

# OPEN DOCUMENT EXCHANGE FORMATS WORKSHOP

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## 0 Abstract

The **Workshop on Open Documents Exchange Formats (ODEF)** was organised by the German Presidency of the European Council in collaboration with the IDABC Programme of the European Commission. It took place on **28 February 2007 in Berlin**, one day prior to the [International Conference 'Advancing eGovernment'](#) in the framework of Germany's presidency of the EU.

The One-day workshop attracted over 100 participants, with 21 Member States represented. The aim of the workshop was to coordinate the **exchange of views between stakeholders** on Open Document Exchange Formats. Although the event was oriented towards public administrations, main industry players (Adobe, IBM, Microsoft, Sun) were also present, in order to analyse their strategies and receive input from public administrations.

### *Objectives*

As information exchange in and with public administrations is very often bound to documents, the editing, archiving and exchange possibilities for documents are crucial to the optimum function of administrations, both in terms of practicality and in terms of cost. Initiatives such as the [PEGSCO Recommendations on Open Document Formats](#) published by the IDABC Management Committee demonstrate public administrations preference for "open" document exchange and storage formats that are subject to formal standardisation via international standardisation procedures.

Primary objectives of the Berlin event, held at the [German Federal Ministry of the Interior \(BMI\)](#), were to:

- compile further input from Member State public administrations on their experiences and strategies on ODEF;
- give industry players an opportunity to inform public administrations about their initiatives and perspectives on ODEF standards and standardisation procedures;
- provide a platform for exchange between stakeholders in public administrations and main industry players.

### *General Conclusions*

Based on examples for strategies for ODEF implementation and selected projects in European public administrations, the workshop addressed ODEF potential and use, and stakeholders elaborated on the requirements for developing standards in this area.

There was strong consensus on the necessity **to opt for ODEF**, as these formats were assessed as guaranteeing "openness" for the participation of stakeholders and the freedom of choice. Member State administrations intend to communicate their requirements to the industry players, who, in developing their software should consider consequences for public administrations.

### *Importance of Standardisation*

Member State representatives welcomed the standardisation initiatives undertaken by industry as steps towards open and sustainable formats. However, there is a general dissatisfaction with the perspective of having competing standards: ISO 26300 and ECMA 376 (ISO/IEC DIS 29500). Two competing standards would only perpetuate existing compatibility problems.

Instead, **interoperability** should be ensured: no incomplete implementations (one should be able to open all documents conforming to the standard), no proprietary extensions; products should support all relevant standards, and standards used should be supported by multiple products. To this goal, standard compliance programmes should be implemented, conformance testing is required and document validation possibilities

should be explored. The industry should not involve the users in a “war of the formats”. On the contrary, vendors should focus on making quality products that support all relevant standards. In addition, public administrations should be able to standardise (internally) on a minimal set of formats, e.g. they may agree one using specific format for one purpose.

### **Why ODEF?**

ODEF allow to dissociate documents from the software used to create them. In this manner, citizens, businesses and administrations will have the freedom of choice in selecting their software on the basis of functionality and quality. ODEF will also **free the information** contained *within* documents – an aspect which will eventually lead to a “market” for information mining software. Finally, there is a crucial long-term advantage. In ensuring accessibility regardless of software used, open document exchange formats will secure the future: keep the documents accessible over long periods of time, over evolving software.

### **How are ODEF to be defined?**

ODEF should be defined in an **open process** in which all stakeholders can participate. ODEF can be studied and implemented by anybody, without restrictions, in commercial applications as well as in free (open source) software. Considering the importance of the issue, formal standardisation, via recognised standardisation bodies has been requested.

For public administrations, on the other hand, this issue is of paramount importance, as documents are the “core material” of their functions. Administrations should not impose the use of specific commercial products on their correspondents or depend on commercial companies to have access to their information – the administrations must “own” their documents, and therefore not be bound to proprietary products.

### **What is the role of public administrations?**

As there are already many examples of implementation and migrating to ODEF, public administrations can coordinate as to make **optimum use of their know-how**. In this process, administrations can exchange best practices and coordinate strategies, in order to ultimately approach the industry together, with common anticipation and requirements of the preferable formats to use for exchanging documents between themselves.

