed structures for cooperation, such as working groups and regular meetings. Estonia for example specifies in its e-government strategy[37], that the day-to-day coordination of the implementation of their strategy (i.e. its action plans) is done through thematic or task-based working groups and networks (e.g. records management council, expert group on interoperability). Denmark applies a similar structure. Each time a product is developed, they take stock of which authorities are involved. Then a working group is gathered of representatives of these authorities. The working group members remain the contact persons and are, after implementation, still contacted every three or six months to keep the information on the PSC up-to-date.

In other countries, the cooperation is less structural and more ad-hoc. These countries indicate for example that cooperation is ensured by "phone or email communication, in case of more serious issues a meeting is organized" or that "informal cooperation is in place between PSC and relevant departments of the ministry". The more authorities are involved in the e-government strategy and the implementation of the Points of Single Contact, the more important strong cooperation structures and a common basis are. The e-Government Benchmark of 2014 concluded that "*cross-government programme models that build on centralised management as are in use in Denmark and the UK, have indeed increased the success rate of projects*[38]". It is recommendable that the authority responsible for the implementation of the Point of Single Contact should be involved in the e-government policy making process and continuous and structured coordination across government levels should take place.

4.5   PSCs in relation to other digital eGovernment and Business portals

Section 4.4 shows that in the 'physical' world there is quite some fragmentation in terms of authorities involved in the implementation of PSCs and of e-government in general. This fragmentation causes governments to work in silos. In this section it is analysed whether these silos are overcome in the digital world. To what extent are PSCs embedded in main e-government portals or other business portals, are there any other portals that play a similar role and if yes, how does the PSC function in relation to the other portal(s)?

When analysing the structure of the Points Single Contact, it becomes clear that the situation varies across countries. ***In 14 of the 27 Member States[39] that filled out***

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37 Available at http://www.riso.ee/en/information-society

38 Capgemini, IDC, Sogeti, IS-practice and Indigov, RAND Europe and the Danish Technological Institute for the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (2014), Delivering on the European Advantage?'How European governments can and should benefit from innovative public services'. E-Government Benchmark, Final Insight Report.

39 Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Spain.

the Commissions' questionnaire, the Point of Single Contact is a self-standing portal with no links to other existing portals for businesses. This does not mean that the self-standing portals do not refer to one another. In Belgium for example, regional 'stand-alone' PSCs are put in place, which refer to the central business portal www.business.belgium.be, an information portal that in turn functions as an electronic gateway to the Belgian PSCs. In Greece, the PSC is also stand-alone, but interlinked with other state portals for business. However, the portals do not interoperate, because the technical solutions are not in place.

In other countries, the PSC is embedded in a general e-government portal. Latvia for example commented that the "PSC is part of the national public service portal which is divided in two sections – one for citizens and second for entrepreneurs". Also Estonia combines services for business and citizens in their PSC[40], as well as Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, the United Kingdom and Slovakia. On the other hand, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, Lithuania, Malta, Ireland, France, Finland and Czech Republic all have a dedicated PSC portal for business. These portals are not covering services other than for businesses, and are separated from other websites of their governments.

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40 https://www.eesti.ee/

The Point of Single Contact as an entry point
The functioning of the Point of Single Contact in relation to other (business) portals is best shown by examining the exact role of the Point of Single Contact. Is it a portal where procedures can be completed, or does it function more as an entry point from which the user is redirected to the procedures? We can assess this by taking the EC e-Government Benchmarks into consideration. In the previous e-Government Benchmark[41], mystery shoppers have assessed where they could obtain e-government services for business in the different European countries[42]. E-government services assessed were among others:

- Corporate tax
- Procedure for VAT declaration
- Social contributions
- Submit financial reports with business registration office
- Submit company data to statistical offices
- Obtain information on employee contractual agreements
- Obtain information on required working conditions for employees
- Report illness of employee
- Request compensation employer
- Request a refund of VAT
- Possibilities for objection and appeal against a claiming refund of VAT decision

The results of this assessment are summarised in the table below. This table shows how many authorities are in total involved per country in providing the e-government services. It also shows how many websites the user had to visit in order to complete all the procedures. The last column indicates whether the Single Point of Contact was amongst these websites.

Table 3.2 Responsible authorities and websites consulted in the Business life event of the EC e-government benchmark

Country	Number of responsible authorities	Number of websites	PSC mentioned in websites?
Austria	10	11	No
Belgium	6	10	No
Bulgaria	4	6	No
Croatia	10	10	No
Cyprus	7	7	Yes
Czech Republic	5	6	Yes
Denmark	5	6	No
Estonia	4	5	Yes
Finland	6	6	No
France	5	5	No

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41 Capgemini, IDC, Sogeti, IS-practice and Indigov, RAND Europe and the Danish Technological Institute for the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (2014), Delivering on the European Advantage?'How European governments can and should benefit from innovative public services'. E-Government Benchmark, Final Insight Report.
42 Liechtenstein was not included in this survey

Germany	22	17	No
Greece	7	9	No
Hungary	5	5	No
Iceland	5	5	No
Ireland	6	8	No
Italy	9	9	No
Latvia	4	3	No
Lithuania	5	3	No
Luxembourg	5	6	Yes
Malta	7	8	Yes
The Netherlands	6	6	Yes
Norway	5	5	Yes
Poland	6	7	Yes
Portugal	3	3	Yes
Romania	5	9	No
Slovakia	6	6	No
Slovenia	7	11	No
Spain	5	5	No
Sweden	6	6	Yes
United Kingdom	4	4	Yes

As the data in this table shows, the PSC is complemented by many other government websites, often under the responsibility of different authorities, in its aim to support businesses in complying with government requirements. For the specific e-government services assessed by the e-government benchmark, the PSC is not consulted at all in 19 of the 30 countries assessed. As the services assessed under the e-government benchmark are often transactional in nature, it seems likely that the PSCs fulfil a role in information provision, rather than in the provision of transactional procedures. In that case, the PSCs would function primarily as entry point for businesses, after through which they are then redirected to the website of the government authority responsible for the procedure itself. The mystery shopping results underpin this assumption, showing that mystery shoppers were redirected to other websites in 42 per cent of the cases. Mystery shoppers were primarily redirected to other websites for the specific requirements dealing with tax and social security (42%), followed by specific requirements dealing with the general registration of businesses (24%). The fact that users are redirected to other websites is not necessarily negative. As long as there is a clear starting point (PSC) from which users are redirected and where business information is bundled, combined with straightforward navigation and clearly described procedures, users should be able to fulfil business procedures without too many barriers. The fact that the URL is different should not be a major barrier in this regard. However, when users are redirected to too many websites for related activities, the user might perceive the customer journey as too complicated and too dispersed. In addition, it might be inefficient from a governments' perspective, as overlap in activities and information provided might occur. However, the perception of users, nor the efficiency of governments as an effect of redirection has been measured.

4.6   Supporting PSCs with key enablers

The use of technical key enablers can increase the transactionality of online procedures by taking away the necessity to physically authenticate or to sign on paper. The extent to which PSCs are supported by key enablers has been assessed in two ways: 1) through the Commissions' questionnaire to Member States; 2) by asking mystery shoppers if they could use key enablers in the course of the process.

Key enablers for national users

The assessment through the Commission's questionnaire shows that the eSignature is currently the most widely used key enabler by Member States. As one signs a document with a pen in the offline world, electronic signatures deliver a way to sign documents in the online world[43]. 23 Member States[44] indicate that they use eSignatures in their country. Electronic identification on the other hand, is implemented to a lesser extent. Of the 27 Member States that filled out the Commissions' questionnaire, 17[45] indicate that they have a system of light identification in place for e-government in general. Light identification is defined as a user ID and password. The system of electronic identification (eID) is a more advanced method to identify a person. Electronic identification is one of the tools to ensure secure access to online services and to carry out electronic transactions in a safer way[46]. Also in this case, 17[47] out of 27 Member States indicate that eID is used in their Member State.

