



Agency for Public Management  
and eGovernment

# Standardisation Forum International Network meeting

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*Report from the second meeting – Oslo May 10-11*

## Introduction

The second Standardisation Forum International Network meeting took place in Oslo May 10-11 2010. The following countries and people participated:

- Denmark : Adam Arndt, Martin Jensen Buch
- European Comission: Per Olav Gramstad
- Netherlands: Joris Gresnigt
- Slovakia: Peter Biro
- Norway: Kristian Bergem, Marit Grønntun, Steinar Skagemo, Kristin Kopland, Mehran Raja, Helge Bang

## Day 1

### Introduction – what has changed since last time?

Kristian Bergem started the meeting by welcoming the participants and apologising for setting the date for the meeting so late. As a result, there is a limited number of participants, but on the other hand that might make it easier to go into deeper discussions. Finally he thanked Joris for the initiative which started with the first meeting last autumn.

Each participant country held a short presentation on the status and changing's since last meeting in Amsterdam November 26-27 2009.

### Norway

The number of people working with standardization increased from two to eight persons last year, but this year there will be less money. Norway will have about half the budget compared with last year. Last year the work primarily focused on accessibility, semantics and character sets. Also, there was a lot of focus on document standards – and it still is. A report published this winter stated that OOXML was inadequate, which led to a lot of criticism from Microsoft and a lot of publicity.<sup>1</sup>

The report (in Norwegian) is available at: <http://standard.difi.no/filearchive/utredning-egnethetsvurdering-redigerbare-dokumentformater.pdf>

Last week a new report states that ODF is not suitable either. Norway raises some alternatives: Should we point to a specific application, or make one ourself? Or should we give someone the task of making such an application?

Also, Norway has launched a new portal, <http://standard.difi.no>.

This year, beside focus on document formats, the focus is on a national strategy for metadata, and an effort to establish a general methodology for coordination of terms across public sector. Other areas are telecommuting and a standard developed in Norway for the layout and interaction of electronic forms called ELMER.<sup>2</sup> In addition, focus is on the adoption on the existing standards, like publication of multimedia files and accessibility, through the development of guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> The report was mentioned on Slashdot: <http://news.slashdot.org/story/10/02/08/2319248/Study-Says-OOXML-Unsuitable-For-Norwegian-Government>

<sup>2</sup> See description (in English): <http://www.elmer.no/english/>

## **Slovakia**

Slovakia has had mandatory standards for ICT through a specific law since 2006. There are different areas: File formats, accessibility, standards for domains/email, web content and functionality (quality), security, IT-project management, eService and eForms. More is coming from the special sectors, like health. They also look into what versions of browsers to support.

In order to make a standard mandatory, there has to be rough estimates on the cost before a standard can become part of legislation. This is difficult to estimate – which is general for all the ICT standardisation. There is currently only one person – Peter Biro – working within this area.

## **Denmark**

In February Denmark got a new minister with responsibility for ICT, Charlotte Sahl-Madsen, with background from the industry.<sup>3</sup> She has made a good impression so far. She is committed to open government data and practical use of ICT, and has also been very clear on the prioritisation of activities; unless it contributes to the Danish economy, it should not be done.

The organisation structure has been changed, in order to have more cooperation with people from other departments. Denmark has a strengthened focus on public data, and a changed focus from doing governments data to finding data sets.

In Denmark they are looking into cloud computing, making guidelines that will give public sector more confidence when it comes to putting data into a cloud.

In order to make room for the focus on cloud computing and open data, OIOXML is more or less put on hold. Instead of having rules detailing how common XML-dialects should be made, it is reduced to making the standards mandatory. The focus is changed from syntactic to semantics. As a result, the models can be transformed to XML. A common tool is available for doing the transformation. The next step will be to have a common tool for doing the modelling, but there are not enough users yet, so this is not being worked on. Instead, the different domains do modelling with the tools as they like, and the standardised model is used for transformation when there is need for interchange between the domains. “The people that say they won’t use it, are really upset that we don’t want to build it”.

They have been asked to make IPv6 as a possible mandatory standard. Today it is “Recommended”. If it is going to become mandatory, they will need to find the process of making standards mandatory, which is not a documented process as of now.