### **Progress of standardisation efforts:**

- 2003: PDF/A is available as ISO Standard 19500-1
- November 2006: OASIS ODF has become ISO 26300
- December 2006: Microsoft Office Open XML approved as ECMA 376 Office Open XML
- January 2007: ECMA 376 has been submitted to ISO Fast Track
- January 2007: Adobe has announced that it will submit PDF 1.7 to become another ISO standard

### **Further Results**

The presidency's [International Conference on "Advancing eGovernment"](#) on 1 March 2007 took note of the workshop's output. The Conference's "Conclusions of the Presidency" contain the following paragraph:

4. *"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."*

## 1 Keynotes

Welcoming keynotes were delivered by:

### 1.1 *Johann Hahlen, Secretary of State, Federal Ministry of the Interior*

**Johann Hahlen** welcomed the participants of the workshop on behalf of the German presidency. He pointed out that reducing the administrative burden through the implementation of an **efficient and cost-effective eGovernment** was an important goal of the German government. Modern eGovernment contributes to the international competitiveness of European Member States.

The Secretary of State recognized the importance of lean processes and open standards for seamless and user-friendly eGovernment services. Common standards for the exchange of civil registration data as they have been implemented in Germany not only fasten the processes but also save money.

Open Document Exchange Formats (ODEF) are of paramount importance for public administrations and also a topic for the German presidency, Hahlen stated. The organisation of an international workshop on ODEF proved the presidency's commitment to become active in this field.

### 1.2 *Francisco García Morán, Director General DIGIT, European Commission*

**Francisco García Morán** provided an overview over the ODEF activities that the IDA and IDABC Programmes of the European Commission have undertaken in the last years: From studies over workshops to the TAC and now the [PEGSCO Recommendations](#). He expressed appreciation for the industry efforts and achievements in standardising document formats.

Taking into account the importance of the public sector as buyer of IT services and products, García Morán identified the following **targets** in promoting ODEF:

- to ensure accessibility of information owned by European public sector by all,
- to rationalise and facilitate the interactions among public administrations and with business and citizens,
- to unlock the information contained in public sector documents.

The Director General affirmed that the Directorate General for Informatics (DIGIT) is "*committed to continue working with all the stakeholders and industry in order to go further steps forward in this matter*".

## 2 Strategies on Open Document Exchange Formats: Examples from European Administration

### 2.1 PEGSCO – Conclusions and Recommendations (Karel De Vriendt, IDABC)

Karel De Vriendt opened the session with the presentation of [the PEGSCO Recommendations on Open Document Formats](#) that were approved by the IDABC Management Committee in December 2007. Since the PEGSCO is composed of representatives from all Member States, the Recommendations reflect the common denominator of European public administration in regard to document standards.

Besides reiterating former IDA and IDABC activities and lauding the achievements in standardisation, the PEGSCO document focuses on providing **criteria and requirements** for ODEF to users and providers. According to the PEGSCO recommendations public administrations should:

- use international document format standards;
- use standards supported by multiple products;
- adapt national guidelines and regulations to reflect the choice for open, international standards in this area;
- define functional requirements for open document formats, ensuring compatibility between applications;
- create guidelines for (non-)revisable document formats for different purposes.

Industry and providers in turn are required to:

- work together to avoid proliferation of standards;
- ensure that products handle all relevant standard formats;
- avoid supersets and subsets;
- consider conformance testing to safeguard interoperability;
- improve the existing standards where needed (example: electronically signed documents).

#### [Presentation Karel De Vriendt, IDABC](#)

### 2.2 The Belgian Ministerial Decision on implementing ODEF (Peter Strickx, Fedict)

Peter Strickx defended the need for interoperable open standards in eGovernment, clarifying that they will have to follow the so-called “Highlander” principle. Taken from an 80s fantasy movie ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highlander\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highlander_(film))) that bears the protagonist's name as title, the principle says: “**in the end, there can be only one**”.

Fedict's CIO pointed out that IT-standards are not a goal themselves, but “*E-government focuses on better services for citizens and businesses and more effective use of the Government's information resources. It sets a strategic direction for the way the public sector will transform itself by implementing business models, which exploit the possibilities of new technology*” (Office of the e-Envoy (UK)).

The complex political and administrative structures in Belgium – Federal Level/ Communities/ Regions/ 10 Provinces/ 589 municipalities – pose a special challenge for interoperable eGovernment, especially since various departments use their own types of documents.