The more extensive support of eSignatures can be explained by the wide adoption of the Electronic Signature Act. The fact that the eID is used less frequently in Member States, might be caused by the fact that until recently, there was no legal framework behind it yet at the European Union level. The application of electronic identification is expected to increase significantly, now the Regulation (EU) N°910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (eIDAS Regulation) has been adopted on 23 July 2014.[48] The national e-government strategies and the initiatives as presented in paragraph 4.2.3 also indicate that countries will increasingly develop and make use of key enablers for the provision of e-government services.

However, the application of key enablers on the Member State level, does not mean that these key enablers are also used to support the Points of Single contact. The assessment shows that there is a slight gap between the availability and usage of key enablers in general in Member States, and the usage of them in the Points of Single Contact. Of the 17 countries that have implemented light identification, only 9 Member States have it in place at their Point of Single Contact. The eID and the eSignature are more often applied in the PSC portal, in respectively 93% and 78% of the cases.

For Member States that indicate that they do use key enablers for their online public services, but not in the Point of Single Contact, the reasons behind it differ. Some argue that this is still work in progress, such as the Czech Republic: "The necessary steps to use the key enablers on the ePSC are currently being taken". In Belgium, they use a system of private PSCs on the regional level. They comment that existing key enablers on a national level are therefore not used in these PSCs.

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43 Definition from http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/trust-services

44 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

45 Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain

46 Definition from http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/e-identification

47 Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden

48 Available at http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/trust-services-and-eid

Key enablers for cross-border users

The Member States that use technical key enablers for e-government services, were asked if they have general e-government solutions in place that allow access from users from other Member States. The outcome is mixed. Thirteen[49] of the Member States have solutions in place, whilst 12 have not. In Germany, all the Länder have solutions in place, except Hessen and Rheinland-Pfalz. As already concluded in the 2012 study on the Points of Single Contact[50] the limited cross-border acceptance of e-Government solutions is an important barrier for cross-border completion of procedures on the Points of Single Contact.

Member States also had to indicate if these general e-government solutions allow access from other Member States specifically to the Point of Single Contact. In 9 of the Member States[51] there are technical solutions in place that allow users from other Member States to complete procedures in the Point of Single Contact. However in these 9 countries, the available solutions do not always allow access to users from *all* Member States. For instance, the Point of Single Contact in Lithuania uses STORK 1.0 solution for three Member States (Estonia, Slovenia, Portugal) in their Point of Single Contact.

Some Member States did indicate to work on the cross-border accessibility of key enablers:

▪ "Following the completion of the implementation of PKI Bridge solution we can mention the possibility of authentication on the PSC platform on the base of qualified signatures" (Romania);

▪ "At the moment Latvia is working on cross-border eSignature verification and eID solution implementation";

▪ "By the end of the year, we plan to include in the reference portal for the PSC (impresainungiorno.gov.it), a function to enable service providers from other EU countries to do some eProcedures using the digital signature in use in country where they are established" (Italy);

▪ "The usage of key-enablers is in plan which depends on several competent bodies involved. For example, Ministry of Justice is competent for court register (companies), while Ministry of entrepreneurship and crafts is competent for craft register (individuals, sole traders). That means that digitalization of business registration procedure depends on the will of these bodies" (Croatia);

▪ Belgium indicated that at the moment, tests are on-going on a governmental level.

Although the initiatives with regards to cross-border accessibility are encouraging, the limited level of current accessibility also shows there is still a long way to go. As shown in previous sections and as the comment of Croatia in the enumeration above illustrates, governance issues can be a barrier for the implementation of key enablers.

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49 Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany (all Länder, except Hessen), Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain
50 Deloitte & Tech4i2 (2012), The functioning and usability of the Points of Single Contact under the Services Directive – State of Play and Way Forward
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/docs/services-dir/study_on_points/final_report_en.pdf

51 Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain

Perception of key enablers by mystery shoppers versus availability for the PSC according to Member States

Governments and users can only fully benefit from available key enablers if they are actually recognised and used by businesses. Table 4.3 shows the functionality of the key enablers in the home and cross-border scenario as perceived by the mystery shopper during their PSC assessment and the availability for the PSC as indicated by the Member States in the EC questionnaire.

Table 4.3 Functionality of key enablers as perceived by mystery shoppers and indicated by the Member States in the home and cross-border scenario (EU28+)

Countries	eID		eSignature		eID (Cross-Border)	eSignature (Cross-Border)	Indicated availability by MS (eID - eSignature combined)
	Perception mystery shopper	Indicated availability by MS	Perception mystery shopper	Indicated availability by MS	Perception mystery shopper	Perception mystery shopper	
AT	(orange)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(grey)	(grey)	Yes
BE	(grey)	No	(green)	No	(grey)	(grey)	No
BG	(green)	No	(grey)	No	(red)	(red)	No
CY	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(green)	(green)	Unclear
CZ	(grey)	No	(green)	Yes	(grey)	(grey)	Unclear
DE	(orange)	Depends on Länder	(grey)	Depends on Länder	(grey)	(grey)	Unclear
DK	(green)	No	(green)	Yes	(green)	(green)	Yes
EE	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(green)	(red)	No
EL	(green)	No	(green)	Yes	(green)	(red)	No
ES	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(green)	(red)	Yes
FI	(green)	Yes	(red)	No	(red)	(red)	No
FR	(green)	No	(grey)	No	(green)	(red)	Unclear
HR	(grey)	No	(green)	No	(grey)	(grey)	No
HU	(green)	No	(grey)	Yes	(grey)	(grey)	No
IE	(grey)	Unknown	(grey)	Unknown	(grey)	(grey)	No
IS	(green)	Unknown	(green)	Unknown	(red)	(grey)	Unknown
IT	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(red)	(red)	No
LI	(grey)	Unknown	(green)	Unknown	(red)	(red)	Unknown
LT	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(red)	(red)	Yes (eID only)
LU	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(green)	(grey)	No
LV	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(red)	(red)	No
MT	(green)	Yes	(green)	No	(green)	(red)	No
NL	(grey)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(green)	(red)	Unknown
NO	(green)	Unknown	(green)	Unknown	(red)	(red)	Unknown
PL	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(green)	(red)	Yes
PT	(green)	Yes	(green)	Yes	(red)	(red)	Yes
RO	(green)	No	(red)	No	(red)	(grey)	Unclear
SE	(green)	No	(green)	No	(grey)	(red)	No
SI	(grey)	Yes	(grey)	Yes	(red)	(grey)	Yes
SK	(grey)	Yes	(grey)	Yes	(red)	(red)	No
UK	(green)	No	(green)	No	(green)	(red)	No

Note: Green● is functional, orange● is partly functional, red● is not functional, grey● is not applicable.

In assessing the home scenario mystery shoppers have noted digital authentication (either through log-in or eID) is possible in all countries where authentication is necessary to complete government procedures (indicated by the green dots). In Austria and Germany, one of the two regional PSCs assessed enables digital authentication. Mystery shoppers also indicate to be able to sign documents digitally

as a national user in all countries, except for Romania and Finland . The perception of national users roughly match the availability of key enablers as indicated by the Member states. Surprisingly, mystery shoppers in the United Kingdom and Bulgaria have indicated to be able to authenticate digitally, while the Member State representative has stated this is not possible. When checking, it seems both countries have log-in possibilities on the PSC or on websites of authorities the PSC links to (e.g. the tax agency). For eSignature, mystery shoppers from the United Kingdom and Malta indicate to be able to sign digitally, while the Member State representative has provided a contradictory answer. The difference in answers might be explained in the way e-identification or eSignature is defined/understood (e.g. logging in by entering an e-mail address is not necessarily e-identification). Another explanation could be that the Member State representative is not aware of what key enablers are developed across government institutions or the key enablers have been implemented after the questionnaire was answered.

