

Welcome to Document Freedom Day.

In a world where records are increasingly kept in electronic form, Open Standards are crucial for valuable information to outlive the application in which it was initially generated. The question of Document Freedom has severe repercussions for freedom of choice, competition, markets and the sovereignty of countries and their governments.

Some 200 organisations in over 60 countries have signed up to Document Freedom Day (www.documentfreedom.org) and will be running local events. Its a massive show of force and determination to liberate this key part of ICT which is so visible to the person in the street.

Yet we know there is a long way to go. In parallel OFE is sponsoring the Petition to the European Parliament (www.openparliament.eu) calling on the EP to allow citizens full rights to communicate with their MEPs and the working of the EP, without being forced to purchase certain proprietary software.

And of course the OOXML shambles runs on. Its now a month since the OOXML BRM Meeting in Geneva and we are now receiving reports of the follow up meetings being held at National Bodies. But there seems to be something missing? To my knowledge the promised ECMA write up of agreed proposed changes to the spec post the BRM has yet to be seen, but some NBs seem happy to make decisions without seeing it? What are ECMA trying to hide? What a farce of a process this is - and what damage is it doing to the global standards process. ECMA and Microsoft should be ashamed of the discredit they are doing to the ISO and National Body credibilities.

The BRM ended with apparently some minimal improvement in certain areas but with still some 80% of the comments undiscussed. Since then there have been new and further technical issues identified as well as re confirmation of others which had been raised but to date have been ignored. So the technical issues cannot, even with the best MS spin, be claimed as resolved. Furthermore we see a list of other issues (mainly non-technical) which remain on the table eg the Open Specification Promise has now been shown to be seriously flawed.

The NBs must vote NO to this proposed spec for five basic reasons-

- The fast track process has placed an impossible task on any NB, and is an abuse of the process
- The technical spec is fatally flawed, is incomplete, and is just not up to the quality demanded
- There are substantive non-technical issues undiscussed or resolved
- The proposal directly competes with an existing ISO standard and will add zero value to the market, but will add cost and complexity.
- There has never been such a global pushback against such a proposal -the reasons for this can't be ignored.

A NB must be able to honestly say to its citizens and government that all these points have been fully covered if its vote is not to be subsequently challenged.