

EUROPEAN COMMISSION INTRODUCTION: THE DLM-FORUM, MOREQ AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission has been involved in the creation and development of the DLM-Forum as well as many of the activities that have come out of the Forum since the DLM-Forum was first conceived. One of the major achievements of the DLM-Forum, the development of *Model requirements for the management of electronic records*, better known as MoReq, is one of the main topics of this conference.

This paper describes, first, how and why the DLM-Forum was created and how it evolved in the early years of its existence with the support of the European Commission. Secondly it will set out how the MoReq project emerged from the DLM-Forum and became a highly regarded and widely used tool for institutions that need guidance in managing their electronic records.

The History of the DLM-Forum

The chain of events leading to the creation of the DLM-Forum started on 14 November 1991 when the Council of the European Communities and the Ministers of Culture adopted a resolution on arrangements concerning archives.¹ This resolution highlighted both the importance of archives to the decision-making process in the public sector and the importance of archives to our cultural heritage. The resolution invited the European Commission “to set up a group of experts appointed on the proposal of the Member States, for the purpose of examining to what extent greater coordination of archives policy and practice within the Community is desirable”.

The Group of Experts compiled a report on the coordination of archives entitled ‘Archives in the European Union’. This report, published in 1994 by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, soon became known as the ‘Black Book’.

Amongst the areas highlighted in the Report which the Group of Experts believed warranted coordination and cooperation on a European level was the need for adequate management and storage of computerised archives.

The Report led to the Council Conclusions of 17 June 1994, concerning greater cooperation in the field of archives.² In these conclusions the Council once again underlined recognised that archives form a significant part of European cultural heritage and agreed with the group of experts on the importance of greater cooperation between the Member States and at Community level in the field of archives. The conclusions highlighted a number of actions that had been outlined in the Report and which the Council found to be of particular interest.

One such action was the organisation of “a multi-disciplinary forum to be held in the framework of the Community on the problems of the management, storage, conservation and retrieval of machine-readable data”. Participants in this Forum were to include representatives from public administrations and national archives services as well as representatives of industry and research.

¹ OJ, 91/C 314/02.

² OJ C235 23.8.94 p.3

On this basis the Commission decided to organise such a multi-disciplinary Forum in close cooperation with the Member States. The forum became known as the DLM-Forum and its main goal is to investigate, promote and implement possibilities for wider cooperation in the field of electronic archives both between the Member States and at EU level. When the DLM-Forum was first established DLM was an acronym for the French ‘données lisibles par machine’ (machine-readable data), however, since the DLM-Forum 2002 in Barcelona, the acronym has come to mean ‘Document Lifecycle Management’.

The first DLM-Forum was held in 1996 and subsequent Forums have been held every 3 years since then. The theme of the 1996 Forum was ‘Electronic Records - Co-operation Europe-Wide’. Amongst the 10 follow-up points that came out of this Forum was the call to establish functional requirements for electronic documents and records management in public administration and in the private sector. This eventually developed into MoReq, which is explained in more detail below.

Another important issue that was highlighted was the call for a programme of training of administrators and archivists which addressed technical matters relating to the handling of electronic records in order to learn the necessary skills from IT disciplines. This training programme became known as ‘E-term’ - European training programme in electronic documents and records management. E-term was developed by different archives schools and other specialised bodies in the Member States and was designed to be delivered via the internet so that those interested could proceed at their own pace.

The theme of the second DLM-Forum in 1999 was ‘European citizens and electronic information: the memory of the Information Society, Cooperation Europe-wide’. One of the most important outcomes of this Forum was the ‘DLM-Message to Industry’ and the subsequent response of the Information and Communication Technology industry.

The message called for representatives of the ICT industry to actively cooperate with archivists and records managers so that electronic records are managed effectively, that they are accessible over time and they can be preserved for as long as they are needed. The message to industry noted that closer collaboration between ICT professionals and archivists who work with electronic records should improve products that are used to manage these records and will open new business opportunities.