The lack of coordination led to low quality of public services and high cost for delivery. The only way towards improvement is **integration of the back office**: “*There is no sense in a fancy front end*”. And this, in turn, can only be based on technical, semantic and organization interoperability that relies on open standards. When the Belgian Ministerial Council decided on establishing a roadmap to introduce OASIS ODF (ISO 26300) as

the main open standard for internal and external communication, it was in order to implement interoperability, reduce costs and keep options for software choice open.

However, setting (open) standards alone, Peter Strickx warned, is not enough: To use this kind of complex standards, reference implementations and compliance testing for applications are needed.

#### [Presentation Peter Strickx, Fedict](#)

### **2.3 Proactive-Paper on ODEF for Federal Administration (Joachim Sturm, Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI))**

Under the lead of the BMI a working group of experts from the German Federal administration has produced a paper that is to serve as a basis for discussion for further decisions on ODEF. Accordingly, **Joachim Sturm's** presentation focused on the current situation in German public administration and he discussed the specific advantages and potential challenges in migrating to ODEF.

With **several office products** on the market supporting different document format standards, Sturm noted that the current situation is not at all satisfactory. Interoperability problems hinder reliable access to documents, and conversion entails increased cost, as well as possible loss of information in the conversion process. Different authorities, companies and citizens are using different office products. eGovernment should be barrier-free, efficient, open for all and non-restricting. Administrations should tackle this problem by leaving citizens the freedom of choice; open document exchange formats are part of the solution, with usage in two contents: editing & archiving. Sturm advocated in favor of ODEFs, stressing that they enhance competition and software diversity, increase interoperability and automation, ensure archive security, and guarantee future proof.

Sturm went on to present the case of **ODEF implementation** in German administration. This is an ambitious objective within the federal structure, and from theory to implementation there is a long way to go. "Every day disturbance will exist - however, there is a genuine need to develop a strategy for the introduction in the German administration, and this strategy needs to be converted to legislation, rules, recommendations and administration workflows".

Sturm assured that the Ministry of the Interior will contribute to this goal and strive for international coordination.

#### [Presentation Joachim Sturm, Federal Ministry of the Interior \(BMI\)](#)

### 3 Practical experience with the implementation of ODEF

#### 3.1 Migrating a Ministry (Martti Karjalainen, Ministry of Justice, Finland)

**Martti Karjalainen**, Ministry of Justice, Finland opened the session with hands-on experience, presenting the migration details to ODEF of the Finnish Ministry of Justice. With 10 000 officials, 400 offices and 130 IT staff throughout the country, this is a major migration process which began two years ago, and is currently ongoing.

According to the findings of the [office software evaluation](#) conducted by the Finnish administration in 2005, several essential applications were relying on proprietary solutions, so there was no possibility for full migration. Where possible, it was decided **to migrate to OpenOffice**, as it features a series of strong points in terms of compatibility: user interface, simultaneous use of for different types of documents, file management; furthermore Openoffice.org portable can be uploaded on a USB memory stick (~200 MB) which is another convenient factor.

Karjalainen also elaborated on **requirements** for the purposes of Training, Support and Resources. He pointed out that promoting the migration process is a delicate issue. How do administrations deal with the resistance of users? Among other actions, he underlined that it is important to make all information openly available, optimize response times in support actions, and focus on targeted training with handbooks of high quality and document templates for daily use.

In conclusion, Karjalainen noted that further **details** and **economic breakdown** of the migration procedure could be sought in the relevant report - "[Migrating a Ministry to OpenOffice.org](#)".

#### [Presentation Martti Karjalainen - Ministry of Justice, Finland](#)

#### 3.2 German Embassy Network (Rolf Theodor Schuster, German Federal Foreign Office)

**Rolf Schuster** summarised the interoperability and security challenges and the solutions implemented in the German Embassy Network.

The Federal Foreign Office comprises more than 230 German Embassies, Consulates and multilateral representations, and employs over 10 000 staff. The operating environment of its network features certain **specialised needs**:

- worldwide VPN
- secure, encrypted network certified by the service of the Interior,
- increasing needs for mobile access to network .

This entails a series of challenges, the most important consideration being **security**. Implementation of formats by a single vendor is a security hazard, Schuster said. However, experience to date has shown that there is poor compatibility even of different versions and settings of Microsoft office, not to mention among the different products relying on different standards. Software monoculture aggravates the security problem; closed source ("security by obscurity") is no solution, as the source code needs to be available for security reasons.

