

The Internal Market Information System

Setting up IMI: guide for the first user in an authority

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Foreword

Dear IMI user,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to the Internal Market Information System (IMI). Congratulations on your new role in IMI!

IMI is a tool with great potential. It makes cooperation between administrations in different countries much easier and faster. And in doing so, it helps administrations provide a better service to all those who want to make use of the opportunities offered by the European single market.

However, like any other electronic system, IMI will only work properly if it is managed properly. If IMI users are to find their counterparts in other countries, authorities need to keep the information about themselves up to date. And if the exchange of information is to work smoothly, enough users need to be registered in each authority in order to deal with all incoming requests without delay.

This is why you as the first IMI user in your authority are so important! You need to make sure that your authority can easily be found in IMI and you need to see to it that it is set up in a way that ensures that information can be exchanged rapidly and effectively.

This guide is intended to assist you in this task. It gives you a short introduction to how IMI works and then explains step by step what you need to do to set up IMI for your authority. The guide also includes a glossary of important IMI terms and a number of frequently asked questions and answers. In the middle of the guide, you will find a checklist that will help you make sure that you do not forget anything important.

I wish you a very good start with IMI!



Jörgen Holmquist
Director-General for the Internal
Market and Services
European Commission



Introduction: what is IMI and how does it work?

What is IMI?

In order to comply with 'mutual assistance provisions' in European internal market legislation, administrations throughout the European Economic Area (EEA) ⁽¹⁾ need to exchange information with their counterparts in other countries. The Internal Market Information System (IMI) is an electronic tool designed to help them in this cooperation. IMI consists of a computer application that is accessible via the Internet without the need to install any additional software. It was developed by the European Commission in close cooperation with Member States.

How does IMI work?

IMI helps you to identify your counterpart in another country: each authority registered in IMI enters its 'informal title' (an easily understandable version of its name) and a description of its responsibilities into the system. Both the informal title and the description are translated into all official EU languages and are linked to a multilingual search function.

IMI also makes it easy for you to exchange information with your counterpart: an authority that needs information from an authority in another country can create an information request in its own language based on pre-translated question sets that are available for each legislative area supported by IMI. The authority sends its request through the system to its counterpart. The responding authority sees the request in its own language; it can reply in this language and sends its reply through IMI to the requesting authority. You can check the progress of your request at any time through IMI.

Who are the actors involved in IMI?

The main actors in IMI are the following.

- Competent authorities throughout the EEA who exchange information and operate at national, regional or local level.

⁽¹⁾ The EEA consists of all EU Member States as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

- IMI coordinators whose role it is to decide which authorities should register in IMI and to ensure that requests from other countries receive satisfactory replies in a timely manner. They include:
 - one national IMI coordinator (NIMIC) for each country (the list of NIMICs can be found on the IMI website: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/imi-net);
 - at the discretion of the country, delegated IMI coordinators (DIMICs) for a particular legislative area or geographical region;
 - so-called super-DIMICs (or SDIMICs) with responsibility for all legislative areas for their region.
- The European Commission hosts and maintains IMI, is responsible for the translations in the system and operates a central helpdesk.

Which areas does IMI cover ?

IMI is designed as a flexible system that can be used for all sorts of internal market legislation. It is currently used for the directive on the recognition of professional qualifications (2005/36/EC) and the services directive (2006/123/EC) (which obliges authorities in the EEA to assist each other in the supervision of migrating service providers and in the supervision of the cross-border provision of services).

For latest news about the scope of application of IMI in these legislative areas and about any new legislative areas that will be added, please refer to the IMI website.

What about data protection?

Authorities using IMI have to respect EU and national data protection laws. A European Commission recommendation that is available on the IMI website contains IMI-specific data protection guidelines. It is important to note that IMI is data protection friendly because:

- it does not create a permanent database or register of personal data;
- personal data contained in information exchanges is deleted at the latest six months after the closure of the exchange;
- only authorities directly involved in an information exchange have access to personal data.

