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Transboundary disease data exchange: proposal for a "Data Interface Protocol"

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Objective

To identify and discuss practices and procedures that promote a rapid, timely and efficient **access** and **sharing of relevant data** (i.e. laboratory and epidemiological data related to outbreaks of diseases with intra-community trade impact) and to identify the critical aspects along the process of data access and sharing (**Figure 1**), suggesting solutions to address the identified hurdles.

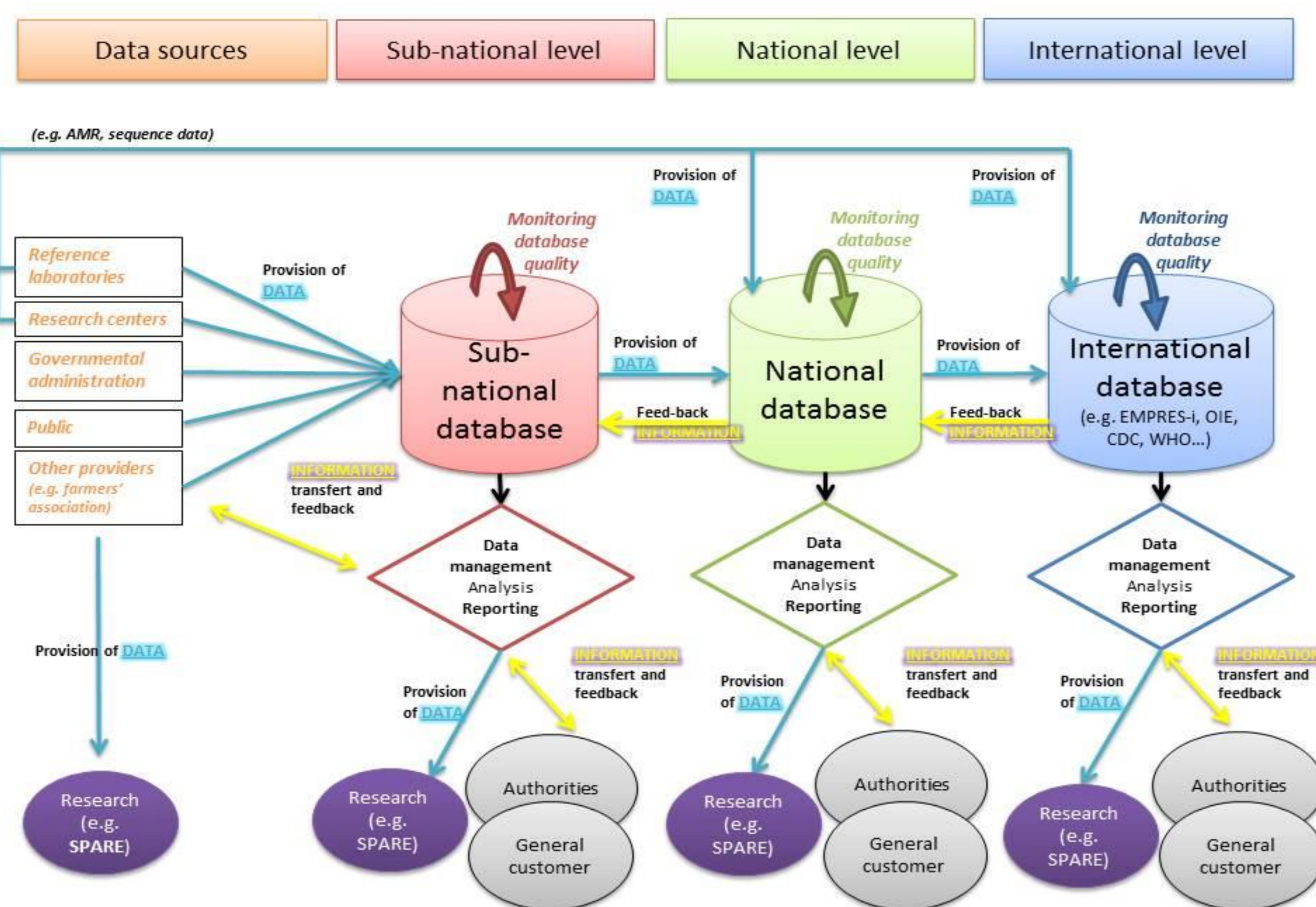


Figure 1: General data flow diagram. Blue arrow indicates provision of primary data whereas yellow arrow shows the bi-directional transfer of information and feedback.

Methodology

A **Technical Advisory Group for Data Exchange** (TechADE) has been established with SPARE consortium members, experts from veterinary institutes from Belgium (CODA-CERVA), Germany (Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut, FLI), Netherlands (Wageningen Bioveterinary Research, WBVR) and from FAO and the EFSA.

Three case studies (**rabies**, **bluetongue** and **classical swine fever**) were selected to develop a spatial model to assess the risk of introduction and spread of transboundary diseases in EU. Data are being collected to parameterize the model.

