Request for Information

Directory service for Operational EPC Scheme Management

EPC087-23 / v1.0 / Date issued: 24 March 2023

Public

Request for Information

European Payments Council

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1   Introduction

The European Payments Council (EPC[1]) is an international non-profit association (AISBL), located in Brussels, Belgium. Its members are Payment Service Providers (PSP) or national or European PSP associations. In constant dialogue with other stakeholders and regulators at European level, its role is to support and promote European payments integration and development, and notably to develop and manage Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) payment and payment related schemes, and to formulate positions and proposals on European payment issues. The EPC is also active in the fields of card and mobile payments, payment security and fraud prevention, and cash.

The EPC currently manages five payment schemes (SEPA Credit Transfer (SCT), SEPA Instant Credit Transfer (SCT Inst), SEPA Direct Debit (SDD) – Core and B2B -, One-Leg Out Instant Credit Transfer (OCT Inst)) and three payment related schemes (SEPA Proxy Lookup (SPL), SEPA Request-to-Pay (SRTP) and SEPA Payment Account Access (SPAA)).

The participants adhering to the schemes are essentially regulated PSPs but there may be non-PSP participants such as RTP Service Providers.

1.1   EPC Scheme management

Beyond the management of the schemes' lifecycle (including maintenance of rulebooks and implementation guidelines) through its governance and working bodies, the EPC, through its Secretariat performs the following administrative tasks (non-exhaustive list):

- Check and validation of requests for adherence, updates and termination of adherence, from the (potential) scheme participants.
- Maintenance of an internal database of scheme participants data and related operations in this database ("Register of Participants" - RoP).
- Monthly publication on the EPC website of the list of scheme participants and changes occurring in that list, as an extract from the RoP .
- Management of the processes related to participants' homologation in relation with the Homologation Body (for SRTP only).
- Billing of participants for scheme participation fees.

Currently the EPC does not manage data and mechanisms to ensure *reachability* of participants among each other, i.e. how the participants should discover and connect each other for the purpose of sending and receiving payment or payment related transactions. The responsibility of this *routing* function is left to operational entities such as CSMs (Clearing and Settlement Mechanisms, for the payment schemes), or other specialised entities (SPL service provider for the SPL scheme, other entities in case of SRTP, etc). For example, for the payment schemes, the EPC publishes a list of self-declared compliant CSMs that are able to play this role, and other mechanisms are also possible (i.e., bi-lateral or intra-group).

1.2   New challenges related to Operational management of the Schemes

In November 2022 the EPC published the third version of the rulebook of the SRTP scheme:

https://www.europeanpaymentscouncil.eu/document-library/rulebooks/sepa-request-pay-scheme-rulebook-version-v30

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[1] https://www.europeanpaymentscouncil.eu/

Prior to that publication, in June 2022 the EPC published the first set of Default SRTP related API Specifications (to be updated in line with the third version of the Rulebook by May 2023) and decided that the ability to use of APIs for the exchanges between RTP Service Providers will be mandatory as of 30 November 2023.

Also in November 2022 the EPC published the 1st version of the SPAA rulebook:

https://www.europeanpaymentscouncil.eu/document-library/rulebooks/sepa-payment-account-access-spaa-scheme-rulebook

The SPAA scheme requires by nature the use of APIs between the scheme participants for the exchange of data and transaction assets, to fulfil the functions in its scope.

Additionally, the EPC published in March 2023 the "API Security Framework", applicable to SRTP and SPAA scheme participants:

https://www.europeanpaymentscouncil.eu/document-library/guidance-documents/api-security-framework

The mandated use of APIs by these two schemes created new challenges related to the reachability between participants:

- On the "sending" side, a participant needs to know what is the end-point (URL, address) of the "receiving" participant and needs certainty that it is an adherent to the scheme, properly registered with the EPC.
- On the "receiving" side, a participant needs certainty that the sender (API caller, originating participant) is trusted, and it is an adherent to the scheme, properly registered with the EPC.

Therefore, for operating the schemes new information needs to be managed and made available to participants: the URLs, or end-points of scheme's participants APIs, identification and authentication related information, but also information on which function a participant is performing or which functionality(ies) it is offering, within a specific scheme.

It must be noted that other EPC schemes, or options of existing schemes might require the use of APIs in the future and consequently the management of related information might also be required in such cases.

