



Being Open About Standards

Speech of Munich's Lord Mayor Christian Ude
in Brussels, June 10, 2008

The spoken word prevails

Dear Commissioner Kroes,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

we have just heard, that the Choice of Open Standards is a very smart Business Decision.

...Well, let me say that the City of Munich has taken its Decision – and done **just that**...

In fact, the Municipality of Munich has worked with Free Software for over a Year.

I myself am using Free Software and Open Standards in my Office every Day.

Let me explain to you how our Decision came about, - what we are expecting from it, - where we stand at present, - and where our worries are.

The Starting Point, was Microsoft's Announcement to suspend the Support of the operation system Microsoft Windows NT4 in 2002.

For us, this meant that we had to find an Alternative for this previous technical Platform, which has had priority so far.

It was a Necessity, as other Suppliers of Hard- and Software were no longer in a Position to support this Operation System either.

A free Decision for the continued Application of this Solution was not possible for Munich, - so we had to take Action.

Subsequently, the City of Munich had to look at different alternative Conversion Models, as was required for all public Offices by the Bavarian Local Government Act.

In the Process of extensive Preliminary Studies, Proprietary Solutions, Open Solutions and Mixtures of both Versions were evaluated on the basis of technical, economical and strategic Factors.

In the end, the Municipality was able to submit 2 Alternatives for Decision. The two Alternatives had equal Ratings, which happened the first Time in our city's history.

While one Version promised short-term Monetary Benefits, the other offered the Possibility for the Municipality to determine the IT of the Municipality for ourselves, thus avoiding in future Situations like we had with the NT4.

Munich, then took a Decision for the Application of Free Software and Open Standards.

You will ask why we have decided in favour of this Option – of which some people assumed it would make no Sense...

Well, we can see a Lot of Opportunities in this Option, - not just for Ourselves, - but also for the Competition in the Software Market.

We want to minimize the Dependancies from individual Suppliers in the long term – and **improve** equal Opportunities in the Software Market.

We maintain, that the Possibilities for small and mid-size Firms to participate in this Market have **improved** - as a Result of the Application of Free Software and Open Standards.

The increased Competition resulting from it - was meant to improve the Quality - and bring down Costs at the same time.

The small and mid-size Enterprises in particular, are, in our Opinion, well positioned in the IT Area in Germany and Europe, offering a Variety of innovative Solutions.

Open-Source Software and Open Standards provide us with a **ded** Security – when it comes to the Processing of Individual-related Information.

This was even a substantial Argument in **fav**our of Free Software for the Foreign Ministry, our Cooperation Partner. In the previous course of the Project, we had already invested some 4 Million Euro in the national and European Economy in the Process of Tender Proceedings.

Otherwise there would be no Guarantee in the Decision for the **oth**er Alternative, that EU Firms would be benefiting from these Investments.

The Option chosen by the Munich City Council in 2003 is **grou**nded on 2 fundamental Decisions:

Firstly, the Decision to apply for a free Operation System, as well as a free Office System for the Desk-PCs of the Municipality in future.

This Decision is known all over the World – and has even won the City of Munich **Pu**blicity - on the first Page of a U.S. Daily Newspaper.

A Decision which is just as important for us is the Requirement, to buy all technical Operations on the basis of independent Platforms, based on Open Standards – also decided in 2003.

This was meant to **ens**ure that the existing Dependencies resulting from the recent History of Proprietary Products are increasingly dis-

solved – and the Selection of Software and Architecture could produce the desired Flexibility in future.

Now.... how far has the Conversion progressed – and, where are we today ?

The Implementation of the fundamental Decision of our City Council is done on the basis of the IT Product name “LINUX” - “Portmanteau-Word” (Kofferwort) for LINUX and MUNICH.

And the Conversion Process is gaining Ground, no doubt.

Special Challenges are here – the extensive Conversion Process to the Office Software Package OpenOffice.org, the Integration of the specially designed Linux Basis-Clients in heterogenous Munich IT Structures, as well as the Availability of a large Number of Administration-related specialised Applications.

At present, free Software is used on all 14.000 Operational Computers of the Municipality for Central Tasks of the daily Administrative Business, which means, - as Web-Browser and E-Mail Client.

Our future PC Workplace will be based on Open Standards and Free Software.

Our Choice was the Result of a Europe-wide Tendering of a Concept of a mid-size Company, who designed a Workplace in Cooperation with us on the basis of the completely free LINUX Distribution Debian GNU/Linux which managed to produce effective Operations.

And it clearly showed - after a short time only – that mid-size Companies are benefiting from our way, no doubt.

To make sure that the Application Compatibility of the Basis-Client is sufficient – right from the start – we had arranged technical Assistance in the first months, in Combination with a Certification of Usability by the Technical Control Board TÜV, at the end of a Trial and Improvement Phase.

With the Migration on the Basis-Client, we have the Possibility to provide for Applications just what they need: A modern Workplace which invites People to become productive Workers. Our Basis-Client is already used on 1.200 personal Computers. 2 of our 12 municipal departments are almost completely converted, and 4 departments are in the Process of Conversion.