Step-by-step guide: how to set up IMI for your authority

Getting started

IMI is a decentralised network of authorities. This means that every authority that uses IMI is responsible for all the information about itself in the system. It is also responsible for its own set-up for the purposes of using IMI.

When your authority was registered in IMI, you as a first user were registered at the same time. Since you are so far the only person in your authority who can access IMI, you need to:

- make sure that authorities in other countries who might need information from your authority will be able to find and contact it easily;
- determine who in your authority does what in IMI so that you and your colleagues can participate in information exchanges quickly and effectively.

These may sound like difficult tasks, but don't worry! IMI is designed to be as user-friendly as possible. If you follow these instructions carefully, setting up your authority in IMI will be easy and will not take you long.

This guide gives you a practical overview of all the steps you need to take. For a detailed screen-by-screen description of these steps, please consult the IMI user handbook, which is available in the section 'Important documents' on the IMI website: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/imi-net

On the IMI website, you will also find a range of training material, especially a series of interactive e-learning modules that introduce you to all important IMI functionality.

To get started, it might help you to think of your authority from three different perspectives.

- Firstly, think of your authority in the way an authority in another country would see it.
- Then, think of it in the context of authorities in your own country, for example from the perspective of an authority which supervises your authority's work or of an authority with which you collaborate.

- Lastly, think of your authority from the inside, for example how responsibilities are divided and how workflows are organised.

The following step-by-step instructions are put together with these three perspectives in mind. Let us start from the point that is furthest away from your authority, the point of view of an authority in a different country.

My authority seen from another country

Try to put yourself in the position of an IMI user who works in an authority similar to yours in another country. He does not speak your language and does not know anything about the administrative structures in your country. However, he should nevertheless be able to find your authority in IMI. All essential information about all authorities registered in IMI is translated into all official EU languages and can then be searched with a multilingual search function. However, you need to ensure that the information about your authority is correct in *your* language and that it is kept up-to-date.

Step 1: Edit the general information about your authority

Some information about your authority was already entered into IMI when your authority was registered. Your first step is to check this information and, if necessary, correct or update it.

- *The informal title*

IMI allows each authority to choose its own 'informal title', a version of its name that says clearly what the authority does. This informal title is translated into all EU languages. To help others identify your authority in the system, you should keep it short and clear.

Why an informal title in addition to the official one?

What do you think the Irish 'Honourable Society of Kings Inns' is responsible for? Judging from this official title, it could be lots of things. In fact, it is responsible for admission to the profession of barrister. An informal title such as 'Professional body for admission of barristers' would more clearly convey what this authority does.

Whenever you make any substantial changes to your authority's informal title, remember to indicate in the system that a new translation is necessary (by ticking the relevant box). If you only correct a spelling mistake, there is no need for a new translation.

- *The short profile*

On its own, the informal title cannot of course convey fully what your authority does. This is why you have the possibility to write a short profile of your authority which will also be translated into all EU languages. Here you can indicate, for example, if your authority is a local, regional or national one, its principal fields of activity and its tasks in these fields. When you write the short profile, try to imagine what you would need to know about your authority if you were an IMI user in another country.



In the short profile, you do not need to cover all your authority's responsibilities, but only the ones that are relevant to your tasks in IMI.

- *Languages*

For some information exchanges in IMI it will be enough to use the pre-translated questions and answers which exist in IMI for each legislative area. However, sometimes IMI users in other countries may want to add a question or a comment. Or they may want to contact you by telephone or e-mail. Therefore, you should indicate which languages are understood in your authority.

Don't be afraid to say you understand foreign languages!

You do not need to be fluent in the languages you select. Other users just need to know if you have a working knowledge.

- *Contact details*

You can edit and add information to the contact details that are registered for your authority. For example, you can include a link to your website if you want.