In the EPC's view these operational related tasks form the role of *Operational Scheme Manager (OSM)* which enables the effective functioning of the schemes, along with the EPC itself who remains *scheme manager* from the governance and adherence point of view. The OSM role would be very close to the provision of a *Directory Service*, open to the participants of the schemes, in tight relation with the EPC.

1.3   Purpose of this Request for Information (RFI)

The EPC has decided to explore what would be the most effective way to ensure the performance of the OSM role and what would be the interest of market actors in this area.

This RFI is issued by the EPC as a means of technical discovery and information gathering regarding the provision of the services related to the OSM role. The EPC considers that the gathering of such information is essential for its understanding of the range of models by which such a service can be provided.

This RFI should not be considered as a request for commercial proposals, nor should it be considered as an obligation from the EPC to pursue the RFI with a contract or other agreements with the interested entities. This RFI in no way commits the EPC to invite the respondents to submit a bid as part of a follow-up process.

2   Requirements for the OSM (Directory Service for EPC schemes)

The respondents are invited to take knowledge of the following list of requirements and respond according to the structure set out in Section 4.

Ref #	Requirement description
OSM1	The entities for which the OSM will manage their data are EPC scheme participants and, when necessary, Technical Solution Providers ("Proxies") acting on behalf of scheme participants.
OSM2	Data managed by the OSM will be data from the EPC Register of Participants (identification and adherence data) and additional technical data communicated by the scheme participants (e.g. URLs, additional data).
OSM3*	Data managed by the OSM must be machine readable (i.e., in a structured electronic format) and made available as a single full data file including all participants' data. In addition, if applicable, a file including the changes made since the previous version of the full data file ("delta" file) should also be made available. The availability of the OSM interface for data download/reading via API is 24/7, 365 days a year. The OSM will ensure full data update at minimum on a monthly basis.
OSM4*	Managed data can also be made available via API calls*. The API should allow retrieval of individual participant data (lookup), data of a set of participants (search values provided in the API request), or all participants' data (a special API call).
OSM5	Data managed by the OSM must be properly secured. It is recommended that the entities requesting the data should be authenticated using client TLS/SSL certificates. Entities having certificates for the purposes of PSD2 APIs should be able to use these certificates for authentication to the OSM. If the data is to be made available as a file, publicly available for download (without need for authentication by the requesting entity), this file has to be signed by the OSM with an electronic signature of at least AdES level (Advanced Electronic Signatures). However, it is not required that the OSM is linked to Certification Authorities (CA) or Qualified Trust Service Providers (QTSP) of the participants for automatic certificate data exchanges. Other participant authentication methods may be proposed.
OSM6	The data made available for download or via API calls must be restricted to the scheme participants and their Technical Solution Providers.
OSM7	The OSM must implement a function for rapid (i.e., intraday) publications of changes (full data file and "delta" file) when an entity is removed or has one of its roles removed or changed.
OSM8	The OSM must provide a function for immediate removal/update of a participant on its request, following a certificate revocation or other security issue that could lead to a certificate revocation.
OSM9	Mandatory data of the scheme participants to be collected, maintained, and made available (not exhaustive): -identification and adherence data from the EPC Register of Participants (Legal name, address, identifier for each scheme, adherence date, etc) -technical and additional data from the participants: API endpoints (URL) for each relevant scheme, API documentation endpoints (URL) for each relevant scheme, UID of the certificate(s) and the name of the authority that delivered the certificate(s),

