

1 TO: Cabinet Office / Standards Hub

2
3 From the page:
4 <http://standards.data.gov.uk/proposal/sharing-collaborating-government-documents>

5
6 CHALLENGE: SHARING OR COLLABORATING WITH GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

7
8 First of all, a lot of thanks to Cabinet Office for organising this important consultation /
9 Challenge. I gave my reasoned opinion in the following two links:

10
11 HTML: Jukka Rannila's response to the government's proposal
12 <http://standards.data.gov.uk/comment/838#comment-838>

13
14 PDF file: Jukka Rannila's response to the government's proposal
15 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_47

16
17 However, Microsoft gave their opinion on 26 February 2014
18 HTML: <http://standards.data.gov.uk/comment/929#comment-929>
19 Microsoft Response to the government's proposal

20
21 MICROSOFT SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THEIR OPINION EARLIER !!!

22
23 It is totally **unacceptable and unfair**, that one of the mightiest (ICT) corporations in the
24 world did not disclose their reasoned opinion(s) earlier in this consultation process
25 (challenge). In this way, Microsoft did not give wider opportunities for interested
26 stakeholders to give reasoned opinions based on the Microsoft's opinion (document).

27
28 This opinion represents an opinion of an individual citizen, not any legal entity. This opinion
29 does not contain:

- 30 – any business secrets
31 – any trade secrets
32 – any confidential information.

33
34 This opinion is public. The text of the Opinion can be added to a relevant web page.
35 Annex 1 holds information about disclaimers and copyright.

36
37
38 Best Regards,

39
40 Jukka S. Rannila
41 citizen of Finland

42
43
44 signed electronically

45

46 1. The PDF file prior to this opinion

47

48 I strongly recommend to read the PDF file prior to this opinion, that opinion is my 47th opinion
49 based on the previous consultations.

50

51 EN: Opinion 47: Sharing or collaborating with government documents

52 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_47

53

54 2. The behaviour of Microsoft prior to this opinion (26 February 2014)

55

56 I have to reiterate, that Microsoft has previously been subject of several consultations. It can be
57 concluded, that the European Commission (EC) has been forced (Directorate-General for
58 Competition) to assess different competitive situations in the business areas, which are affected by
59 the market behaviour of Microsoft.

60

61 EN: Opinion 17: Opinion to Antitrust Case No. COMP/C-3/39.530

62 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_17

63

64 EN: Opinion 18: Opinion Related to the Public Undertaking by Microsoft

65 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_18

66

67 EN: Opinion 19: Official Acknowledgement by the Commission

68 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_19

69

70 EN: Opinion 20: SECOND Opinion Related to the Public Undertaking by Microsoft

71 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_20

72

73 In some cases, Microsoft has constructed written Commitments for the Directorate-General for
74 Competition. These competition (Antitrust) cases can be listed here.

75

76 Microsoft (Tying)

77 http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=1_39530

78

79 Microsoft (ECIS complaint)

80 http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=1_39294

81

82 PO/Microsoft+NTL

83 http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=1_37925

84

85 PO/Microsoft+UPC

86 http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=1_37924

87

88 Microsoft Europe

89 http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=1_37792

90

91 It has been a great disappointment for me, that the European Commission has not disclosed publicly
92 the responses given by different stakeholders. The European Commission calls the as “Market
93 Tests”, and all interested parties are invited to give their reasoned opinions based on the
94 Commitments made by different companies.

95

96 Other companies have also forced the European Commission (Directorate-General for Competition)
97 to take same actions based on market behaviour of some companies. My opinions related to those
98 competition cases can be downloaded from the following web page addresses.

99

100 EN: Opinion 32: COMP/C-3/39.692/IBM - Maintenance services

101 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_32

102

103 EN: Opinion 37: CASE COMP/39.654 - Reuters instrument codes

104 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_37

105

106 EN: Opinion 41: AT.39398: observations on the proposed commitments

107 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_41

108

109 3. The behaviour of Microsoft related to this opinion

110

111 I have to reiterate, that it is totally **unacceptable and unfair**, that Microsoft gave their opinion
112 (documents) so late, that there is just some hours to give a reasoned responses based on the opinion
113 given by Microsoft.