Apart from the Possibility of migrating directly to the Basis-Client, and thereby convert to the Free Office Software OpenOffice.org, - a soft Migration Process is applied, especially in big and more complex Areas of the Municipality.

This means that – as an intermediary Step – the Office Product of the previous Supplier is replaced by the free Alternative OpenOf-

office.org.. In a second Step, the previous Operation System is replaced by the BasisClient.

At present, OpenOffice.org is available on more than 60% of the Workplaces, which means at over 8000 Office Desks.

In future, Munich will put the Focus on the Open Document Format (ODF) – recognized by the international standards organisation as Standard for the Exchange of Documents, as far as the Production and Processing of Documents is concerned.

The open Document Format is implemented in well-known Software Products like OpenOffice.org, StarOffice and KOffice – and is used and supported by many, partly competing Firms, like Google, Sun Microsystems, IBM, Novell.

It became evident, that, above all, small and mid-size Firms are particularly benefiting from these standards, which have already been introduced and proven in every-day practice.

The clearly-structured Open Document Format which is easy to handle – enables especially small and mid-size Companies to offer additional Products and Services – which used to be reserved for large-scale Enterprises.

This is ideal to strengthen the national and European Economy and open up New Markets. After a further Format was standardized with Office Open XML, by the ISO, in April, we now have 2 competing Standards for the same Purpose, the Exchange of Documents.

It would appear that this does not promote Competition, - it might even obstruct it.

The Idea of Competition is that the Participants have comparable Means to perform the Tasks they need to fulfill.

At present, this is not the case with these two Standards, however.

Only the Firm which developed the OOXML, which is predominant on the World Market, is capable of implementing this Standard to its full Extent in their own Products.

While, - at the same time, the producer-neutral Standard ODF, which has been in use for quite some time, is not fully supported yet.

This means that the general access of alternative Solutions to the Market is prevented, however.

Let me mention to you our 3 greatest Worries, concerning the Obstruction to open and fair Competition, as a Result of the Standardization of the OOXML Format.

Firstly: Competing Standards tend to weaken the Competition.

The Standardization of the Format Office OpenXML has resulted in the Creation of a second Competing Standard for the Exchange of Documents, apart from the already established ODF.

Instead of using scarce IT Resources for Solutions and Products, they now are needed to support a second Standard. It is therefore likely that not all Software Producers are setting up 2 Interfaces.

Also, in Reality, only one Firm has the Possibility to fully implement Office Open XML, - due to the complex technical Implementations.

OOXML has the Aim to secure the Compatibility with previous Formats of the Microsoft Office Products, - which can only be fully implemented if these Proprietary Formats are also run on an Open Basis.

A second Standard for the Exchange of Documents therefore does not ensure increased Competition, but rather tends to undermine this desired Effect.

Secondly:

The Possibilities for the Application of free Software and Open Standards are impaired – including the Possibilities to apply Alternatives to the Products of the Market Leader.

With the electronic Support of a growing Number of administrative Tasks, the Specialization of the IT Application tends to grow, along with the Dependency of functioning IT Systems.

To be able to meet the Requirements with limited Resources in the long Run, specialized IT Staff and Financial Resources must be used as effectively as possible.

Many public Offices, - at home and abroad, -

are therefore considering the Application of Free Software (Open Source) and Open Standards for their IT-Strategy.

As already mentioned, it is likely that not all Suppliers of specialized Operations will implement two Interfaces.

With the additional Introduction of OOXML, as Standard, there is a Risk that specialized Operations already used today – can no longer be operated, as they will need specialized and partly expensive Solutions.

This would mean that Transition Projects, which would provide Opportunities for Solutions – offside the Market Leader, due to increased Openness and Independence from the Producer, would be delayed, - and even made more complicated and expensive.

In the worst case, alternative Solutions would have to be replaced by Products of the Market Leader.

The developing Competition of Open Solutions would at first be dominated by this Market Leader and even controlled by it at a later Stage.

Thirdly: The Interoperability and Communication between Public Offices among themselves and Citizens is strongly obstructed.

As long as there are no Products which support ODF, as well as OOXML by themselves, the Existence of 2 Standards means that they have to settle for one Documentation Format.

The Document Format should be usable throughout all Products and be fully implementable.

Such a Document Format is presently not available, however.

Problems in Communication, which are costly to eliminate, are therefore inevitable.

Along these Lines, I greatly welcome the Announcement of MICROSOFT to support the Free and Open Document Format - from next Year on, which is a Step in the right Direction towards increased Interoperability by Open Standards.

Munich, and the Public Offices in general, require the Possibility to exchange Documents between the two Standards, without any Losses. Interoperability is only reached in this Field, if no Problems are occurring.

I am curious to see, if and when this Announcement will be put into Practice in fulfilling our Expectations, as far as Interoperability is concerned.

And, let me add – that we would like to see that the Commission will take Action here - as Commissioner Kroes was kind enough to announce – to ensure that Interoperability will really be achieved.

There is no Doubt that Open Standards are strengthening Competition, opening up big Opportunities to small and mid-size Companies.

We consider ourselves to be on the right Track, which is clearly proven by recent Development.

Thank you very much for your Attention !

It was a great joy and honour to be able to meet with you and submit our position.

(Thank you again !)