	-roles, -optional feature(s) supported by the participants, -contact details to communicate about exceptional intraday update.
OSM10	Other recommended data to be collected, maintained, and made available (not exhaustive): -commercial/Trade name (when relevant), -flag indicating the API endpoint type (direct route or proxy), -flag indicating the API signature owner (Scheme Participant or proxy), etc
OSM11	The OSM will ensure that the entities have at least one valid unique and unambiguous identifier by scheme (as defined at Requirement OSM9). The OSM will assign internal, unique, identifiers to all entities. These internal identifiers are given under the responsibility of the OSM, which must ensure their unicity (the same identifier cannot be given twice) and unambiguousness (it identifies without ambiguity a single entity). In addition, the OSM must let the scheme participants use identifiers they already have, provided they are compliant with the unicity and unambiguousness requirement (e.g., PSD2 identifier, LEI, VAT number etc…). The EPC and the OSM will agree on a list of valid identifier types. A minimum set of valid identifiers should be defined by each scheme. Identifiers of scheme participants are the "key" values to fetch other information about the scheme participants/proxies (e.g. via API), and for authentication purposes.
OSM12	An API endpoint of a scheme participant could be paired with a flag indicating whether this is a proxy or a direct route. Alternatively, this information can be retrieved by assigning the "proxy" role to that entity. A second flag can indicate how the scheme's API requests are signed (by the proxy or the scheme participant).
OSM13	The OSM must ensure the participant's adherence data is accurate. An "adherence data channel" (via public download or secure channel) may be set up with the EPC to provide the OSM with data from the EPC Register of Participants. The OSM may propose the following methods for data update (i.e. additional technical data) by the participants after authentication: via a graphical user interface, API calls, or other methods.
OSM14	Commercial constraint. No set-up ("one-off", implementation cost) and no operational ("recurrent") costs will be borne by the EPC. All costs will be borne by the respondent who is (are) expected to develop its own business plan and funding model (e.g. on the basis, of fees directly charged to scheme participants for the use of the OSM services).

*Technical assumption:

The API calls/downloads are not correlated with the underlying transactions carried out by the scheme participants while operating the schemes (e.g. a payee's RTP provider will not query the OSM for retrieving the payer's RTP provider's API endpoint at every sent request-to-pay transaction, nor a payer's RTP provider will query the OSM at every received request-to-pay transaction). The participants would call the OSM at a defined frequency, but this should be much lower than the scheme volumes of transactions and "throughput" between the participants. For example, they might need a "local cache" and "refresh" mechanism to be defined by their specific implementations.

3   RFI overview, timelines and response guidelines

3.1   Overview

The EPC is issuing this RFI to the market to encourage responses from suitably qualified and self-selecting organisations ("Respondents"). Respondents are required to prepare and submit a response in the manner described in this document. Responses will be evaluated for completeness, quality of information provided and responsiveness to requirements set out herein.

The receipt of this RFI document confers no right on any Respondent. Without limitation to the foregoing, the EPC is under no obligation to place a contract with any Respondent as a result of this RFI process and reserves the right to use more than one supplier to complete the overall project in case it implements it.

3.2   Timetable

Stage	Details	Dates
1	RFI published via EPC website and via social media	24 March 2023
2	Respondents submit any questions with regard to this RFI (as detailed in section 3.3 headed "Queries")	By 5 April 2023 18h00 CET
3	The EPC provides responses to queries (as detailed in section 3.3 headed "Queries" via EPC website)	By 12 April 2023 18h00 CET
4	Receive responses from Respondents - late submissions may not be accepted	By 21 April 2023 18h00 CET
5	Optionally notify respondents of the outcome and any proposed next steps (e.g. request for further information, no further action, progress to a further stage, postponing the decision).	26 May 2023

3.3   Queries

The Respondents should submit queries in relation with the contents of this RFI to the EPC via contact details provided below. All questions will be published on the EPC website and where possible answered. Please note this may not always be possible. Anonymity will be preserved and the EPC will not provide details of which Respondent nor will a response be provided which might indicate whom the question was raised by.

Please aggregate queries prior to submitting them, via email in the format detailed in Appendix B headed "RFI Query Table".

All queries should be addressed by email to srtp@epc-cep.eu.

3.4   Response submission and format

Each Respondent must submit its response in PDF format attached to an e-mail to srtp@epc-cep.eu. The heading of the e-mail should read "Strictly Confidential – OSM RFI - Name of Your Organisation".

The document should be structured and numbered in accordance with the section headings and numbering as set out in section 4 "Response structure". Responses that do not adhere to this structure may be excluded from consideration. In regard to the presentation format this shall be your organisation's discretion.

Respondents must ensure that any emails sent to srtp@epc-cep.eu are free from any virus or other malware. In consideration of their participation in the RFI process, each Respondent agrees to indemnify the EPC from and against all costs, expenses, losses or damages that may result from the electronic copy being infected by a virus or other malware.

3.5   Evaluation

In evaluating the capabilities and potential solutions of the Respondents the EPC will focus on, but not limited to, assessing the following criteria (which are not listed in a prioritised order):

- Quality and appropriateness of the solution proposed.
- Evidence of experience with projects of a similar content, scope and scale.
- Experience with operating a similar type of services.
- Clear indication of viability and sustainability of the preferred commercial model to supply the services.