The obstacles faced to access, use and share the data were analyzed, discussed within the TechADE framework, and elements related to data sharing were described in the **Data Interface Protocol** available for downloading from: <https://www.spare-europe.eu/>

Results

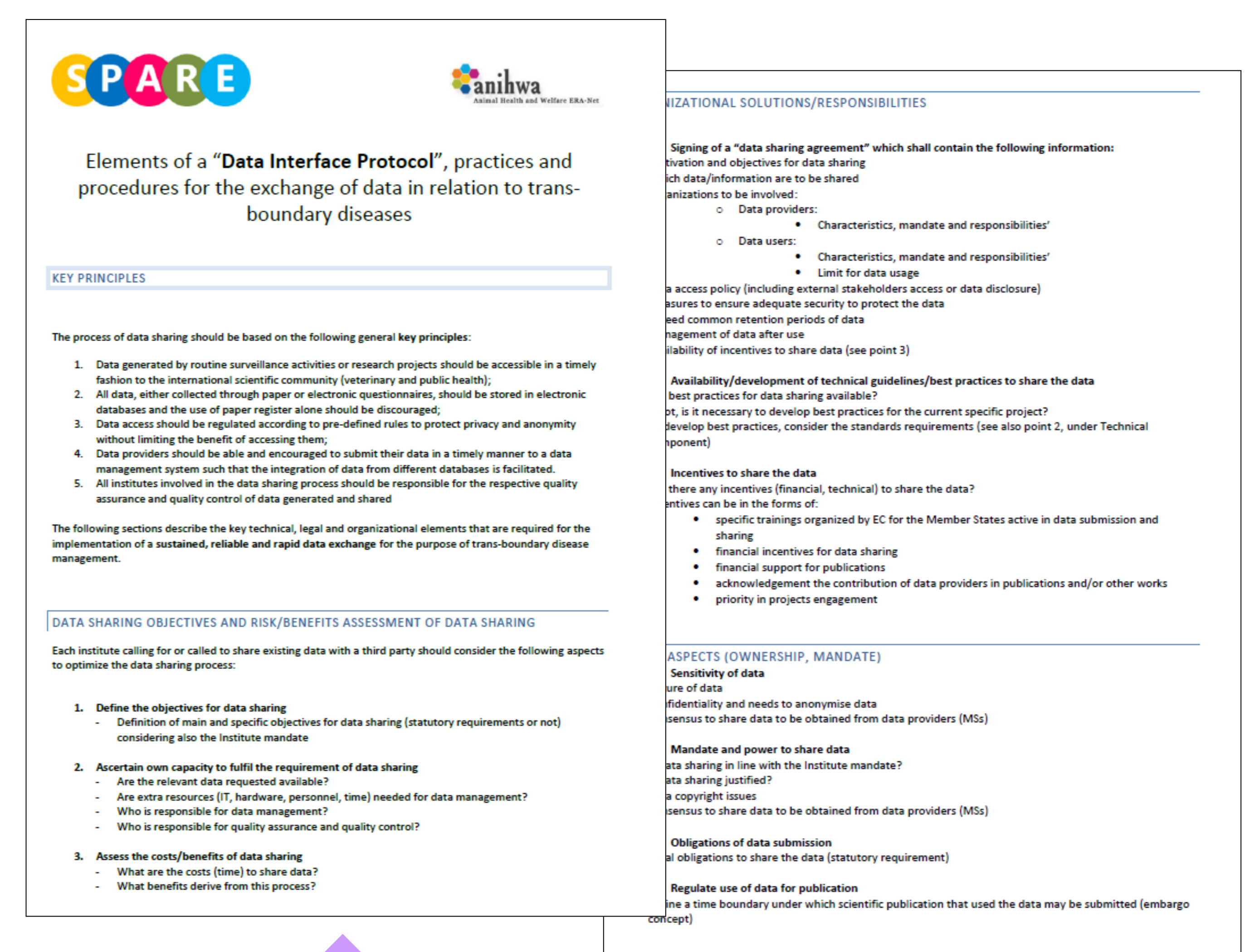
The challenges faced by institutions required to access and exchange data may be:

Organizational: extent of access permitted and terms of data use, agreement between institutes about stakeholders responsibilities etc.

Legal: data ownership, compliance with national legislations and EU legislation etc.

Technical: data standardization, coding system, tools for analysis, IT etc.

Also the **lack of scientific or economic incentives** to share the data with other parties does not encourage research institutes or other bodies to share the data and information generated by their routine efforts.



Conclusions

To assure communication and data flow between different parts of a system, rules can be defined resulting in a **protocol**. A data interface protocol typically defines the procedures and format for exchanging data. Such a protocol needs to be explicit and agreed by all partners.

A long-term objective of a protocol is to become accepted as a standard operating procedure.

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