Denmark has also had two evaluations of the document formats ODF and OOXML, with the same conclusions as the recent Norwegian report.<sup>4</sup> Neither of them are ready as of today. A parliamentary debate on the issue, including so many abbreviations that it got noted by the president ended with a common “memo of understanding”: An expert group is mandated to make a list of *interoperable* formats – and it is not clear whether ODF is already on the list or not. The Danish Standardisation body has the role as an independent secretariat for the group. For standards to be added to the list, it must be proved that it is interoperable with the existing standards already on the list, but it is not clear whether the requirement of interoperability is mandatory for the first version of the list.

## **The Netherlands**

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<sup>3</sup> See CV in English: <http://en.vtu.dk/the-minister/cv>

<sup>4</sup> Denmark has also been mentioned on Slashdot ... see: <http://news.slashdot.org/story/10/01/29/1357203/Denmark-Chooses-OpenDocument-Format>

In the Netherlands there are two lists of open standards, one with mandatory (“comply or explain”) standards which currently includes 14 standards, and one with common (reference) standards, with 42 standards. Currently there is work being done on XBRL – i.e. the taxonomy on top of the XBRL-syntax –, IPv6, PKI, and BPEL.

An important area in the Netherlands is on how to increase *adoption* of open standards. They have developed guides for using the different document standards, e.g. a “decision tree” for choosing the right format, and they do yearly monitoring. The CIOs of each agency are guided in making sure the open standards are represented in the internal IT-governance. Unfortunately, professional IT-governance in public agencies is rare. Another concern regarding adoption is the question of which adopting strategy to use when (different types of standards might benefit from different strategies for adoption).

On the area of semantics, the Netherlands has developed a new methodology – but as has been stated: “the window of opportunities might not be now”. Even though everyone acknowledges the problem and sees the methodology as a solution, the agencies might not be ready to do the adjustment on existing work-practice yet.

The Netherlands are also working on a common semantic Invoice-standard. If you are starting from scratch use UBL, else, use the domain standard and plan for migrating to CII later.

Other standards being considered are BPEI, PKI and the HL7-standards for the health sector. The latter might not pass, because of problems with openness of the standard. Another way of standardisation in the Netherlands is by making Software developed by ministries/public bodies mandatory for the whole public sector.

### **CAMSS (EC)**

At the last network meeting, the CAMSS-work was influenced by the process of shutting down IDABC, and now it is influenced by the process of starting up ISA.

Many of the new commissioners are interested in the ICT-area and the Digital Agenda is likely to become a cross-commissionaire agenda. “Digital agenda”, open standards, -- what’s openness, what’s standards? There are a lot of new people coming in who are eager to debate these topics.

The ISA-programme has established their work program and the program actions have been approved by the Member States. ISA are now working on the project charters for the actions. Hopefully the work programme will be adopted in June with the actions starting in July. Which actions are discontinued in the ISA? It seems like all the interoperability-actions are re-introduced, including CAMSS, in ISA. There will be a new Programme Officer for CAMSS, as Per Olav will go back to Denmark this autumn.

## **Selection of standards – compare the Norwegian criteria with those defined by CAMSS, the Dutch**

Norway, The Netherlands and CAMSS held presentations of the methodologies of Norway. The presentations of Norway and The Netherlands are included in following files:

2010-05-10 Evaluation methodology and criteria NO.pdf  
2010-05-10 Evaluation methodology and criteria NL.pdf  
2010-05-10 Comparison CAMSS vs. NL.xls

### **Norway**

Kristian presented the Norwegian process and criteria. The Norwegian body receives approximately 10 proposals for standards from people outside the standardisation work each year.

- Who should be in the board?

