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## Open standards

Open standards: Belgium's federal Council of Ministers approves ODF (Open Document Format)

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The federal Council of Ministers has approved the memorandum on the use of open standards for creating and exchanging office documents. Minister Vanvelthoven said "The creation and exchange of office documents such as text documents and spreadsheets is currently based on different office suites like Microsoft Office, Corel WordPerfect Office, OpenOffice... Until recently users of one of these suites experienced difficulties with exchanging documents with users of other software. These last few years have, however, seen an important standardization effort, which has led to the definition of a new standard. XML is a certified standard for the definition, exchange and interpretation of information. ODF (Open Document Format) is an XML format for creating and saving documents for use in office suites. This particular open standard is well on its way to being approved by ISO (International Standard Organisation). The federal Council of Ministers therefore proposes establishing ODF as the standard for exchanging office documents such as texts, spreadsheets, presentations within the civil service as soon as the format is definitively approved by ISO. As a first step, each of the federal government agencies is to ensure that the ODF format can be read. A transition period will be put in place, allowing all agencies to take the necessary measures without compromising the continuity of services. This period will be determined on the basis of the impact study as well as on the availability of plug-ins for reading and writing the ODF format. This decision fits in with the federal government's strategy of promotion of open standards. Further information on open standards can be found on [www.belgif.be](http://www.belgif.be) Persdienst van de Minister van Werk en Informatisering Koningsstraat 180 1000 Brussel de heer Koen Pardon (Informatisering) Tel.: 02/212.92.04 - 0475/50.25.05 [koen.pardon@e-gov.be](mailto:koen.pardon@e-gov.be)