

SCOOP4C: REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR CITIZENS THROUGH ONCE-ONLY – VISION & CHALLENGES

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Abstract: *The once-only principle is among the seven driving principles in the eGovernment Action Plan 2016–2020 of the EU. To boost developments towards administrative burden reduction and simplification of procedures, two projects are funded to investigate once-only principle implementations: SCOOP4C and TOOP. SCOOP4C aims to investigate, discuss and disseminate how the once-only principle can be implemented in contexts of co-creation and co-production of public services for citizens to contribute to significant administrative burden reduction for citizens. In this contribution, the vision as well as key enablers and barriers of implementing the once-only principle for citizens will be presented.*

1. Context and motivation for the once-only principle for citizens

The EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016–2020 puts forward the following vision: «By 2020, public administrations and public institutions in the European Union (EU) should be open, efficient and inclusive, providing borderless, personalized, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services to all citizens and businesses in the EU. Innovative approaches are used to design and deliver better services in line with the needs and demands of citizens and businesses. Public administrations use the opportunities offered by the new digital environment to facilitate their interactions with stakeholders and with each other.»¹

The once-only principle is among the seven underlying principles of this action plan to make government more effective, simpler and reduce administrative burdens for citizens and businesses by re-using data within government. The principle requires public administrations to «ensure that citizens and businesses supply the same information only once [...]. Public administration offices take action if permitted to internally re-use this data, in due respect of data protection rules, so that no additional burden falls on citizens and businesses.»²

This overall vision of implementing once-only is further elaborated in the call text of the Horizon 2020 programme on once-only, where it is argued that «co-creation and collaboration between administrations can improve their efficiency and effectiveness by opening up and sharing knowledge and resources with the aim to unlock productivity improvements and foster the creation of more public value. [...] This can allow them to provide administrative services in a pro-active manner. Administrative burden of citizens and businesses will be reduced, legal obligations will be fulfilled faster and citizen services will be simpler and less cumbersome.

¹ EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016–2020: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020> (all Internet sources accessed: 31 January 2017).

² Ibid.

*Effective implementation and use of the once-only principle demands public authorities to cooperate not just at national level but also cross-border at EU level and share such data in a secure and user-friendly manner, respecting data protection and privacy and the sensitive nature of some of this data».*³

In order to spur innovation and to implement the once-only principle, the European Commission has called for project proposals in the Horizon 2020 programme in 2016⁴. SCOOP4C has been selected for implementing a stakeholder community for citizens' once-only implementations.⁵ TOOP has been selected for building up a federated architecture and for piloting once-only in different domains for businesses.⁶

2. Objectives of SCOOP4C

In this contribution, focus is on SCOOP4C, the stakeholder community for once-only principle for citizens aiming at reducing administrative burden. SCOOP4C aims to investigate, discuss and disseminate how the once-only principle can be implemented in contexts of co-creation and co-production of public services for citizens in order to contribute to significant administrative burden reduction for citizens and thus, strengthening economic growth, therewith contributing to implement the strategic objectives of the Digital Single Market Policy⁷ as well as the eGovernment Action Plan 2016–2020⁸ of the European Commission.

SCOOP4C has the following objectives:

- to build up and sustain a stakeholder community for the once-only principle for citizens in order to discuss and share experiences as well as drivers, enablers and barriers
- to identify, collect and share existing good practices of once-only implementations for citizens across Europe and to establish a body of knowledge about the cases
- to discuss challenges, needs and benefits of widely implementing and diffusing the once-only principle in co-creation and co-production contexts involving citizens and governments as data producers and data consumers
- to draw conclusions from comparing existing best practices with needs and challenges, including policy recommendations towards a necessary paradigm change in the public sector and of the citizens to build up trust on data shared among governments while no longer bothering citizens to repeatedly provide the same data in public service provisioning
- to identify relevant stakeholders and to develop a strategic stakeholder engagement plan to ensure sustainable implementations of the once-only principle with a large engagement of stakeholders in various co-creative and co-productive public service provisioning contexts
- to develop a tangible roadmap of future areas of actions to implement, diffuse and sustain concepts and implementations of once-only solutions for citizens