- Who should be doing the assessment of standards?
  - o Originally, the members of the board did it themselves. Today it is done by contractors. The problem are that they don't know the area better than we do, and we will anyway need to know the assessment in detail in order to be able to answer questions coming in the later phases of the process
- Consequences – cost/benefit
  - o What is the zero-scenario? What is the benefit of increasing the speed of adoption of a standard like UTF-8?
  - o What is the difference of cost/benefit when choosing one out of several standards within an application area?
  - o Within the “alternatives”-part of the assessment-phase, the cost/benefit of the alternatives are considered, but only “scratching the surface”. Then, after getting the standard supported by the board, the “real” cost/benefit is performed in order to get the standard mandatory
  - o Qualitative benefits? How do we assess that, and compare it with financial costs?
  - o No standards so far has had a cost less than 10 mill €
  - o “Mandatory” means “Comply or explain”
  - o For instance for accessibility; if these standards were imposed too strict, the result would be that no-one would put video on the web

After a standard has been assessed, there is a public hearing based on the written report 6 weeks before the board meeting. It is being tests with having two weeks hearings on each part of the assessment. People are not trained to react on these hearings yet. The aim is to avoid what happened with the multimedia standardisation, where someone at the last big meeting mentioned a standard that should have been part of the assessment.

“Mandatory” is by regulation, based on the statutory law: “Act relating to procedure in cases concerning the public administration [Public Administration Act]”

For the regulation, see <http://www.lovddata.no/for/sf/fa/xa-20090925-1222.html>, translate it through <http://translate.google.com>

The status “Not recommended” has not been used, but is necessary in order to “get rid of” standards after they have had status “obsolete”.

In Norway, there are no “minimum-criteria” and no weighting of criteria relative to the others. The criteria seems to be quite close to the CAMSS-criteria.

## **Netherlands**

Joris presented the Dutch process and criteria.

The goal is higher interoperability and less dependence on suppliers.. Open standards are the norm to achieve both objects.

Two lists: “Comply or explain” and “common” – reflects the status of the standard. (I.e. a third status is “not being on either list”).

The assessment is done through expert review – one expert group for each standard/area. Only the chair-man (usually a professor) is payed, as is the consultants administrating the group and writing the report. The secretariat itself does not perform any form of assessment, and are objective. The expert groups range from 10-15 persons, and they look at the criteria more in detail.

Average cost is approximately 30.000 € for one standard. There are very limited cost/benefit-analysis of making a standard mandatory, but they ask users about the impacts.

The conclusions from the expert group often concludes with “yes – but”, and the “buts” are often related to the standardisation organisation, for instance pointing out the need for structural, long term funding, more explicit transparency in the decision making etc.

Being part of the expert group is becoming more popular, and the amount of feedback is also increasing.

The decision is made in “communities” – no single body can bind the rest of public bodies.

Whether a standard is to be considered for the “comply or explain”- or the “common”-list is usually obvious from the standard itself, and it is also a part of the application form.

In the Netherlands they organise a “Coming out”-party to celebrate when a new standard is put on either list. The idea is to reunite all the stake-holders in a standard in form of a a conference/release party, and to get focus on the adoption of the standard: “Now the standard is on the list – what do we do next?”

The process is documented in English on the website, see: <http://www.open-standaarden.nl/service/english/>

Fact sheet: <http://www.open-standaarden.nl/fileadmin/os/documenten/Factsheet%20open%20standaarden%20En.pdf>

Selection process for the open standards list: <http://www.open-standaarden.nl/fileadmin/os/documenten/beheerprocedure%20UK.pdf>

Criteria on openness are based on the EIF, and made operational using CAMSS.

Work in progress is to make pre-defined answers for every questions, where some are “below threshold”, meaning that there’s no need to evaluate further (primarily on “openness” and maintenance of standard,), i.e. “knock-out criteria”. There are two sets of criteria;

- 1) questions about the STO (online or offline, IPR, ...)
- 2) standard-specific criteria.

## **Camss**

The motivation for the CAMSS is illustrated through the presentations already seen. It was not possible to have one common set of standards for all the member-states, but it was possible to re-using the experiences from the similar *processes* in the member-states for establishing the list of (mandatory) standards.

Malta has been doing a lot recently. Estonia, Sweden and Finland are also looking into this.

## **About the work on standardisation in general**

Everyone agrees: Each criteria needs a stable identity! This will make it possible to map criteria between different nations criteria, and common sets such as CAMMSS.

An argument often heard for not making standards mandatory, is “Standards are bad for innovation!”

