

A European Perspective:
**How are policies on eGovernment
interoperability and standards
evolving?**

Benoît Müller

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Overview

- From restrictive definitions of open standards to recognizing the role of Intellectual Property in standards
- From theoretical discussions on interoperability to implementing pan-European eGovernment services
- From suspicion toward standards to valuing the importance of voluntary, industry-led standardization for competitiveness
- From a tendency to favour Open Source Software to reaffirming technology neutrality



From restrictive definitions of open standards...

- European Interoperability Framework version 1 (November 2004, outdated!) definition of Open Standards:
 - ...
 - The intellectual property – i.e. patents possibly present – of (parts of) the standard is made irrevocably available on a royalty-free basis.
 - There are no constraints on the re-use of the standard.



...to recognizing the role of Intellectual Property in standards

- Global Standards Collaboration resolution on open standards (September 2005)
 - ...
 - the standard is subject to RAND/FRAND Intellectual Property Right (IPR) policies which do not mandate, but may permit, at the option of the IPR holder, licensing essential intellectual property without compensation; and
 - the standard is published and made available to the general public under reasonable terms (including for reasonable fee or for free).



From theoretical discussions on interoperability...

- European Interoperability Framework
 - Attempts to address interoperability horizontally across broad policy areas, irrespective of the specificities of various technologies, or the meaning of “interoperability” in different circumstances
 - Emphasis on technical interoperability, putting the burden on industry
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...to implementing pan-European eGov services

- Communication on Interoperability (February 2006) and eGovernment Action Plan (April 2006)
 - Governments to work on organizational and semantic interoperability
 - Sector specific approaches to interoperability (e.g. interoperable electronic identity management)
 - Cooperation among stakeholders including industry
 - Revise European Interoperability Framework
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From suspicion toward standards...

- European Interoperability Framework
 - Similar restrictive definitions of, and narrow focus on, open standards at national level
 - Public administrations to promote interoperability, but should not use the many existing standards facilitating interoperability
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...to valuing the importance of voluntary industry-led standardization for competitiveness

- Study on ICT Standardization
- ETSI IPR Working Group and CEN eGovernment Focus Group
- Communication on Interactive Digital TV Interoperability
- Role of voluntary, industry-led standards, including open standards
- Convergence: more technologies and more standards become relevant for Governments, issues become even more complex



From a tendency to favour Open Source Software...

- European Interoperability Framework
 - Open Standards = Open Source Software (OSS)
 - Pushes for IP exceptions allegedly to favour OSS
 - Pushes for OSS procurement preferences
 - Pushes for government funded research available to OSS only
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...to reaffirming technology neutrality

- Open Standards = technical specifications /
Open Source Software = implementation
- Pragmatic approach to interoperability and standards
- Whether proprietary, mixed or open source, software relies on adequate and effective IP protection
- Software to be selected on best value for money, assessed case by case
- Government funded research to be available to all
- European Interoperability Framework will be revised!



Conclusions

- Defining Open Standards is not essential, but if doing so, listen to Standards Development Organizations
- Pragmatic and sector specific approaches to interoperability and cooperation among stakeholders are most effective to make eGovernment work
- Government interest in studying the role of standardization and its impact on government policies
- Technology neutrality increases competition among suppliers and choice for customers



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

- Benoît Müller
- e-mail: benoitm@bsa.org