If your authority moves office or if telephone numbers change, don't forget to update this in IMI.



- *E-mail address*

Whenever you need to use IMI, you will be alerted by e-mail. To make sure that you do not miss an important piece of information, your authority's e-mail address needs to be valid and frequently checked.

Step 2: Specify your authority's areas of competence

If an authority in another country is looking for its counterpart in your country, it not only needs general contact information, but also a description of the counterpart's responsibilities. For this purpose, IMI contains two detailed lists of keywords that have been put together at European level in order to ensure that they are valid for each country. These lists contain:

- areas of economic activity;
- policy areas.

Using these lists, you should try to be as specific as possible in describing your authority's responsibilities.

Step 3: Specify your authority's responsibilities in each legislative area

IMI can be used in many different legislative areas. If your authority is active in two areas, it can have access to IMI for both of them. This is why, in addition to the areas of economic activity and policy areas, you need to describe in more detail what your authority's responsibilities are in each area.

To help you in this task, IMI provides you with lists of keywords for each legislative area. Some keywords will already have been selected when your authority was registered, but you should check if they are correct and, if necessary, select additional ones.

Checklist: all important

My authority seen from another country

Step 1: Edit the general information about your authority

The informal title

The short profile

Languages

Contact details

E-mail address

Step 2: Specify your authority's areas of competence

Areas of economic activity

Policy areas

Step 3: Specify your authority's responsibilities in each legislative area

My authority in my own country

Step 4: Link other authorities to your authority

Step 5: Establish your authority's links with its request coordinators

ant steps at a glance

My authority seen
from the inside

For coordinators
only

Step 6: Find out in which departments IMI will need to be used

Step 13: Decide who will play the role of data administrator

Step 7: Determine how many additional users to register

Step 14: Decide if you want to participate in the referral process

Step 8: Decide if your authority wants to use allocation

Step 15: Decide if authorities you coordinate need your approval

Step 9: Decide on the roles of each user

Step 10: Register the users

Step 11: Tell the users their usernames

Step 12: Encourage the new users to log in to IMI

How to choose keywords

If you do not find a perfect match in the list of predefined keywords, choose the nearest possible keyword or a combination of keywords. If you find that an important keyword is missing, please contact your coordinator so that the list can be updated if this is appropriate.

My authority in my own country

With all the above information, an authority in another country should be able to find and contact your authority easily. However, there is more to IMI. In your country, there may be other authorities which have similar tasks to yours. You might collaborate with them, supervise them or be supervised. For the next steps, think of your authority in its national context: What distinguishes it from other authorities in the same field? What are its working relations with these authorities? Where does it go to in the event of problems?

Step 4: Link other authorities to your authority

Let us assume that your authority is a regional medical chamber. In that case, the national medical chamber may want to have an overview of the requests that your authority is dealing with, in order to keep track of how much IMI is used on a national level. For this and similar situations, it is possible to link other authorities to your authority. The linked authorities will have a high-level overview of your information exchanges in IMI. However, for reasons of data protection, they will not be able to see any personal data contained in the requests.

Step 5: Establish your authority's links with its request coordinators

It is the task of IMI coordinators to make sure that IMI is set up properly in their country or region and that the exchange of information through IMI runs smoothly. Coordinators decide themselves how active they want to be in the system. Some may restrict their role to administrative coordination; others may decide to get involved in individual information exchanges. They may act as referees if there is a problem between an authority they coordinate and an authority in another country or, in countries that have decided to retain centralised control, they may decide to approve requests and/or replies of authorities they coordinate. In this content-related role, which is specific to each legislative area, coordinators act as 'request coordinators'. You should have at least one request coordinator for each legislative area. If you think that additional coordinators may need to get involved in your authority's information exchanges, you should link these coordinators to your authority.

By default, coordinators do not see the details of your requests. This is for reasons of data protection. However, if a coordinator decides to play an active role in your information exchanges, you can allow it to see the details of your requests. Even with this full view, however, the coordinator will not be able to see any personal data contained in the information exchanges.

