



Study supporting the interim evaluation of the programme
on interoperability solutions for European public
administrations, businesses and citizens (ISA²)

Final workshop, 07 May 2019



[CEPS_thinktank](#)

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Introduction



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Data sources

Primary data

- Targeted in-depth interviews (20)
- Targeted online surveys (80)
- Public consultation (14)
- Short questionnaire distributed during the ISA² Mid-Term Conference and the Kick-off workshop (15)
- Expert assessment (4 technical experts)

Secondary data

- ISA² dashboard
- Rolling work programme
- Webpages of the Europa website dedicated to ISA² actions and solutions
- Performance indicators directly shared by action owners of the sampled actions
- Monitoring and evaluation reports
- Summary of communication activities
- List of participants in official meetings
- Relevant literature

Triangulation

Main limitations

- Timing
 - The evaluation is confined to **actions funded between 2016 and 2018**
 - The longer-term results ('impacts') can only be partially captured by an interim evaluation
- Contact details for solution users
 - Two-step approach to contacting solution users
 - **Users' consent** to be involved in consultation

Results



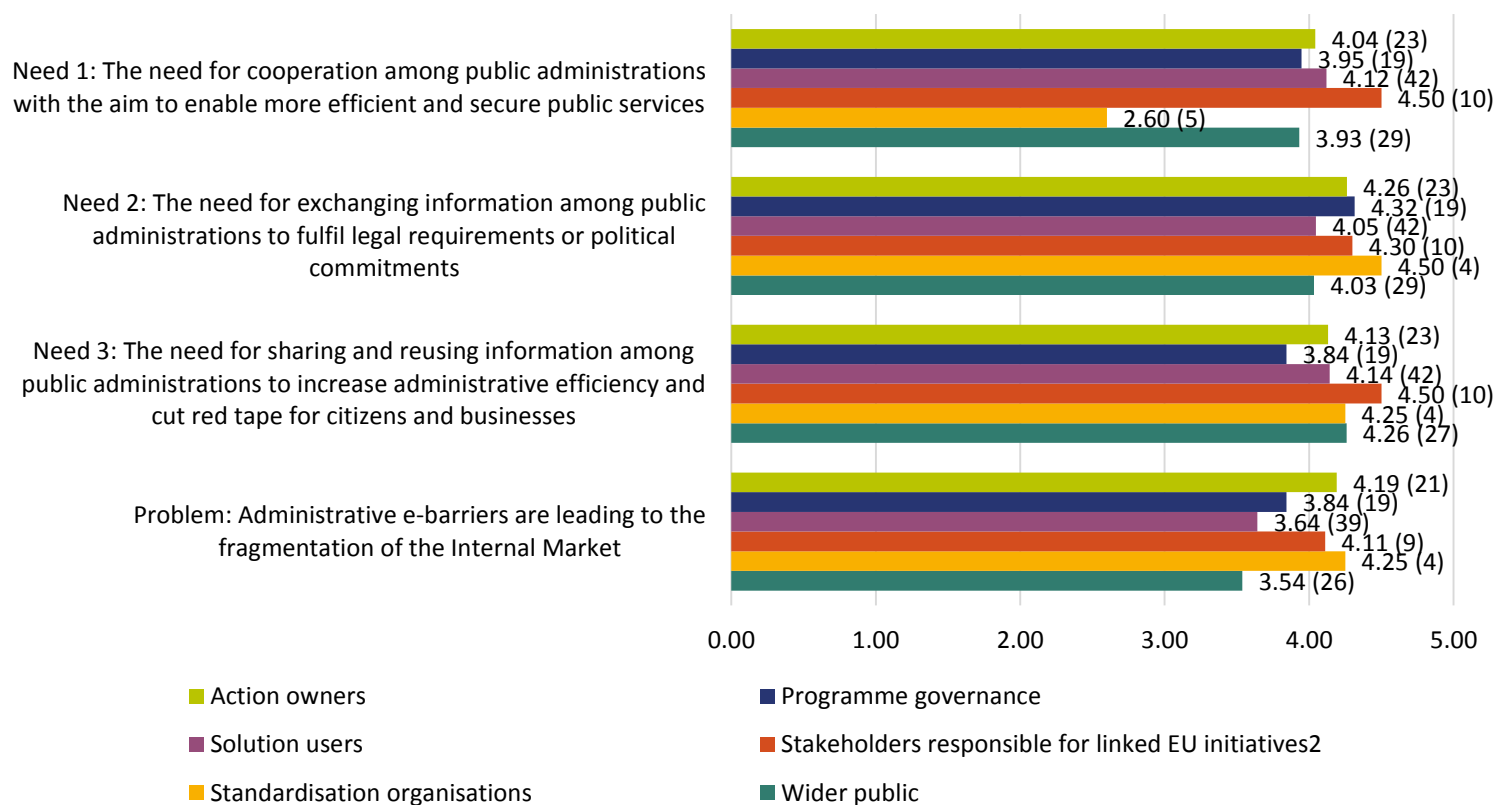
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Relevance: evaluation framework

- Evaluation question
 - EQ1: To what extent are the objectives of the ISA² programme still pertinent in relation to the evolving needs and problems at both national and EU levels?
- Judgment criteria
 - Alignment between needs and problems addressed by the programme and current needs and problems
 - Alignment between the objectives of the programme and current needs and problems

Relevance: key findings (1/3)

- The **original needs and problems** that the programme intended to address are still relevant



Relevance: key findings (2/3)

- Additional needs and problems detected
 - EU level
 - The need for a **more binding legal framework for interoperability**
 - The need for a more prescriptive approach to design interoperable public services (**'interoperability by design'**)
 - The need to improve **the way administrations communicate with one another**
 - The need to **share best practices**
 - The need to account for **new developments** (e.g. blockchain, privacy-by-design, etc.) that are changing the interoperability landscape
 - National/subnational level
 - **Resource constraints**, such as shortage of qualified IT staff, experienced by national and local public administrations
 - The **different political priorities** among Member States hindering a consistent approach to interoperability in the EU
 - The **limited awareness of ISA²** and other initiatives related to interoperability at the regional and local levels

Relevance: key findings (3/3)