114

115 In the case of Finland (GMT+2) there are just some hours before the consultation (Challenge) is
116 over. The opinion of Microsoft (26 February 2014, 1:45 pm, GMT+0) can then be reviewed just
117 some hours (GMT+2).

118

119 4. The actual situation on the standardisation of the OOXML standard

120

121 At this phase, I have to refer to my Opinion (23 June 2010) based on the (ISO/IEC JTC 1 / SC 34 /
122 Working Groups 1, 4 and 5), which is based on actual reality with the standardisation of the
123 OOXML standard.

124

125 EN: Opinion 24: ISO/IEC JTC 1 / SC 34 / WGs 1, 4 and 5 in Helsinki 14-17 June 2010

126 http://www.jukkarannila.fi/lausunnot.html#nro_24

127

128 I made some conclusions based on those meetings:

129

130 1. OOXML still demands much real human work in order to correct ALL defects

131 2. OOXML is not 100% perfect

132 3. ODF is not 100% perfect

133 4. The ultimate winner of this ODF/OOXML standardisation wrangle is PDF.

134

135 The situation is the same on 26 February 2014 – PDF is so ubiquitous, that all relevant and serious
136 document processing utilities nowadays conform to the PDF.

137

138 **5. The status of PDF is very firm!!!**

139

140 Based on this situation, we can look to the web page of the other consultation (Challenge) organised
141 by the Cabinet Office:

142 <http://standards.data.gov.uk/proposal/viewing-government-documents>

143

144 The number of comments related to this challenge is very small. Since PDF is so ubiquitous, there
145 is discussion only about the versions of the PDF standards.

146

147 **6. The status of the ODF standards?**

148

149 Like said, the ODF standard was not 100% perfect on June 2010. However, the NUMBER of the
150 ODF defect reports were much smaller than the NUMBER of OOXML defects.

151

152 Based on this simple calculation, it can be noted, that it is easier to correct smaller number of
153 defects related to the ODF standard.

154

155 It is easy to collect the number of pages for ODF standards from this web page

156 <http://standards.iso.org/ittf/PubliclyAvailableStandards/index.html>

157 ==> ISO/IEC 26300:2006/Amd 1:2012

158 ==> ISO/IEC 26300:2006/Cor.1:2010

159 ==> ISO/IEC 26300:2006/Cor.2:2011

160 ==> ISO/IEC 26300:2006

161

162 Altogether the number of the pages (728+108+10+13) is 859.

163

164 Then we can look the version 1.2. of the ODF standard.

165

166 29 September 2011 - Version 1.2

167 <http://docs.oasis-open.org/office/v1.2/os/OpenDocument-v1.2-os.html>

168

169 As can be seen, the PDF document contains 120 pages.

170

171 **7. The status of the OOXMLstandards?**

172

173 It can be concluded, that the number of pages is smaller than in the OOXML. The amount of pages
174 related to OOXML can be collected from the same page

175 <http://standards.iso.org/ittf/PubliclyAvailableStandards/index.html>

176 ==>ISO/IEC 29500-1:2012

177 ==>ISO/IEC 29500-2:2012

178 ==> ISO/IEC 29500-3:2012

179 ==> ISO/IEC 29500-4:2012

180

181 The OOXML standard documents is altogether over 6000 pages, and then there is a large collection
182 of “Electronic inserts”.

183

184 Based on this simple calculation, it can be concluded, that over 6000 pages (OOXML) means a lot
185 of work, when implementing the OOXML in different document processing utilities.

