

The power and potential of the once-only principle



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In the simplest possible terms, the once-only principle aims to ensure citizens and businesses are not asked to engage in useless administrative actions over and over again. We have all had the experience of needing to provide the same kind of information, phrased in a slightly different manner to different administrations, organisations and companies. Resubmitting information over and over again, making us wonder “Why do I need to provide this information still, in this day and age?”

For some topics we have this solved already, for example cross-border identification is beginning to take-off and work. However, if you want to engage with public administrations and complete cross-border transactions, such as moving from a city in one country to a city in another country, you are often faced with complicated administrative procedures. You need to obtain information from your own

local administration and then provide that to a new administration. It can involve discussions regarding the information on your birth certificate, what is in your attestation of domicile, tax declarations, as well as the provision of translations explaining the legal validating. This is a tonne of paperwork that really doesn't solve any problems or serve any purpose for the citizen or the public administration.

The once-only principle means that you should only have to provide information once.

When the required information has been provided to a public administration, it should be made available to other administrations that need it. You can already see this in a lot of cases and contexts within country borders. For instance, when filing tax declarations you will often find that they are already pre-filled with information your government already has, such as the amount of money you have made with a specific employer, how much social contribution you have made, what kind of revenue you get from rent and so forth. Using the once-only principle, if an administration needs information then they try to get it from another source before asking you, which becomes the fallback option. The standard plan to complete a procedure as efficiently and accurately as possible is to ask another administration directly.

A lot of Member States have been doing this successfully for a few years

and it works quite well at the national level. The challenge is that many of us don't work, live and move purely within our own national borders. We work in other countries, we move, marry, have children and retire in other countries. This makes it all the more important that information can be easily exchanged, not just within a countries administrations, but with administrations across national borders. It is very difficult to make this work in practice, given that the once-only principle is already difficult to implement nationally, as you need to transpose the same logic between administrations that don't know each other, or their rules, procedures, the type of documents they work with etc.

The DE4A project is all about making the once-only principle work in Europe, to make things better and more efficient for citizens, companies and public administrations, by building infrastructures that in a few years from now will make it as easy to move to another country, as it is to move within your own country.

At the European level, there are already initiatives such as the Single Digital Gateway (SDG), which aim to 'solve' the once-only challenge. This is expected to be a portal site where people can find information about how procedures work, but more importantly it requires Member States and the European Union to collectively build an infrastructure that allows information (birth certificates, attestation, social security etc) to be exchanged at the

request of the citizen.

This concept of the SDG that interconnects administrations and provides information to citizens and to businesses exists and legislation (the Single Digital Gateway Regulation – SDGR) has already been adopted, requiring Member States to cooperate to build once-only and make it work in practice.

Writing legislation is one thing, but actually building something that works is a very different game. DE4A aims to support the practical realisation of the European Digital Single Market, by making it easier to provide effective public services that are fully digitised, user-centric, data-driven and cross-border. DE4A will show the potential of sharing data across borders, and by building common

shared services that are accessible in all Member States. It will help deliver better mechanisms to exchange and manage evidences, implementing not only the once-only but also the digital by default principle, promoting the mindset that information should be first and foremost exchanged digitally in a way that is electronically secured and authenticated.

Real-life piloting of the once-only principle



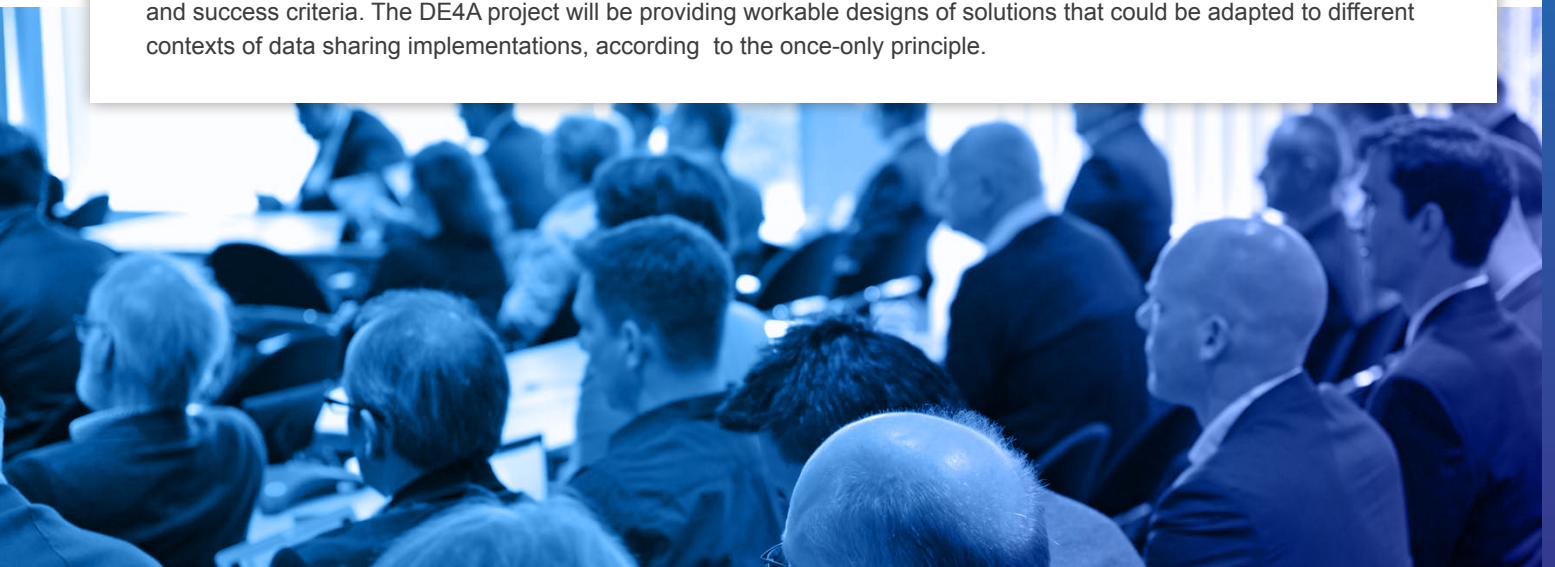
Alberto Crespo, Head of Identity & Privacy Laboratory, Atos Research & Innovation