Foreign users indicate to be able to sign or authenticate to a far lesser extent. Comparing the mystery shopping perception with the Member State questionnaire results, we see that in case of a cross-border scenario mystery shoppers in multiple countries have indicated not to be able to digitally authenticate or sign, while according to Member State representatives this should be possible. For digital authentication, this is the case in Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and Slovenia. For digital signatures, it is the case in Spain, Lithuania, Poland and Portugal. These differences might mean the key enablers are not as visible as should be or do not function properly. The other way around, foreign users assessing Estonia, Greece, France, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom have indicated to be able to authenticate digitally, while the government representatives indicate this is not possible.

4.7   Conclusions

The context in which it is implemented clearly has a significant impact on a PSC's performance. Stakeholders had hoped that the PSCs would act as a catalyst for administrative simplification and efficient eGovernment services. In many cases, however, they are in practice proving to be more a reflection of the status quo than an agent for change

In this chapter we analysed the factors that could positively or negatively influence PSC performance in the countries under assessment.

We have seen that, although in general countries indeed aim to modernize government through ICT, the PSC is hardly mentioned in national strategies and policies as a tool to achieve this. The lack of political commitment at national level could hamper the further development of the PSC, especially given the wide array of authorities which are often involved in providing government services to businesses. In many countries the responsibility for providing government services is scattered across different government levels and different executive bodies. The main barriers for PSC performance are a lack of understanding of the objectives of the PSC across government bodies, as well as the silos among government bodies. To move towards the same goals, it is important that a clear message is conveyed as to what the goals are. By specifically referring to the development of the PSC in the national eGovernment strategies and policies, national governments would be able to apply more pressure to the different bodies involved. On the operational level better-structured cooperation is of course a pre-requisite to breaking through the silos.

A supportive legislative framework is another driving factor for PSC performance. Although most countries have legislation in place to grant citizens the right to obtain

government services electronically and to validate key enablers such as eID and eSignature, this legislation often does not oblige authorities to deliver certain qualitative and quantitative standard of e-procedures or to use certain key enablers. Such legislation would drive the performance of PSCs across government levels and would ensure authorities optimize the use of the key enablers developed.

5 Key Findings and Recommendations

Based on the results of the PSC assessment conducted by the mystery shoppers, the results of the policy analysis and the examination of the results of the reply of the Member States to the Commissions' questionnaire, this chapter provides the key findings and recommendations for both the European Commission and the Member States on how to improve the functioning of the Points of Single Contact. This chapter presents the key findings and recommendations related to the four main PSC Charter criteria followed by some general recommendations.

5.1 General recommendations

R.1 Results clearly indicate that the online business portals are still – more than 5 years after the deadline - far from delivering what is expected from them. It can be concluded that the PSC Charter which the Commission developed as a framework for implementation has not had its desired effect. The limitations of a voluntary approach are clear and a tougher approach is now needed. The following actions are recommended:

A. Enforce what is in place: the Commission must apply a "zero tolerance" policy through infringement procedures in cases of non-compliance with the PSC specific obligations under the Services Directive;

B. The division between the legal obligations under the Services Directive and the voluntary commitments as defined by the PSC Charter has proved to have no significant value to either users or the PSCs themselves, according to the mystery shopping exercise. However, it does hinder the Commission to seek implementation of all requirements and associated e-procedures necessary to set up and run a business in the Single Market. In order to achieve a holistic approach to the provision of online services to businesses, a new regulatory framework should be considered enlarging the scope of the PSC services so as to effectively cover all administrative requirements for accessing national and cross-border EU/EEA markets.

C. In order to deliver truly business-friendly and effective services, the PSCs have to be tailored far more to the needs of the end-users and therefore reflect a business rather than administrative perspective. To this end, certain core elements of the PSC service portfolio (e.g. design, repackaging of information, helpdesk) should be outsourced to external contractors with strong skills in providing support to companies in relevant fields. Such enhanced private-public partnership in the delivery of the PSCs could be facilitated by the European Commission

R.2 A lack of properly functioning cooperation models in decentralised countries can lead to different understandings of the objectives of the PSC. In these cases, **a common governance platform** can align the regions in terms of back-end infrastructure and front-end navigation, look and feel.

R.3 The study reveals heterogeneity in the approaches chosen by the Member States for implementing and running the PSCs. Although there is not "one model fits all" and it is not realistic to opt for a single approach, a **stronger engagement in peer-to-peer interaction at EU level** is recommended in order to get direct feedback on the problems/difficulties encountered and the solutions implemented by other countries. A more active exchange of experience, sharing of good and bad practices, discussion on the strategies chosen and progress made are key to move the PSCs to higher levels of quality. The EUGO network, which already offers a platform for discussion to the

Member States, could be used and strengthened notably by identifying and agreeing on a limited number of focus areas for discussion per year. These priorities would be subject of intense preparation and discussion, in particular through the identification of problematic issues and best practice. To this end, a system of "rapporteurs" for individual topics should be put in place. The rapporteur would lead the preparation and the debate for the focus area by, for instance, gathering information from his peers and providing an analysis of the methods used in Member States to tackle the issues at hand. This would increase the ownership and in-depth analysis of the issues discussed by the members of the EUGO network.

R.4 In order to effectively guide the process of development of the PSC portals, it is recommended to install **monitoring tools to track the impact of the PSC and activity of its users**. Data collected through these tools would support the authorities/organisations managing the PSC portals in their decision-making as regards future developments such as language availability and communication activities. Denmark can serve as a showcase in this respect. Furthermore, a list of compulsory minimum monitoring features should be established by the European Commission in order to provide input for comparative analysis and benchmarking. Here, the PSC charter could be used as a basis. To help countries set up their monitoring activities, the European Commission could provide the **PSC performance assessment framework as a ready-to-use toolbox** for countries.

Golden rules from best practices to put in place general drivers for success

Prepare and adjust legislation if necessary - Existing legislation is seen as a major hurdle in the development of online procedures. Formal requirements stand in the way of online availability or completion of public services. Often, legislation needs to be adapted before online procedures and online services can be realized. Adjustment of legislation should be considered during the early stages of projects because modifications are generally time consuming.

Political commitment –In order to be successful, PSC should not be considered as a mere obligation imposed by the EU, but as effective and powerful tools for improving national and European business environment. Both *Spain* and the *Netherlands* underline that this is only possible with the political support and recognition of the importance of the PSC within the national policy agenda, such as e-government and/or support to businesses. The political support should go hand-in-hand with budget.

Integration within the institutional set-up - PSCs are not a one-off exercise, but a continuous and developing service which needs to be fully integrated and in sustainable manner within the institutional set-up. In the *Netherlands*, the PSC is part of the business support agency. In *Poland,* the PSC combines a high political management (Cabinet of the ministry of economy and vice-prime minister) and the expertise of the chamber of commerce (business) and the institute specialised in e-government. Furthermore, an environment should be created which ensures close coordination between the great number of actors involved. A large country like *Poland* uses structural funds to set-up a self-sustainable online system for collecting and updating information regarding requirements and procedures, to integrate the works of all relevant actors. They organize events (conferences, trainings) targeting relevant state authorities not only to raise their capacities as providers to the system, but also to promote benefits from using it. Motivated competent authorities is a key to getting updated and relevant information.

5.2   Quality and availability of information

Key findings:

- *The overall score of the PSCs on the EU28+ level (57%) indicates moderate performance with considerable room for improvement.*
- *Although PSCs provide basic information on general requirements, information on sector specific requirements is insufficient.*
- *On almost half of the PSCs, information is still structured according to the logic of the administration and not according to the logic of the business user.*
- *Users experience difficulties in finding the right information: content is insufficiently up-to date, navigation tools do not always lead to the information needed, legal and administrative jargon is used instead of business vocabulary.*

Recommendations:

RI.1 The effectiveness of the PSC portals relies on its ability to provide efficient, effective and credible services. In order to achieve this, it is important that the authorities/organisations running the PSC **continuously work on its content**. Many users described their experience on PSCs as "*excellent concept, but weak content*" - which is often followed with explanations such as missing or outdated information/attachment or dead links. The regulatory and administrative business environment is a moving target, which is why PSCs should be considered as an on-going process, requiring continuous efforts to keep the information up-to-date, not as a one-off exercise.