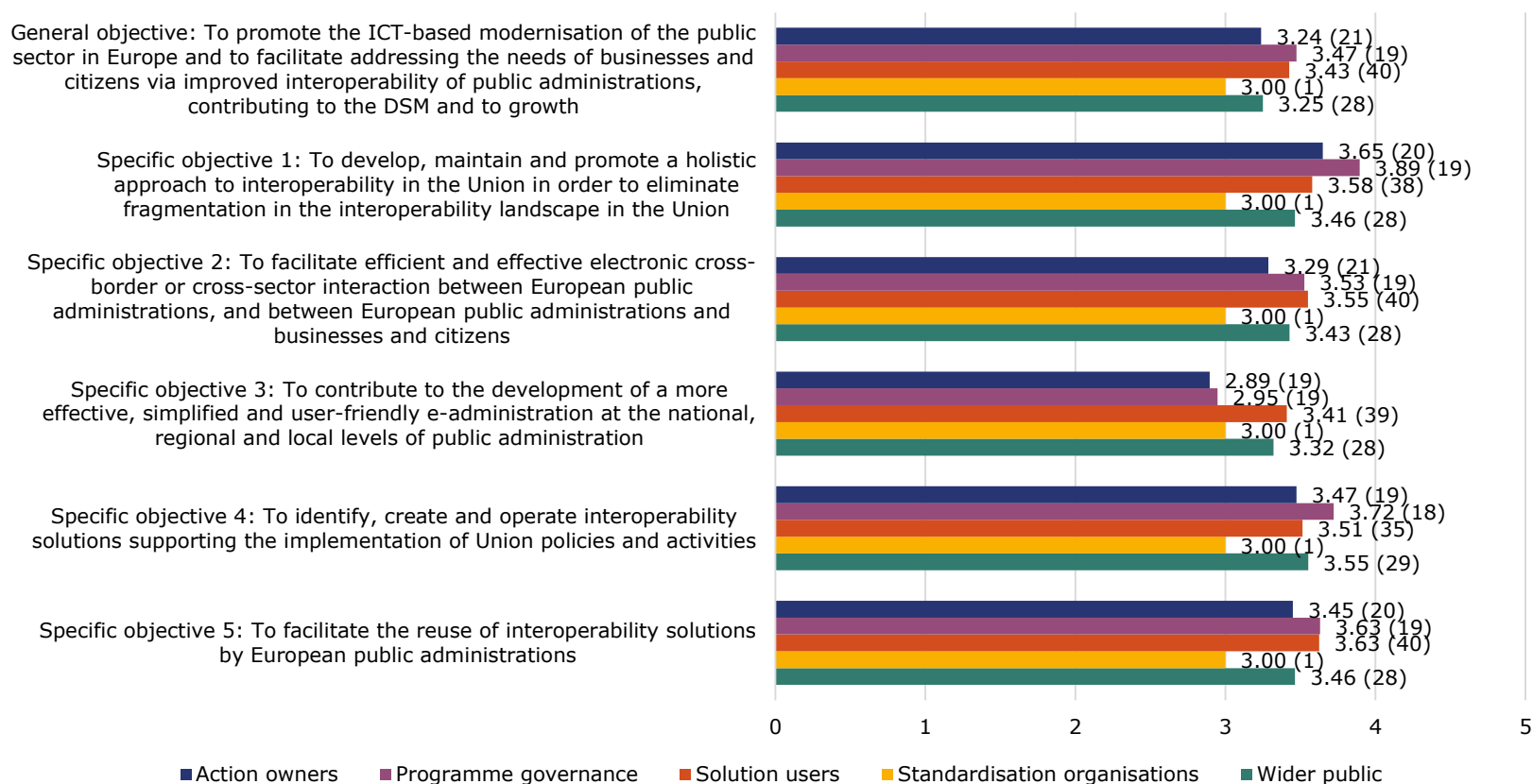
- **ISA² can address the needs and problems** in the field of interoperability of digital public services **identified when the programme was adopted**
- For ISA² to address new needs and problems, the following measures could be taken into consideration
 - Ensuring more **collaboration and exchanges with regional and local administrations**
 - Improving the **sharing of best practices** among public administrations
 - Ascertaining that interoperability of digital public services becomes a **priority for EU Member States**
 - Designing a **more binding legal framework for interoperability**

Effectiveness: evaluation framework

- Evaluation questions
 - EQ2: How far are the ISA² programme's results in the process of achieving the programme's objectives?
 - EQ3: Are there aspects that are more or less effective than others, and if so, what lessons can be drawn from this?
- Judgment criteria
 - Alignment between actual results, the objectives and the expected results of the programme
 - Impact of external factors on the performance of the programme
 - Awareness of the programme
 - Performance indicators
 - Alignment with principles spelled out in Article 4(b) of the ISA² Decision

Effectiveness: key findings (1/6)

- The results achieved so far by ISA² are aligned with the objectives of the programme



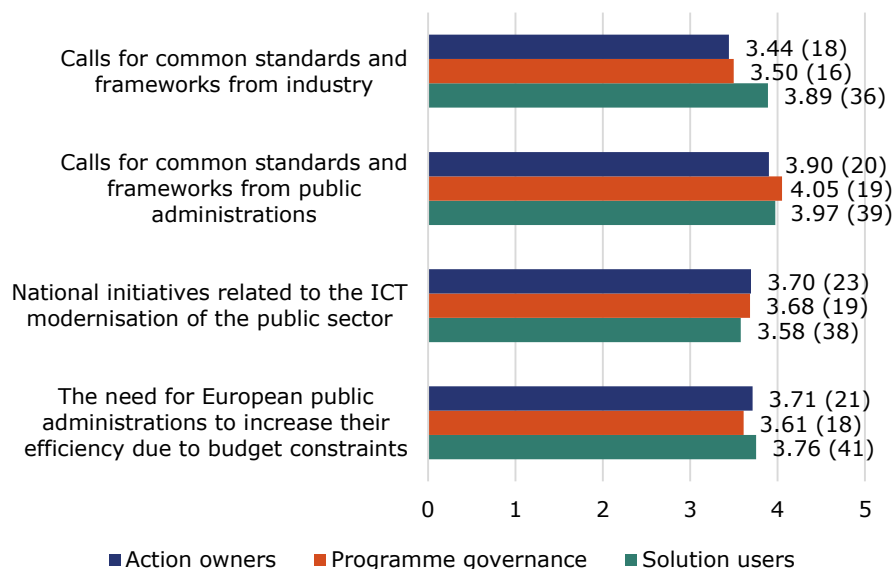
Effectiveness: key findings (2/6)