186

187 **8. The amount of real people involved in the real OOXML standardisation process?**

188

189 JTC 1/SC 34/WG4 as a working group has the following functioning web page (26 February 2014)

190 <http://www.jtc1sc34.org/wg4/>

191

192 From this page there is a link for the Document Register (ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 34/WG 4)

193 http://lucia.itscj.ipsj.or.jp/itscj/servlets/ScmDoc10?Com_Id=w4

194

195 From this page I have selected

196 ==> Meeting Report

197 ==> Date

198 ==> Descending

199 ==> Search

200 The result is meeting reports of this working group (ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 34/WG 4). From this page
201 we can take the following document

202 ==> (261) Minutes of the Bellevue Meeting of 2013-06-17/20

203

204 SO, in the latest face-to-face meeting, there were twelve (12) persons involved. I don't know the
205 actual amount of persons involved in the OOXML standardisation processes.

206

207 Based on my own experience (actually attending a meeting / Helsinki 14-17 June 2010), I can
208 conclude, that all persons involved are well-meaning persons.

209

210 However, the latest published defect report document (22 April 2010) is in the following address:

211 <http://kikaku.itscj.ipsj.or.jp/sc34/wg4/archive/sc34-wg4-2010-0138.zip>

212 The number of defects (22 April 2010) in this document is 347 different defect reports.

213

214 The reality is, that processing all defect reports means using a lot of time and a lot of human
215 resources. In reality, this means that e.g. those 12 persons involved have to use their valuable time
216 and effort for correcting these defects (e.g. 347).

217

218 Based on my own experience in one (Helsinki) face-to-face meeting, it is possible to address just a
219 limited amount of defect reports in one meeting. Solving all defects (e.g. 347) will take time and
220 effort.

221

222 SO, what I am saying? I am saying, that OOXML standardisation is more a process, which will
223 evolve based on the work done by that rather small amount of people.

224

225 My conclusion is, that the amount of persons involved OOXML standardisation might be shrinking,
226 not increasing new persons.

227

228 Naturally, we can conclude, that Microsoft may have internally several engineers working on
229 OOXML conformity with their own products.

230

231 As can be seen from (ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 34/WG 4) working group documents, Microsoft have their
232 representatives working on OOXML standardisation process, which is still evolving. The obvious
233 question is naturally following: how long there will be other representatives from other
234 communities than from Microsoft?

235

236 My assumption is, that the number non-Microsoft representatives in the public OOMXL
237 standardisation process may be a decreasing, not increasing. This remains to be seen, but the
238 absence of non-Microsoft representatives is a serious issue.

239

240 Privately, different organisations will seriously work on OOXML conformance, but they are not
241 concerned with the public images/impressions of OOMXL standardisation process.

242

243 Since OOXML might constitute a de facto standard in some contexts, different communities do not
244 actually care about the public images/impressions of OOMXL standardisation process.

245

246 Serious question: Will there ultimately be only Microsoft representatives in the public OOMXL
247 standardisation process?

248

249 **9. OOXML is implemented in several document processing utilities**

250

251 List of software that supports Office Open XML

252 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_software_that_supports_Office_Open_XML

253

254 Like the list above indicates, OOXML is implemented in several software, and OOXML might
255 constitute a de facto standard in some contexts.

256

257 However, there is the serious question about the de jure standards, and according to my
258 understanding this consultation (challenge) is about the de jure standards, which might be enforced
259 by different government entities.

260

261 Therefore, the Cabinet Office is in a very tight spot when dealing with the de jure standards and de
262 facto standards. The Cabinet Office has to make very careful assessment with the document
263 formats.

264

265 **10. Creating a test suite for OOXML?**

266

267 In my previous opinion, I advocated either creating a test suite or selecting a test suite for ODF
268 conformance. With this test suite it would be rather easy to compare conformance of ODF with
269 different software solutions.

270

271 However, corollary to ODF test suite, there should be a test suite for OOXML; either selected or
272 created for the Cabinet Office usage.