RI.2 More efforts should be invested in **identifying and facilitating sector specific requirements through the PSC**, in particular those that apply at sub-national levels. By regularly checking inconsistencies and gaps in legislation and procedures - as was done when implementing the Services Directive – and by cross-checking these with the information provided on the PSC, governments can ensure that all relevant procedures are provided online and are up-to-date. Feedback from domestic and foreign SMEs and their (sector based) associations on administrative complications, can help to keep the PSC as comprehensive as possible. (see RI.3).

RI.3 The structure and content of the PSCs should be more business friendly and should follow the logic of the users, not of the administration. One way of doing this might be to present the information according to the business life cycle. In order to achieve this, it is recommended **to cooperate with business representatives to identify and shape the content.** This can be done through setting-up or making use of already established channels for consulting the business community, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises. This dialogue with the business community should also be used to gather the **feedback** from the (potential) users. Additionally, the European Commission should consider using its own channels such as the SME feedback activities in the framework of the Enterprise Europe Network and its regular dialogue with European level business representatives.

RI.4 In order to ensure more effective use of the PSC portals **the absence of regulatory requirements in certain sectors should be clearly stated on the PSC**. Mechanisms described in RI.2 and R.2 could be used to identify such cases.

Golden rules from best practices on quality and availability of information

Degree of information provided – In order to ensure all necessary information is collected and updated, the good performing PSCs have set up a system for sourcing data from numerous competent authorities. Poland, for example bases its system on a national legislation which defines the responsibilities, the IT system for collecting information and the number of coordinators who control and supervise the process. In addition, *Luxembourg* cooperates with chambers of commerce to identify and prioritize requirements and procedures relevant to businesses, which should be included in the scope of PSC services.

Structure – PSC in Luxembourg bases its work on a formula – standardized and uniform, but simple and easy to read. For structuring information, they use a single template (Outline of the Procedure) for all procedures. The logic of template is the one of the user, so the information is adapted to it, no other way around. *Cyprus* uses the similar template method with a clear distinction between establishment and cross-border service provision scenarios.

Content – is the critical element in the PSC service portfolio. It has to be up-to-date and precise, but also comprehensive and user—friendly. This is why *Luxembourg* combines cooperation and continuous communication with procedure providers (competent authorities) and users (business organizations, such as chambers of commerce). They also engage people with specific communication skills and proof-readers without specific expertise in the topic covered. Cyprus opted for two tier approach. First they collect information from authorities, then they compile it to make it easy to use and then they send it back for confirmation from the authorities. Both PSCs agree efforts should be invested not to use legal and administrative jargon.

Navigation – Availability of information significantly relies on ability to find it. If navigation is bad, the entire PSC service might be perceived as such. *Cyprus* offers variety of navigation tools (such as search functions, indexes, etc.) but keeping it simple and intuitive, not to overload and confuse the user. *Luxembourg* pays special attention to cross-referencing, so users can create they own path through the vast amount of information, PSC normally provide.

Feedbacks – *Luxembourg* organizes its own mystery shopping to get feedback and define priorities for further development. Poland on the other hand prefers small scale meetings with different experts to discuss identified issues and ways they could be tackled.

5.3 Transactionality of electronic procedures

> **Key findings:**
>
> - *The overall EU28+ score on transactionality (61%) indicates moderate performance of the PSCs in facilitating online procedures for fulfilling regulatory requirements.*
> - *There is a considerable gap in online availability of the procedures associated with general requirements and the ones associated with specific requirements. The general specific requirements are fully transactional on about half of the PSCs. The sector specific requirements are fully available online on less than 30% of the PSCs. In both cases, the digital transactionality of government procedures is falling short. Specific procedures often require visiting a physical office, printing and/or sending forms by mail.*

Recommendations:

RII.1 Given the plethora of authorities involved and the sometimes complex nature of procedures, Member States should make sure they have a clear overview of the procedures, activities and the different actors involved, by starting with a process map of the customer journey, indicating what data is exchanged by whom (including the businesses) and when. It should also indicate at which times businesses are required to authenticate, sign papers or deliver documents. This overview will enable the Member State to identify opportunities for simplification and pinpoint where the use of key enablers is necessary.

RII.2 The technical key enablers for transactional digital procedures are in place and supported by legislation in the majority of countries. Those countries that have not yet developed the necessary key enablers should build on the tools made available through CEF. Those countries that do have key enablers developed should make sure that these key enablers are actually being used across government levels. Common agreements on what technical standards key enablers should comply with help to fit the technical solutions in any environment, thus stimulating re-use and interoperability. The same goes for common agreements on data exchange formats.

RII.3 National governments should put more pressure on the digitisation of government procedures. E-Government strategies should be translated in clear-cut targets, pinpointing what the required digital sophistication level of procedures is (i.e. at least two-way interaction between businesses and government should be possible), which customer journeys are not sufficiently digitised, where the implementation of key enablers is lagging behind and which government authorities are responsible. A clarification of the required level of digital sophistication by the European Commission would help in this regard[52]. The national strategy should be accompanied by implementation plans and targeted financing (preferably joint financing with all authorities involved in the customer journey). National implementation teams could help to coordinate the digitisation of government procedures and the necessary collaboration between government authorities. They can also help to raise awareness on what technical key enablers are already there to re-use. Furthermore, national governments should define consequential measures if targets are not met within the set timeframe. The same can be done on the European level.

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[52] Currently, the Services Directive requires 'Member States to ensure that all these procedures and formalities can be completed at a distance and by **electronic means'.**

RII.4 Many procedures, which are under the competence of sub-national administrations, are poorly facilitated by the PSCs. Given the complexity of numerous procedures and competent bodies and acknowledging that centralisation is not an option for all countries, governments should at least ensure that procedures provided at the sub-national level comply with certain quality standards. To realise this, governments could think of developing a set of 'golden rules' or minimum quality criteria for online service provision.Also, they should train responsible bodies in how to develop and maintain digital government procedures according to these standards.

Golden rules from best practices on transactionality of e-procedures

Create a flexible infrastructure - Availability of information is crucial for the provision of online procedures. A flexible data infrastructure eases the exchange of information between institutions or procedures and increases possibilities to follow and finish procedures online. *Estonia* uses the data exchange layer X-Road to make data exchange more effective both inside state institutions and between citizens and the state. The data exchange layer is available for the entire public sector, not just the state departments, to make maximum use of the potential benefit of information exchange.

Explain the business case - Not everyone has a digital mindset and the benefits of digital transformation of public services are not always seen or accepted. Showing the value of online procedures requires clear insights in the benefits, both financial gains and improvement of the quality of services. While developing the PSC, *Estonia* invested in business cases to show the involved authorities that physical service points were no longer needed and that providing services online would result in lower costs and improved services to citizens.

Collaborate and consider joint financing - Collaboration between different authorities is often necessary to enable online availability and completion of procedures. Involving stakeholders from the start of the digital transformation of a public service is key to successful realization of online procedures. Joint financing is a way to gain commitment from the involved authorities. The *Swedish* PSC, for example, is financed jointly with the authorities own means with reinforcement from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation.

User driven development and customer journeys - Efficient digital transformation of public services starts with procedures that are essential and most frequently used by citizens and companies. Several approaches are available to make sure that development of eProcedures is directed at user-needs. *Denmark* used target group analysis to focus the development of the PSC on the most important users. Foreign companies were interviewed to find out about their expectations and needs. The processes that entrepreneurs go through were mapped to gain insight in necessary administrative steps. In a similar way, *Sweden* used customer journeys to gain insight in the needs of customers. Moreover, after the development of the PSC, user logs were used to monitor the experience of customers with the PSC to further develop and improve the PSC.

Keep it simple - Online procedures should be as simple as possible to enable easy and fast completion. Useful and practical advice from the development of the *Swedish* PSC is not to copy forms when developing new online procedures. Try to make the new process smart by considering what information is really needed; take away everything that not is essential.