- The programme performs relatively less well when it comes to **developing a more effective, simplified and user-friendly e-administration at the national, regional and local levels of public administration.**
 - This is an area where Member States can in fact have a greater impact
 - National initiatives supporting interoperability can enhance the overall performance of ISA² as the topic becomes more prominent
- Actual results still do not fully match the expected results, as most of the actions are ongoing and solutions are still being developed
 - **More time is needed** in order to achieve all the expected results.
 - This is confirmed by the assessment of key performance indicators and a comparison between actions continued from ISA and actions started under ISA²

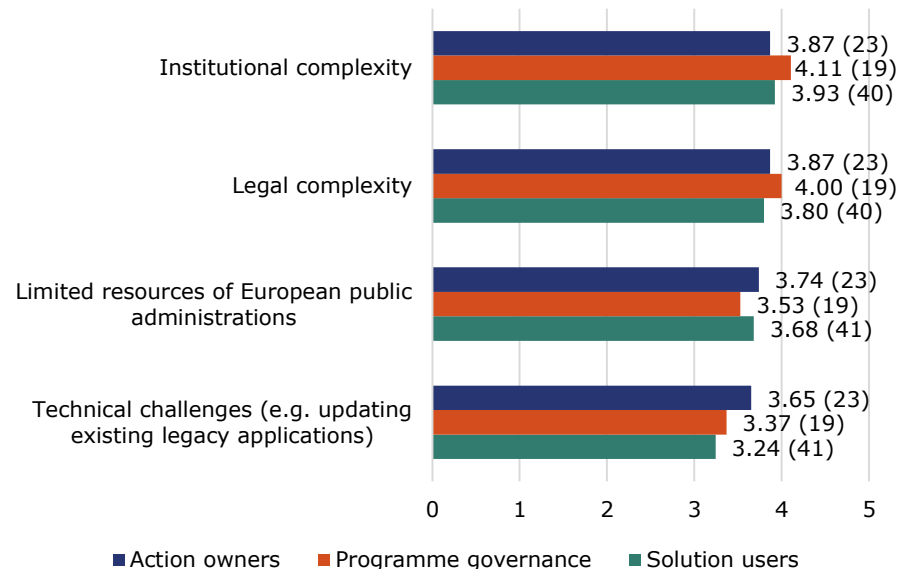
Effectiveness: key findings (3/6)

- **External factors** could improve but also jeopardise the way in which the programme achieves its objectives and delivers its results

Contributing to the performance of the programme



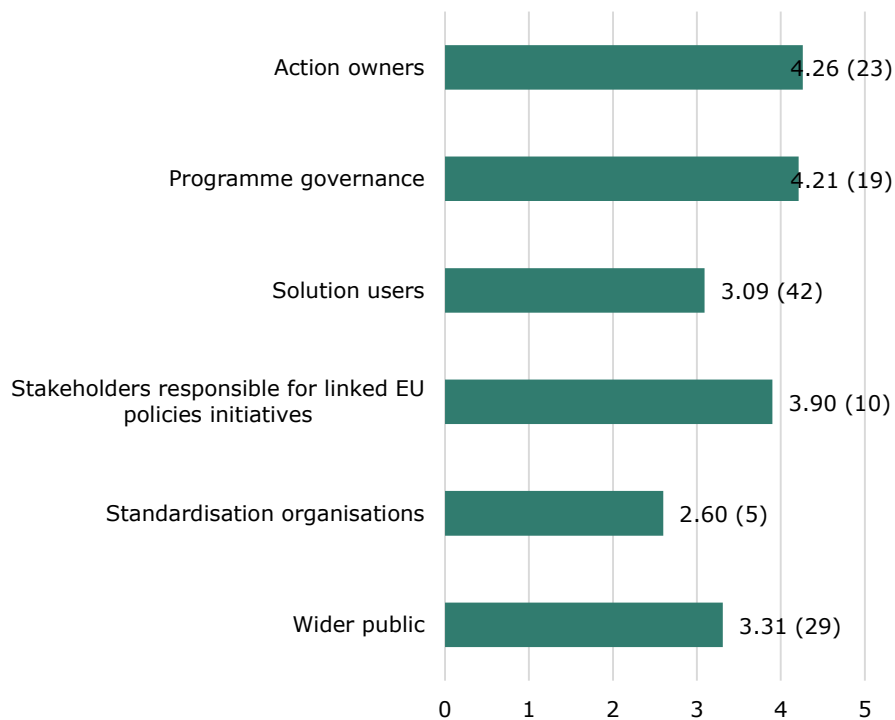
Jeopardising to the performance of the programme



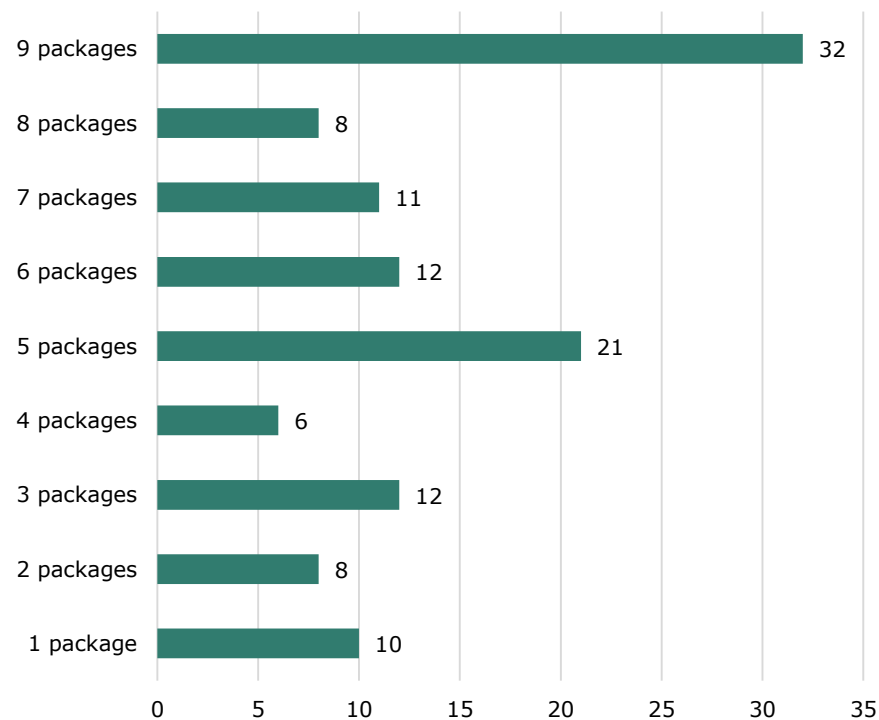
Effectiveness: key findings (4/6)

- There is a general awareness of the programme; however, there are **areas that could benefit from more promotion**

