

1. From TESTA to EU-IXP

Directorate-General for Digital Services (DIGIT) put together a new strategy for the successor of the TESTA (Trans-European Services for Telematics between administrations) network¹. The new approach seeks to avoid the current limitations of TESTA, while at the same time aligning the service offering with the current telecommunication market standards and trends. This also implies changes in the procurement approach.

To mark the fundamental change in orientation, the name of the new network will be changed from TESTA to **EU-IXP (EU Interconnectivity and eXchange Platform)**. The new name emphasises the purpose of the new services. The EU-IXP should normally be available during 2026, while migration of all TESTA customers to EU-IXP are foreseen to be fully completed by end of 2027 at the latest.

The new strategy also has as purpose to align the services with the recommendation of the recent EC white paper on the future of Europe's digital infrastructure.²

The goal is to transform TESTA into a set of network services delivered and operated in a similar approach with the current DIGIT owned network services, i.e., composed of service elements provided by different providers, under the full control and orchestration from DIGIT. This new approach builds on DIGIT's experience with designing and operating other corporate networks and telecommunication services under its responsibility. As such, the new strategy differs significantly from the historic approach on TESTA in which all services and the entire lifecycle were outsourced to one single provider through one single managed services contract. The new strategy will change DIGIT's role from a contract broker in the frame of which it is managing the execution of a contract, to a concrete network services integrator and orchestrator, sole responsible and owner of the services provided in the frame of EU-IXP service catalogue.

Indeed, the contracting authority will adopt an IT service management model, with a flexible and evolutive service catalogue, for which the service lifecycle will rest on technical infrastructures and solutions that are aligned with trends in the telecommunications market. In addition, DIGIT will take full responsibility for all the service management phases (strategy, design, evolution, and operations), supported by multiple contracts and service providers, aiming the many service elements involved in the provisioning and delivery of the EU-IXP services.

The customers of the EU-IXP will be EU Institutions, Bodies and Agencies, EU Member States and EU accessing countries administrations, EFTA Members administrations, and third parties that would need to interconnect with them.

¹ Currently, the TESTA network is provided under TESTA-ng. TESTA-ng is a project developed in the form of a network service on the basis of article 3 of Decision 922/2009/EC, in order to support the development of projects of common interest and to provide a secure and reliable communication platform for exchange of data between the public administrations.

TESTA-ng is a secure and highly available infrastructure which supports sensitive pan-European information exchanges between public authorities requiring guaranteed service levels for network availability, confidentiality, and integrity.

² White Paper - "How to master Europe's digital infrastructure needs?"

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/white-paper-how-master-europes-digital-infrastructure-needs>

Main places of delivery of the EU-IXP services will be the 27 EU Member States, the 4 EFTA Member States, the EU accessing countries and the UK. Services may need to be delivered also to other places where third parties that would need to be interconnected with EU administrations are situated.

Main business use cases are interconnection of public administrations networks to allow usage of large trans-European information systems, as well as deployment of IT services across and outside EU, in all offices, buildings and sites where EU-IXP customers may request services.

2. EU-IXP architecture

The service architecture for EU-IXP will be built around three layers:

- A service underlay, composed of inter-connected classical physical network connectivity services, ensuring network communications between all sites;
- A service overlay, implemented over the underlay (i.e., a virtual layer running over the physical layer). This overlay will offer virtual circuits, and related segregation, adapted to the needs of the different customers;
- A set of cybersecurity services, covering both the underlay and overlay services.

UNDERLAY

- Field services (on-site interventions)
- Local connectivity (local loop)
- Regional connectivity (to EU-IXP points of presence)
- EU-IXP backbone

OVERLAY

- Virtual circuits (SDN network management)
- Network security services (segregation & access control)
- Encryption of data in transit
- 'Bring-Your-Own-Service' capabilities

CYBERSECURITY

- Security assurance, threat analysis and vulnerability management
- Cybersecurity monitoring, incident handling and response (SOC)

3. Procurement approach

From a procurement perspective, for each of the above-mentioned service layers, different contracts and procurement mechanisms will be needed to source the corresponding infrastructure and services. Several of these contracts already exist or will be available soon, which will accelerate the execution of the new strategy. Nonetheless, there will be some new procurement procedures, although smaller in scope and value than the previous TESTA calls for tenders.

In order to subscribe and/or implement the service elements and subsequent technologies that are needed to deploy and operate the future EU-IXP, other than the current framework contracts already available and possibly launching other calls for tenders, DIGIT intends to run tenders as separate

procurement procedures or competitions in the existing and future Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS) from DIGIT on Negometrix/Mercell such as:

- Telecommunication Services Dynamic Purchasing System (TELCO DPS - DIGIT/2022/DPS/0019)

<https://s2c.mercell.com/today/32490>

- The future replacement of the DPS 2 for Professional Services related to Cloud Services (CLOUD II DPS 2 – DIGIT/A3/PR/2018/035)³

<https://platform.negometrix.com/PublishedTenders.aspx?tenderId=150516>

- Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for IT Supplies (DPS ITS - DIGIT/2023/DPS/0002)

<https://s2c.mercell.com/today/31298>

- Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for software (DPS SIDE III - DIGIT/2023/DPS/0001)

<https://s2c.mercell.com/today/36251>

The DPS is a two-stage electronic procurement process under EU's Financial Regulation⁴, in which, in a first stage, suppliers are pre-qualified and admitted to a pool of participants, and in a second stage, contracts are awarded through competitive tenders from this pool. The DPS simplifies procurement, enhances competition, and offers quick access to new suppliers.

Additional details on the procurement approach

In particular, in line with the EU-IXP strategy and beyond the currently available contracts already available for DIGIT, the TELCO DPS - DIGIT/2022/DPS/0019 and the DPS which will be launched to replace the CLOUD II DPS 2 – DIGIT/A3/PR/2018/035⁵ are considered to launch future procurement procedures aiming at acquiring specific elements of EU-IXP, such as (but not limited to):

- Local connectivity for customers sites,
- Backbone connectivity towards point of presence of EU-IXP across Europe,
- SDN management and operation services,
- Field services on customers sites,
- Integration services for 'Bring-Your-Own-Service' approach,
- Managed services around integration/orchestration/evolution of IT services
- etc.

³ Please see the [Prior information notice](#) for the future Professional Services Dynamic Purchasing System

⁴ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012

The exact timing and scope of those specific procurement procedures will be announced at a later stage through appropriate channels of communication. However, it is important to keep in mind that, where competitions in existing and future DPS are launched, ONLY registered companies to those DPSs will receive the notification(s) and will have the right to bid for those specific procurement procedures.

DISCLAIMER

All information provided by the contracting authority during this market consultation is purely indicative and is intended for preliminary informational purposes only. The information shared does not constitute a commitment, a promise, or a legal obligation on the part of the contracting authority to proceed in any specific manner. All details, including but not limited to scopes, estimates, and procedures, are subject to change at the discretion of the contracting authority without prior notice. No right, claim, or reliance can be derived or asserted based on the information shared in this consultation. Economic operators should not construe any information provided during this consultation as grounds for any claim or expectation of entering into a contractual relationship with the contracting authority.