Representatives of the ICT industry responded to the message issued by the DLM-Forum in a statement that was published in INSAR in the autumn of 2000. In their reply the ICT industry “readily accepts the challenge given to it by the DLM-Forum” stating that it was “prepared and willing to support the efforts of the European Union for the preservation and public access to archives and records”.

This response to the message from the second DLM-Forum in 1999 led to the active involvement of the ICT industry in the third DLM-Forum, held in Barcelona in May 2002. A good example of this is the production of six ‘Industry White Papers’ for the Barcelona forum. The Industry White Papers, published by the DLM-Forum and AIIM International Europe, covered critical areas that need to be addressed to achieve more effective electronic document, records and content management. Each of the White Papers was written by a representative of a different company and they provided a valuable insight into how the ICT industry is addressing the issues in this field.

The theme of the DLM-Forum 2002 was 'Access and preservation of electronic information: best practices and solutions'. The outcome of this third Forum highlighted the effectiveness of the partnership between the DLM-Forum and the ICT industry. One of its most important results was the call to create a European DLM-Network on electronic records. The Network was established soon after because it was recognised that a strengthened and enlarged European platform that would focus on issues such as standardisation, user access and long-term preservation of electronic records would be beneficial to all the partners in this field.

The regularity of the DLM-Forums has meant that professionals from the public and private sectors who work in the area of electronic records creation, management and preservation can meet to discuss their viewpoints and benefit from the expertise and experience of colleagues. Many professionals have attended these Forums both from the Member States of the European Union, other European countries and from Canada and the USA.

European Commission support to the DLM-Forum

The European Commission was actively involved in the establishment of the DLM-Forum. In close cooperation with representatives from the Member States, it organised the first DLM-Forum in 1996 and the second DLM-Forum in 1999 both of which were hosted by the Commission in Brussels.

Based upon these firm foundations, after the DLM-Forum in 1999, other participants of the Forum, notably the national archives of the member states together with representatives from the academic community and industry, took more control over its organisation and direction. This became particularly evident in 2002 when the third DLM-Forum, held in Barcelona, was organised by the Catalan government in collaboration with the Spanish central government and with support from other Member States and the Commission.

The European Commission is pleased to witness that the DLM-Forum continues to flourish. In 2004 the DLM-Forum was founded as a constitutional organisation and a DLM Network EEIG, established in 2003 provides the legal entity to administer the Forum. The DLM-Forum 2005 in Budapest was organised with no Commission involvement by the DLM-Forum and the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office.

Besides its contribution to the organisation of the three preceding DLM-Forums, the Commission has also contributed to the work of the DLM-Forum in other ways. In the past it has played an important role in the DLM Monitoring Committee that was set up to oversee and co-ordinate the progress of the DLM-Forum. The Commission has moreover edited and published the proceedings of each of the previous DLM-Forums as a supplement of INSAR (INformation Summary on ARchives).

The Commission was always anxious to ensure that the follow-up points that emerged from each Forum were quickly acted upon. In this regard after the 1996 Forum where the DLM action plan was formulated the Commission was involved in the development of the E-Term training module and it commissioned and subsequently published the report on '*The relationship between public administration and archives services concerning electronic documents and records management*'. This report was a comprehensive survey of electronic records and their management within the public administrations and archive services of the EU Member States.

One of the most significant and far-reaching outcomes of the DLM-Forum that was acted upon by the Commission was the development of MoReq.

The MoReq Project

Each DLM-Forum has led to the initiation of new developments and projects in the field of management, preservation and allowing for continued access to electronic records. One significant outcome that emerged from the DLM-Forum in 1996 was the call for a comprehensive specification of requirements for the management of electronic records. The European Commission undertook to initiate and manage the development of this specification which became known as MoReq – model requirements for the management of electronic records.