Knowledge of ISA²



Knowledge of ISA² action packages



Effectiveness: key findings (5/6)

- The **20 sampled actions** have generated **35 solutions** so far
 - 280 Commission proposals have been screened for ICT impacts since 2015
 - 13,440 professionals working in the field of eGovernment are registered on “Joinup” in order to access interoperability solutions and collaborate with one another
 - Over 8.8 million documents have been exchanged so far between the Commission, the Council, the Member States, and companies using the “e-TrustEx” platform
 - The “European Single Procurement Document” (ESPD) website has been visited almost 200,000 times (as of January 2019)
 - The “Core Public Service Vocabulary-Application Profile” (CPSV-AP) solution has been downloaded over 2,500 times from “Joinup”
- Many solutions are used by all 28 EU Member States or the vast majority of Member States as well as by EU institutions
- The **take-up rate** of solutions is influenced by **the duration of the programme**
 - Actions continued from previous editions have produced solutions that are now more widely used than solutions resulting from newly established actions

Effectiveness: key findings (6/6)

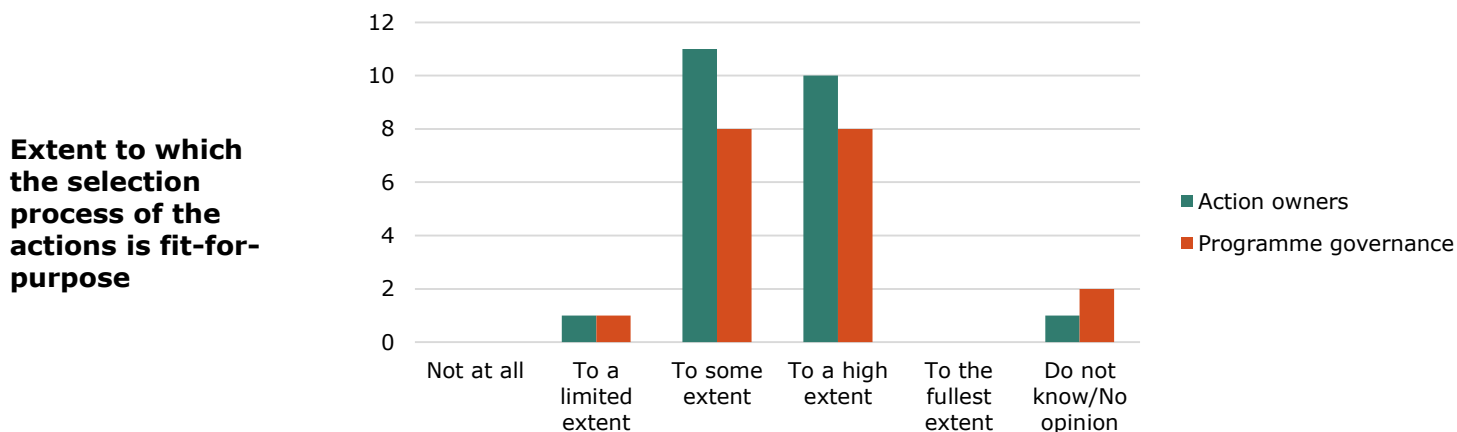
- ISA² actions are largely **compliant with the principles listed in Article 4 of the ISA² Decision** (e.g. subsidiarity and proportionality, user-centricity, inclusion and accessibility, multilingualism, transparency, openness, etc.)
 - These principles are taken into account when the actions are designed, selected and included in the rolling work programme
- The assessment of the programme's achievements could be further enhanced by developing **studies that quantify the impact of interoperability solutions** on the **efficiency and productivity of public administrations**

Efficiency: evaluation framework

- Evaluation questions
 - EQ4: To what extent has the programme been cost-effective?
 - EQ5: Which aspects of the programme are the most efficient or inefficient, especially in terms of resources mobilised?
 - EQ5.1: How is the programme performing relative to the planned work and budget?
- Judgment criteria
 - Efficiency of the selection process of the actions to be included in the rolling work programme
 - Cost-effectiveness analysis to assess the ratio between allocated funds and actual results of the programme
 - Earned Value Management analysis

Efficiency: key findings (1/4)

- The **process to select actions funded by ISA²** is considered relatively efficient and fit for purpose.
 - 6 person-days at most are required to prepare and submit a proposal for actions already included in previous rolling work programme. Between 10 and 30 person-days are required to prepare a proposal for a new action.
 - The costs incurred to prepare a proposal are relatively small, ranging between 0.09% and 0.5% of the potential funds that could be allocated to the proposal



