The EIF and the role of Open Standards in pan-European eGovernment

An IDABC perspective

ETSI conference on standards, open standards and interoperability

Sophia Antipolis, 26 May 2005

eGovernment and Europe's policy objectives

Prosperity through growth and jobs

- Services for businesses
- Costs of interacting with government
- Creating new market opportunities

Solidarity

- Social security
- Inclusion
- Environmental conservation

Freedom and Security

- Mobility
- Crime prevention
- Civil emergencies

EIF

Public sector organisations need to collaborate

- Interoperability is required as an in-built capability of all public administrations

EIF established high-level recommendations for achieving interoperability in eGovernment

- Technical
- Semantic
- Organisational

One of a set of actions

- Guidelines, such as the EIF or the Architecture Guidelines
- Specifications (eLink, eProcurement, …)
- Infrastructures for interoperability (TESTA, eLink, XML clearing-house, Bridge CA,…)

Why standards, why "open"?

Standards:

- Expression of consensus between all interested industry actors.

- Most efficient way of achieving interoperability, not only of (technical) infrastructures but also of information and processes (as opposed to a gateway architecture).

Why "open"

- Create the lowest possible obstacles for adoption

- Allow for unrestricted procurement

- "Future proofing" investments in infrastructures

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What is meant by "open"?

The process:

- The standard is adopted and will be maintained by a not-for-profit organization,

- its ongoing development occurs on the basis of an open decision-making procedure available to all interested parties (consensus or majority decision etc.);

Diffusion of the standard

- Freely available description

- Associated patents royalty-free

- No (other) constraints on re-use.

Observations and assumptions

The observations

• Today's debate about the EIF's definition of open standards is much wider than its original context.

• We are missing the voice of the small and medium-sized software publishers.

The assumptions

• There is not a single software vendor who can ignore the requirement to interoperate with other vendors' products. Every vendor has an interest to lower the obstacles for others to link into his software.

• The emphasis on "openness" of process and of output creates unique opportunities for standardisation bodies but also challenges these to reassess their rules of procedure.

What next?

Technical competence

- Identifying suitable technologies for cross-border eGovernment needs to take precedence again
- Engage in dialogue with industry on technology and product trends
- Begin work on processes and message structures for seven priority areas
- Establish reference architecture and reference standards

Credibility

- Industry is open to discussions
- Example: open document format
- Practice what we preach

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