

Statement by Thomas Vinje

ECIS Legal Counsel and Spokesman:

Microsoft announces more delay in open standards implementation

Microsoft announced last night that it will provide support for the Open Document Format (ODF) in the Office 2007 service pack 2 (SP2) to be released during the first half of 2009. Other vendors have supported this open standard since 2006 when the International Standardization Organization (ISO) approved it.

“These steps are in the right direction, but are not nearly enough to achieve genuine interoperability. Moreover, they are clearly the result of determined anti-trust enforcement by the European competition authorities over the past decade and more. A closer look at their substance suggests that Microsoft is still playing for time to further consolidate its super-dominant position, and that continued anti-trust vigilance will be necessary.

“It is particularly striking that all of Microsoft’s latest policy statements on interoperability are still in the future tense, as though these were difficult technical objectives. They are not. For several years now other major vendors have implemented ODF 1.1, and most are planning to move to ODF 1.2. Viewed in this light, Microsoft’s new promise to implement ODF 1.1 “in the first half of 2009” is pretty underwhelming. If Microsoft really wants to promote interoperability, it would join other vendors implementing ODF as its default format.

“And that’s not the only problem. Current indications are that Microsoft’s disclosures for Office document interoperability so far are inadequate in spite of the interoperability principles announced in February. In short, what we seem to have from Microsoft today are incomplete disclosures coupled with statements of future intention to implement earlier versions of open standards. In other words, more delay.

“ECIS also notes that, despite the rhetoric about its new commitments to interoperability and about letting the past be the past, Microsoft has now appealed the amount of the fine levied by the European Commission for wilful failure to comply with its interface disclosure obligations over a period of 3 years. We repeat, the software engineering required to meet these obligations now and in the future does not require years of trial, error and best efforts.”

About ECIS

ECIS is an international non-profit association founded in 1989 that strives to promote market conditions in the ICT sector allowing vigorous competition on the merits and a diversity of consumer choice. ECIS has actively represented its members on many issues related to interoperability and competition before European, national and international bodies, including the EU institutions and WIPO. ECIS’ members

*include large and smaller information and communications technology hardware and software providers
Adobe, Corel, IBM, Nokia, Opera, Oracle, RealNetworks, Red Hat, and Sun Microsystems.*

ECIS media desk at POD Associates:

+32 2 735 43 70

email: info@ecis.eu

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