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Answer given by Mr Šefčovič
on behalf of the Commission
(7.1.2014)

The report of the Inter-Institutional Committee for Informatics (IICI) to which the Honourable Member refers sets out a common approach on document formats around two axes:

- 1) internal (i.e. inter-institutional) / external exchanges; and
- 2) non-revisable / revisable documents

The recommendation mentioned in the question is limited specifically to internal exchanges of revisable documents. It is aimed at controlling expenditure by identifying the most cost-effective solution.

However, as stated explicitly in the report, for exchanges with the external world (including citizens and other public administrations) the approach is clearly open. While non-revisable formats¹ should be preferred as a general rule, whenever revisable documents have to be used, the IICI recommended the EU Institutions to support:

- as a minimum requirement, the two existing ISO standards (i.e. ODF² and OOXML³); and
- on a best effort basis, other widely used formats.

The Commission can confirm that it has implemented all of the recommendations issued by the IICI. Hence, it can already support ODF, OOXML and other widely used document formats in its exchanges with citizens and national administrations. There is therefore no lock-in effect whatsoever, and indeed no contradiction with the Commission's strategy on interoperability.

Concerning the suggestion to reassess the situation, the Honourable Member may care to note that the IICI is currently chaired by the European Parliament's representative. The Commission's services have brought this suggestion to the attention of the Chairperson.

¹ In particular ISO/IEC 32000-1:2008 (PDF) and ISO 19005-X (PDF/A)

² ISO/IEC 26300:2006

³ ISO/IEC 29500:2008