- Standardisation is not bad for innovation, but it is bad for re-invention.
- Yes, standardisation concretifies things, which is good. You want your innovation to build on solid grounds.

Should we have one page, where we can follow each other's work, put out documents etc?  
Should we use the ARSOS-group on Semic.eu set up by Joris, see:  
<http://www.semic.eu/semic/view/snnav/network/Communities/arsos.xhtml>

Everybody agreed that it would be useful to have easy access to information on the standardisation work in the other countries. For instance this would make it easier to:

- cross-check when vendors refers to processes and decisions in other countries as an argument of support for their standards;
- evaluate the criteria regarding the standardising *body*, which is likely to be independent of the situation in each country – in contrast to the evaluation of the standard itself
- reuse relevant part of assessments performed in other countries
- coordinate processes of assessing standards

Some ideas for ways of achieving better information was for each country to put out link to local resources, map the question in CAMSS to the countries own criterias and maintaining contact information

Currently the CAMSS-page is password-protected, should it be open?

## **Adoption of standards and monitoring**

In the agenda for the meeting, the participants had been asked to reflect upon the following question in advance of the meeting:

*“Means for adoption? Do they work? How can the adoption be monitored? “*

We discussed different kind of policies and strategies. The discussion about this is summed up in the mindmap included in the file “Adoption and monitoring of standards.pdf”. The means for adoption discussed included legal, organizational and technical means; guidance and assistance, information, supervision, monitoring (shaming and naming).

## **Day 2**

### **Document formats**

Each country presented the status on document formats:

#### **Denmark**

Martin and Adam talked about the situation in Denmark, where they currently have a special political situation, as one of the ruling parties are in opposition to the other ruling parties in the question of “Open Standards”. There was a parliamentary decision in January, with an expert group considering formats and making a list of accepted formats. The deadline is April 1<sup>th</sup> 2011. The expert committee contains professors and IT-managers, but no vendors. The selection of members was a political process. The status by now of the document format area is:

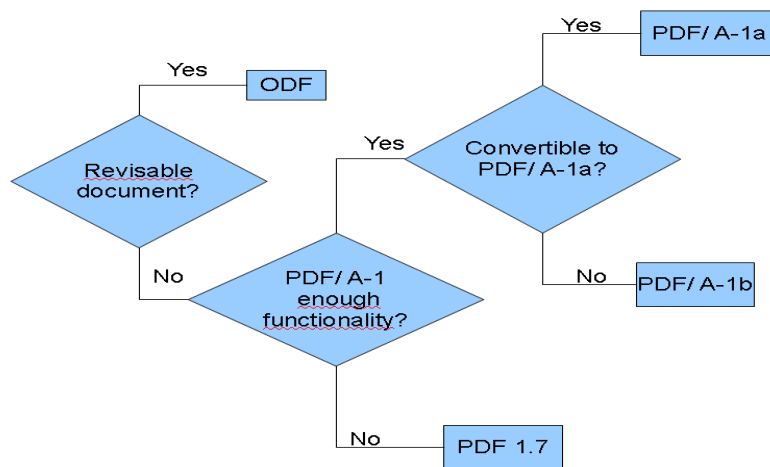
- Non editable documents: PDF/A is mandatory
- Editable documents - They have just started a review again - to result in a list for editable documents.
- A “functionality ceiling” – it must be usable for all the possible application areas in public sector (fourth criteria is “Functionality for public sector”). All types of exchange (web-page, email ...). Not internally in one.
- The public services have to “comply or explain” the mandatory formats. The main criterion for “explain” is cost.

- In addition to having all the functionalities, to be on the list the standard must be open, interoperable and not in conflict with any other standard on the list.
- They are concerned they might end up with an empty list, but it is anticipated that the opposition will not accept a list without ODF, and potentially an empty list could bring down the government ...
- The new thing; not only mandatory to support, but mandatory to *use*.