5.4 Accessibility for cross-border users

> **Key findings:**
> - *Features enabling access to PSC services by foreign users are assessed as poor (41%)*
> - *The transactionality of online procedures for foreigners is one of the weakest points of the PSC offer (scoring 32%)*
> - *The PSCs provide good general information in foreign languages but the specific information, as well as documents and platforms for online procedures, are often only available in the local languages. Key enablers (e.g. eID, eSignature) are not in place for cross-border users*
> - *There is a clear distinction on the PSCs between cross-border establishment and the provision of temporary services*

Recommendations:

RIII.1 Language remains one of the main obstacles to the accessibility of the PSC services for foreign users, in particular with PSCs having a decentralised management. Many Member States are lagging behind as regards the availability of the information in foreign languages, notably concerning the sectors and the procedures to be fulfilled at the sub-national level. **Radical improvements should be made as regards the language availability** related to the content of the website but also the search function and key features of the online procedures such as the online forms. PSCs should be available in the widely spoken languages (such as English) and/or languages of the most frequent users (see recommendation R.3). Automatic translation should only be used as a last resort and forms should be available in multiple languages.

RIII.2 Online procedures are not as available to cross-border users as to national users. This is partly due to the lack of key enablers available to cross-border users. These technical obstacles should be tackled in order to create online procedures truly open to foreign users. **Member states should make sure they recognise key enablers from other Member States.** For this purpose they can make use of tools already provided in the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), such as the Digital Signature Service, which provides open source software for the creation and validation of e-signatures in the most commonly used formats.

RIII.3 **The European Commission** should stimulate Member States to use existing solutions developed for cross-border procedures by extending communication and dissemination activities and by providing practical assistance to Member States (e.g. through an implementation help-desk or hands-on training sessions) to help government authorities to operationalise the use of key enablers. EUGO should facilitate communication and benchmarking in this field.

RIII.4 It is recommended to put a **stronger focus on the provision of information to cross-border users**, which is less covered by the PSCs than for national users. Assistance from the European Commission regarding the provision of content should be envisaged. With the assistance of EUGO network, the Commission could facilitate activities such as: development of equivalence schemes for better understanding different legal settings across Europe, identification of requirements normally expected by the European users to be dealt by the PSCs in countries where such requirements do not exist (see RI.4) or development of common information structure to ease the navigation by foreign users (see RI.5).

Golden rules from best practices on cross-border accessibility

Provide possibilities for online submission of documents - When it is not possible to integrate procedures of local or other authorities in the PSC, Member States might consider providing opportunities for foreign users to submit documents to the PSC and forward these documents to relevant authorities. ***The Netherlands*** and ***Lithuania***.integrated a Message Box in the PSC to provide cross-border users the opportunity to submit documents online. Enquiries submitted through the Message Box are being processed inside the PSC or are forwarded to the competent authority.

Use appropriate and alternative methods for authentication - Member states should implement suitable authentication methods to enable authentication of cross-border users when comprehensive systems for eID and eSignatures are not available. This is especially relevant since eID and eSignatures are limitedly available for cross-border users. The PSC of the ***United Kingdom*** operates a policy, in line with the Commission decision 2009/767/2009, to only use the form of eSignature appropriate to the level of risk involved. This implies a simple form of eSignature like a tick-box plus declaration or scanned copy of a handwritten signature in most cases. ***Malta*** makes sure that online procedures that are available to residents with support of eID can be accessed by foreign users as well. Foreign users are offered alternative ways for authentication that, in conjunction with additional documentation, provide an acceptable level of legitimacy of the respective users.

Monitor transaction volumes to gain commitment for further development of the PSC - Political and stakeholder commitment are crucial for further development and improvement of PSCs. Providing insights in the value of the PSC is key to ensure such commitment and provide additional online procedures to cross-border users. In the ***United Kingdom***, trends in transaction volumes are used to show the value of the PSC and ensure that the PSC is being maintained and further developed in accordance with the needs of residents and foreign users.

5.5   Usability

Key findings:
- *With an average score of 61% at the level of EU28+, there is room for improvement to make PSCs more user friendly. Finding information is neither intuitive nor swift.*
- *Overviews of procedures and information in particular lack structure*
- *Assistance services are interactive on only half of the PSCs.*
- *Assistance services are rated 15 percentage points lower by foreign users than by national users.*
- *PSCs that score high on usability tend to score high on the other three criteria as well.*

Recommendations:

RIV.1 The usability of the PSCs could be improved by providing **a well-structured overview of the procedures needed** to comply with the requirements and time needed to complete the procedures. Information on what users need to comply with the requirements and the use of pre-filled data could accelerate the process of completing procedures. Furthermore, Member States could make it easier for businesses to comply with requirements by presenting the procedures in the same way and according to minimum quality standards (see also RIV.4 and RII.2).

RIV.2 Providing support to users is important. In order to provide effective support services, the Member States could professionally train **helpdesk** personnel for them to be able to provide **user-friendly support**, which excludes overly bureaucratic texts, legal jargon, extensive deliberation on the legislation applied, etc. and instead focus on providing answers to inquiries as practical as possible. **The use of social networks, online forum and other internet tools** to provide assistance to users can improve the effectiveness of the service as well. It increases the level of interactivity not only between the government (PSC) and the users but also among users themselves, which can provide added value to the service provided.

RIV.3 The specific needs of foreign users with regards to assistance services should be better taken into account. A first step would be to provide assistance **in languages other than the national language** through the PSC.

RIV.4 In order to improve the user-friendliness of the PSCs, a **certain level of standardisation as regards the presentation and organisation of the information should be considered**. Users often complain about the diversity of portal structures and their complexity. Harmonizing the way the information is presented and organised (e.g. through definition of the key elements of the website layout and the information on administrative requirements, the way business cycle principle is implemented, etc) while leaving some flexibility to accommodate national specificities, would drastically improve accessibility to the information. To this end, the European Commission should explore the possibilities of drafting guidelines on successful PSC structure(s) and information architecture or developing a "model PSC", which would make the PSC experience transferable and more user-friendly. Here too, this task should be completed with strong support from external communications and ICT experts well-versed in the needs of business users. Clear, easily accessible and updated information is critical for businesses.

Golden rules from best practices on usability

User-perspective - Usability reflects the degree to which PSCs have implemented user oriented approach to developing and offering their services. The **Netherlands** has taken this approach to the new level by creating all-inclusive step-by-stop guides for certain activities, such as setting up a company in different fields. They are made to guide the user to all procedures necessary for starting a business, from checking eligibility and company registration to applying for permits and licences and employing people. This kind of one-stop-shop service is highly praised by the users.

Complex cases and simple solutions - An expert from **Luxemburg** made a comment: Usability of information often depends on the complexity of the regulation. For complicated government systems, it is worth pointing out **Spanish and Italian** – three steps concept. In order to get information, the user needs to provide input on location, activity and the company. Based on these three simple steps the system returns the list of relevant requirements and associated procedures. The system has proved to be very successful, provided the database of information is comprehensive and organized in the same way.

Feedback – Effectiveness of the service is always based on the good perception of users' needs. This is why PSC should develop their own method for collecting feedbacks from their users. **Luxembourg** and the **Netherlands** do their own testing sessions, **Poland, Denmark and the Netherlands** regularly analyse visitors' data. **Poland** has implemented short and effective feedback mechanism on each web-page on the portal.

Helpdesk – Strong assistance service contributes to effectiveness of PSC services by providing missing links to tackling specific real-life situations. Although it is important to open new channels of communication with the users, it is even more important to have trained staff who deliver targeted answers to inquiries. To tackle the problem of limited resources,the **Polish** set up the IT system called virtual officer which provides an answer to the new enquiry from the rich database of questions and answers. They reported more than a half queries to be successfully answered this way.

Information on other EU member states - Many local companies turn to local Points of Single Contact for information about other EU member states, which it is advisable to follow the **Spanish** practice of putting intuitive link to other PSCs on a visible and prominent place in the web-sites.