3. Vision of SCOOP4C

Along its first activities, SCOOP4C consortium has defined the following vision:

In 2020, the Once-Only Principle (OOP) has become a centrepiece of public administration with a clear commitment to transparency, privacy, and data protection. The once-only principle is so well-understood by active citizens that it is demanded from their respective public administrations. The general public is aware of the significant reduction of administrative burden and

³ Horizon 2020 programme on once only: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/node/85>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See project website SCOOP4C: <http://www.scoop4c.eu>.

⁶ See project website TOOP: <http://www.toop.eu>.

⁷ See EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016–2020: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-egovernment-action-plan-2016-2020>.

⁸ See FN 1.

trusts implementations of once-only delivery of data, based on their ability to verify and track the compliant use of their data at all times. The public administration values the benefits delivered by realising the once-only principle, such as improved quality of data and efficiency gains, and thus considers it as the default option for any new administrative process or reform of existing processes. Based on the full political commitment, any deviation from the once-only principle needs to be explicitly justified. The legislative, organisational, and technological framework for implementing data provision only once also opens up new opportunities for innovative private sector services aimed at citizens.

SCOOP4C will engage with stakeholder communities to investigate how this vision can be effectively implemented by governments by 2020.

4. Benefits of the once-only principle

The fulfilment of the above outlined vision brings a number of benefits to citizens:

- reducing administrative burden for citizens as they need not to provide the same data repeatedly at different occasions
- increasing transparency of the use of resources by the state, since citizens can verify (e.g. through a service account and through particular logging mechanisms, etc.) the compliant use of their data and they can have better control over their data
- providing foundations for new private sector services aimed at citizens (e.g. banking) through Government as a Service and where public administration acts as a trust provider
- simplified, less cumbersome and more convenient procedures and pro-active public service offers for citizens through the re-use of existing data across public administration

Benefits of the once-only principle implementation for public administrations are e.g.:

- increased efficiency and effectiveness of public administration through co-creation and collaboration between administrations by opening up, sharing and re-using knowledge and resources with the aim to unlock productivity improvements and foster the creation of more public value
- opening up data enables governments to pro-actively provide public services to citizens
- sharing and re-using of data enables legal obligations to be fulfilled faster
- public administrations retrieve data from the sources, where data are approved and quality-assured
- through higher quality of data, governments can make better policies using the same infrastructure

5. Enablers and barriers for the once-only principle

In order to implement the vision of once-only implementations for citizens, a number of key enablers have to be (put) in place, which need to be well understood. If these are not in place, the once-only principle and its implementations may be confronted with severe barriers. Hence, countries need to overcome these barriers to ensure the successful and effective implementation of the «once-only» principle, thus reaping the benefits of the principle in the widest possible way. An overview of identified enablers and barriers that will be subject of in-depth investigations along the case analyses in SCOOP4C is provided below:

- Political commitment to implement the once-only principle as a pre-condition
- Legal framework in place to enable sharing and reuse of data stored in government's base registries while at the same time ensuring data privacy and protection of citizen's rights
- Organisational commitment and collaborative business processes in place to enable governments to share citizens' (personal) data among public administrations in secured networks (i.e. opening up, sharing and re-using knowledge assets e.g. stored in base registries) and on the basis of standards

- Standards for data exchange, a common terminology, taxonomies, etc. (semantic enablers) as well as multilateral agreements on reference data in the form of taxonomies, controlled vocabularies, thesauri, code lists and standardised data structures/models to ensure information interoperability
- Networked trusted infrastructure among governments as well as use of e-delivery building blocks
- Appropriate collaborative governance models to enable cross-government collaboration
- Trust mechanisms and transparency to enable citizens to control and monitor when an agency has used the citizen data and for what purpose

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