Currently, MS Office and Open Office are installed on each Windows desktop, noted Schuster. Thousands of notebooks and desktops are running Linux in parallel. The mobile access to the network completely relies on Linux and OSS products - for security reasons. Security can not be left to products: "*You have to assume responsibility for your own network's security*". This renders open source mandatory for security sensitive areas, despite the impractical aspect of incompatibilities in the existing formats.

Schuster insisted that what is needed is **choice in software** products and not choice between different standards: “*standards should be the common denominator*”.

He concluded with a message to the industry to “*not overwhelm customers with unnecessary functions and enhancements that, in the end, cannot be operated or implemented by other vendors*”.

#### [Presentation Rolf Theodor Schuster - German Federal Foreign Office](#)

### **3.3 Improving Accessibility in ODEF (Peter Korn, Sun Microsystems)**

**Peter Korn** presented ODEF-based functionalities and products that are being developed to assist the disabled. He pointed out that the Commission policy and programmes strongly support inclusion for all citizens.

Loss of vision and physical dexterity, hearing or cognitive impairments are disabilities that require software where “**assistive technology**” is used as an intermediary for use of normal material. Such examples are switch software, voice recognition software, etc.

Evolution in software entails many practical problems for use of the assistive software by the disabled. Korn stressed the need to adopt 4 **ODEF accessibility principles** in order to be useful for everybody:

- Easy conversion into specific formats that are used by the disabled;
- Standards process must include peer-review body of disability experts;
- Files must be accessible on affordable systems with affordable assistive technologies;
- Adoption of ODEF should not require to switch to another platform, disabled users should be able to continue using the assistive technologies in the new format.

Korn underlined the importance of **affordability**, since most people with disabilities are un-/under-employed, with little disposable income. Therefore, even if the technical solution can work, the cost barrier still needs to be considered.

A number of assistive tools were presented by Korn. All tools demonstrated were free and open software. Korn noted that the Open Source community is offering more than Windows-based products with regards to certain functionalities.

#### [Presentation Peter Korn - Sun Microsystems Inc](#)

## 4 Report on ODEF-standardisation activities

### 4.1 Office Open XML (Jean Paoli, Microsoft)

According to **Jean Paoli**, XML is becoming the "universal plug", combining technology cross-standards, cross-boundaries - and Microsoft is a leading player in this field.

Paoli gave a first hand report from the **ECMA-376 Office Open XML Standardisation** in Ecma TC 45, of which he is co-chair, pointing out that it were the TAC Recommendations that requested that "Microsoft should consider the merits of submitting XML formats to an international standards body of their choice". Starting with 2000 pages of specifications in December 2005, the document contained over 6000 pages when it was approved as Ecma-376 in December 2006.

Paoli went on to present reactions and **current developments** such as:

- the adoption of the new Office Open XML standard as default in the MS Office Suite and by in Novell's Open Office - and the support announcement of Correl
- [Open XML Developer.org](http://OpenXMLDeveloper.org) that has been established by Microsoft "... to share technical experience on Office Open XML between developers".

In the meanwhile, Microsoft has introduced the Ecma-376 Office Open XML to the ISO Fast-Track that should be concluded within approximately six months. More than 75% of Ecma standards have been approved as ISO/IEC standards, Paoli said.

In addition, he depicted on-going Microsoft activities to resolve interoperability problems with ISO 26300 documents. The ODF / Open XML Translator for Microsoft Office is sponsored and funded by Microsoft as Open Source project on Sourceforge to develop translation tools as add-ins for Microsoft Office.

ODF / Open XML Translator for Microsoft Word was finalized as of February 1, 2007. In February 2007, work will start on the ODF Translator for spreadsheet and presentation formats. In May, regular betas will be posted to Sourceforge, and final versions should be available at the end of 2007.

In terms of assistive tools for the handicapped, Mr Paoli ensured that they will continue working and that the formats will be respected.

In concluding, Mr Paoli stressed that the goal is to migrate the old binary format to an open XML-based format. This is a strictly engineering task, viewing to ensure migration with high fidelity, implementable by all.

#### [Presentation Jean Paoli - Microsoft Corporation](#)

### 4.2 OASIS ODF: perspectives of ISO 26300 (Doug Heintzman, IBM)

**Doug Heintzman** elaborated on the motivation for IBM to get involved in OEDF and their perspectives on future developments.

