REFIT PLATFORM (2017.03)

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ACTION

Service in charge	Unit C1 Evaluation, Regulatory Fitness and Performance, Directorate Smart Regulation and Work Programme Secretariat-General
Associated Services	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The REFIT Platform was established as part of the Commission's Better regulation policy. The platform consists of 48 Members from all Member States, including High level experts from national authorities of all Member States and the private sector. They have been appointed to submit opinions to the Commission on suggestions on EU law and its implementation by Member States coming from citizens, businesses, public authorities and other stakeholders with a view to the Commission or Member States concerned responding, indicating the actions intended to be taken on those subjects. The Platform is therefore designed to play an important role in the development of the work programme of the Commission and therefore also the EU agenda and to improve the coherence and efficiency of the EU and Member State regulatory environment.

Since its start several hundred suggestions have come in to the Platform from government authorities, stakeholders and other interested parties. Managing this workload requires a new IT tool to support the process. The current IT infrastructure does not satisfy the needs and ensure the success of the REFIT Platform which is central to EU policy-making, the development of EU and Member State regulation as well as for the policy on Better regulation.

This application concerns a project on developing an IT tool that facilitates smarter cooperation by a large number of Commission officials, Member State government ministries and other experts in managing incoming suggestions and preparing positions on a high number of suggestions within a reasonable timeframe. The IT tool should enable multiple external users to work on the same document, avoid document down- and uploads and serve as a repository for all in-coming suggestions. The proposal meets in particular with ISA Article 7 priorities (b), (c) and (d).

OBJECTIVES

The expected outcomes would have to include:

- Development of a user-friendly, interactive web-based application (IT tool) to serve the REFIT Platform to be used by the REFIT Platform members comprising Member State administrations and stakeholder members, the Secretariat (SG), the Directorate Generals (DGs) in charge of files being handled by the REFIT Platform;

- The application should be able to manage each suggestion coming in, each work-step of developing an opinion including adding up-to-date background information through-out to the adoption of the opinion with a view to:

- Significantly enhance the active contributions of the 48 platform members leading to better and inclusive opinions of the platform. Positive impact on platform members' satisfaction with and readiness to contribute to the process.
- Reduce workload related to the preparation and publication of suggestions in the form of 'Assessment Sheets' (AS) (a burden both on SG and DGs)
- More timely production of AS with more up-to-date information
- Better and more reliable storage and classification of suggestions and ASs allowing for a smarter use of information (once only) already received
- Greater DGs buy-in and a more positive approach towards the platform process

SCOPE

To replace the current use of CircaBC, emails, Collaborative Workspace and the Europa website, the scope of the project is to develop an IT tool facilitating the participation of all 48 REFIT Platform members in developing opinions on a broad array of subject matters based on hundreds of suggestions.

The IT tool needs are:

- Two separate 'channels' with the same functionalities, one for all users, one for Commission internal.
- Automatic generation of an Assessment Sheet when a suggestion is introduced via the website 'Lighten the load…' and notification to relevant Commission services requesting contributions.
- When the Assessment Sheet is available on the 'external channel' it should allow the 48 members to indicate their interest in leading the work; entitlements to fill-in their contribution to the opinion in predetermined boxes and enable a pre-set sequence of input; initiation of formal 'written adoption' where relevant; availability of each opinion-document with all changes visible and clean version.
- The IT tool should support a single, shared document on which several members can work simultaneously (no down- and upload of documents)
- Authorised Members (or their assistant) entitled to edit documents in the IT tool but delegation only based on prior approval by the Secretariat.

The Better Regulation Portal and the 'Lighten the load – Have your say' are not within the scope of this project, but appropriate alignment with these is required.

ACTION PRIORITY

The proposal for a REFIT Platform IT tool is important for the success of the REFIT Platform, which is one of the flagship actions in the May 2015 Better regulation agenda[1] of the European Commission and one of the 10 Juncker priorities. The action will therefore make an important contribution to EU and Member State cooperation and responses to suggestions from citizens, businesses and local and national authorities with on-the-ground experience with application of the EU law.

The IT tool will significantly help the geographical reach of the Platform so as to ensure equal and inter-active engagement of all Member States and of European public administrations involved, stakeholder members

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[1] See: http://ec.europa.eu/info/files/better-regulation-better-results-eu-agenda-0_en

based in various parts of Europe and between the different Commission Directorates General and Secretariat-General because all sectors / EU policies are involved.