If you work in different legislative areas, you may have different coordinators for each of them.



My authority seen from the inside

You have now clarified your authority's role both towards authorities in other countries and towards authorities in your own country. Lastly, you need to look at your authority from the inside. In which departments is IMI going to be used? How many IMI requests do you expect? How many of your colleagues will work with you in IMI? How can you organise the internal working processes most effectively?

Step 6: Find out in which departments IMI will need to be used

If you work in a big authority, it may not be obvious which units or departments will work with IMI. In this case, you should first verify in which of the legislative areas supported by IMI your authority is active. You will find updated information about these legislative areas and the relevant EU legislation on the IMI website. You should then check which unit or department in your authority deals with the questions addressed by this legislation. What could help you in this task is to check the standard question sets that have been introduced into IMI for each legislative area. The complete lists of these question sets are available in the section 'Important documents' on the IMI website.

Step 7: Determine how many additional users to register

As the first IMI user in your authority, you are responsible for deciding how many additional users should be registered for your authority. The number of users should of course reflect the size and needs of your authority. If it is a small authority dealing with only a few requests in IMI, one or two additional users may be enough. A large authority, on the other hand, may need to have a number of users with different roles in order to manage its information exchanges efficiently.

Think about back-up

Even if your authority is a very small one, you should in any case register at least one additional user to ensure back-up during holiday or sick leave.

Step 8: Decide if your authority wants to use allocation

When IMI is set up in the standard way, the arrival of a new request sent to your authority is announced by an automatic e-mail to your authority's general e-mail address and to all users who handle requests. This can be impractical if you have a large number of users, if you expect to deal with a high number of information requests or if different parts of your authority will work with IMI. In those cases it could be useful for you to set up the so-called 'allocation process'. This means that one person, who is assigned the user role 'allocator', receives all incoming requests and distributes them to his or her colleagues, depending for example on subject matter or workload. This could help you ensure that responsibilities are clear and that requests are dealt with rapidly.

Step 9: Decide on the roles of each user

You, as the first user in your authority, are automatically given all user rights for IMI. This implies that you can do everything in IMI yourself. However, you do not of course need to do everything yourself. It is up to you to decide which tasks you could delegate to other people. You could register a number of additional request handlers. You could also, for example, give the role of 'local data administrator' to a user in your authority's IT department. This role entails updating your authority's data, registering additional users and helping colleagues with technical problems like lost passwords. Or you could grant your boss, who will not be involved in the information exchanges themselves, basic user rights that allow him to monitor the flow of information.



Remember that, if you decide to use allocation, you need to appoint an allocator.

Step 10: Register the users

Once you have decided how many users to register and how to organise the way they work together, you can register them in IMI. This is very simple. You enter their contact details, their preferred working language and their e-mail address in the system.

Keep in mind that each user must have a different and individual e-mail address because it will be used for all system-generated automatic e-mails.

You then determine the users' role for each legislative area. A colleague who is a request handler for the legislative area of professional qualifications may, for example, only be a basic user for the legislative area of services.

Step 11: Tell the users their usernames

When you register a new user in IMI, the system will automatically create a username and a temporary password for this person. The temporary password is sent to the new user by e-mail. However, for security reasons, usernames are not sent out by e-mail. You have to contact your colleague outside the system and tell him his username in person, or by phone, fax or post.

Can the automatically generated username be changed?

Yes, if your colleagues would like to have a different username from the one automatically generated by the system, you can change the username in his user details.

Step 12: Encourage the new users to log in to IMI

IMI can only work well if the users who are registered are familiar with it and become active in the system. This is why it is so important that you encourage all new users in your authority to log in and explore IMI.

When a new user logs in to the system, he can choose his own password and a 12-digit security code. Upon each subsequent login, the system will ask for three random letters from this security code.