According to Heintzman, documents contain our history, therefore **long-term access** should be ensured: "*Why should a commercial entity control your access to your documents?*"

He reiterated the **advantages** of an open, royalty-free, vastly documented common document standard: greater choice, greater freedom of action, greater cost effectiveness, more efficient interchange of information, control of access to own information, and greater access to innovations; advantages that could not be realised when using multiple standards, according to Heintzman.

He continued by giving an overview over the **OASIS ODF standardisation process** and the IBM involvement so far. From the IBM viewpoint ODF/ISO 26300 has a huge potential as an instrument to foster interoperability, innovation and independence:

*"In working with business sheets and editing documents, there is a lot of design behind ODF that moves towards changing the underlying economics. Web and business applications, gadgets etc will be able to touch on the next generation of documents, liberated from binary. We need to break the link between application and translation of application in order to enhance value, speed and cater for the diverse group of client environments". And: "We can move beyond the paradigm of traditional office suites. Once standardised, we can go out and build on top of standardisation. We can now take the specifications, map it to a document object model and interact with documents in many ways".*

In answer to a question from the audience, Mr Heintzman stated that IBM has invited Microsoft to work on XML and revise formats so as to make them compatible, adding that by principle there is a need for a single specification.

#### [Presentation Douglas Heintzman - Director of Strategy, IBM SWG](#)

### **4.3 PDF/A – providing ODEF for non-revisable documents (Jim King, Adobe)**

**Jim King** gave an overview of Adobe's standardisation activities, with special focus on PDF/A as an archiving solution. PDF/A is the PDF subset defined for electronic document archiving applications - a useful format for saving read-only unchangeable documents.

King agreed on the principle of **avoiding subsetting and supersetting** standards, and noted that "*subsetting kills the customer side*". However, "*we subset on the producer side in order to respect certain constituencies*".

He explained that some useful general PDF features work against, and are incompatible with, preserving information over the long-term. These had to be excluded from PDF/A: **Long-term preservation** needs for electronic documents determined the objectives for PDF/A. PDF/A also includes properties of document of record, and enforces strict rules on the extra information put into the PDF file to increase fidelity for preservation and standard computer audio tools.

King stressed that Adobe's PDF has always been an "open" standard, since Adobe first published its specifications. However, the company had decided: "*It is now time ...*" to release the full Portable Document Format (PDF) 1.7 specification to AIIM, the Enterprise Content Management Association, for the purpose of publication by the International Organization for Standardisation (ISO). According to King, this will be an outstanding example of how a company can introduce and manage a de facto standard in a very open fashion. "*The technology is mature, 14 yrs old, we want PDF to be owned by the world and not by us*", King stated.

In moving the specification to public control, Adobe plans to be a strong stakeholder; however, Mr King explained that those processes will be controlled completely by the standards organizations (AIIM, ISO) and their committees. He went on to point out that a **baseline standard** is required in order to cover the millions of PDF files that already exist.

Given the vivid interest in ODF, Mr King commented on the relationship between ODF and PFD. These are not competing alternatives, he explained, but supplementary standards for different scenarios.

Jim King summed up his presentation with what the future holds:

- PFD x – graphics work
- PDF e - construction and engineering
- Ensuring accessibility to the handicapped

#### [Presentation James C. King - Adobe Systems Incorporated](#)

## 5 Panel Discussion with Stakeholders

### 5.1 Stakeholders/Users

#### 5.1.1 Long term preservation (Adam Farquhar, The British Library)

**Adam Farquhar** focused on ensuring **long term preservation** - and not only on document exchange. The British Library is responsible of taking in and preserving material. Farquhar explained that digital material is being collected in bulk in the past years.

Ensuring long term preservation entails that there will not be only one standard, as there are not only simple exchange issues to deal with. He observed that documents also have with **dynamic properties**, flash for example. In this respect, Mr Farquhar requested that vendors look into taking into consideration these other features.

#### 5.1.2 Working together to develop a unique standard (Peter Strickx, Fedict Belgium)

**Peter Strickx** pointed out that neither ODF nor the Office Open XML are ideal standards, and addressed a direct question to the vendors: *"How will you put aside differences and work together on one standard?"*

He went on to note that the definition of CleverAge states that functions of ODF will never to be compatible for with Office Open XML, and proposed that vendors make a "hit-list" of these differences to be proactively elaborated for future versions.

