**2024-06-26**

Intergovernmental Committee e-Government (ICEG) proposal:

Data standard for Person

Dear colleague,

**Management Summary**

In collaboration with the National Register, the Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) is leading a crucial initiative to refactor its person data services. As the primary sources of person data in Belgium, these two institutions have traditionally provided data through uniform service protocols. The new approach aims to harmonize interfaces around person data across web APIs.

With this note, prepared by members of the Intergovernmental Committee e-Government (ICEG), we propose a pathway to establish a comprehensive data standard for natural persons. ICEG provides funding for this initiative, which has already been financed by the federal government, the regions, and the communities, ensuring support at all administrative levels.

The goal is to develop a formalized person data model that can serve as a common foundation across these services and other services to be created by other service integrators. By standardizing the interface of person data, both current and historical, ICEG ensures interoperability across various government platforms, facilitating improved service delivery and decision-making.

It is essential for all ICEG partners that the National Register and the Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) commit to defining and implementing this data standard in the future.

All involved partners firmly believe this will contribute to achieving the goals of the Interoperable Europe Act, which aims to enhance cross-border digital cooperation within the European Union by establishing common standards and frameworks that facilitate seamless data sharing and interoperability between public administrations.

Kind regards,

François Du Mortier, chairman ICEG

# objectives INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE E-Government (ICEG)

The Interfederal Working Group on Data Standards is part of the Intergovernmental Committee e-Government (ICEG). ICEG is a collaborative agreement between the federal government, the regions, and the communities to harmonize and coordinate efforts for an integrated e-government. This collaborative agreement was ratified in 2013[[1]](#footnote-2).

This working group, part of the ICEG collaboration, primarily aims to develop data standards. It was established in 2019. Since then, the working group has successfully agreed on a method for joint development of data standards, the development of thematic data standards, and the unique identification of information within and between various administrations. These standards include standards for public service delivery, public transport schedules, and fire hydrants (not exhaustive).

Furthermore, the working group has focused its efforts on increasing knowledge about data standards among analysts at the federal, regional, and community levels and their ICT service providers. Through these efforts, the involved partners contribute to achieving the goals of the Interoperable Europe Act, which aims to improve interoperability between public administrations across the European Union.

# cause and context

In collaboration with the National Register, the Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) is leading a crucial initiative to refactor its person data services . As the primary sources of person data in Belgium, these two institutions have traditionally provided data through SOAP service protocols. The new approach aims to transition to REST web service protocols.

Web service protocols offer a streamlined method for accessing and managing resources, such as person data, through specific endpoints (e.g., retrieving a person’s citizenship details). This transition requires a deep and stable understanding of the person data domain to ensure effective and reliable services.

Several EU member states, including The Netherlands, already use these advanced protocols for their person data registries, often accompanied by comprehensive documentation (according to OpenAPI specifications). These specifications are user-friendly for developers, facilitating easier integration and utilization of the services.

The ICEG Person project is central to this initiative, focusing on the semantic formalization of person data. Building on the Interoperable Europe’s ISA core person vocabulary[[2]](#footnote-3) and the Open Standards for Linked Organisations (OSLO) persoon[[3]](#footnote-4) vocabulary from 2019, the project aims to adapt and enhance the model to accommodate evolving data needs and refine the legal interpretations of specific data points, such as residency status.

A key aspect of the ICEG Person project is its inclusive approach, involving all relevant federal, regional, data provider, and data consumer stakeholders. Broad support is essential for successfully adopting and implementing the new standard.

When successful, the ICEG Person project will lead to the development of mappings and transformations aligned with the new data model. While physical data migrations may not be necessary, the model's primary use will be to facilitate interoperability between authentic data sources and their data consumers. A second benefit of interoperable services lies at the level of the entire ecosystem, where point-to-point adapters are no longer needed, and all connections are interoperable. This reduces integration costs and avoids the need for specific connectors that can introduce data errors. The project will provide data examples in JSON to ensure practical implementation and stakeholder engagement. These examples will demonstrate the model's operation and illustrate the data exchange process using this model.

This initiative represents a significant step towards harmonizing Belgium’s person data services, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring compatibility with contemporary technological standards.

The goal is to develop a formalized person data model that can serve as a common foundation across these services and other services to be created by other service integrators. By standardizing the interface of person data, both current and historical, the ICEG Person project ensures interoperability across various government platforms, facilitating improved service delivery and decision-making.

All involved partners firmly believe this will contribute to achieving the goals of the Interoperable Europe Act, which aims to improve interoperability between public administrations across the European Union.

# proposal for decision

The National Register and the Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security (CBSS) commit to defining and implementing this data standard in the future.

# detailed roadmap

* The [Belgian Crossroads Bank for Social Security](https://www.ksz-bcss.fgov.be) (CBSS) is spearheading an initiative to refactor its person services. CBSS is – together with the [National Register](https://dofi.ibz.be/en/national-register) – the authentic source of person data in the Belgian jurisdiction. Historically, data has been exposed under the form of [SOAP](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SOAP) services. The redesign aims to expose data under the form of [REST](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/REST) JSON APIs.
* REST JSON APIs identify resources which are accessed and managed under certain endpoints (e.g.: hitting <https://api.bcss.be/person/123e4567/citizenship> with a HTTP GET request would return a list of citizenships of that person). A precondition to give form to such an API is a strong and stable understanding of the underlying domain, in this case person data.
* Some EU member states already offer a base registry of person data as a REST JSON API. See, for example, [The Netherlands](https://github.com/BRP-API/Haal-Centraal-BRP-bevragen). Such API often goes hand in hand with a [description](https://brp-api.github.io/Haal-Centraal-BRP-bevragen/v2/redoc) in line with the OpenAPI specification. This format is well-known to developers and allows them to integrate with the service with minimal effort.
* The ICEG Person project aims to contribute to the semantic formalization of the person domain. The formalization will be designed to address present use cases, while offering sufficient flexibility for future extensions. A starting point of this effort is the [OSLO Persoon](https://data.vlaanderen.be/doc/applicatieprofiel/persoon-basis/) data model published in 2019. Starting from this work, we will have a.o. to adapt the model to support evolution of the recorded data over time and sharpen the legal perspective on certain data points (e.g. residency is one of multiple statuses of a legal subject under public law).
* The ICEG Person project aims to be a full-blown thematic standard development traject which involves all the relevant stakeholders. Only with maximal buy-in from federal, regional, data provider and data consumer constituencies does the standard have a chance to be adopted and implemented.
* In the event that the ICEG Person project is successful, the impact will materialize in the form of mappings / transformations being developed to align with the new data model. The data model may - but need not - involve migrations of physical data. Our understanding is that the model will be first and foremost used within the scope of an interoperability logical layer between authentic sources and data consumers.
* In order to mitigate the above impact, the ICEG project aims to be as practical as possible, with data examples in JSON format made available to stakeholders. These data examples are useful resources to demonstrate the operation of the model and illustrate the shape of the actual data exchange.
* The tentative schedule is to organize working groups in the 2nd semester of 2024 and publish the specification in early 2025.

1. <http://reflex.raadvst-consetat.be/reflex/pdf/Mbbs/2013/10/08/125379.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://semiceu.github.io/Core-Person-Vocabulary/releases/2.1.1/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://data.vlaanderen.be/ns/persoon/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)