



Technical Relations Europe

The Importance of Open Standards in the Public Sector



Government Use of ICT Standards in Procurement Policies and Practices

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The “Webolution” - Innovation Based on Open Standards

Pre-web

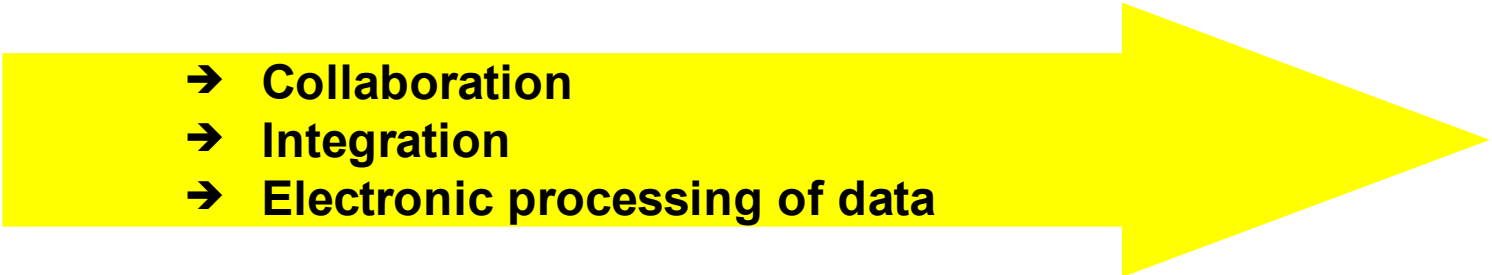
- Face-to-face meetings
- Telephones, fax
- Newspapers, books, magazines, television, cinemas...
- Encyclopedias
- Diaries
- Libraries
- Internet, ftp, AOL, CompuServe, Prodigy
- Office suite desktop software, local disk storage, floppies
- Distributed information, often paper-based

Web 1.0

- HTML, CSS, XML ... standards
- Browsers like Mosaic, Mozilla, Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera
- E-commerce, web-based forms
- Plug-ins like Flash
- Streaming music and video
- Dynamic but not very interactive web pages
- Easier access to distributed information and search engines
- Java, PHP, web services
- Mostly inbound information
- Widespread use of open source like Linux, Apache, and Firefox

Web 2.0

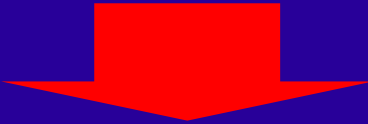
- “The read/write web”
- Standards combined to yield greater interactivity
- Blogs, wikis, and social networks
- Web-based email, word processors, spreadsheets, CRM
- The rise of SOA (service oriented architecture), SaaS, etc.
- Virtual worlds, both general purpose and games
- User-contributed content
- Browser-based applications composed of multiple distributed services primarily using information represented in XML



→ **Collaboration**
→ **Integration**
→ **Electronic processing of data**

The Role of Public Procurement

- Public authorities play an important role in the economy.
 - As large customers of ICT they have a significant effect regarding market demand and needs; and
 - As implementers of ICT they drive technology adoption.
- Public authorities need to be vendor neutral:
Nobody should be required to buy or use one specific product in order to communicate, interact or operate with a public authority
 - “External” dimension: G2B, G2C
 - “Internal” dimension: G2G (but also across boundaries)
- Public procurement should ensure that vendors can compete on fair grounds, including open source offerings
- Openness, standards and interoperability are important aspects to be observed in public procurement



A recent study of the **OpenForum Europe** on public procurement practices has shown that

in 25% of all tender notices (34 out of 136) trademarks were mentioned in procurement documents.

Basis: public procurement notices for computer software published on Tenders Electronic Daily between Feb 1 and Apr 25, 2008.

For the full study, published on Oct 22, see <http://www.openforumeurope.org/>

Standards, Open Standards, and the Public Sector

- Babylonian confusion about “standards”
 - European standardisation framework: formal standards only, “de jure”;
 - Standards that are not called or don't want to be called “standards” (i.e. deliverables from “fora” and “consortia”): Specifications, recommendations, RFCs, etc.;
 - Technologies that would like to be standards but are not: proprietary standards, “de facto” standards.

- The concept of Open Standards – focus on both
 - Development process: Open, transparent, not dominated by one vendor, consensus-based;
 - Availability to access and implement: Software interoperability standards should be available on Royalty Free (RF) terms.