## The Netherlands

Joris presented the situation on document formats in the Netherlands. The presentation is in the file: 2010-05-11 Document formats NL

When deciding for the ODF and PDF-standard in the Netherland, this was not through the full process of evaluating the standards (described yesterday), instead it was a political decision. The status by now is as illustrated by the decision map that shows when to use which standard:



- Low usage now
- The public services have to “comply or explain” the mandatory formats.
- They plan to monitor the use.
- They’ve had a meeting with Microsoft and it seems that Microsoft are aware that OOXML most likely will not pass a full standardisation process, because of the lack of multiple and complete implementations. A submission of OOXML as a standard was nevertheless submitted, but after mentioning Microsoft became aware of it, the submission was withdrawn

The Netherlands thinks that if all software supports both standards in the future (seems like we’re going there), they should allow for both, but has not decided on this. They ask: OOXML and ODF – Why wouldn’t we allow both? What is the downfall, what is advantage of having only one?

Strategically, the Netherlands considers it as a threat towards the standardisation work in general if the document formats gets too much attention; there are more important standards, and a conflict/polarisation of the “open standard” area will probably undermine the authority of the body.

## Slovakia

Peter Biro talked about the status of document formats in Slovakia:

- Not going into “editing” internally, only for exchange of documents.
- For editable documents – RTF
- For websites - X(HTML)
- PDF 1.3 to 1.5 – newer versions have too many dynamic functions. 1.3 and 1.4 are accepted for signatures.
- ODT – up to 1.2, even though it is not approved by Oasis. 1.1 is considered by Oasis a revision of 1.0, while 1.2 is a new version.
- OOXML under scrutiny. Was rejected because of lack of maturity, but will be revised during this year.

A relevant question is what is a textual document? E-mail, powerpoint, spreadsheets? SMS?

## Norway

Kristin Kopland gave a presentation of document formats in Norway. The presentation is included in file: 2010-05-11 Document formats NO.pdf.

- All documents already published should be converted to PDF or ODF as of 2014.
- As of 2011, the versions are updated.
- Monitoring? A partly mandate, but not a “supervising body”/”inspectorate”. Will try to check as part of the quality assessment (randomly choose three documents).
- If the regulation is updated once every year, that might keep the bodies from converting existing documents, until they now what will be the target format (in the regulation of 2013).
- For some, the major use case is “copy and paste” from documents, and PDF is often not easy to copy from.
- Work in progress is 1) looking at two new use areas (exchange of documents within public sector and integration with production system), and 2) revision of the existing:
- The most complicated issue is the integration between the production systems (case management, archive etc) and the office suites (word processor).
- Blog from the Bouvet- report author Lars Marius Garshol gives a summary in English of the findings: <http://www.garshol.priv.no/blog/211.html>
- The case study: “ODF – And it Works” – see <https://samhandling.difi.no/web/odf-og-det-fungerer/hovedside> (use <http://translate.google.com> if the Norwegian language makes the content a bit inaccessible).
- DK is considering making a “guideline” for bindings to production systems.
- Somehow it is impossible to convert to IP-based telephone system without using MS Office.

## Discussion

After the presentations of the status in the different countries, there was a discussion, and below is a summary of some of the arguments mentioned:

NL: If not saying anything is choosing – why is it necessary to do anything now? Wait until the standards matures

NO: 50 mill € in licence cost every year – increased level of bindings as time goes by.

NL: But that is procurement. Could you not require public sector to choose another system?

NO: Doesn't work as long as the cooperating parties will not understand the documents.

DK: By making the decision of going from MS Office to OO through standardisation, means you want the change no matter what the cost is. Instead it should be a question of procurement, where every aspects of cost, like training of personnel in new software, is taken into account.

DK: How many documents intended for re-editing are sent from public sector?

NO: An estimation: 0.4 %. Standard Agreements for procurement of ICT-systems,<sup>5</sup> used as templates by public bodies, might be the only existing use-case.

DK: Difference in Norway and Denmark; schools are excluded in Denmark from the mandatory formats.

Bindings – can be omitted by specifying APIs, but that is not easy either.

## **Accessibility/universal design**

Mehran Raja held a presentation of the work within the accessibility area in Norway. The presentation is in the file: 2010-05-11 Standards for Universal design of ICT NO.pdf.

Norway: Information about the new accessibility law, the project group and the work of finding standards for web and terminals.