The proposal will facilitate cooperation between the Commission, Member States and stakeholders by supporting cross-border and cross-sector exchanges of information that will enable more efficient, secure and collaborative public services.

This interoperability solution will facilitate successful implementation of policies and offers great potential to overcome cross-border electronic barriers, further securing the emergence of new, or the consolidation of developing, higher quality and more coherent public services at Union level.

Contribution to the interoperability landscape

The contribution of the action to the interoperability landscape, measured by the importance and necessity of the action to complete the interoperability landscape across the Union

Question	Answer
Does the proposal directly contribute to implementing the European Interoperability Strategy, the European Interoperability Framework, or other EU policies with interoperability requirements, or needed cross-border or cross-sector interoperability initiatives? If yes, please indicate the EU initiative / policy and the nature of contribution.	Yes, It helps to elaborate the better regulation agenda of the European Commission and to efficiently and effectively improve electronic cross-border and sector interaction between Commission and the members of the REFIT platform (Member States and stakeholders) and between the members of the Platform supporting the implementation of Union policies and activities. More efficient use of reported data is a key area of work for the REFIT Platform.
Does the proposal fulfil an interoperability need for which no other alternative solution is available?	Other solutions (CIRCA BC and a collaborative workspace) are available but they are not user-friendly for the REFIT platform members. The CIRCA BC is used to distribute documents to the REFIT platform members. There is no online collaboration between platform members through CIRCA BC as it does not allow for a simultaneous collaboration on word documents. The newsgroup option is not used, as it is considered not to be particularly user friendly.

Cross-sector

The scope of the action, measured by its horizontal impact, once completed, across the sectors concerned

Question	Answer
*Will the proposal, **once completed** be useful, from the interoperability point of view, and utilised in two (2) or more EU policy areas? If yes, which are those?*	The REFIT Platform covers all EU policy areas where suggestions from citizens, businesses, stakeholders and public authorities are made. Once completed the IT tool will vastly increase the speed with which the Platform works and thus help the Platform to cope with the high and diverse work load covering the whole EU regulatory acquis across all policy areas.
*For proposals or their parts **already in operational phase**: have they been utilised in two (2) or more EU policy areas? Which are they?*	N/A

Cross-border

The geographical reach of the action, measured by the number of Member States and of European public administrations involved.

Question	Answer
*Will the proposal, **once completed** be useful, from the interoperability point of view, and used by public administrations of three (3) or more EU Members States?*	Yes. The REFIT Platform consists of two Commission expert groups. A Government group in which all member states are represented. And a Stakeholder group with representatives of businesses, social partners, civil society organisations in various member states, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions
*For proposals or their parts **already in operational phase**: have they been utilised by public administrations of three (3) or more EU Members States?*	N/A

Urgency

The urgency of the action, measured by its potential impact, taking into account the lack of other funding sources

Question	Answer
Is your action urgent? Is its implementation foreseen in an EU policy as priority, or in EU legislation?	Better regulation is one of the 10 Commission Juncker priorities. The REFIT Platform is one of the key new developments in the Commission May 2015 Better regulation package. The Platform started its work in January 2016 offering a dialogue between all relevant actors (EC, MS and stakeholders). It is urgent to ensure the efficient functioning of the Platform within the mandate of this Commission.
Does the ISA^2 scope and financial capacity better fit for the implementation of the proposal as opposed to other identified and currently available sources?	Yes, the ISA scope and conditions fits well with the objective and scope of the REFIT Platform. Other resources are not available.

Reusability of action outputs

The proposed IT tool is tailored to the needs of the REFIT Platform. Nevertheless, there may be possibilities to reuse / apply certain or even major outputs to other Commission expert groups – to be explored during the Planning phase of the project.

Level of reuse by the proposal

The re-use by the action of existing common frameworks and elements of interoperability solutions.

Question	Answer
Does the proposal intend to make use of any ISA^2, ISA or other relevant interoperability solution(s)? Which ones?	Yes. REFIT intents to make use of the e-TrustEx platform for the secure exchange of documents amongst Member States' representatives and the Commission. Additionally, REFIT will make use of the MT@EC translation service for working documents.
For proposals or their parts already in operational phase: has the action reused existing interoperability solutions? If yes, which ones?	N/A

Interlinked

The link of the action with Union initiatives to be measured by the collaboration and contribution level of the action to Union initiatives such as the DSM.