273

274 Like I have explained earlier, the OOXML standardisation is more an evolving process at the
275 moment, and the quality and quantity of defect reports is a pertaining issue.

276

277 Therefore, it can be concluded, that it is possible to create a temporary solution for the OOXML test
278 suite. The Cabinet Office can ratify the OOXML test suite based on some certain point of
279 standardisation process, e.g. on some date of 2014. Then it should be easy to construct a test suite
280 based on the situation on a certain date.

281

282 However, the current fluidity of OOXML standardisation process constitutes some problems.

283

284 1) Who will determine a certain point of the OOXML standardisation process, e.g. on some date of
285 2014?

286 2) Is it easy to create a temporary solution for the OOXML test suite, e.g. on some date of 2014?

287 3) Who will maintain this OOXML test suite in the long run?

288

289 The solution for these problems means following issues.

290

291 1) The Cabinet Office has the possibility to select a specific date of the OOXML standardisation
292 process, and the test suite could be constructed based on the situation of the selected date.

293 2) Is there enough technical expertise inside the Cabinet Office to create the test suite for OOXML
294 based on some certain date in the standardisation process?

295 3) Is it a responsibility for the Cabinet Office to create and maintain versions OOXML test suite?

296

297 This is an important issue, since in the public procurement there must be a fair, clear and simple
298 guidances for different vendors. My initial conclusion is, that there is not enough technical expertise
299 inside many government entities for creating a test suite (for OOXML and/or ODF) for different
300 software products.

301

302 This means, that a test suite for OOXML has to be created in the first place, and this leads to using
303 external expertise for creating a test suite for OOXML. In this way, there could be a test suite for
304 OOXML, and this test suite would take care of the special needs of the Cabinet Office and other
305 stakeholders.

306

307 **11. Why I am emphasising the test suite for OOXML?**

308

309 Naturally, we can conclude, that there are enough office software with OOXML support. This is
310 really the situation, since there are numerous versions of software and they conform to OOXML
311 partly or totally.

312

313 However, there is a constant need for creating documents dynamically using different parameters. A
314 good example in this context is legislative documents, which can be constructed dynamically during

315 the legislative processes – there are numerous versions of different documents during a legislative
316 process. In the case of PDF it can be concluded, that PDF files are constructed dynamically using
317 different parameters.

318

319 The problem with this dynamic document processing is, that the underlying software is tied to the
320 specific needs of the Cabinet Office and to different stakeholders. In other words, there might not be
321 commercial software based on the needs of the Cabinet Office and different stakeholders.

322

323 Therefore, OOXML conformance with the current commercial vendors may not be sufficient for the
324 Cabinet Office and different stakeholders, since the needs of the Cabinet Office and different
325 stakeholders are so specific, that the commercial OOXML conformance is irrelevant.

326

327 In short, creating dynamic PDF documents is my recommendation, and creating dynamic editable
328 ODF and/or OOXML documents should not be the solution. Once more, PDF is the ultimate
329 winner.

330

331 However, the amount of documents in the Cabinet Office and with different stakeholders (public
332 sector) can be overwhelming, and one simple office suite is not sufficient.

333

334 **12. Do we need several document formats for dynamic document creation?**

335

336 The previous problems mentioned lead us to the very demanding question: How many document
337 formats has to be processed dynamically? One, two or more?

338

339 If we stick with the PDF format with dynamic document processing, there is only one format for
340 dynamically created documents.

341

342 But, is there a need for creating EDITABLE documents dynamically? This is a very serious
343 question for the Cabinet Office and with different stakeholders (public sector)?

344

345 A good example is the linguistic diversity in the European Union, and for example the European
346 Parliament and the European Commission have very elaborate document processing systems, and
347 very detailed dynamic document creation solutions with several document formats, e.g. PDF.

348

349 Based on this need for dynamic document creation, we have to conclude, that dynamic creation for
350 several document format means a lot work for information technology specialists.