#### 5.1.3 Sustainable support of formats (Rolf-Theodor Schuster, German Foreign Ministry)

Rolf-Theodor Schuster stressed the importance of choice: not in standards, but definitely in software! He underlined the need to ensure that consumers will be able to use all formats in different software, sustainably, and fully compliant over the years, requesting action for sustainable support to be guaranteed.

### 5.2 Participants from industry – answers to questions

Vendors responded to a number of questions on various topics of concern to both the panel stakeholders and the audience, commented on issues addressed, and provided clarifications.

In general, stakeholders expressed concern over the question of **format** conversion, requesting further information, in order to quantify and evaluate potential loss. Vendors were invited to focus on how to handle **macros** in standardisation, as these are active components and an everyday situation, so should be interoperable. Specific issues identified include interoperability problems with **networking**, **bulk import**, and **update** capabilities.

The issue of **archiving** documents was further developed. To respond to the challenge of preservation, three aspects are to be taken into consideration:

- Documentation
- Evolution of format, which is in the hands of the standardisation body for preservation
- IP rights and standards

Microsoft was encouraged with overtures from all parties to **participate in open activities**. Representatives from public administrations requested over and over again that industry take steps to overcome interoperability problems between ISO 26300 (ODF) and Office Open XML and to implement both standards in their products.

Industry players pointed out **ongoing activities**:

Efforts to map Lotus Smartsuite to ODEF are underway, with the code still in beta but to be released in June; Heintzman (IBM) noted that *“putting them into XML is good sense, we will implement and support in our product”*.

Microsoft was urged to also work towards this direction and put ODEF in their projects. Paoli (Microsoft) confirmed that Microsoft has no reservations as towards ODEF: *“we need to understand what is needed and continue the effort”*.

Mr Paoli reassured that Microsoft has been **investing in ODEF**, with transparency instead of working in-house: The ODEF plug in is available from the Microsoft centre – to install it; there is also the translator. *“I am ready for anything, please put forward the requests”*, he said. Paoli defended this as the best way to proceed, because Office Open XML has just been ratified by Ecma and ODF (ISO 26300) is evolving, therefore translator needs to be updated frequently.

In turn, representatives from Member States required **easy installation** of the plug-in, so as to automatically detect and download the format, equivalent to the procedure in the various Office versions (Office XP / Office 2007, for instance).

There was a clear message from the public administrations in the audience that they did not want to get involved in a "war of standards" as García Morán (European Commission) phrased it. They would prefer one common ODEF and as less attractive alternative, applications that support the main competing standards. Finally, what is of immediate concern to users is *“what is the **timeframe** and what do we do in the meantime?”* Vendors were prompted to propose intermediate solutions, based on their experience and understanding of each other's formats.

Microsoft assured that though all formats are barely new, already on this base there will be real interoperability in the very near future. A merger of the standards is not likely - for practical obstacles such as the legacies of former MS Office versions.

IBM stressed the need for one standard regardless of the specifications. This standard should thus allow to integrate new technologies.

An important aspect for industries to be able to respond to the users demand is for stakeholders to **describe their business reality**: which are the functions and the levels of standards that consumers want? Only when public administrations clearly define their needs, vendors and providers will in turn be able to address the issues. All industry representatives expressed their eagerness to respond to the requirements put forward by the stakeholders.

As Heintzman of IBM illustrated, *“The battle is doing no good and it is costing money to all sides in the meantime”*.

## 6 Parallel sessions

"From presentation to strategic thinking we came down to telling the suppliers what we want them to do", observed **Karel de Vriendt**. He introduced the reports from the four **parallel sessions** where input of stakeholders form had been had been collected by topic:

### 6.1 *The current ODEF standardisation efforts: Conclusions for administrations*

Reported by **Peter Hofmann** (HA III Informationstechnologie, Projektleiter LiMux Landeshauptstadt München, Direktorium)

The parallel session consisted of experts with practical experience in migration efforts. The challenges observed are as follow:

- Interoperability
- Making the decision to migrate to OEDF itself
- Document Authenticity
- Resistance of users
- External communications

Based on their practical experience (Cities of Munich, Schwäbisch-Hall, ODF in the French Gendarmerie, Danish strategy decision), the group members analysed the challenges and steps to be taken to improve the situation in regard to the selected discussion topic. In regard to "interoperability" the group came to the conclusion that although one single standard would be desirable, in praxis it is the software that has to be compatible. Administrations should aim at a separation between software and format - and they should tell their requirements to the vendors.

