

# Preface

Interoperability is a very interesting notion. One might be under the impression that its scope is limited to the digital endeavour. But, in fact, there is a lot more to it than we tend to think.

Interoperability is at the heart of *Europe 2020*, the EU strategy for growth, innovation and jobs that will forge the Europe we want in the next decade. The idea behind this is that we need to make important steps forward, not only in individual areas, but in all parts of our daily lives: education, innovation, health, environmental protection, in addressing social challenges and in using information and communication technologies (ict) to achieve *smart growth*. None of these goals can be achieved in isolation. All of them are interdependent, all of them contribute to our common desire to maintain and improve our quality of life.

This applies to everyone involved in current affairs, to all of us. No country, no organisation, no public or private body has the luxury to ignore the plethora of data and opportunities that are available out there, but are not necessarily accessible to those who can make good use of them. Whether we like it or not, we cannot make it on our own, especially in the current economic climate.

The European Commission strongly believes in this holistic approach. It is therefore no accident that interoperability and standards are among the key action areas of the *Digital Agenda for Europe*, our comprehensive strategy to help Europe plan its long-term digital success. We believe that, to allow people to create, to combine and to innovate, we need ict products and services to be open and interoperable. Indeed, what could be a better example of technical interoperability than the Internet, whose open architecture has enabled the current wide dissemination of interoperable devices and applications across the globe? But we need to step up our efforts to improve interoperability between devices, applications, data repositories, services and networks.

The *Digital Agenda* is trying to do just that by means of various specific actions. For example, improving ict standard setting is critical to catch up with fast-moving technology markets. That is why the Commission has proposed a new standardisation policy for the EU. We have issued guidelines on the licensing of intellectual property rights in standard-setting contexts to enhance efficiency and competition. And we are promoting interoperability between public administrations through better coordination.

I strongly believe we can get there. We have to. And to do it, we need to work on this together. This volume of essays brought together by Forum Standaardisatie and ECP-EPN is a valuable contribution to raising awareness of the necessity to promote interoperability in Europe today. I sincerely hope this dialogue and related initiatives will continue to provide input for our effort to build the Europe we want, for ourselves and for future generations.

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