Annex 1: Country fiches

See separate document

Annex 2: References

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The Large Scale Pilot e-SENS (*Electronic Simple European Networked Services*), available at: http://www.esens.eu/home/

Annex 3: Assessment Scenarios

	Establishment scenario: home Member State	Establishment scenario: host Member State	Cross-border scenario: host Member State
Construction	You want to set up a construction company, in the legal form of a private limited liability company. You will be specialising in heating, sanitary and electrical installations. The company will be established in your home and you would like to install a business sign or a banner on the façade of the building to advertise your company and attract potential clients.	You want to open a construction company in the host Member State in the legal form of a private limited liability company. You will be specialising in heating, sanitary and electrical installations (you have acquired qualifications to carry out this activities in your home Member State). You want to employ a civil engineer that was working with you in your home Member State (he obtained his qualification in that Member State).	You are a certified heating (including air conditioning) and sanitary installer in your country. You have been approached by a client, who would like you to install new heating, air conditioning and sanitary installations in his property, which is located in other country. You want to take on this assignment as it opens you a possibility to work on other projects for this client. To carry out this project you will need to post your workers to host Member State for the duration of the project.
Food & Beverages + Accommodation	You want to open a cafeteria (which will also have its own bakery), located in the building in the main square of city X (the building belongs to you). Your company will have the legal form of a private limited liability company. The cafeteria will serve fresh bread, pastries, coffee, other beverages, including alcoholic ones, and will also provide take-out and catering services. You also intend to open a restaurant terrace and play music inside. On the upper floor of the building you would like to open a small bed & breakfast with 3 guest rooms. The infrastructure may require specific permits (such as health and safety permits)	You want to open a cafeteria (which will also have its own bakery), located in the building in the main square of city X). Your company will have the legal form of a private limited liability company. The cafeteria will serve fresh bread, pastries, coffee, other beverages, including alcoholic ones, and will also provide take-out and catering services. You also intend to open a restaurant terrace and play music inside. On the upper floor of the building you would like to open a small bed & breakfast with 3 guest rooms. The infrastructure may require specific permits (such as health and safety permits)	Your restaurant is very successful and you have been hired by one of your clients to provide catering services during the event he is organising to kick off the World Cup Championship. The event takes place in the neighbouring country (host Member State). You will be serving food and beverages (including alcoholic and non-alcoholic). You want waiters normally working for you to come with you (they are your employees). You will be providing a temporary service in the country and it is only a one time assignment.
Personal Care	You will open a fitness	You want to open a	One of your old

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services	club located in a quiet neighbourhood in the third biggest city in your country. Your company will have the legal form of a private limited liability company. You will be employing three fitness trainers. On the premises of the fitness club, you will also offer artificial tanning services, beautician and massages services, which will be provided by a self-employed aesthetician and masseuse. You would also like to sell nutrition supplements and beverages and beauty products to you clients. You would like to play background music in your premises. The infrastructure may require specific permits (such as health and safety permits)	branch of your fitness club in a host country (also in one of the biggest cities). The branch of your fitness club will provide the same fitness services as in the country of origin and you would like to employ also one of the trainers that were previously working for you in your home Member State. You will also have a dedicated beautician and massages services. You would also like to sell nutrition supplements and beverages and beauty products to you clients. You would like to play background music in your premises.	costumers is getting married in the host Member States and she would like hairdressers and beauticians working with you to come to the wedding to provide the services to the wedding guests. This will take around 1 week.
Business services	You want to set up a business consulting company in a form of limited liability company. You will be specialising in tax advisory, audit, accountancy (including payroll services) and IT consultancy services.	You want to set up a subsidiary of your company in a host country. The subsidiary will have the legal form of a private limited liability company. You intend to provide the same services as in your home country. You will employ local experts in the field but you also plan to engage experts working with you in your home country (they will move permanently to the host country).	You won a contract for providing IT consultancy services in the host country. To carry out the contract you will be sending 3 IT engineers for 5 months to the host country.

Annex 4: URLs assessed

Country	PSC assessed
AT	- Wien: http://www.wien.gv.at/eap/ - Burgenland: http://eap.bgld.gv.at/Start.aspx
BE	www.business.belgium.be
BG	http://psc.egov.bg
CY	www.businessincyprus.gov.cy
CZ	www.businessinfo.cz
DE	- Nordrhein-Westphalen - Köln: http://www.einheitlicher-ansprechpartner-koeln.de/eaportal/ - Saarland: http://www.saarland.de/einheitlicher_ansprechpartner.htm
DK	National citizens: www.virk.dk Foreign citizens: www.businessindenmark.dk
EE	www.eesti.ee
EL	www.eu-go.gr
ES	www.eugo.es
FI	www.enterprisefinland.fi
FR	www.guichet-entreprises.fr
HR	www.psc.hr
HU	www.magyarorszag.hu
IE	www.pointofsinglecontact.ie
IS	psc.island.is
IT	www.impresainungiorno.gov.it
LI	www.eu-go.li
LT	www.verslovartai.lt
LU	www.guichet.public.lu
LV	www.latvija.lv
MT	www.businessfirst.com.mt
NL	www.answersforbusiness.nl www.ondernemersplein.nl
NO	www.altinn.no/no/Starte-og-drive-bedrift/
PL	https://www.biznes.gov.pl/
PT	www.portaldaempresa.pt
RO	www.edirect.gov.ro
SI	www.eugo.gov.si
SK	www.eu-go.sk
SE	www.verksamt.se/eugo
UK	https://www.gov.uk/ukwelcomes

Annex 5: Elaboration of indicators

In the tables below, the synthetic and compound indicators are further elaborated. For each indicator, the tables show:

- The method of calculation i.e. the range of answers to the different questions and how they will be aggregated into comparable scores.

- The respective weightings.

- The messaging suggested to 'label' what is measured, in very simple terms, for example "this service is fully available online" This is used to communicate the actual meaning of the various indicators. The survey questions the indicator is derived from. The survey questionnaire can be found in Annex 6.

- The level at which the data will be presented. This can either be the requirement level, the industry sector level, the Member State level, the EU, or a combination of these.

Table A4.1 Indicator I: Quality and availability of information

Indicator I: Quality and availability of information			
Compound indicator	**IA: Degree of available information**	**IB: Navigation tools and Retrieval of information**	**IC: Structure of information**
Related survey questions	1.1	1.2-1.3	1.4-1.5
Weighting	Obligatory: 20 Voluntary: 20

To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied:

Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25 | Obligatory: 5 Voluntary: 5

To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied:

Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25 | Obligatory: 5 Voluntary: 5

To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied:

Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25 |
| Calculation Requirement level | Semantic scale:

0 for not online; 0.25 for information online on the requirement; 0.50 for information online on the requirement and the contact details; 0.75 for information online on the requirement, the contact details and what steps have to be taken; | No specific requirement score | Binary yes/no answers:

Yes=1 No=0 |

	1.0 for information online on the requirement, the contact details, what steps have to be taken and how long the procedure will take;		
Calculation Industry sector level	Average of the scores for all sector specific requirements	No specific industry sector score	Average of the scores for all sector specific requirements
Country Indicator	Average of the scores for all specific requirements	Binary yes/no answers Yes=1 No=0 Scale: 1= 0 2= 0.25 3= 0.50 4= 0.75 5= 1.0	Average of the scores for all specific requirements and the scores for portal level questions
EU Indicator	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators
Messaging	Is- Partly is -Is not	Is- Is not	Is- Partly is -Is not
Synthetic indicator	**Quality and availability of Information**		
Calculation	Average of compound indicators*weights		
Level	EU + MS		