Lost passwords and usernames

If a colleague forgets his username for IMI, you can look it up in the system and communicate it to him again.

If a colleague forgets his password, you have to reset it – unless you have delegated the role 'local data administrator' to someone else. Please inform the users in your authority that, if they forget their password, they should contact the local data administrator and ask for a new one.

When the local data administrator resets a forgotten password, the user will receive an automatic e-mail with a new temporary password. He can then start the login procedure again from the beginning.

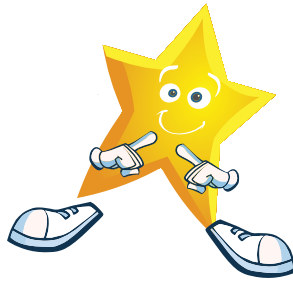
If you are the only local data administrator in your authority and you forget your password, you should contact the data administrator of the IMI coordinator who registered your authority or who validated its registration.

Additional information for coordinators

If you are a first user in an authority that is an IMI coordinator, there are a few more things that you need to do before you can start working with IMI.

Step 13: Decide who will play the role of data administrator

By default, the first user of an IMI coordinator receives another role, that of 'data administrator'. Whereas a 'local data administrator' is responsible for the management of all data of your own authority in IMI, the 'data administrator' is responsible for the management of the data of the authorities you coordinate. He can authenticate new competent authorities, give them access to a new legislative area, edit their official title and reset the passwords of their local data administrators. Therefore, if your tasks as a coordinator include registering new authorities or giving them access to new legislative areas, you may want to give this role to one or even several of your colleagues.



In contrast to the 'local data administrator', the role of the 'data administrator' is specific to a legislative area. If you decide to delegate this role, don't forget to do so for each legislative area in which your authority works.

Step 14: Decide if you want to participate in the referral process

If an authority that you coordinate and an authority in another country cannot agree on the information to be provided, IMI offers you and the IMI coordinator on the other side the possibility to get involved. In this situation, the coordinators have the role of referees. The standard setting in IMI is that coordinators participate in this referral process. This setting is also specific for each legislative area.

If you want to handle referrals yourself, you do not need to make any changes in the system. If you want to delegate the role to someone else in your authority, you can appoint a 'referral handler'. If you do not wish to participate in the referral process at all, for example if your role as a coordinator is restricted to technical aspects, you need to change the setting to 'no'.

Step 15: Decide if authorities you coordinate need your approval

Some Member States have decided to retain centralised control over the information exchanges involving competent authorities in their country. For this purpose, IMI allows coordinators to decide that they want to approve requests and/or replies before they are sent to another country. Here the default setting is 'no'.

Glossary of IMI terms

Allocation process: A large authority with a high number of IMI users may want to use the allocation process to assign incoming requests to one or more of its → request handlers, depending on the subject matter or other criteria. In order to be able to assign and re-assign requests within the authority, a user needs to have 'allocator' rights.

Approval process: → IMI coordinators can choose that they wish to approve new requests or responses from → competent authorities they coordinate before they are sent to another Member State. This means that when a competent authority sends out a new request, the request is sent first to the IMI coordinator for approval. If the coordinator approves the request, it is dispatched to the → responding competent authority.

Basic user: Each IMI user is at minimum a basic user. A basic user can search for a → competent authority using the IMI database of competent authorities and he has a high-level overview of all requests (incoming and outgoing) of his authority as well as of requests of → linked authorities.

Competent authority: Competent authorities are the main actors involved in IMI who exchange information requests through the system. These authorities may be public bodies or private bodies to which Member States have given competence for carrying out certain functions related to the application of internal market legislation. They may be operating at national, regional or local level.

IMI coordinators: IMI coordinators are responsible for authenticating → competent authorities who would like to use IMI and for ensuring that IMI functions smoothly in their country or region. In addition, IMI coordinators can decide to be involved in individual information exchanges between authorities they coordinate and authorities in another country (→ approval process, → referral process).

