

# Once-Only & Business Registers

*What is the relation between the TOOP project, the 'once-only' principle and business registers?*

Today's economy is a fast-paced and rapidly changing environment, in which businesses strive to operate effectively. Expansion of activity across borders is an important fact of life for European entrepreneurs, and the developments of the Digital Single Market facilitate their efforts. More and more companies want to do business on a pan-European scale, increasing the demand for reliable and trustworthy information, available for public administrations and for businesses themselves. Business registers play an important role in this landscape. They contain official data, and their history of collaboration allows for fast and secure realization of interoperable digital services not only on a national level, but also on a pan-European scale.

European law widely supports the use and development of services based on the information provided by business registers. Directive 2012/17/EU sets out provisions for the mandatory interconnection of the central, commercial and companies registers (business registers) as a next step required to create a more business-friendly legal environment. This system is known as Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS) and it became a reality on 8 June 2017. Since then this approach has been developing further, with more and more services, systems and architectures based on business registers and BRIS, allowing for efficient data exchange across borders within the EU.

Another important EU law that concerns business registers and the 'once-only' principle is the Single Digital Gateway Regulation (SDGR). It establishes an access point for citizens and companies, who want to live or do business in other European country. The gateway itself will feature information, procedures and assistance services for all EU & EEA<sup>1</sup> citizens. The procedures available through the Single Digital Gateway need to be accessible to foreign and national users in a similar way. The provision of services available through the gateway will result from, among others, interconnected business registers. The regulation specifies 21 key procedures – provided fully online – that need to be available across borders (e.g. starting business activity abroad, submitting tax declaration<sup>2</sup>). The Single Digital Gateway Regulation requires not only, that business registers are connected in order for those procedures to work, but it also requires the implementation of the 'once-only' principle. The principle will enable re-using the information for key digital procedures. Together with safely connected business registers, it will make the Single Digital Gateway a reality in the European Union.

From the perspective of the TOOP project, services based on BRIS and Single Digital Gateway are a strong incentive for the implementation of the 'once-only' principle. TOOP reinforces

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<sup>1</sup> European Economic Area

<sup>2</sup> Regulation EU 2018/1724 establishing a single digital Gateway to provide access to information, to procedures, and to assistance and problem solving services and amending Regulation EU No 1024/2012, Annex II: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018R1724&from=EN>



and extends the provision of the BRIS Directive and greatly contributes to the realisation of the Single Digital Gateway Regulation. TOOP has implemented a pilot infrastructure which is based on the 'once-only' approach required by the SDGR and concerns directly business registers. It is called Business Register Data Provision and enables business registers to provide information to other public agencies that request it. This is currently based on direct cross-border communication from business registers to public administrations; in collaboration with the BRIS network, alternative solutions and cases are being studied. Moreover, TOOP explores the possibility to integrate the European Single Procurement Document (ESPD) within its e-Procurement testing activity. It requires enabling the Data Consumer approach, when talking about the communication between business registers. However, this functionality needs to be further researched in three contexts: interoperability, legislation and standardisation.

TOOP use cases highlight the importance of business registers in the architecture of modern and competent e-services. They facilitate the connectivity between different countries' databases and allow for swift realization of digital processes.

Moreover, they can potentially simplify the administration of cross-border branching procedures and promote a more accurate exchange of information and reporting. This results in providing a significant stimulus to the development of the EU single market. These topics will be further presented and explored at the "Once-Only" and Business Registers workshop, that will take place in Tallinn (Estonia) on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019. If you are interested in business registers or are a member of business registers community, take part in this event! More information:

<http://toop.eu/workshop>