In DE4A we are focusing as a major objective on generating substantial and tangible evidence of the benefits of the once-only and digital by default principles. We will be delivering three pilots which are focused on real life events for students, businesses and citizens. Each of these pilots will demonstrate use cases of fully online procedures that are related to the Single Digital Gateway Regulation (SDGR).

We will have cross-border exchange of real data and will be addressing real users, in order to extract the maximum amount of knowledge and lessons learned. The pilots are designed to validate a very broad range of DE4A results, in operational environments, from architectural communication patterns to common specifications and components. The project is using building blocks and a sematic tool kit, as well as looking at the impact of transformative technology such as blockchain.

As we try out our solutions, to overcome the barriers to the realisation of these crucial principles for digital transformation of public administration in Europe, we are following a pragmatic approach where we want to generate knowledge and lessons learned at multiple levels, in order to overcome interoperability barriers. This will provide a very valuable insight to public administrations and also some blueprints of solutions that could be replicated in different Member States, in order to have better integrated or better orchestrated public services. The project will be assisting Member States to be prepared and ready for the Single Digital Gateway, when it comes into full operation at the end of 2023.

The pilots are designed to produce a better common understanding of the life events across all Member States, but also the pilots are very important because they will be trying out important concepts for the Single Digital Gateway, such as the review and approval functionality that is explained in the regulation, explicit requests as well as other functionalities. The pilots explore different aspects to realise trust models between competent authorities of different Member States, but we also leverage and apply the results from public initiatives in the public sector, for example European blockchain services infrastructures and the European self-sovereign identity frameworks. We will be assessing the fulfilment of the goals of the pilots and measuring the impact through a common framework of benefits realisation logic, comprising of smart metrics and success criteria. The DE4A project will be providing workable designs of solutions that could be adapted to different contexts of data sharing implementations, according to the once-only principle.





The Studying Abroad pilot

The main goal is to facilitate the mobility of European students, building on cross border support of the once-only principle, particularly paperless procedures, to simplify interaction with higher education systems and platforms which can exist in these institutions, and national education platforms. The pilot will demonstrate how the administrative burden that we currently see can be greatly reduced by enhancing the data exchange between competent authorities of different Member States. Examples include authorities issuing evidence relevant to students wanting to be admitted to higher education courses, to apply for study grants or to request that studies they have achieved are recognised in another Member State.

This will foster an increased update in electronic identity across Europe and importantly in this pilot we will be assessing the impact of novel technologies such as verifiable credentials, self-sovereign identities and distributed ledgers.

The Doing Business Abroad pilot

This will demonstrate how to meet the different needs of companies that are seeking to lower barriers to become established across Member States and also to do business for different services, such as applying for a subsidy and taxation. For these we need to achieve maximum quality and freshness of company data, as it is of critical importance in order to conduct the procedures correctly in the destination Member States.

This will be achieved by reusing data coming from authentic sources, such as business registers and by enabling notifications in case of company data updates.

The pilot will demonstrate how manual work and the processing costs that currently exist, can be greatly reduced, and the delivery of services in the context of services for business can also be improved.



The Moving Abroad pilot

The goal is to support citizens that are moving or have moved to another Member State. When the citizen is required to provide evidence in a range of procedures such as change of address, or to prove life events for example a birth, marriage or death. The pilot also includes a use case regarding the claiming of pensions information. This pilot focuses on achieving and demonstrating wins in efficiency of the procedures and cost reduction, through reducing physical movement to the country holding the evidence, making it more convenient for citizens and also public servants, as it will decrease the number of in-person interactions. It will also improve the quality of the data exchange because the evidence/attributes will be delivered in the language that the receiving Member State understands. And using a harmonized data structure (agreed in the public documents regulation of 2016).



