

Ecma International and the Adoption of Open XML as an Open Standard

Ecma International is Dedicated to IT, Communications, and Consumer Electronics Standards

- Ecma International, founded in 1961 and based in Geneva, is an internationally respected not-for-profit organization dedicated to standardization in the information and communication technology field. For additional information, visit <http://www.ecma-international.org>.
- Since its founding, Ecma has developed more than 370 international standards -- two-thirds of which have also been approved by the International Organization for Standardization / International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC). Ecma is entitled to submit its standards for "Fast-Track" approval at the Joint Technical Committee (JTC 1) of ISO/IEC. Ecma pioneered the Fast-Track process adopted by ISO/IEC.
- Ecma standards are open standards. The Ecma process is open and consensus-based.

Open XML is an International Open Standard

- On December 7, 2006, Ecma announced that it had approved the "Office Open XML File Formats" (Open XML) specification as an open standard named "ECMA-376."
- The Technical Committee at Ecma that developed Open XML included representatives from Apple, Barclays Capital, BP, The British Library, Essilor, Intel, Microsoft, NextPage, Novell, Statoil, Toshiba, and the U.S. Library of Congress. The Technical Committee posted drafts of the standard for public review and comment.
- Ecma also submitted Open XML to JTC 1 of ISO/IEC for *additional* approval through the Fast-Track process. Ecma recognized that the additional approval granted by ISO/IEC will promote further adoption of Open XML, and will create new opportunities for technology companies around the world. Maintenance of and updates to the standard thereafter are expected to be performed by Ecma in collaboration with JTC 1.

Benefits of Open XML

- Open XML was developed as an international open standard through the collaborative efforts of leading companies and organizations (including competitors of Microsoft) at Ecma.
- Open XML is designed to be backward compatible with the content and functionality in billions of existing documents, thereby enhancing interoperability and document preservation in the public and private sectors.
- The impressive 6000-page Open XML specification provides much greater functionality and flexibility than ODF, as well as more comprehensive documentation. This richness and thoroughness unleashes a world of possibilities for software developers, empowering them to create a host of new innovations for customers.
- Microsoft has made irrevocable, royalty-free patent commitments to all implementers of Open XML, which both Ecma and ISO/IEC have declared satisfy (and, indeed, exceed) the Ecma and ISO/IEC minimum licensing requirements. Accordingly, there are no IPR concerns associated with Open XML.
- Any entity can thus freely implement Open XML and develop innovative, interoperable products that use the platform- and application-neutral standard. For example, Novell, Corel, Apple, Microsoft, Sun, and others have already adopted (or announced adoption of) Open XML in their products on a variety of platforms -- including Linux, Windows, Mac OS, Palm OS, Java, and .NET. Thousands of developers, organizations, governments, and professionals spanning 67 countries and six continents have already expressed public support for Open XML and for its further approval by ISO/IEC.
- Open XML works with file format translators such as the Microsoft-funded Open XML-ODF Translator to translate documents saved in Open XML to the OpenDocument Format (ODF), and vice versa.
- Open XML also accommodates multiple languages and cultures, and supports technologies that enable people with disabilities to use computing devices. Further, Open XML allows data from other systems -- e.g., healthcare and financial records -- to be easily incorporated into documents created using Open XML and to be updated in real-time; this functionality is not present in ODF.