MoReq was developed in the framework of the IDA programme (Interchange of Data between Administrations) managed by the Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise. After an open tender was launched in 1999, work began in 2000 and it was completed in 2001. The company that developed the specification, Cornwell Associates plc, were supported by a team of experts and validation for the specification was sought from organisations in the public and private spheres. The MoReq specification, which first became available electronically in 2001, was published by the European Commission as an INSAR supplement in early 2002. It is available on-line on the Europa website³ and has been translated into 7 languages, most recently into Slovenian and French.

This specification describes model requirements for the management of electronic records and focuses mainly on the functional requirements for the management of electronic records by an electronic records management system (ERMS). MoReq contains a model of how filing plans, files and records relate to each other and, very importantly, it can be applicable to both electronic files and hybrid files.

MoReq was designed to be a very practical specification. It does not specify a particular ERMS, instead it outlines the essential elements an ERMS should have to ensure that records are properly managed, can be accessed at all times, are retained for as long as they are needed and are properly disposed of once the retention period has ended. An organisation which develops an ERMS based on the requirements of MoReq can be assured that their records will be properly managed. MoReq is a generic modular specification which means that each organisation that uses it can incorporate into their ERMS the aspects of MoReq which are relevant to them.

The e-Domec⁴ project at the European Commission aims to introduce an electronic archiving and document management system based on common rules and procedures for all Commission departments. E-Domec will allow any document connected with the Commission's official functions, whether on paper or in electronic format, to be managed, stored and retrieved securely at all times. This is no mean feat. It requires not only the development of common rules and a common ERMS, but also requires, and this is still ongoing, a complete change of culture at the Commission. In our own experience MoReq has been helpful to us in this process, especially in our collaboration with both in-house and outside IT experts.

³ <http://europa.eu.int/idabc/en/document/2631/5585>

⁴ Electronic Document Management at the European Commission

MoReq can be used for a variety of reasons by different organisations and examples include potential ERMS users who can use it as a basis for preparing an invitation to tender, by ERMS users as a basis for auditing or checking an existing ERMS and by academic institutions that can use it as a teaching resource.

Since its introduction MoReq has proven to be a highly regarded model specification for the management of electronic records. However, given the continuous and rapid development of information technology and the increasing sophistication of electronic records, it is generally recognised that for MoReq needs to be revised and up-dated if it is to maintain its status as a highly valued European reference model. To this end a MoReq Working Group was established by the executive committee of the DLM-Forum to discuss how MoReq should be revised and to invite comments and suggestions from all members of the DLM-Forum. The proposed revision of MoReq is discussed in a paper presented by Ian MacFarlane on 'Plans for MoReq, a report on scoping of a MoReq 2'.

In regard to the development of MoReq, the European Commission was aware that a specification of this type would benefit institutions in the public and private spheres in all the Member States. There was also the added bonus that its positive effect would extend to other countries outside the European Union and it would become part of the international body of model specifications of this type. The Commission is keen to ensure that MoReq maintains its relevance in today's business environment whether that be in the public or private sectors and it recognises the fact that MoReq needs to be revised and up-dated.

Representatives of the DLM-Forum initiated discussions with the European Commission at the beginning of 2005 on possible funding for MoReq2. As a result the DLM-Forum reviewed what it felt was necessary for an up-date of MoReq and presented its plans for MoReq2 at the DLM-Forum 2005. The European Commission in turn agreed to consider launching a tender for the future development of MoReq with a view to developing and publishing a definitive up-date of MoReq in 2006 or 2007.

To conclude, as with many other initiatives in many other fields of activity the European Commission is keen to encourage cooperation and coordination on matters that affect all the Member States. It was widely recognised that the establishment of a Forum which would concentrate on issues relating to the effective management of electronic records would benefit both the public and private sectors in the Member States and the European Institutions themselves. Using the Council Conclusions of June 1994 as a basis the Commission, in close association with the Member States, undertook to establish this Forum and it has evolved into a dynamic and progressive body with members from across the European Union.