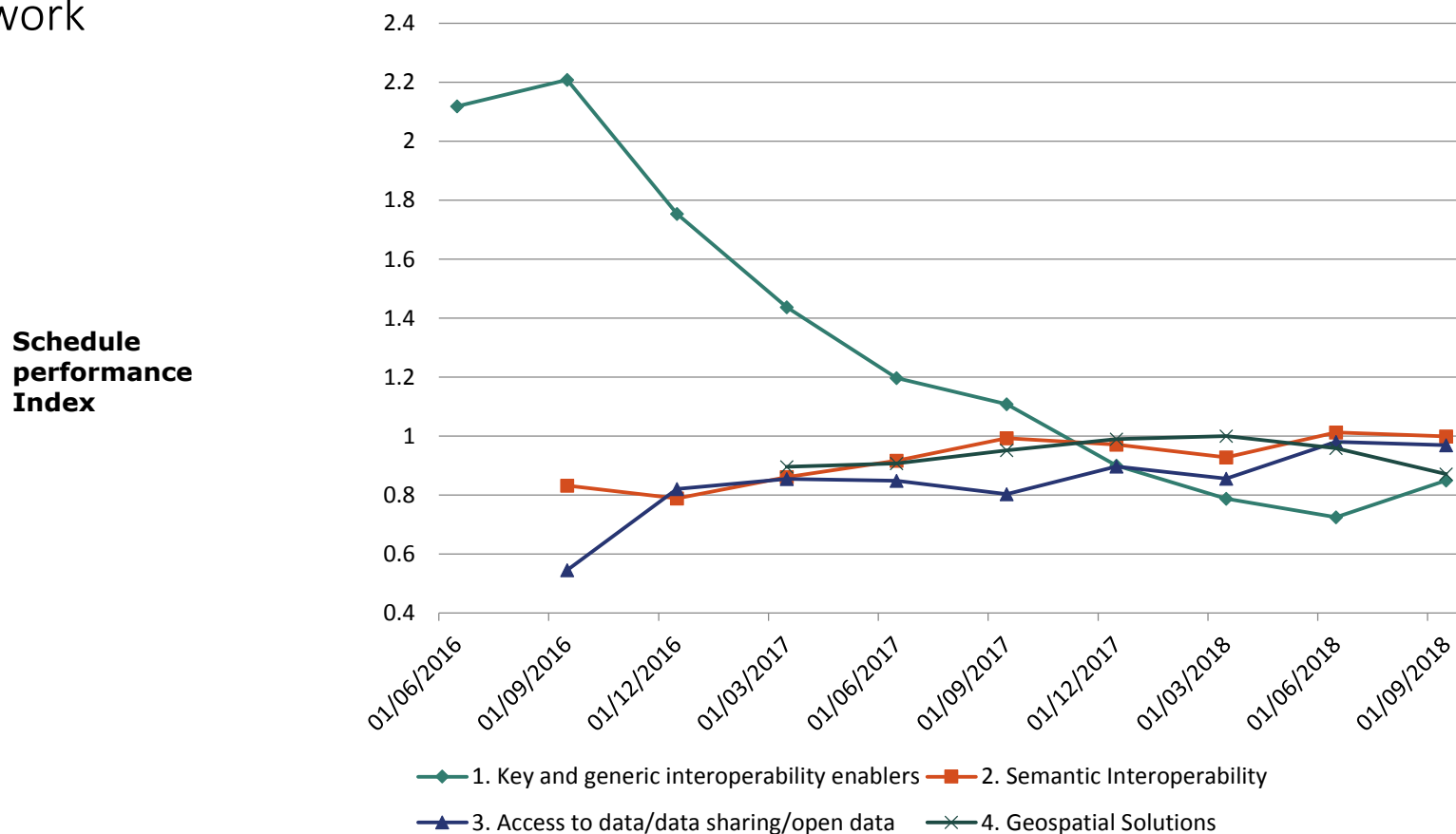
- This process could be further streamlined by **simplifying the rolling work programme** and **launching thematic calls for actions**

Efficiency: key findings (2/4)

- The heterogeneity of performance indicators makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the overall cost-effectiveness of the programme
 - For those packages where it was possible to apply cost-effectiveness techniques, **costs per end-user (e.g. business, citizens, etc.) have been estimated as low**
- **Monitoring and evaluation reports could converge towards some common metrics** to measure the performances of all actions, such as the number of EU public administrations using a given solution, the number of downloads from the “Joinup” platform for downloadable solutions, and/or the number of single users per solution

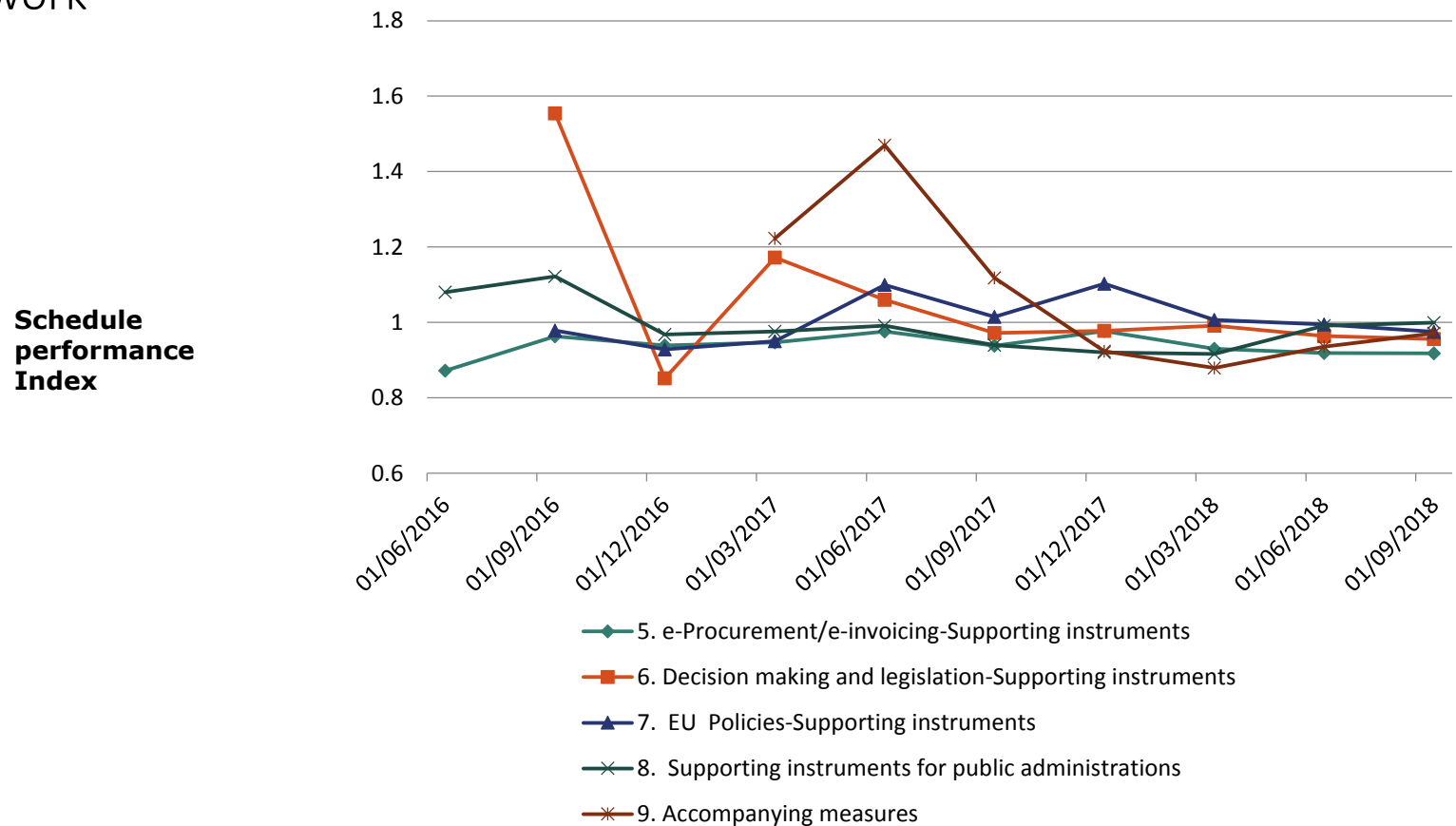
Efficiency: key findings (3/4)

- All packages are either **on track** or close to achieving the planned level of work