- ➔ Industry (as members of major global IT standards bodies (fora and consortia) in the area of internet technologies and software interoperability) has decided for Open Standards on RF terms as default paradigm (e.g. W3C, OASIS);
- ➔ IBM recently reconfirmed its strong commitment to Open Standards with announcement of IBM's new standards policy
- ➔ Important issue: Compatibility with Open Source; no IPR encumbrances for implementation of standards in Open Source projects

Rules and definitions in EU Directives regarding standards:

Directive 98/34:

Considers only formally recognised standards organisations for European standardisation system, which is problematic for ICT

Procurement Directive 2004/18:

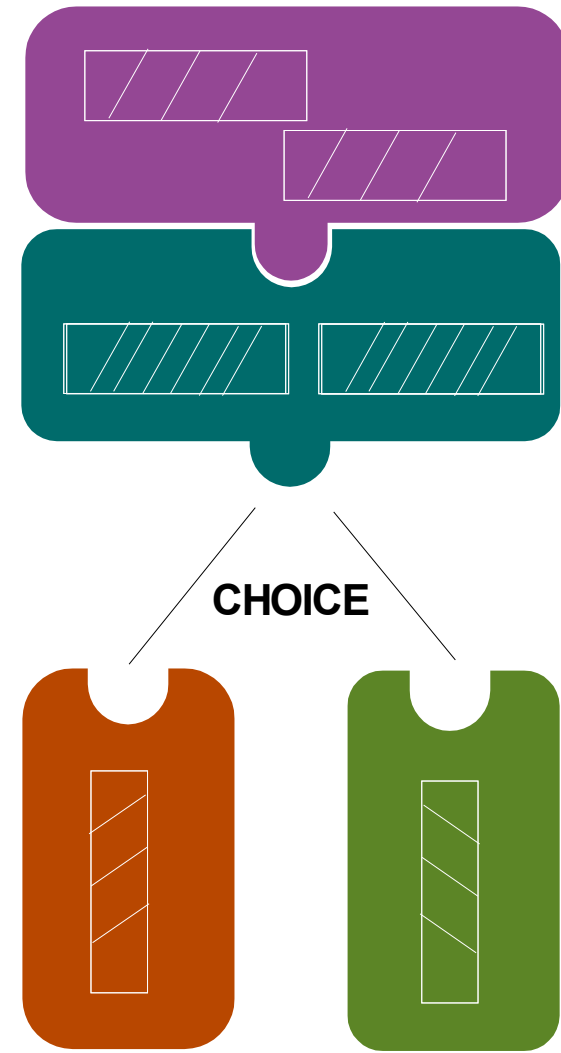
Differentiates between Technical Specifications (not specific to any organisation) and Standards (from formally recognised organisations only).

Referencing standards in the above sense in public tenders is straight forward.

Referencing technical specifications from non-formal organisations is possible but only in combination with listing functional or performance requirements.

The Value of Open Standards and Interoperability

- Open Standards provide detailed information about interfaces, data formats, message formats etc. and allow the full and free use of this information.
- In other words, Open Standards are essential for achieving genuine interoperability.
 - Technology integration;
 - Service Oriented Architectures (SOA).
- Open Standards and interoperability guarantee flexibility and choice and thus create an environment for fair competition.
 - Prevent vendor lock-in and keep exit costs for technologies low.
 - Ability to chose, replace, exchange
- Open standards provide an agreed and trusted base for innovation
- Important issues:
 - Quality of standards
 - Avoid “competing”/”multiple” standards



Leveraging the Potential of Open Standards

- Open Standards are developed voluntarily by industry for increasing competitiveness and global market access.
- Public Procurement promotes competitiveness by purchasing standards based services and solutions.
- Open Standards are essential for modern, scalable and extensible IT infrastructures allowing effective electronic offering of services, efficient collaboration and electronic processing of data.
- The public sector – via public procurement – has good reason to require open standards:
 - For public authorities: flexibility, choice, integration, independence, cost-efficiency, security, control
 - For vendors: fair competition (including Open Source), integration
 - For society: choice, independence
- Referencing of open standards from fora and consortia needs to be straight forward for public procurement in the same way as it is for standards from formal organisations.
- Public authorities should encourage the development of open standards where standardisation gaps have been identified.