eGovernment:
From interoperability to collaboration

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Overview

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Disclaimers

- This presentation provides technical information on the IDABC programme and the eGovernment actions of my unit. This presentation should not be considered as an official statement from the Commission.
- Neither the European Commission nor any person acting on its behalf is responsible for the use that might be made of the information contained in this presentation.
Introduction

• I am not an expert in standardisation matters, hence I will try to avoid to use the term “standard”. Instead I will speak about what is needed for interoperability.
• Likewise, I’ll try to avoid the term “open”.
• Instead I will speak about what is needed for interoperability and collaboration.
IDABC (1)

- Interoperable delivery of pan-European eGovernment services to public administrations, businesses and citizens
- 2005 – 2009
- 150 million euro
• Enables the efficient, effective and secure interchange of information between public administrations
• Extends the benefits of this interchange of information to business and citizens
• Supports the Community decision-making process and facilitates communication between the Community institutions
• Achieves interoperability on the basis of the European Interoperability Framework
• Contributes to the efforts of Member State public administrations
• Promotes the spread of good practice
• Direct support for concrete Community projects which concern the establishment or enhancement of pan-European eGovernment services

• Supporting actions:
  – Infrastructure services in the strict sense (network, security, authentication, middleware)
  – Infrastructure services in a larger sense (guidelines, interoperability measures – European Interoperability Framework, architecture guidelines, XML clearinghouse, eGovernment and open source observatories, open source repository, etc.)
  – Studies, evaluations, dissemination activities
eGovernment

- eGovernment is the use of information and communication technologies in public administrations – combined with organisational change and new skills – to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies.
- eGovernment is a way for public administrations to become:
  - more open and transparent, and to reinforce democratic participation;
  - more service-oriented, providing personalised and inclusive services to each citizen;
  - productive, delivering maximum value for taxpayers' money.
The Lisbon agenda

- eGovernment has various links with the Lisbon agenda:
  - Improve efficiency in the public sector (government costs go down)
  - Reducing administrative burdens for business (business costs go down)
  - The public sector is an important buyer of ICT goods and services
  - Public sector actions can have an impact on the competitiveness of the ICT sector
eGovernment actors

- Public administrations at various levels: European, national, regional, local (great diversity of sizes and needs)
- Businesses of all sizes (from large multinationals over small and medium enterprises to one person companies – again with a great diversity of needs)
- Individual citizens
- ICT service providers

- They all must be able to interact electronically
Technology

• Although there is of course an enormous infrastructure to be constructed, maintained and operated, emphasis is on software

• Service oriented architectures: although “state-of-the-art”, not really “high-tech” – no high upfront investments needed to participate (as actor, as provider)

• Software is a shareable resource – once made, it can be used by many users (at the same time)

• By the way: also “information” is a shareable resource – provided the information is encoded in a “shareable format”
Interoperability

- My electronic “agent” must be able to interact with your electronic “agent”
  - No problem, I have published my “interfaces”
  - No problem, you just need to use my programme to communicate with me
  - No problem, but you need to pay me for the right to make your programme interact with mine
  - Or: let’s sit together and agree on what and how

- Freedom of choice? eDemocracy? eInclusion?
Competitiveness

• We want to have a healthy ICT eco-system with an emphasis on the possibility of small and medium enterprises to provide ICT services to public administrations
• SMEs are very well placed to serve local needs and to construct/adapt systems to local circumstances
• Barriers to entry should be as low as possible:
  – Avoid upfront payments just to have access to specifications and/or to have the right to use the basic technologies
Collaboration (1)

- We are solving the same problems over and over again.
- Most software we use is custom-made (made especially for us – and paid for with taxpayer’s money) – mostly via public procurement
- Re-use and collaboration should be promoted
- We need to agree on functionality and interfaces – but we must ensure that the software remains easily adaptable to local and/or changing needs
- We want to re-use and collaborate without too big an administrative and procedural overhead (otherwise the advantages quickly disappear)
Collaboration (2)

• Therefore, we should try to start from work already done by others (especially if that is already paid for by the taxpayer)
• Therefore, we should request that the software developed for us:
  – Can easily be re-used by others
  – Can easily be changed by others (and we need to be able to benefit from any improvement made by someone else)
• We should be able to put further maintenance and evolution of our software forward up for tender regularly
Other aspects

- Security (do we know what our systems are doing?)
- Transparency, democracy (do our business and citizens know what our systems are doing?)
- Will we remain able to access our information in the future?
What others say: 2 views from industry

- BSA: “Governmental policy on software standards should not discriminate in favour of, or against, any particular software development model.” (BSA on “principles for software innovation” – letter to Mr Barroso, June 2005)
What others say: 2 views from industry

- Nessi: Networked European Software & Services initiative (http://www.nessi-europe.com)
- Two quotes from their “vision document”
Today however the IT services marketplace is changing dramatically, due to a series of factors:

- Business and the Public Sector, which require flexibility to keep up with the ever increasing pace of change caused by globalisation and technological innovation.

- A continuing shift toward increasingly made-to-order solutions, which changes the balance of demand from products to services and from monolithic do-it-all applications to ad hoc service components and customised software solutions.

- The clear emergence of Open Source Software, which nourishes the dynamics of the ICT marketplace and creates an “eco-system” that fosters opportunities by: increasing options and competitions, aligning to open standards objectives, positioning software are a public good, improving technological self-reliance, increasing transparency, minimising security risk while optimising costs.

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NESSI – vision document: quotes

- Over the last 15 years the IT marketplace has been dominated by large software suppliers. SME’s, either software developers or end-users, have had no alternative but to adopt proprietary standards. This is bound to change. Open source and open standards based solutions with service oriented architectures taking into account specifically European requirements shall provide smaller enterprises with new opportunities to drive their growth.

- Structuring of digital landscapes through open standards-based services will give rise to a new “open service” market. On the consumer side services can be procured based on any criteria (functionality, quality, cost) and from any source desired (established player vs. new market entrant, large standard provider vs. small specialised provider). On the provider side, this will open the service market and provide new opportunities particularly for specialised SMEs and companies that can build on regional strengths (language, culture, local market conditions). This will in turn allow for a stronger multi-cultural adaptiveness of software and digital services to accommodate users from diverse cultures in a society in which business tends to be international.
Summary

Standards should provide:

• For the administrations, businesses, citizens
  – Freedom of choice (of products)
  – Freedom of information: open document formats

• For the construction of eGovernment custom made software:
  – Freedom to collaborate
  – Freedom to re-use
  – Freedom to share
  – Real competition under public procurement rules
Useful links

• http://europa.eu.int/idabc
• http://europa.eu.int/information_society/soccul/egov