Efficiency: key findings

- All packages are either **on track** or close to achieving the planned level of work

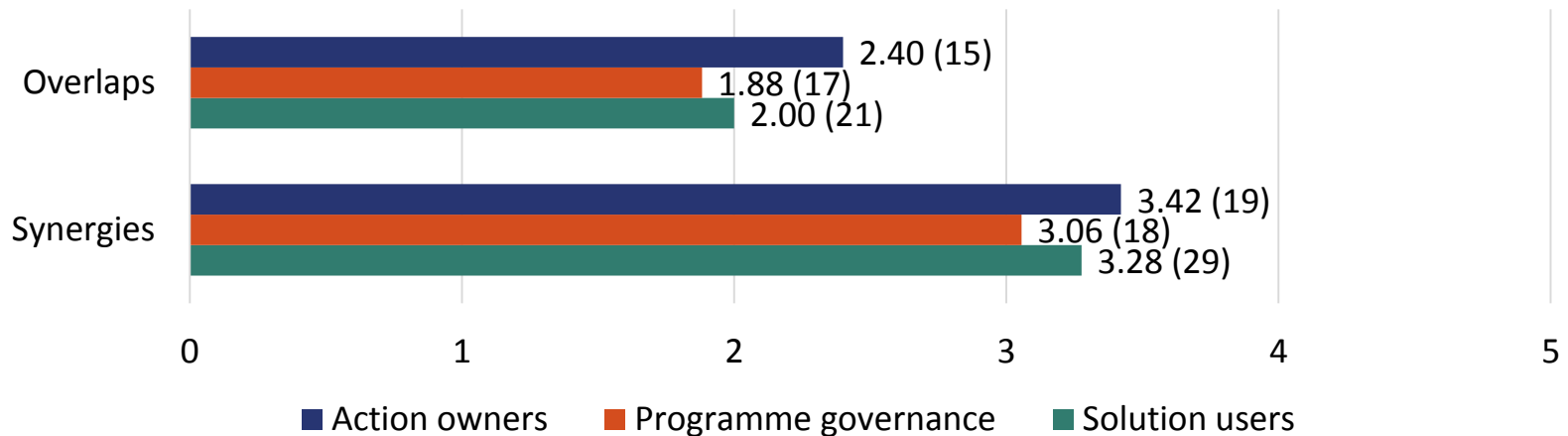


Coherence: evaluation framework

- Evaluation question
 - EQ6: To what extent do the ISA² actions form part of a "holistic" approach within the framework of the programme? (Internal coherence)
 - EQ7: To what extent is the ISA² programme coherent with other EU interventions, which have similar objectives and with global initiatives in the same field? (External coherence)
- Judgment criteria
 - Degree of coherence among actions funded by the ISA² programme
 - Level of reuse of results of a funded action by another action within the ISA² programme
 - Degree of coherence between the programme and other EU supported programmes
 - Level of reuse of results delivered by ISA² actions by other EU programmes
 - Degree of coherence between the programme and other EU policies
 - Degree of coherence between the programme and global initiatives in the field

Coherence: key findings (1/2)

- ISA² actions are characterised by **substantial synergies** among each other and **limited overlaps**



- There are **multiple instances of internal reuse** of ISA² solutions, with actions like “SEMIC” or “Joinup” playing a particularly nodal role in the system

Coherence: key findings (2/2)

- Respondents to the consultation activities identify the **highest level of synergies between ISA² and CEF**
 - ISA² actions have **multiple links outside of the programme**
- Respondents also pointed out the synergies and overlaps with “other” EU initiatives such as **VIES, ERDF, Corporate IT Governance and the Single Digital Gateway**
- Synergies also exist between ISA² and other broader EU initiatives or policies, such as **Digital Single Market Strategy**, the **eGovernment Action Plan**, the **Tallinn Declaration on eGovernment**, and the **Rolling Plan for ICT standardisation**
- Synergies have been detected also between ISA² and the **OECD Digital Government Initiative**
- Potential issues may arise with regard to standardisation, as the coherence between **intellectual property rights for ISA² solutions** and **CEN/CENELEC standards** need to be clarified

EU added value: evaluation framework

- Evaluation question
 - EQ8: What is the additional value resulting from the ISA² programme, compared to what could reasonably have been expected from Member States acting at national, regional and/or local levels?
- Judgment criteria
 - Achievement of objectives that could not be otherwise attained with national or sub-national interventions
 - Achievement of objectives at a cost lower than what could be attained via national or sub-national interventions
 - Achievements in terms of cross-border interoperability
 - The contribution to the advancement of common EU policies

EU added value: key findings (1/2)

- National and/or sub-national interventions would not be able to achieve the general and specific objectives in the field of interoperability at which ISA² is aiming
 - National or sub-national interventions would be able to provide some contributions in the absence of an EU level programme when it comes to the development of a more effective, simplified and user-friendly e-administration at the national, regional and local levels.
 - This is the specific objective where the ISA² programme appears to be less effective, thus showing some **complementarities between EU and national initiatives**.
- The **level of coordination ensured by the programme plays an important role** in enhancing the overall interoperability among European public administrations
- In addition, **ISA² is able to achieve its objectives at a lower cost** than comparable national or sub-national initiatives (economies of scale)

EU added value: key findings (2/2)

- ISA² has contributed to **enhancing cross-border interoperability** in the EU
 - **Awareness:** it raises the awareness about interoperability across EU Member States and helps put the topic on national agendas
 - **Organisational contribution:** It also brings people together, thus creating networks, helping national organisations meet their counterparts in different countries and facilitating exchanges between Member States in the field of interoperability
- ISA² has also contributed to the **advancement of common EU policies** or initiatives.
 - For instance, it plays a central role in the implementation of the EIF (including its 2017 revision) and supports the establishment of the Digital Single Market
 - In addition, the programme fully meets the objective of advancing common shared policies within EU, as stated in the Tallinn Declaration