What we have learned from the work so far:

- Lack of one covering standard for Terminals
- Web more difficult than Terminals
- Making accessible terminals are cheaper than we predicted

Standards for web: The guidelines of WCAG 2.0 (double A) and ATAG 1.0 in the international form. These will complement each other. ATAG will help to publish accessible content and fulfil WCAG. ATAG 2.0 is not done, but one can use ATAG 1.0 and WCAG 2.0 together as well. ISO 9241-20 was reviewed but found too general.

The reason for choosing WCAG 2.0 without use of any local profile, is to avoid a situation where private companies must oblige to different web accessibility standards in different countries.

For the terminals there's a lack of one common standard, and Norway has landed on 10 standards which is believed to cover the functions and most disabilities. The main functions are such as headphones, cards and the space around the terminals.

But terminals are easier than websites, because all websites have different interfaces.

There will be a supervisory, but the work on this hasn't started yet.

In the Netherlands there are guidelines, not law. They use the "comply or explain"-list for public sector – and do not say anything about private sector and accessibility. There is a worry that national guidelines can make problems for international companies who use the same web solutions in different countries.

For the public sector, there's a work in the Netherlands for making templates for the central government. There is no work related to terminals as Joris was aware of.

In Denmark there is some monitoring and guidelines. The monitoring is partially manual and partially automatic monitoring/survey. It is not part of the general evaluation of public web-sites ("Bedst på nettet"), it is a separate activity. ITST is only concerned with public sector. Testing of web accessibility includes "real world testing" with blind people performing the test. Nothing is

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<sup>5</sup> See (Norwegian): <http://www.difi.no/emne/anskaffelser/statens-standardavtaler-ssa/oversikt-over-avtalene-ssa>

being done on self-service automates. ITST is still maintaining the wizard for procurement of machines/terminals.

NO: Has a report on accessibility in document formats, but the report is not finished. We will send at least the conclusion to the participants.

Norwegian tickets machines are less accessible than for instance in Spain, as a result of the producer chosen by Norwegian transport authorities.

The White paper on accessibility in society that mandates accessibility-requirements also for private sector has an English summary:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/jd/dok/nouer/2005/nou-2005-8/20.html?id=390816>

SK: Will the law in Norway include Intranets, and what about dynamic web-sites?

NO: Intranets no (must be of public interest), Dynamic web sites – waiting for WAI ARIA. Intranets in public sector? This is covered by another law (regulating work-life).

NL: The system for vacation and pay checks for public sector does not fulfil requirements (only works with IE). Instead of listing which browsers to support in a procurement, we will instead point to the web guidelines, and if those are followed, the site *will* work with all browsers that implements the standards – see <http://www.webrichtlijnen.nl/english/guidelines/>

NO: The situation is probably the same for the Norwegian paycheck system ... We're asked to give list of which browsers must be supported.

SK: Nothing on terminals.

The work on accessibility in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands is primarily focusing on making web-sites accessible for the blind/seeing-impaired.

## **New trends and areas for standardizations**

We discussed new possible and upcoming areas for standardization. The different themes that came up was only briefly discussed, as the idea of the session was to make a catalogue of possible themes/areas for standardisation. The work is documented as a mindmap in the file 2010-05-11 New trends and areas for standardisation.pdf.

## **Date and agenda for next meeting**

Kristian Bergem proposed a third meeting, dedicated to semantics and metadata, and offered to host the meeting in Oslo (without making a precedence that each country should organise two meetings in a row ...).

Steinar Skagemo presented a draft agenda. The draft including comments from the group, is in the file: 2010-05-11 Proposal for Agenda Third Network Meeting.pdf.

Before the invitation is sent, the mailing-list should be revised to make sure other relevant parties get the invitation.

*Everyone is asked to give their feedback* on the proposed dates for the next meeting:

October 13-14 or November 3-4, 2010

## **Debrief**

We ended the meeting with some quick feedback. Obviously it would have been better if the invitation to the meeting had been sent out earlier. Still, everyone agreed to the usefulness of the meeting; as we are working with the same things there is always a lot to learn when we get a chance to discuss common problems. The flexibility regarding the agenda was positive, as it did not make it necessary to cut fruitful discussions.