Table A5.2 Indicator II: Transactionality of e-Procedures

Indicator II: Transactionality of e-Procedures			
Compound indicator	**IIA: Procedures e-completion and transactionality**	**IIB: Payment tools**	**IIC: Track and Trace**
Related survey questions	2.1-2.10	2.11-2.13	2.14-2.16
Weighting	Obligatory: 30 Voluntary: 30 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25	Obligatory: 5 Voluntary: 5 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25	Voluntary: 5 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25
Calculation Requirement level	Average of the scores for all requirement level questions: Semantic scale: 0 for not online; 0.25 for information only; 0.50 for one-way transaction; 0.75 for two-way transaction; 1.0 for full transactionality;	No specific requirement score	No specific requirement score
Calculation Industry sector level	Average of the scores for all sector specific requirements	No specific industry sector score	No specific industry sector score
Country Indicator	Average of the scores for all specific requirement and portal questions Portal questions provide binary yes/no answers (Yes=1, No=0). For the questions on key enablers a score is only attributed if authentication, a signature or supporting documents are required (and in case of the latter, no original documents are required).	Average of the scores for all questions Binary yes/no answers Yes=1 No=0 If no payment is required, no score will be attributed.	Average of the scores for all questions Binary yes/no answers: Yes=1 No=0
EU Indicator	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators

Messaging	Is- Partly is -Is not	Is- Partly is-Is not	Is- Partly is -Is not
Synthetic indicator	**Transactionality of e-Procedures**		
Calculation	Average of compound indicators*weights		
Level	EU + MS		

Table A5.3 Indicator III: Accessibility for cross-border users

Indicator III: Accessibility for cross-border users			
Compound indicator	**IIIA: e-Completion by foreign user**	**IIIB: Distinction establishment and service provision**	**IIIC: Multilingual**
Related survey questions	3.1-3.7	3.8-3.9	3.10-3.12
Weighting (points)	Obligatory: 15 Voluntary: 10 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25	Obligatory: 10 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25	Voluntary: 10 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25
Calculation Requirement level	Average of the scores for all requirement level questions: Semantic scale: 0 for not online; 0.25 for information only; 0.50 for one-way transaction; 0.75 for two-way transaction; 1.0 for full transactionality;	No specific requirement score	No specific requirement score
Calculation Industry sector level	Average of the scores for all sector specific requirements	No specific industry sector score	No specific industry sector score
Country Indicator	Average of the scores for all specific requirement and portal questions Portal questions provide binary yes/no answers (Yes=1, No=0). For the questions on key enablers a score is only attributed if authentication or a	Average of the scores for all questions Binary yes/no answers: Yes=1 No=0	Average of the scores for all questions Scale: 1= 0 2= 0.25 3= 0.50 4= 0.75 5= 1.0 Binary yes/no answers: Yes=1 No=0

	signature is required.		
EU Indicator	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators
Messaging	Is- Partly is -Is not	Is- Is not clear	Is- Partly is -Is not

Synthetic indicator	Accessibility for cross-border users
Calculation	Average of compound indicators*weights
Level	EU + MS

Table A5.4 Indicator IV: Usability

Indicator IV: Usability			
Compound indicator	IVA: Availability and quality assistance services	IVB: Ease of use	IVC: Speed of use
Related survey questions	4.1-4.6	4.7-4.13	4.14-4.17
Weighting	Obligatory: 5 Voluntary: 5 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25	Obligatory: 3 Voluntary: 3 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25	Obligatory: 2 Voluntary: 2 To calculate an average on the country and EU level, taking into account both Obligatory and Voluntary services the following weighting should be applied: Obligatory: 0.75 Voluntary: 0.25
Calculation Requirement level	No specific requirement score	No specific requirement score	No specific requirement score
Calculation Industry sector level	No specific industry sector score	No specific industry sector score	No specific industry sector score
Country Indicator	Average of the scores for all questions Scale: 1= 0 2= 0.25 3= 0.50 4= 0.75 5= 1.0	Average of the scores for all questions Scale: 1= 0 2= 0.25 3= 0.50 4= 0.75 5= 1.0	Average of the scores for all questions Scale: 1= 0 2= 0.25 3= 0.50 4= 0.75 5= 1.0

	Binary yes/no answers: Yes=1 No=0 Multiple yes/no answers: Yes, one way interaction= 0.5 Yes, two way interaction= 1 No=0		
EU Indicator	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators	Average of Country indicators
Messaging	Is- Partly is -Is not	Is easy to use - fairly easy - difficult	Is fast -acceptable- slow
Synthetic indicator	**Usability**		
Calculation	Average of compound indicators*weights		
Level	EU + MS		

Annex 6: Assessment Questionnaire

1	Criteria I: Usability and availability			
	Question	*Answer option*	*Explanation*	*Assessment level*
A. Degree of information available				
1.1	To what degree is *information* about the specific requirement available online?	Scale of 1-5, Not applicable If not applicable: skip question 1.5, 2.1, 2.2	**1 =** information on this specific requirement is not available online; **2 =** general information on this specific requirement is online, but the procedure for me to follow to comply with this requirement is not provided; **3=** general information on this specific requirement is online and general contact details are provided, but the procedure for me to follow to comply with this requirement is not explained; **4=** information is online on the specific requirement, the contact details and the procedures I have to follow (i.e. the steps that have to be taken are explained) **5=** information is online on the specific requirement, the contact details, the procedures I have to follow (i.e. the steps that have to be taken are explained) and on how long the procedure will take. **Not applicable=** this is not a requirement in this country	Requirement
B. Availability of Navigation tool				

1.2	Please indicate whether the following characteristics are available on the portal:
	  1.2a Search function
	  1.2b Index table
	  1.2c Tab(s)
		Yes/No (if all are answered with 'no', skip 1.3)	An **index table** is the content table of the website, i.e. a list of subjects/ headings and associated links to where useful material relating to that heading can be found on a website.
			Tabs allow for the user to access different parts of a website quickly, by clicking on a button. Often the website has a row of buttons/tabs to select the webpage that is interesting you (e.g. a button for 'businesses' versus 'citizens') or to navigate to a certain step in the process (e.g. 'provide personal
				Portal

			information')	
1.3	To what extent was the navigation provided helpful	Scale 1-5	1= not at all helpful 2= Slightly helpful 3= Somewhat helpful 4= Very helpful 5= Extremely helpful	Portal
C. Structure of Information				
1.4	Is the information displayed on the portal following the structure of the business lifecycle?	Yes/No	Ordering the requirements according to the lifecycle stage of the business, i.e. starting a business, re-location/expansion, regular business operations, innovative business operations, closing a business	Portal
1.5	Is step-by-step guidance provided for the respective administrative requirements?	Yes/No	Step-by-step guidance means it is clear how many steps the procedure consists of /how the process of obtaining the requirement is structured, e.g. by numbering the steps, provision of process flows etc.	Requirement

2	Criteria II: Completion/ Transactionality of eProcedures			
	Question	*Answer option*	*Explanation*	*Assessment level*
A. Availability and Sophistication of the procedures				
2.1	To what extent can the procedure for this specific requirement be completed online?	Not online/ Information only/one way transaction/two way transaction/full transactionality/Not applicable If not applicable: skip question 1.5, 2.2	**Information only=** Submitting and/or downloading forms not possible; information only **One way interaction=** Downloadable forms **Two way interaction=** Downloading and sending forms via e-mail is possible **Full transactionality=** Full electronic case handling, via online forms or uploading documents (i.e. no printing, face-to-face contact and e-mail is needed) **Not applicable=** This is not a requirement in this country	Requirement
2.2	Are you referred to other sites (outside the Portal) in order to complete the task? (if yes, please indicate in the comment box at what stage of the process)	Yes/No		Requirement