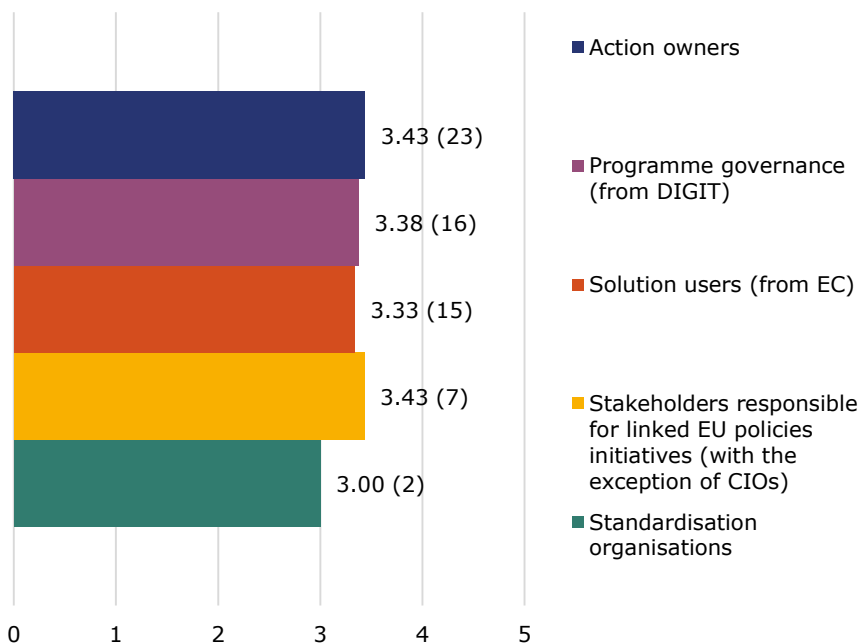
Utility: evaluation framework

- Evaluation question
 - EQ9: How do the ISA² programme's actions and results, achieved and anticipated, compare with the needs they are supposed to address?
- Judgment criteria
 - Alignment between stakeholders' perception of needs and problems at the Member State and EU levels and the results of the programme
 - User satisfaction, with a breakdown by stakeholder group

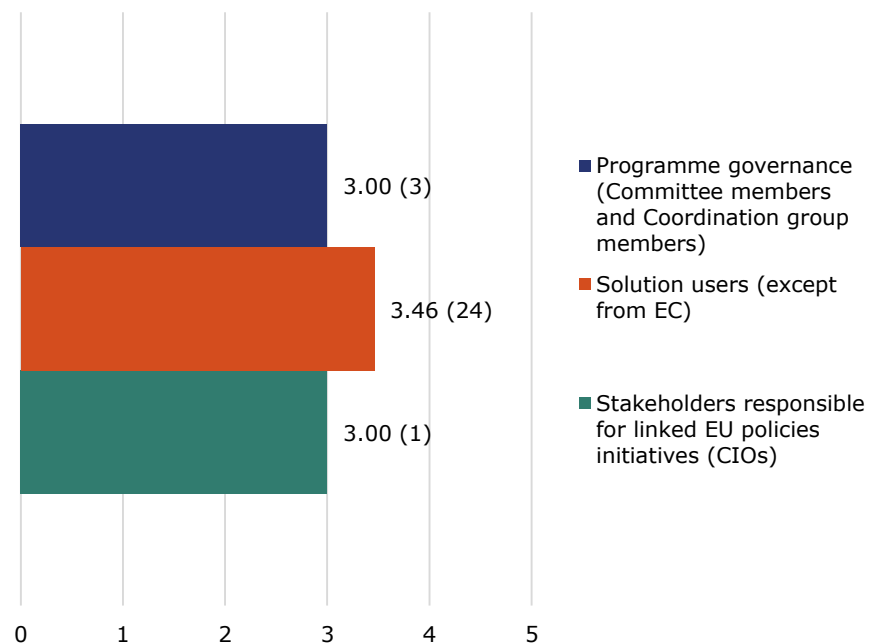
Utility: key findings (1/4)

- Solutions developed or maintained by ISA² have **contributed to addressing the original needs and problems** identified in the field of interoperability

EU level



Member State level



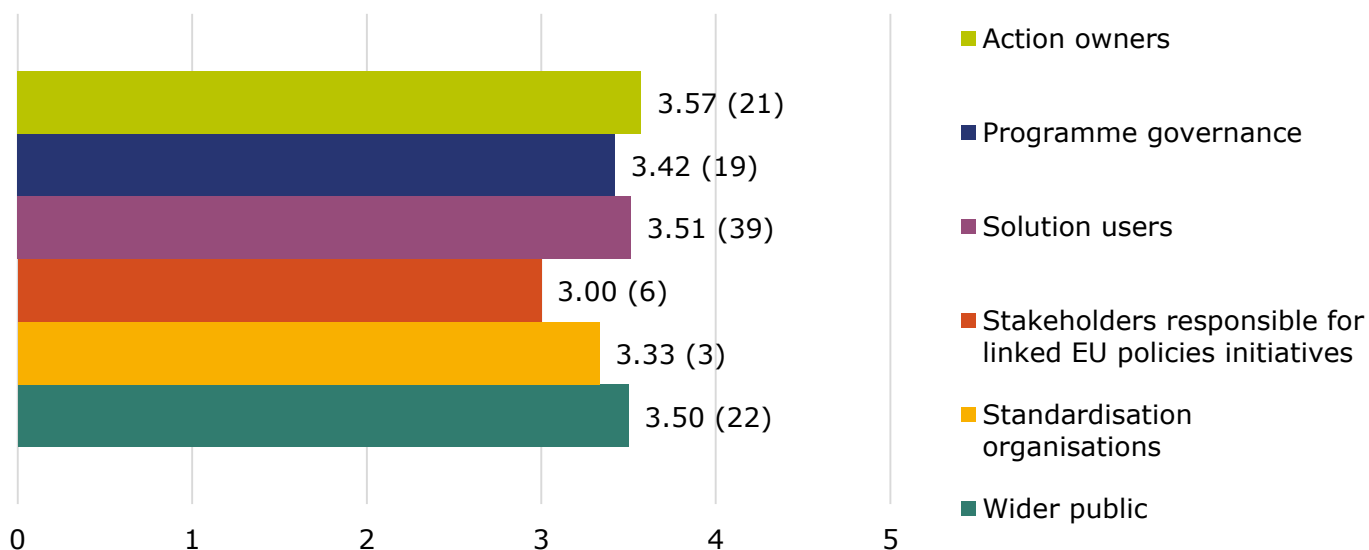
Utility: key findings (2/4)

- As the programme is still ongoing, **the way solutions meet user needs may improve** as the implementation of the programme comes closer to the end
 - With more extensive adoption of ISA² solutions across European public administrations, the needs and problems are expected to be better addressed
- Whereas **some of the new needs and problems experienced by consulted stakeholders are addressed** by the programme, some others fall beyond the scope of the programme as it is currently defined.

