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On behalf of the members and partners represented by OpenForum Europe, I am again writing to raise with you our acute concerns about the revised draft European Interoperability Framework V2.0 which has been sent to you for consultation, a copy of which has been leaked to us.

We know that you have been asked to comment on this latest draft. We think that the content of the document is in such direct conflict with current European ICT and Competition policy that we are asking you and your colleagues to reject this draft outright and call for it to be completely rewritten on the basis of a new consultation exercise.

When the last draft of November 2009 was rejected by so many Member States and external commentators and as a consequence withdrawn, we and many others expected this version would be rebalanced and improved in its substance so that it was an evolution of the solid basis that Version 1.0 had provided. Version 2 should also have taken into account the argely positive comments as to the developments proposed via the Consultation. Also bearing in mind the high level of support from Vice President Kroes on the topic of open standards and interoperability within her Parliamentary hearing on the Digital Agenda, we expected a clearer and more positive a approach to defining openness.

Regrettably this is not the case. The current draft shows no improvements over the last draft and our conclusion after careful and detailed analysis is that it is actually worse than the November 2009 version:

- it further marginalises the vital role of open standards based software interoperability for governmental organisations,
- it demotes the important concept of the open source software development method, particularly as an aid to re-use, to a document footnote,
- it does not provide sufficient guidance to EU Member States on how their national interoperability frameworks should be framed - it is rather an "anything goes" approach,
- it is out of synch with latest global thinking on open standards and European Member State software procurement policies such as Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, UK, etc.
- it demotes Europe from a leader in thinking to an also ran. Version 1.0 was seen as providing leadership and has been developed and built upon worldwide, e.g., Japan.

It is our strong recommendation that the document should not only again be rejected, but that Member State CIOs and PEGSCO representatives should demand from DIGIT/IDABC in the European Commission that the document should be redefined and rewritten. We would ask you to compare this current version, both its approach and quality of content, with the [consultation document](#)¹ published in 2008. It is our belief that this document provided a valuable base for what should have been the final document.

As we explained before, OFE and its membership is an organisation which has resolutely supported the work of the Commission on EIF. We cannot understand how the deconstruction of the previous drafts came about. However this followed long and protracted delays in the distribution of this document which we assume were due to the phenonemon of repeated inter services consultation and the removal of any clear recommendations about how governments should use open standards. Specific concerns from other

1 EIF 2 Draft Document of 2008-07-16 at <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=31597>

Directorates may have been resolved but the result is a document that is devoid of any clear position.

Going back to the first draft of EIF 2.0, the external consultation process was completed in 2008 and we were very interested then to analyse the different [responses²](#) and comments made. We believe the changes to subsequent drafts cannot be seen as resulting from the comments submitted through the public consultation, which leads us to the conclusion that the Commission, and DIGIT in particular, has been unduly influenced by pressures outside of the democratic and transparent processes that bind the European institutions. At a global level the two draft versions leaked show that Europe is no longer a leader in e-Government policy, and has succumbed to pressure from interest groups which would like to maintain past practice. This latest version again appears to be more interested in protecting the status quo and rewriting the strategy to align with current local procurement practice.

EIF V1.0 was rightly seen to offer leadership, in that it recognised the value and necessity of an open approach, both in the use of open standards and the incremental benefits of open source. EIF V1.0 was – and, in fact, still remains – an important accelerator and trigger for innovation in the area of eGovernment services across Europe. Also the dangers from lock-in to proprietary solutions were recognised. The majority of governmental thinking and strategy since its publication has not been to question the reasoning but to focus on how the strategy could be aligned with procurement practice.

To suggest that openness and use of open standards in a government interoperability framework can be negotiated as if they were mere levels of optional functionality is not only very disappointing but it puts Europe's innovative powers and global leadership in eGovernment at risk. Whilst ignoring areas of controversy (such as licensing terms for standards) would be wrong, to 'resolve' by deleting or diminishing their importance is equally misguided. A confirmation of a firm definition of a fully open standard would be clearly seen as a positive contribution. Deleting and excluding this shows indecision and weakness, thus relinquishing leadership.

We are again contacting all CIOs in EU Member States as well as all EC Directorates to make them aware of our concerns on a document which we believe undermines European ICT and competition policy, and endangers the credibility of the Commission.

In summary, we believe this draft should in its entirety be withdrawn with immediate effect, and would ask that you add your country's concerns to those we understand have already responded.

If you would like to discuss or clarify any point made then do email me or phone me on my mobile number (+44 771 359 3217) at any time.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Taylor
CEO, OpenForum Europe

Note:

OpenForum Europe (OFE) is not-for-profit, independent of any organisation and was originally launched in March 2002 to accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of Open Source Software in business and government. OFE's role has now expanded and it is a strong supporter of Open Standards and openness and pursues the vision of facilitating open competitive choice for IT users. OFE's members and partners include some of the largest names in industry, as well as national and European organisations. It is an organisation well known to many of your colleagues who will have attended our Brussels briefings or read our white papers, and we believe well respected for the independence of its views and strong support for openness. In 2007 OFE was invited by the EC and Portuguese Presidency to respond on behalf of the European Open community to the Ministerial Declaration at the eGovernment Conference in Lisbon. Some 20+ organisations signed up to the OFE developed Declaration of support.

OpenForum Europe acknowledges all the input received from its members and partners in the compilation of this letter.

² EIF 2 Summary of Comments at <http://ec.europa.eu/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=31955>

However, OpenForum Europe does not seek to represent any specific community nor present its opinions as being unanimously supported by its full membership. References given are fully attributed and every effort made to ensure they have been taken in true context.