

ISA² – In the heart of European Politics

Carlos Zorrinho¹

1- I would like to thank you for the kind invitation to open this conference. As a member of the Government of Portugal between 2005 and 2011 I had wide experience of working with the predecessor programs of ISA².

2- That's why I received enthusiastically the appointment as rapporteur of the European Parliament for this co-legislative procedure. I knew I would work on a program with a history and a tradition of good performance. The responsibility was thus increased since we attempted to adapt the continuation programme of ISA to the new challenges without losing the acquired knowledge.

3 - I think that the European Parliament, always in good cooperation and coordination with the others institutions, gave a good contribution. Only the practical implementation of the ISA² program will be able to confirm this conviction, but for me it is a very solid conviction. A strong majority was obtained in all the votes in the Parliament (committees and plenary) which is also a sign that the European Parliament's contribution was strong in substance but also in the appropriation of the underlying political idea.

4 - I titled my brief introduction - **ISA² - in the Heart of European Politics** - precisely because I think ISA² focuses on what today is most lacking in building the European project: common platforms, trust, involvement of partners, affirmation of an identity built on respect for diversity and by shared values.

5 - The European Parliament and the Council accomplished an agreement on the ISA² programme – Interoperability Solutions for Public Administrations, businesses and citizens in November 2015. This agreement allowed the programme to come into force on the 1st of January 2016.

6 - Further than the almost 131 million euros to be invested over the next five years, there are many innovations introduced in the legislative proposal, not only by the European Commission, but also by the European Parliament and the Council.

7 - The work made took into consideration that this programme should be, as far as possible, compatible with the Digital Single Market and with the political framework of the Digital Union. The new technological developments and the evolution of the conceptual and juridical frameworks were, therefore, taken into consideration.

8 - The European Parliament's report was led by the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE), and also evolved the Committees on Internal Market (IMCO) and Liberties, Rights and Guaranties (LIBE).

9 - Behind all the work made was an underlying ambition to contribute to the construction of a European digital identity, which allows for the creation of better conditions for the

¹ MEP – ITRE / ENVI Committees – ISA2 Rapporteur

development of efficient public administrations that can support companies and citizens in their daily needs, but also in their competitive entrance in global markets of businesses.

The scope of what is considered to be an interoperable solution was broadened. Now it's not only the "strictu sensu" solutions but also common frameworks over which one can develop multiple solutions.

10 - This is a structural change since it takes into consideration the key role that interoperability solutions in public administrations, citizens and companies will have in the creation of a Digital Single Market and a Digital Union. Besides supporting the creation of reference solutions, the programme may support the development of common semantics applicable to all solutions developed inside and outside the ISA², in this way, strongly increasing its impact and contributing to the development of a strong and competitive digital identity of the EU.

11 - Greater importance was given to the connection between public administrations, citizens and users, with increased emphasis on guaranteeing citizens and companies, particularly SMEs, friendlier and more intuitive access conditions.

12 - Although the ISA² mainly addresses support solutions, technological evolution tends to make the border between support and use more difficult to distinguish. Therefore, the solutions and the services supported by the ISA² should be friendly and intuitive, contributing to the mitigation of digital exclusion and favouring the interoperability of the administrations, not only between them, but also between them and citizens and businesses.

13 - More transparent criteria of eligibility for funding of actions and in prioritisation of proposals were introduced, which value territorial and sectorial coverage, the reutilization of solutions and the simplification of procedures accomplished by their use.

14 - In the framework of the Digital Single Market goals, an emphasis is given to applications with critical mass, either because these involve several administrations, or simply because they integrate solutions, or reuse specifications and already existing solutions. The simplification of procedures is also valued, which facilitates a greater use and ensures the economic and social impact of the developed solutions.

15 - An incentive principle for the creation of user communities was introduced, which, through the promotion of the solutions, can improve and permanently adapt common frameworks and solutions to the needs of the society in general and the economy in particular.

16 - In a technological field and in a programme with a five years' horizon, it is crucial to guarantee a permanent exchange of knowledge between administrations and a continuous monitoring of user needs in order for the developed solutions to suit the problems that they intend to answer. The possibility to create user communities that guarantee the permanent exchange of information with the administrations and with the European Commission is an essential progress that has been consolidated.

17 - A permanent alignment of the data protection and privacy criteria was guaranteed, along with the legal regulations in force.

18 - Some of the key concepts for the implementation of this programme are still in the phase of internal debate within the European institutions. Some examples are: the concept of Internet Neutrality or the regulations on privacy and data protection. The agreement accomplished allows the dynamic alignment of the implementation of the ISA² programme within the existing legal framework and its future updates.

19 - ISA² is a newborn. It was born of a happy encounter between experience and knowledge of the needs of public administrations, businesses and citizens. It is the result of an exemplary institutional cooperation between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council. From now on, it will be what its users will make out of it.

20 - I wish ambition and boldness in ISA² implementation. It was no coincidence that I put the ISA² in the heart of European Politics. Please ... let it stay there. It will be a great sign for our common future.