Utility: key findings (3/4)

- The feedback received from respondents in terms of **user satisfaction** tends to be **positive**

Extent to which ISA2 solutions are meeting users' needs



Utility: key findings (4/4)

- Several measures were identified to increase the utility of the programme:
 - Placing more emphasis on the **sharing of best practices** and **providing support to users**
 - **Improving the quality of existing solutions** by better considering user needs
 - Strengthening the **promotion of ISA² solutions** at national and subnational levels as well as among specific groups of professionals (e.g. standards development organisations)
 - **Involving users** not only in the testing phase of solutions, but also in the design phase and establishing a co-creation process
 - Ensuring the **Member States' commitments** to using ISA² solutions

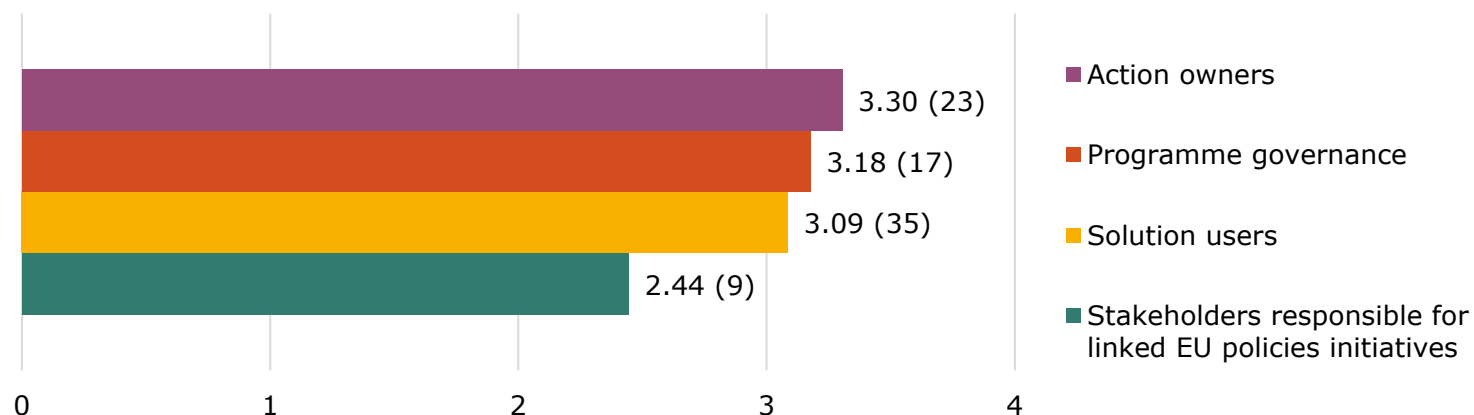
Sustainability: evaluation framework

- Evaluation question
 - EQ10: To what extent is the financial, technical and operational sustainability of the developed solutions – maintained and operated through the ISA² programme – ensured?
- Judgment criteria
 - Extent to which the results achieved by the ISA2 programme are expected to last if funding for the actions covered by the programme would not be available in the future
 - Extent to which ‘cost recovery’ solutions could be introduced

Sustainability: key findings (1/4)

- Consulted stakeholders tend to have a **positive view of the sustainability of results** achieved so far

Likelihood that results achieved so far would last if funding for actions covered by the programme would not be available in the future



Sustainability: key findings (2/4)

- Both **operations and maintenance costs** as well as the **technical and operational support** required for the solutions could have a **negative effect** on the ability of ISA² solutions to deliver their results if the programme were terminated
- Additional obstacles to the sustainability of the programme include:
 - **Lack of development** for existing solutions
 - **Lack of coordination** between national administrations
 - **Limited dissemination and communication** about interoperability of digital public services

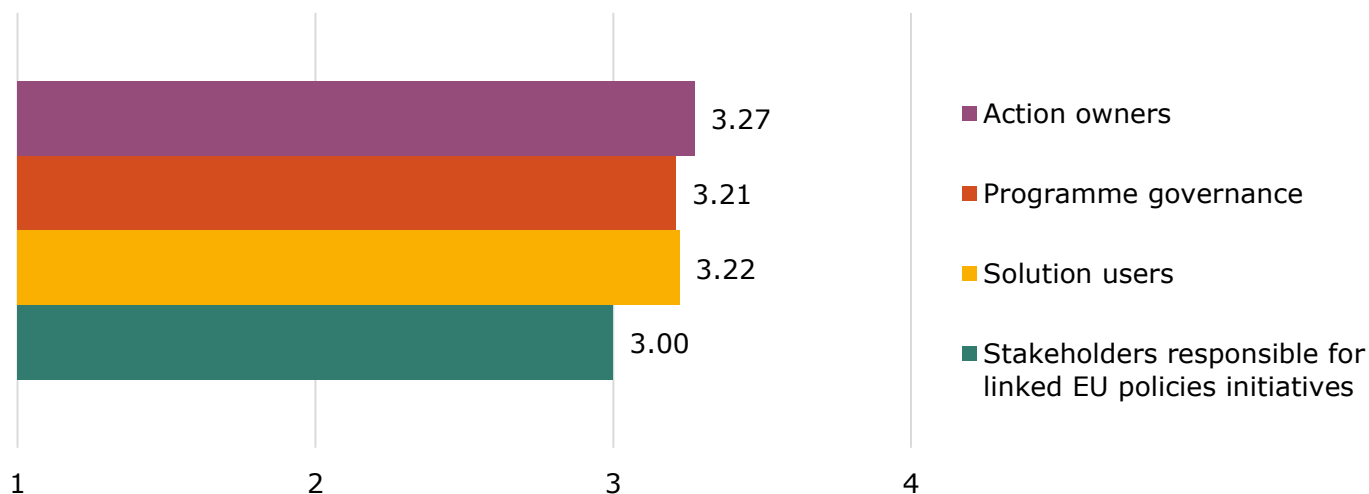
Sustainability: key findings (3/4)

- Users are accustomed to having access to ISA² solutions free of charge
- Changing this system to one based on **pay-for-access** may lead users to **search for other solutions that are free of charge**, except for the more mature solutions
- At any rate, Member States would be put in the position to **follow public procurement rules** should a fee be requested in exchange for access to ISA² solutions
 - There is no guarantee they will be able to pay to use such solutions

Sustainability: key findings (4/4)

- The ISA² programme plays a central role in enhancing the interoperability landscape in the Union

Likelihood that the ISA2 general objective would be jeopardised if the programme was terminated





Thank you for your attention!

Felice Simonelli, PhD
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Back-up slides



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Expertise of respondents

Knowledge of digital public services and interoperability (average score of answers, number of respondents)