Question	Answer
Does the proposal directly contribute to at least one of the Union's high political priorities such as the DSM? If yes, which ones? What is the level of contribution?	Better Regulation is priority 10 of the Juncker Commission. The work of the Platform potentially contributes to all Union priorities dependent on the issues sent in to and taken up by the Platform.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Collaborative Workspace, ordinary emails and CIRCABC are used to prepare documents internally in the commission and to share documents with the Platform members. Combing these tools is inefficient, been criticized by the external members and do not meet all the needs. The main problems identified include:

- Commission services are reluctant to use Collaborative workspace when preparing the Assessment Sheets. It has no workflow management (including validation), no tracking of progress and no effective storage and classification of documents,

- The CIRCABC newsgroup is not user-friendly; does not allow for a simultaneous collaboration on documents and its user-interface is archaic resulting in little use and extra work when email distribution is required.

EXPECTED BENEFICIARIES AND ANTICIPATED BENEFITS

The IT tool will be tailor-made to the needs of an effectively managed REFIT Platform. Those involved with the REFIT Platform work will be the immediate beneficiaries of an IT tool that will reduce the current administration and document handling.

In a wider sense a more productive and inclusive REFIT Platform process will enhance the chances of success for the 'Better regulation' agenda which is seen as critical to revitalise European cooperation based on policies and laws that are responsive to the citizens and businesses directly affected.

Beneficiaries	Anticipated benefits
REFIT Platform members	Greater online interaction of platform members leading to better cooperation and more inclusive opinions of the platform, increased commitment to the work of the Platform and enhanced productivity.

	Positive impact on platform members' satisfaction with the process.
Platform members and EC (SG and DG´s)	Better storage and classification of suggestions and Assessment Sheets allowing for a smarter use of information already received, time and resources saved.
EC (SG and DGs)	Reduced workload related to the preparation and publication of Assessment Sheets Significant reduction in potential for mistakes or incoherent documents
EC (SG and DGs)	More transparency throughout the process leading to greater DGs buy-in and a more positive approach towards the platform process

ORGANISATIONAL APPROACH

Expected stakeholders and their representatives

Stakeholders	Representatives
European Commission	CAB Timmermans, the Secretariat General, concerned DG´s
Refit Platform	Stakeholder members and Member State authorities

Identified user groups

Everyone involved with the REFIT Platform either in general or in specific cases. These are typically the experts in European Commission services; the cabinet of the FVP, the Secretariat General in its capacity as Secretariat. Externally the users will be the 48 members of the REFIT Platform i.e. the stakeholder group members and Member State authorities.
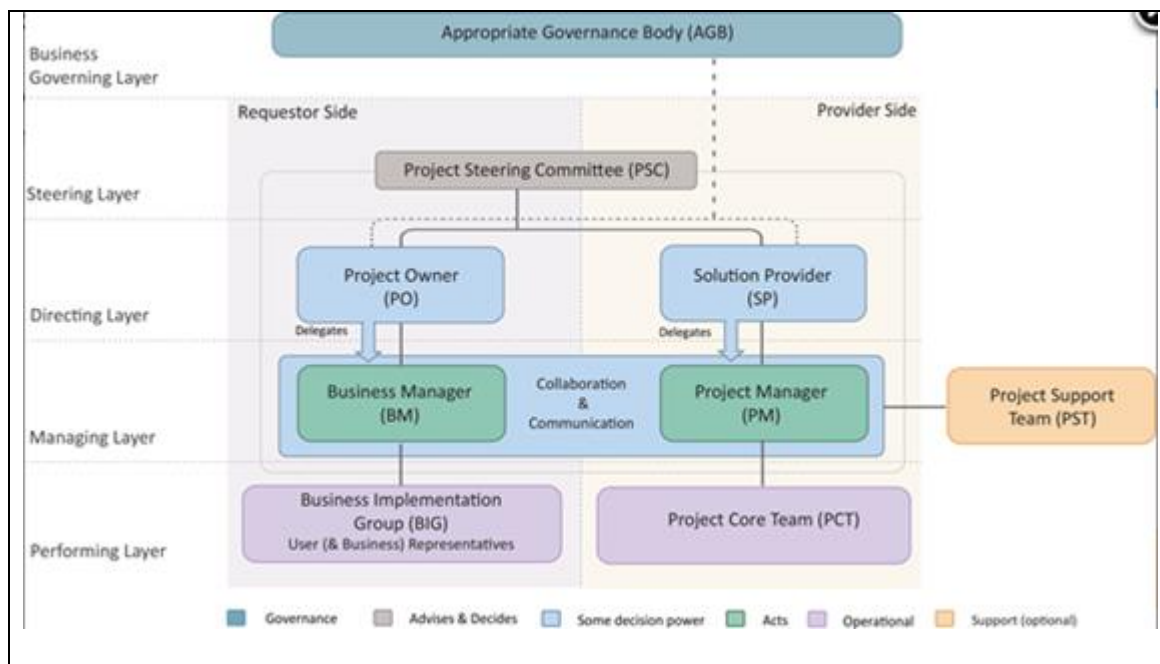
Communication plan