The ISSE Webinar Series - Insights in to the new European Interoperability Platform

On 19th November, DE4A hosted a webinar, as part of EEMA's annual ISSE 2020 conference, which attracted 650 registrations from 35 countries. The session was chaired by Hans Graux of Timelex who together with Alberto Crespo from Atos Research & Innovation; Alexander Bielowski of ICTU; Ana Rosa Guzmán from SGDA and Muhamed Turkanović of the University of Maribor, demonstrated the potential for sharing across borders common European digital services.



The webinar is available to view in full at: www.de4a.eu/news

New DE4A video

This new DE4A video provides an introduction to the objectives of the DE4A project, insight into the four real-life pilots and the technology being used to move to an EU-wide interoperability platform. The video is available at: www.de4a.eu/video



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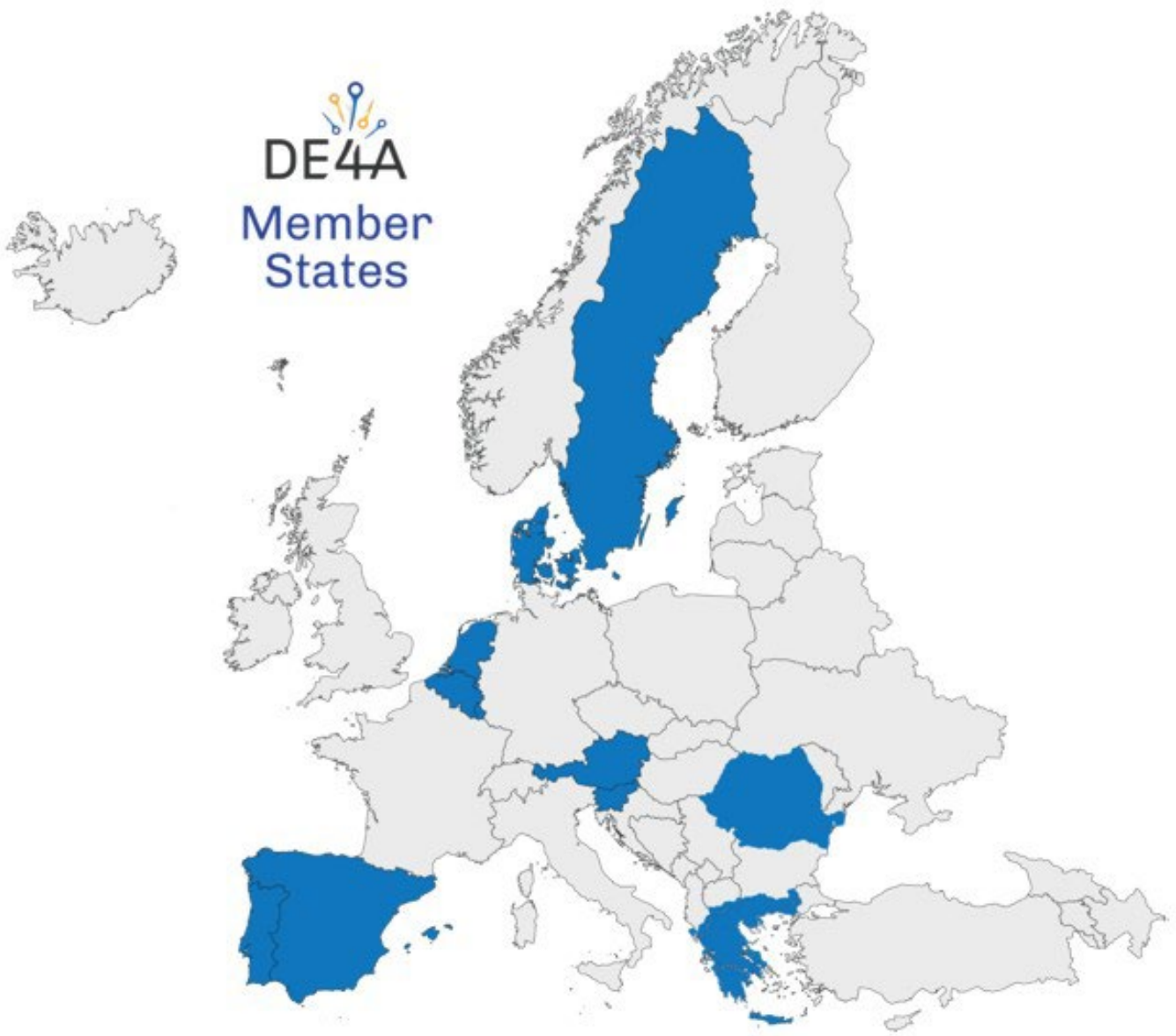
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