Linked authority: It is possible to link other authorities of the same Member State to your authority. Linked authorities have a high-level overview of your authority's information exchanges. Only a → local data administrator can link authorities to yours.



Local data administrator: A local data administrator can take the following actions in addition to those described for the → basic user:

- update data held in IMI about his authority;
- register additional users for his authority;
- change user rights for users of his authority;
- reset passwords for users of his authority.

Referral process: If a → requesting authority is not satisfied with a reply it has received from another Member State, it can request additional information. However, if the → responding authority insists that it cannot provide this information, the requesting authority can involve both its own IMI coordinator and the responding authority's IMI coordinator as referees. This procedure is called 'referral'. IMI coordinators decide if they wish to be involved in referrals.

Requesting authority: A requesting authority is the authority that needs information and initiates the information exchange.

Request handler: In addition to the user rights of a → basic user, request handlers can send and respond to information requests in the name of their authority.

Responding authority: The responding authority is contacted by the → requesting authority and is responsible for providing an answer to the request.

Frequently asked questions and answers

I have received an e-mail with a temporary password to IMI. However, I do not have a username. How can I access IMI?

When you are registered as a new user in IMI, the system automatically generates a username and a temporary password for you. The temporary password will be sent to you by an automatic e-mail. The username should be communicated to you by the person who registered you. For security reasons, this happens outside the IMI system, for instance in person or by telephone. If you as the first user in your authority do not receive your username, please contact the IMI coordinator who registered your authority.

The system does not recognise my password/security code. Whom do I have to contact?

If you are the only user in your authority and you have forgotten your password or security code, please contact the local data administrator of your IMI coordinator. He or she will reset your password. You will then receive an automatic e-mail with your new temporary password. To log in, you will continue to use the same username. The system will then ask you to enter and confirm a new security code.

Please note that the system is case sensitive. If you enter your login details incorrectly five times, the system will block your entry. In this case, follow the steps above to have your password reset.

My authority has competences in different legislative areas. How do I mirror this in IMI?

If there are different departments within the same authority responsible for different legislative areas, there are two technical solutions for registration.

- You can ask your coordinator to register the departments as separate competent authorities in IMI, including the name of the department in the authority name to avoid confusion. It is recommended to follow this route if the two departments are physically separate entities, each having their own dedicated personnel.



- Or you can maintain the registration of your authority as one single competent authority and make sure that it has access to all legislative areas for which it is competent. In this case, it could be of interest to use allocation to assign new requests to the appropriate department.

A colleague whom I registered in IMI has forgotten his password/security code. What do I do?

In order to be able to reset other users' passwords, you need to have local data administrator rights. If you have given these rights to another user, you should ask this user to reset your colleague's password. If you are a local data administrator, you log in to IMI, select the menu option 'Administration' and then 'Manage my authority's users'. You find the colleague concerned in the list of your authority's users and click on 'Reset password'. The new temporary password will be sent to the user by automatic e-mail. He will continue to use his username and he will be able to choose a new security code when he logs on to IMI again.

How do I know that a new request has been sent to my authority?

When your authority receives a request, it will be alerted by automatic e-mail from the IMI system. The alert e-mail for a new incoming request will be sent to all users with request handler rights and to the contact e-mail address registered for your authority. In addition, request handlers will also see new requests on their action lists in IMI.

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If you would like to learn more about how IMI works, please visit the IMI website:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/imi-net

In particular, you may find the following sections useful.

- Important documents (containing the user handbook and all relevant legal documents).
- Training on IMI (containing a range of training material including a series of interactive e-learning modules).
- Contacts (containing a list of all national IMI coordinators).

For any problems with IMI that cannot be resolved by a helpdesk in your country, the European Commission has set up a central helpdesk:

Imi-helpdesk@ec.europa.eu

Tel. +32 22955470



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