351

352 Question: Does the the Cabinet Office with different stakeholders (public sector) need several
353 EDITABLE document formats for this dynamic document creation?

354

355 **13. Do we absolutely need several EDITABLE document formats for dynamic document 356 creation?**

357

358 If this the actual need, then the Cabinet Office with different stakeholders (public sector) has to
359 determine the needed document formats, e.g. PDF, OOXML and ODF.

360

361 However, with two EDITABLE document formats, there is need for double work for the lot work
362 for information technology specialists.

363

364 Therefore, it could be feasible to select just one EDITABLE document format for the internal usage,
365 and then create the dynamic document creation systems based on the one EDITABLE document
366 format.

367

368 In this way the Cabinet Office with different stakeholders (public sector) could have an internal
369 editable document format, and different dynamic document creation systems could conform to this
370 one EDITABLE document format.

371

372 **14. Does the external stakeholders need more than one EDITABLE document formats?**

373

374 This is a hard question, since the Cabinet Office cannot make demands for the commercial usage in
375 the private sector. In the the commercial usage there can be both OOXML and ODF usage.

376

377 Based on this assumption, there could be a need for creating dynamically documents based on
378 several formats, e.g. PDF, ODF and OOXML.

379

380 However, it can be noted, that there is need for clear timestamps and clear date information in
381 public sector documents, and this can be done easily with PDF format. Adding timestamps and date
382 information is harder to ODF and OOXML format, since they are EDITABLE document formats.

383

384 **15. Back to the nature of OOXML standardisation**

385

386 Based on the previously mentioned issues, the possible test suite of OOXML should be very clear
387 and easy to use. However, creating dynamic document processing capabilities to an information
388 system means a lot of work, and therefore the standards should be unchanging.

389

390 Since the OOXML standardisation is an evolving process, actual implementation of OOXML in
391 dynamic document processing information systems means, that the systems are hard-bolted to a
392 certain point of the standardisation process.

393

394 Therefore, there would be several systems with differing points of OOXML standardisation, and
395 therefore there would be several versions of OOXML standards implemented, IF there is moving
396 point of the standardisation process in different systems. In practise, the selected point of OOXML
397 standardisation (e.g. February 2014) could be selected for the system A. However, the system B
398 could be based on the next point of OOXML standardisation (e.g. February 2015). This could go on
399 with different systems, since there can be points of OOXML standardisation, which can last some
400 years in the current speed.

401

402 Therefore, the Cabinet Office is therefore forced to select one certain point of point of OOXML
403 standardisation (e.g. February 2014), and then the Cabinet Office has to stick with this point of
404 standardisation for a long time period.

405

406 16. Back to the nature of ODF standardisation

407

408 Like said, the ODF format is not perfect, but it has some advantages mentioned before. In the
409 current reality, the next version of ODF is (1.3.) in the works, and the Cabinet Office have to work
410 with ODF versions 1.1 and 1.2.

411

412 Based on the previously mentioned need for dynamic document creation, it can be concluded that
413 ODF standardisation is not in the flux, since versions 1.1 and 1.2. have been corrected rather well.

414

415 Therefore, the creation of the test suite for ODF could be done with external experts. There would
416 be need for creating test suite for ODF just once, with OOXML there would be several versions of
417 the possible test suite.

418

419 According to current knowledge, there would not be differing points of standardisation process, and
420 the ODF standardisation process would be less turbulent.

421

422 Since this test suite for ODF could take care of the special needs of the Cabinet Office (and
423 stakeholders), it could be used for several years without any modifications.

424

425 17. Evaluating Microsoft's opinion (document) based on the previous explanations

426

427 The practical reality is, that in reality the Cabinet Office (and stakeholders) will receive documents
428 in several formats: e.g. RTF, DOC, PDF, ODF, OOXML. In practice, the Cabinet Office (and
429 stakeholders) can acquire software, which can convert documents from the outside to the internal
430 document format of the Cabinet Office (and stakeholders). This internal document format can be
431 ODF or some other selected format.