The main communication actions are:

- Written communication, both to internal and external parties involved with the REFIT Platform and its activities (e-mail).
- 'Hands-on' awareness sessions – One with all the members of the REFIT Platform and one with the DGs 'Better regulation' representatives – to present the project.
- Dissemination material for all relevant stakeholders:
  - DGs: a quick-start guide.
  - MSs: a quick start guide.
- Meetings:
  - With external stakeholders, the REFIT Platform meets every 2 - 3 months and will continuously be provided with status and given the opportunity to provide feedback.
  - With internal stakeholders, twice a year, as part of the regular DGs 'Better regulation correspondents meeting, to provide status and receive feedback.
- First-line support: The Project Support Team will help users through the change and collecting feedback.

Event	Representatives	Frequency of meetings / absolute dates of meetings
REFIT Platform group meetings	All Member States and all Stakeholder group members	Meetings every 2 -3 months
Better regulation correspondents meetings	Representatives from all DGs	Once or twice a year
Directors network	Representatives from all DGs	Once or twice a year
Project owner/System supplier	SG.C.1/SG.R.3	Quarterly reporting using PM² methodology

Governance approach

This project will follow the standard PM2 project governance structure.

Project Owner: Mr. STOODLEY, Jonathon (SG.C1)

Solution Provider: Mr. GRITSCH, Martin (SG.R3)

Project Manager: Mr. SAGSTETTER, Norbert (SG.C1)

Business Manager: Ms. GEROLYMATOU Maria

Project Support Team (PST): To be appointed.

Project Core Team (PCT): To be appointed.

Business Implementation Group (BIG): 1 representative per interested DG and 3 representatives from the REFIT Platform Government group and 3 from the Stakeholder group. To be appointed at a later stage.

The governance approach has established regular coordination meetings between SG.C.1 (project owner) and SG.R.3 (solution provider). In addition, this action will respect the general ISA Governance under the supervision of the ISA Coordination Group inside the cluster "Trusted Information Exchange".

A Steering Committee will monitor completion of the project phases; set project requirements, objectives and outcomes, validate project deliverables, test activities and disseminate information about the project to the Commission services. It will be composed of members from Units C.1, R.2 and R.3 of the Secretariat General and representatives of those services who have been most involved with REFIT Platform suggestions (DG AGRI, DG GROW, DG ENV, DG FISMA, DG SANTE and DG TAXUD).

TECHNICAL APPROACH AND CURRENT STATUS

The Platform is composed of two groups, one for Member State experts ("Government group") and one for representatives of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, business, social partners and civil society organisations having direct experience in the application of Union legislation ("Stakeholder group").

The task of the Platform is to invite and collect suggestions on regulatory and administrative burden reduction, to assess the merits of these suggestions, to forward for comment those suggestions considered to merit most attention to the Commission services or to the Member State concerned and to respond to each suggestion and publish the response. This means that altogether 48 experts are involved and are supposed to actively contribute to preparation of the opinions to be adopted. Unlike other Commission expert groups, the Commission (SG.C1) acts as Secretariat, but the active opinion formulation is the responsibility of the members.