2.3	Is authentication required?
	    2.3a To get information
	    2.3b To complete any of the procedures on the
		Yes/No (if no, skip question 2.4, 2.5)		Portal

	portal			
2.4	Is it possible to provide authentication online through an eID? 2.4a Log-in/Password 2.4b Strong authentication: national eID card, Smart card or mobile eID)	Yes/No (if no, skip question 2.5)	Electronic Identification (eID) is document for online identification, and authentication	Portal
2.5	Is the authentication valid for all steps in the procedure (Single Sign On possible?)	Yes/No	Single Sign On (SSO) allows users to get access to multiple systems without the need to log in multiple times. On the contrary, the answer is no if you are required to authenticate repeatedly.	Portal
2.6	Is a signature required to submit information?	Yes/No (if no skip question 2.7)		Portal
2.7	Is it possible to use an eSignature to submit information?	Yes/No	eSignature: 'electronic signature' means data in electronic form which are attached to or logically associated with other electronic data and which are used by the signatory to sign	Portal
2.8	Is it required to submit supporting documents for any of the steps in the procedure provided on the portal?	Yes/No (if no skip question 2.9)		Portal
2.9	Is it possible to: 2.9a upload these documents directly? (within the portal, not via e-mail) 2.9b send these documents from an eSafe environment? 2.9c send scanned copies via regular email? 2.9d Only the original paper documents are allowed	Yes/No	Electronic Safe (eSafe) is a legally recognized system that allow for secure storage and retrieval of electronic documents	Portal
2.10	Is it possible to obtain your data automatically from authentic sources?	Yes/No	Is personal data pre-filled by the requirement provider?(based on data from authentic sources such as National register, Tax registers, Company registers etc)	Portal
B. Availability of payment tools				
2.11	Is payment required for any of the requirements?	Yes/No (if no skip 2.12, 2.13)		Portal
2.12	Is information provided on how to do the payment?	Yes/No	e.g. online through an embedded link, credit card, bank transfer, attaching proof of transfer	Portal
2.13	Are the details (Name of the bank, number of bank account (IBAN), BIC code, transfer date)	Yes/No		Portal

	for the payment clear?			
C. Track and Trace				
2.14	During the course of the requirement, is progress tracked?	Yes/No	i.e. is it clear how many process steps you have accomplished and how many still remain to be done?	Portal
2.15	Does the system mention that a delivery notice of successful completion of the process will be sent ?	Yes/No		Portal
2.16	During the course of the requirement procedure, can you save work done as a draft?	Yes/No	i.e. can you return to your draft work at another moment in time	Portal

3	**Criteria III: Accessibility for cross-border users**			
	Question	*Answer option*	*Explanation*	*Assessment level*
A. e-Completion by foreign users				
3.1	To what extent can the procedure for this specific requirement be completed online?	Not online/ Information only /one way transaction/ two way transaction/ full transactionality/ Not applicable If not applicable: skip question 1.5, 3.9, 3.11, 3.12	**Information only=** Submitting and/or downloading forms not possible; information only **One way interaction=** Downloadable forms **Two way interaction=** Downloading and sending forms via e-mail is possible **Full transactionality=** Full electronic case handling, via online forms (i.e. no printing, face-to-face contact and e-mail is needed) **Not applicable=** This is not a requirement in this country	Requirement
3.2	Are you required to authenticate? 3.2a To get information 3.2b To complete any of the procedures	Yes/No (if no skip 3.3-3.4)		Portal
3.3	Is it specified that a foreign eID can be used to authenticate? 3.3a Log-in/Password 3.3b strong authentication: national eID card, Smart card or mobile eID)	Yes/No (if no skip 3.4)		Portal
3.4	Is it specified that the eID of *any* Member State can be used to authenticate?	Yes/No		Portal
3.5	Do you need to sign applications/submit electronically signed documents?	Yes/No (if no skip 3.6-3.7)		Portal
3.6	Is it clear whether a foreign eSignature is supported directly on the portal	Yes/No (if no skip 3.7)	eSignature: 'electronic signature' means data in electronic form which are attached to or logically associated with other electronic data and which are used by the signatory to sign	Portal
3.7	Is it specified that the portal	Yes/No		Portal

	technically supports eSignatures of *any* Member State ?			
B. Distinction permanent establishment and temporary requirement provision				
3.8	Is clear distinction made between a permanent establishment and temporary requirement provision?	Yes/No	A permanent establishment is a fixed place of business which generally gives rise to income or value added tax liability in a particular jurisdiction.	Portal
3.9	Can you identify what procedures are required in your particular situation?	Yes/No	Your particular situation is defined by whether you will provide your services in the foreign country on a temporary basis or if you will establish your business there. The procedural requirements can differ per establishment scenario.	Requirement
C. Multilingual				
3.10	Is the information available in a language other than the official language(s)?	Yes/No		Portal
3.11	Is the information that is provided in languages other than the official language(s) consistent?	Scale of 1-5/ I don't know	**1= Inconsistent** – No information is provided in another language than the national language(s) **2= Somewhat inconsistent** – Only the minimum of information is provided in the other language or the translation provided is of bad quality **3= Not inconsistent nor consistent** – The information provided in the other language is more limited than that provided in the national language(s) but sufficient to know how to comply with the specific requirement. **4= Somewhat Consistent** – The majority of the information provided in the other language is the same as in the national language(s) **5= Very consistent** – the information provided in the other language is the same as in the national language(s) If you do not speak any of the languages provided on the portal, please indicate 'I don't know'	Requirement
3.12	Are the required forms available in languages other than the	Yes/No		Requirement

	official language(s)?			

4	Criteria IV: Usability			
	Question	**Answer option**	**Explanation**	**Assessment level**
A. Availability and quality of assistance requirements				
4.1	Are assistance services available to help you? 　4.1a one way interaction 　4.1b two way interaction	Yes /No (in case of no or only one way interaction skip 4.2, 4.3)	**One-way interaction:** Contact details of the department responsible (generic contact details do not suffice), FAQ, Demo, Manuals **Two-way interaction:** Click to chat/ direct messenger / Twitter	Portal
4.2	Do they respond to your questions?	Yes/No (if no skip 4.3)		Portal
4.3	What is the average response time? (in number of hours)	Open	e.g. when answered in 10 minutes, the number you indicate is: 0,17	Portal
4.4	Are you satisfied with the assistance provided?	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Unsatisfied **2=** Somewhat unsatisfied **3=** Neutral **4=** Somewhat satisfied **5=** Very Satisfied	Portal
4.5	Please indicate the accuracy of the assistance provided	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Inaccurate **2=** Somewhat inaccurate **3=** Neutral **4=** Somewhat accurate **5=** Very Accurate	Portal
4.6	Is assistance also provided in languages other than the official language(s)?	Yes/No		Portal
B. Ease of Use				
4.7	I could easily access the information needed to find out how to comply with the requirements	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Strongly disagree **2=** Disagree **3=** Agree nor disagree **4=** Agree **5=** Strongly agree	Portal
4.8	I was not confronted to technical difficulties while trying to comply with the requirements	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Strongly disagree **2=** Disagree **3=** Agree nor disagree **4=** Agree **5=** Strongly agree	Portal
4.9	The various activities for trying to comply with the requirements were well integrated (i.e. it was not necessary to use many different websites, forms or contact persons)	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Strongly disagree **2=** Disagree **3=** Agree nor disagree **4=** Agree **5=** Strongly agree	Portal
4.10	I felt very confident that I was doing the right things to comply with the requirements	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Strongly disagree **2=** Disagree **3=** Agree nor disagree **4=** Agree **5=** Strongly agree	Portal
4.11	It was easy and intuitive to comply with the requirements	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Strongly disagree **2=** Disagree **3=** Agree nor disagree **4=** Agree **5=** Strongly agree	Portal
4.12	I have reached the desired goal	Scale of 1-5	**1=** Strongly disagree **2=** Disagree **3=** Agree nor disagree	Portal

			4= Agree 5= Strongly agree	
4.13	Overall complying with the requirements was not a burdensome process	Scale of 1-5	1= Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree	Portal
C. Speed of use				
4.14	Based on available information, I was able to estimate how much time would be needed to complete the required steps	Scale of 1-5	1= Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree	Portal
4.15	I feel the procedures are structured and designed to facilitate the user to complete the requirements as swiftly as possible	Scale of 1-5	1= Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree	Portal
4.16	I could quickly access the information required to find out how to comply with the requirements and what I should have ready beforehand (e.g. supporting documents, authentication).	Scale of 1-5	1= Strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= Agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree	Portal
4.17	The amount of pre-filled data was sufficient	Scale of 1-5	1= Strongly disagree (i.e. there was no pre-filled data) 2= Disagree 3= Agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree	Portal