432

433 Microsoft has made calculations about the popularity of PDF, ODF and OOXML documents. Like
434 the results show, the PDF format is overwhelmingly popular in many cases.

435

436 However, Microsoft rightly notes, that OOXML is a maturing standard, and there is a business plan
437 to improve the OOXML as a standards. However, ISO/IEC JTC1/SC34/WG4 web page contains a
438 dead link: from the page <http://www.jtc1sc34.org/wg4/>

439

440 <http://www.29500sc34comments.org/> (this is not working on 26 January 2014)

441 This web page is possibly meant for handling defect reports (hundreds in other words)

442

443 Like said, the number of non-Microsoft experts in the OOXML standardisation is not gradually
444 increasing, and the actual number non-Microsoft experts remains to be seen in the long run.

445

446 It is true, that the number of OOXML document is larger than the number of ODF documents. This
447 is due to the fact, that a very large percentage of the people using computer do not understand the
448 difference between different formats, and they simply select "Save" when using a office software
449 suite. More experienced users know how to make PDF files, and they don't send editable documents

450 as the first choice.

451

452 Microsoft does not deny the importance of PDF files in their response to this consultation
453 (Challenge). Therefore, the usage of PDF files is not seriously challenged by Microsoft.

454

455 However, Microsoft's response does not mention the need for dynamically created documents and
456 the complex web of public sector information systems. Like said previously, the best way for
457 dynamically created documents is – once more – PDF.

458

459 According to Microsoft, the public sector should use two internal standards, both OOXML and
460 ODF, which means doing the same work for two times. Inside the complex web of public sector
461 systems, there should be just one internal format for editing. Like said before, the commercial office
462 software solutions do not cover the complex needs of public sector information systems.

463

464 Therefore, it is advisable to the Cabinet office (and stakeholders) to have only one editable
465 document format inside the the Cabinet office (and stakeholder) systems. Since OOXML
466 standardisation is still in constant flux (possibly for years), this constitutes several problems
467 mentioned before.

468

469 I referred to the complex document management systems used by the European Commission and
470 the European Parliament, and those system work with PDF files and DOC files. As an example we
471 can take a good example of a legislative process.

472

473 Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE
474 COUNCIL on European Standardisation and amending Council Directives 89/686/EEC and
475 93/15/EEC and Directives 94/9/EC, 94/25/EC, 95/16/EC, 97/23/EC, 98/34/EC, 2004/22/EC,
476 2007/23/EC, 2009/105/EC and 2009/23/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council

477

478 http://ec.europa.eu/prelex/detail_dossier_real.cfm?CL=en&DosId=200502

479

480 As can be seen from this page, documents are gathered and distributed from several entities. When
481 clicking different links, there are some formats: e.g. HTML, PDF, TIFF, DOC. However, when
482 orienting to a legislative process, part of the documents are created dynamically from different
483 databases.

484

485 The TIFF format is a good example of longevity of the public sector systems, since the public sector
486 information has to endure longer than many commercial entities can anticipate. In short, the
487 complex web of public sector information systems need well-defined internal standards. Therefore,
488 the internal standard to be selected should rely on well-defined and non-changing standards.

489

490 In short, Microsoft may endorse OOXML as a standardisation process, but the need for well-
491 defined and non-changing standard for several decades is the prime interest for several new and
492 existing public sector information systems. At the moment, Microsoft cannot guarantee the stability
493 of OOXML for decades – the standard is still in the works for some years to come. Meanwhile, the
494 Cabinet Office has to look for more stable standards for the coming years.

495

496

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498

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509 entity making law proposals.

510

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515

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538



1 Based on the Finnish three-party system there is a phenomenon called extreme-centre in Finland. The 2011 parliamentary elections in Finland challenge the three-party system, since three “old” parties were not traditionally as the three largest parties. The is now a “new” party as the third largest party. We all must remain being interested about this new development in Finland.