Currently a Collaborative Workspace and CIRCABC are used to prepare and share documents with the Platform members. The suggested IT tool should be developed separate from but compatible with the development of the Better Regulation portal (BRP). The primary objective of the IT tool is to manage the preparation and publication of ASs as part of the development of the new "lighten the load" phase.

The technical implementation of the IT tool has the following requirements:
- Two separate 'channels' with the same functionalities, but one dedicated strictly to Commission-internal document preparations and another one open to all 48 members and the Commission.
- The 'internal channel' should enable automatic generation of an Assessment Sheet when a suggestion is introduced via the website 'Lighten the load…' with the functionality that SG.C1 can quality control before notifying the relevant services that a new Assessment Sheet needs input. The approved Assessment Sheet should automatically be available in the 'external channel' with notification to the 48 Members.
- The 'external channel' should allow Members to indicate their interest in leading the work so it is visible who is in charge of a file.
- Each of the two Platform groups should have unique entitlements to fill-in their contribution to the opinion in a dedicated box in the document. The box should be visible and open for editing to all members of the specific group, with clear indication of who has made what changes. This box should only be visible to the

other group once the lead member has verified that the document is ready to be shared. Once both groups have verified that their box have been filled-in (including the option of not having any opinion) both groups should have access to and editing-rights to draft a joint summary opinion.

- The leaders from both groups are entitled to sign-off the joint summary opinion indicating that the opinion is ready for 'written adoption' whereby it automatically notifies all members of the time they have to react or the conclusion that the draft opinion will need to be discussed at a meeting.
- The IT tool should automatically make available both a version with all the individual contributions / comments and a clean version, which is the basis for adoption.
- In the 'external channel' only SG.C1 should have editing rights in the entire document while other Commission services should have continuous access to edit their own contribution only.
- The IT tool should support a single, shared document on which several members can work simultaneously (and avoid down- and upload of documents)
- Members must be able to download documents for internal coordination. However, only authorised Members (or their assistant) must be entitled to edit documents in the IT tool and delegation of that right should not be possible without prior approval by SG.C1.

Due to the scope and complexity, the project will be divided in two versions where learnings from version 1 will be used to calibrate version 2.

COSTS AND MILESTONES
Breakdown of anticipated costs and related milestones

Phase: Inception Execution Operational	Description of milestones reached or to be reached	Anticipated Allocations (KEUR)	Budget line ISA/ others (specify)	Start date (QX/YYYY)	End date (QX/YYYY)
Planning	Requirements gathering, assuring alignment with scope of the Better Regulation Portal and existing 'Lighten the load – Have your say'.	45	ISA[2]	Q2/2017	Q3/2017
Planning	Detailed format (technical use cases) of the in-scope identified business services and their exposure through web services. Validation of version 1 proposal by all actors.	90	ISA[2]	Q2/2017	Q3/2017
Executing	System architecture and system core implementation. Development of 'in/out' web services and their	193	ISA[2]	Q3/2017	Q4/2017

	correspondent backend business services, version 1.				
Executing	Testing and training; updated technical documentation for Platform members to allow them to integrate their systems with the new services, version 1.	45	ISA^2	Q4/2017	Q4/2017
Closing	Roll-out Version 1	45	ISA^2	Q4/2017	Q4/2017
Monitor & Control	Monitor and report on on-going project activities and project performance, planning and implementing corrective actions in case of need.	45	ISA^2	Q2/2017	Q4/2017
Executing	System architecture and system core implementation. Development of 'in/out' web services and their correspondent backend business services, version 2.	200	ISA2	Q1/2018	Q2/2018
Executing	Testing and training; updated technical documentation for Member States to allow them to integrate their systems with the new services, version 2.	45	ISA2	Q1/2018	Q2/2018
Closing	Roll-out version 2	45	ISA2	Q2/2018	Q2/2018
Monitor & Control	Monitor and report on on-going project activities and project performance, planning and implementing corrective actions in case of need.	45	ISA2	Q1/2018	Q2/2018
	Total	797	ISA^2		

Breakdown of ISA funding per budget year

Budget Year	Phase	Anticipated allocations (in KEUR)	Executed budget (in KEUR)
2017	Planning, executing, closing, monitoring and control, version 1	462	
2018	Planning, executing, closing, monitoring and control, version 2	335	

Breakdown of ISA funding per budget year