These factors will be judged at the sole discretion of the EPC and will be based on the Respondents' response to this RFI stated above in section 3.2 headed "Timetable".

4   Response structure

The RFI response must address the areas listed in the table below. The overall response should not exceed 15 pages of A4 paper in length. It should be provided in PDF format.

Ref		Requirement description
R1	Introduction	Introduce the respondent's organisation (key competencies, including a description of the sector(s) in which the Respondent has provided/provide its services) and provide any general information relating to its response
R2	Management Summary	Provide a summary of the response and overview of the proposal
R3	Company Information	Respondent's full legal company name, address and company registration number
R4	Company Information	The contact information for the person that should be contacted for clarification of the Respondent's Response
R5	Company Information	Demonstrate the organisation's capability to provide the services, in particular its history/maturity/experience/achievements relevant for the delivery of service being contemplated.
R6	Company Information	Description of the advantages realised by selecting the Respondent that would not be experienced by selecting another provider- only describe those attributes that the Respondent believes are unique to it and its services.
R7	Solution for OSM / Directory Service – requirements	Briefly explain whether and how the respondent would respond to the requirements set out in the Section 2 NB: The response should refer back to each requirement to indicate how it is implemented and if not please detail any alternative approach used and why.
R8	Additional non-functional requirements	Include any non-functional requirements (e.g. volumes, availability, security) that the proposed solution can fulfil, not mentioned in the response for the item R7
R9	Technical and organisational assumptions	Highlight any assumptions and dependencies, in particularly those as they relate to actions, activities required on the part of the EPC.
R10	Technical risks and issues	Describe any identified issues and risks and the activities and actions that may be undertaken in order to mitigate such issues and risks.
R11	Commercial constraint	Indicate whether the financial constraint set out in Ref OSM14 can be fulfilled and if not, explain why and indicate an alternative model

R12	Additional services	Describe any additional or future services which would improve or make more sustainable the OSM service.
R16	Any other information	Please add any other information relevant to this response, not covered in the above categories.

Appendix A: Terms & Conditions Of Response

Every proposal received by the EPC is deemed to have been made subject to these conditions. No other terms will be deemed to be accepted by the EPC or incorporated into any contract between the EPC and any Respondent unless they are expressly accepted in writing by an authorised signatory of the EPC.

Confidentiality	Nothing in this RFI shall have any priority over any Confidentiality Agreement entered into between the EPC and any Respondent except that the EPC may share with the Respondents any questions or requests for clarification and their responses as set out at section 3.3
Examination and explanation of RFI documents	The Respondent shall be responsible for carefully examining the complete RFI, with any addenda, and making whatever further arrangements as may be required such that the Respondent is fully informed and acquainted with all the circumstances and matters which might in any way affect the performance or cost of the services which are the subject matter of the Respondent's response (the "Services"). Failure to do so is at the sole risk of the Respondent and no relief shall be given for errors or omissions in the RFI in estimating the difficulty or cost of performing the Services successfully.
Unsolicited revisions to proposals	Unsolicited revisions to proposals will not be received favourably unless the Respondent can substantiate to the EPC's satisfaction that a genuine error occurred during preparation of the original proposal. The EPC is under no obligation to accept such a revision.
Modification to RFI Documents	The EPC reserves the right to revise any provisions of the RFI.
RFI Expenses	All costs and expenses incurred by the Respondents in the preparation and submissions of their response or in attending subsequent discussions or negotiations with the EPC, are entirely for their own account and the EPC shall not be responsible for such expenses.
Currency and language	All amounts will be in euro (EUR). All proposals, correspondence and communications shall be in the English language.
Form of proposal	The Respondent shall base its response on the requirements of the EPC as stated in this RFI. However, should any Respondent be unable to fulfil any of these requirements it must state clearly any and all exceptions of such requirements that it may have made with words such as "This response is subject to the following qualifications: ...."
Submission of proposal	Proposals submitted shall be properly executed and completed. Interlineations, alterations or erasures shall be initialled and formally explained under the signature of the Respondent.
Closing Date	Proposals must be received by the EPC not later than the Closing Date mentioned in section 3.2. Late proposals may not be considered.

Withdrawal	The EPC reserves the right to withdraw the RFI and/or not to invite any responded for further steps.

Appendix B: RFI Query Table

Respondent Name:	
Date of Query:	
Submitted by (name):	
Email address for reply:	

RFI Section	Query	EPC response