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Open Document Formats A short report from the European Level

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... in a few words

**IDABC (Programme)
stands for:**

Interoperable **D**elivery
of pan-European **eG**overnment Services
to Public **A**dministrations,
Businesses and **C**itizens

**PEGSCO
stands for:**

Pan-**E**uropean **eG**overnment **C**ommittee:
representatives from Member States discuss and
approve the IDABC annual work programme



Why is the Commission involved in eGov activities?

This question is not so far off ...

- ▶ **The European Commission does not have a legal mandate by itself to become active in IT, issues of administration or eGovernment: These are clearly domains of the Member States (subsidiarity).**
- ▶ **The Commission acts only on explicit request of the Member States in these areas.**
- ▶ **The justification for the Commission's activities are often deducted from core competences: e.g. completion of the single market, promotion of European competitiveness.**
- ▶ **recommendations, but no mandatory standards**

The Commission's view on standards

Directive 98/34 etc.

- ▶ Only specifications issued by public standardisation bodies are standards
- ▶ Only such specifications can be referred to in legal texts
- ▶ IDABC published its own definition of “Open Standards” in the “European Interoperability Framework for eGovernment Services v 1.0”
- ➔ ISO standards such as **ISO 26300** are recognised.
- ➔ The Commission is supposed to stay neutral in standardisation processes; it is not a member of standardisation bodies
- ➔ “Oral question” in the European Parliament (H-0665/07) -
Subject: “Irregularities in connection with decision-making on international standardisation within the ISO”

Recommendations of IDABC Management Committee PEGSCO I

In Dec 2006, representatives of the Member States updated the so-called TAC recommendations :

- **Recommending to European public administrations:**
 - To use international document format standards;
 - To use standards that are supported by multiple products;
 - To adapt national guidelines and regulations to reflect the choice for open, international standards (e.g. ISO);
 - Define functional requirements for open document formats, ensuring compatibility between applications;



Recommendations of IDABC Management Committee PEGSCO II

Dec 2006, representatives of the Member States updated the TAC recommendations:

▪ **Recommending to industry:**

- To work together to avoid proliferation of standards;
- Products should handle all relevant standard formats;
- No supersets, no subsets;
- Think about conformance testing to safeguard interoperability;
- Improve the existing standards where needed (example: electronically signed documents)



Workshop of the German Presidency (28/02/2007)

Common requirements:

- There was a general dissatisfaction with the perspective of having competing standards;
- One format for one purpose: Administrations should be able to standardize (internally) on a minimal set of formats;
- No incomplete implementations, no proprietary extensions;
- Products should support all relevant standards and standards used should be supported by multiple products;
- Conformance testing and document validation possibilities are needed -> in order to facilitate mapping / conversion;
- Handle the legacy / safeguard accessibility.



Conclusions of the International eGov Conference of the German Presidency (01/03/2007)

1. "For all parties involved, the exchange of documents and data between authorities, businesses and citizens must be possible without technical barriers. The public administration must not exclude anyone from participating in an electronic procedure owing to the use of a specific product. **The Member States are agreed that in the future electronic documents should be exchanged fully on the basis of open document exchange formats.**"

Activities in Member States

- ▶ Belgian government as early adopter of ODF/ISO 26300
- ▶ Netherlands: Strategy for migration approved
- ▶ Denmark: field study on formats
- ▶ Germany: towards a common strategy
- ▶ France: large scale migrations and discussion about inclusion of ODEF in national interoperability framework
- ▶ Spain: approved strategies and large-scale migrations at the regional level
- ▶ “New” Member States: growing awareness of ODEFs, first strategic documents/migrations (CZ, SI, SVK)
- ▶ Member States urge the Commission to continue and increase its coordination activities in the area of ODEFs
- ▶ **On request of the Member States IDABC will propose for its next work programme (2008) a study on ongoing initiative, studies and migrations in Europe**



Work in Progress: IDABC Study on Document Formats

Deliverables:

- A **comparative study** between the specifications for ODF and OpenXml. The study will both explain the "anatomy" of each format and the differences in design goals and implementation that could impact interoperability. It will concentrate on "administrative document".
- **Guidelines for the creation of interoperable documents:** identify which features should be avoided in each document format in order to ensure that conversion of the document in the other format will preserved content, structure + presentation.
- If appropriate, a tool – **interoperability checker** – that would help to identify if incompatible features were used in a document and which.
- **Further requirements on standards** to be used in public administrations

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