

## The Global Community Embraces Open XML: Open XML Becomes Fourth ISO/IEC Document Format Standard

On Wednesday, April 2, ISO/IEC [announced](#) that more than 87 countries participated in a process culminating with the ratification of Open XML as an ISO/IEC standard. The details of the vote are as follows: 86% of all countries supported ISO standardization, well above the 75% required of this group for formal acceptance, and 75% of the Participating countries (known as P members) supported standardization, also well above the 66.67% required of this group for formal acceptance. Open XML now joins HTML, PDF and ODF as ISO/IEC recognized open document format standards. This is a positive outcome for public and private sector customers and technology providers who want to choose the format that best meets their needs and want to have a voice in the ongoing evolution of this already widely adopted standard. Similarly, it is a significant validation for government policy makers committed to promoting technology-neutral, market-driven policies that enable choice, opportunity, competition, and local economic development. Microsoft looks forward to continuing to work cross-industry, including with competitors, to address customers' real interoperability needs.

### Successful Standardization Process:

- Microsoft started the development process that led to Open XML more than eight years ago. And at the request of customers and governments (including the European Union), Microsoft submitted its draft of Open XML to Ecma (a European open standards organization) for review. After extensive review, Open XML became an Ecma international open standard on December 7, 2006. The Open XML file format was subsequently submitted by Ecma for consideration as an ISO/IEC standard.
- Over the past 14 months, the depth and breadth of involvement in the ISO/IEC standardization process of Open XML was unprecedented. The process was globally inclusive, soliciting and then incorporating comments and guidance from the National Standards Bodies of 87 countries; members of these bodies included government agencies, professional organizations, technology companies, individual developers, and customers. As a result, the Open XML specification improved considerably and incorporated many edits to meet the specific needs of individual countries. We appreciate the commitment and contributions from all of the individuals and organizations, including those who did not vote in favor of Open XML. They all helped improve the standard.
- The Ballot Resolution Meeting in Geneva highlighted the precision, inclusiveness, and validity of the overall standardization process. More than 3,000 comments were made during the initial vote last fall. Ecma resolved these comments into more than 1,000 discrete comments as they answered them in the following months, and then more than 98% of them were approved by the BRM.
- Participants in the process, such as national standards bodies, and outside observers have commented positively on the professionalism, inclusiveness, and rigorousness of the process. Microsoft wishes to express our appreciation for the leadership of ISO/IEC and Ecma during the standardization process.
- At the same time, no other standard has ever gone through such a rigorous examination by so many organizations and individuals, or been held to such a high bar. That clearly contributed to making the specification better.

### Momentum and Industry Adoption for Open XML:

- The final vote demonstrates that there is overwhelming worldwide support for Open XML.
- Countries around the world believe there should be choice among document format standards, and specifically want the international standards community to have stewardship of Open XML. For more information on the benefits of choice and Open XML, please see [www.microsoft.com/office/openxmlpolicy](http://www.microsoft.com/office/openxmlpolicy).

- The impressive growth in support for Open XML from last September when the initial vote was taken to the final vote in March illustrates how significantly the specification was improved by the participation of people and organizations representing the fullest possible spectrum of views. We appreciate the efforts of all involved in the process, including those who did not vote in favor of Open XML. We sincerely and respectfully thank them for their investment in time and technical comments that have resulted in an improved specification.
- Those working with Open XML can attest to the benefits of this open file format in the areas of file and data management, data recovery, data portability, interoperability with line-of-business systems, and the long-term preservation of documents. The formats are optimized for the level of precision and detail that facilitates carrying forward billions of existing files. Public and private sector customers can use Open XML formats to report information from other applications and systems without having to translate it first, which is a key innovation for developers seeking to incorporate real-time business information into their documents, or those who seek to “tag” documents with their own categorization system to improve their understanding of the documents’ contents. More information about Open XML, as well as available solutions using the open standard specification, is available at <http://www.openxmlcommunity.org/inuse.aspx>.
- Open XML is already widely adopted by independent software vendors (ISVs), customers, and governments throughout the world. Hundreds of ISVs, such as Apple, IBM, Google and Novell, are working across a variety of platforms including Linux, Windows, the Mac OS and the Palm OS, to offer solutions that support Open XML today. The growing number of companies building Open XML applications demonstrates the specification is entirely manageable, is widely supported, and leads to fresh innovations.

#### Looking Forward:

- Microsoft is committed to supporting this newly approved open standard specification in its products. Microsoft believes in data portability and enabling users to control the data they create.
- All in all, the voting results indicate the overwhelming agreement among developers on all platforms, public and private sector customers, and government officials that there should be choice among document formats to meet the varied needs of customers, that there should be technology neutrality, and that one technology should not be mandated as the sole or even preferred solution.
- Microsoft has learned a great deal and listened carefully to many voices during our participation in both the Ecma International and ISO/IEC standards processes. Microsoft is committed to continuing to work in an open, collaborative, and respectful manner with standards bodies and the industry, including competitors, to enhance interoperability and provide choices for how customers meet their needs for interoperability.

Background: [Open XML](#) is an [XML](#)-based document file format specification for [electronic documents](#) such as [spreadsheets](#), [charts](#), [presentations](#), and [word processing](#) documents. A document file format is basically a digital container for electronic data we create in various forms and by various software programs. Because increasingly all of our work is done electronically and with computers, document file formats (and interoperability for document file formats) have become very important. They have become important: (1) to us as end users so we can access our data; (2) to companies that create and use billions of documents a year to transact business; and (3) to governments that are increasingly focused on e-government systems and archival issues. There are numerous document file formats in existence today, and three formats had previously been approved as ISO document file formats – ODF, PDF, and HTML. Open XML is now the fourth ISO approved document file format.