There is need for documents to be archivable apart from exchangeable.

In implementation, resistance was not against formats but against software and giving up habits; this can be found in the fields of users, as requirements for communication, training. However, the bottom line is summed up in a very practical question: "*How do we dispose of software we are used to, if the alternative is not usable?*" It is therefore important to focus on the users' needs when selection and implementing migration scenarios.

#### Presentation of the conclusions

### 6.2 *Requirements to be met by ODEF standards*

Reported by **Martin Mollema**, Bureau Forum Standaardisatie, Den Haag, The Netherlands

Requirements for the ODEF standards were discussed, to come to the conclusion that the key word is *clarity*. This consists of the following elements:

- Clarity of structure: the single, overall standard may need to be tackled per domain in order to ensure clarity. There are items that may not need to be included within the standard but attached to the standard.
- Clarity of content: ready to be implemented
- Future accessibility: the standard needs to be sustainable, so priority should be kept on the long term effects.
- Extensibility
  - o Modularisation of current features (presentation vs. data)
  - o Modularisation of Future developments (signature, security, DRM...)
- Optimized balance between required functionality and required reading

An ODEF should preferably be made available under non-revocable license terms.

## Presentation of the conclusions

### **6.3 The current ODEF standardisation efforts: Expectations towards industry players**

Reported by **Oliver Schneider**, Fedict, Belgium

In this session there were 15 participants with messages to the industry vendors, regarding expectations. Main results of the session evolve around five clusters with "minimal requirements":

- Openness is mandatory. There should be collaboration, and the industry must have an open agenda with fairplay rules in this collaboration. Clients want to keep the option to exit from a product, with no dependency on the vendor.
- One single standard: OASIS ODF (ISO 26300) as a common denominator
- No supersets = avoiding proprietary extensions. Full standards should be implemented in competent products
- No patents
- Compliance testing is necessary

A standard must have multiple implementations.

## Presentation of the conclusions

### **6.4 How do we get from standards to interoperability (conformance testing etc.)?**

Presented by **Anne Østergaard**, Gnome Foundation

In order to set the standards and work towards interoperability, actors need to investigate why the existing OEDF are unable to guarantee interoperability in public administrations, define the concrete obstacles, and determine who should act toward the goals set.

The session also identified the technical problems (many legacy documents, existing standards are not mapable upon each other, no loss-less conversion possible etc.) and organizational issues (public administrations cannot mandate standards to citizens and business, enforcing a standard is difficult, no functioning market etc.).

The group proposed the following list of "possible solutions":

- Native support for all ODEF-Standards by all vendors
- Conformance testing and product certification
- Tools for automated bulk conversion
- Tool for document validation
- Clear ODEF strategy by EU public administrations
- Agreement on an authority on a European level
- Comparing budgets for different solutions

## Presentation of the conclusions

## 7 Concluding statements

### **Karel De Vriendt, European Commission, IDABC:**

Nobody is particularly interested in "formats" but we need to view interoperability problems that have been raised today and look into issues, Mr De Vriendt pointed out. He admitted that looking at the progress of the industry over the last two years, there is more formalism and information than in the past. The Industry is listening to our needs and they announce that they will comply. De Vriendt observed that good intention is there, it remains to be seen what the industry will deliver. His **message to industry**: *"If you want us to continue using your products, please make sure that we can do this independently of format"*.

De Vriendt concluded with an optimistic outlook to the potentials of current technologies and a hint that public administration should make use of this potential:

*"The most remarkable aspect is that we will be able to do so much more than just print documents. We should be enthusiastic on the potential of these formats to use the information within the documents, allowing to index, register, classify and use in ways not ever before possible, independent of format"*.

### **Joaquim Sturm, Federal Ministry of the Interior:**

Sturm stressed that the workshop produced concrete results, which shows the power of European public administration: the power to transport into the future. It also confirmed that ODEF need to be implemented.

He thus addressed his own message to **vendors and suppliers**:

Administrations will state clearly what they expect in order for the industry to work on these specific expectations: *"Please listen to your client; we and millions of users want to have the freedom of choice, without limitations and restrictions. Whether there will be cooperation with these three large players, the future will show"*.