



ADOPTING ELECTRONIC RECORDS MANAGEMENT: EUROPEAN STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

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In Europe, records management has been traditionally viewed as an activity for long-term archiving and one of little actual business value.

However, several elements are currently driving the implementation of records management programs and the development of a corporate business and information strategy in the public and private sectors. For example:

- European Commission (EC) directives on e-commerce and e-signatures are driving the need for electronic records management (ERM) across public and private sectors.
- The EC's Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records

What's Driving ERM in Europe?

Europe is going digital. Year by year, more business is done without paper because of electronic processing's competitive advantages and efficiencies. But what is the legal situation in a dispute when there are no paper records? The European Commission and national governments have recognized the need for legislation and put in place a legal framework for electronic commerce. The goals are to ensure that electronic records are legally acceptable in the same way that paper records have been and that rules for admissibility are defined. This has led to standards and codes of practice for managing electronic records; organizations that do

and recommendations on best practice for records management, but Europe-wide approaches – or at least EC-wide approaches – are now gaining ground.

The Document Lifecycle Management Forum (DLM) has had significant influence. Initially created and funded by the European Commission, it now operates as an independent body. It consists of most EC member states' national archives, including new Eastern European EU members. The DLM forum's most significant publication to date is MoReq. (See "More About MoReq" on page 34.) Western European states have been fostering better recordkeeping practices with some commonality of approach, galvanized by the wide acceptance of

What's driving ERM in Europe, and what can these countries teach the rest of the world?

(MoReq) is becoming widely adopted across European Union (EU) member states. Developed for use in the public and private sectors, it addresses a wide range of information management requirements and operational needs outside records management.

- ERM and archiving have a high profile both at the European Commission and national government level with major initiatives and investment, plus demanding targets and timescales for government departments.

not follow the code will find their records are more likely to be questioned and their legal stance compromised. So, in a sense, adoption of ERM is enabling a digital Europe.

Also driving ERM in Europe is the increase in regulations affecting both private and public sector organizations. Regulations have spread to virtually all sectors, not just traditionally regulated ones such as pharmaceuticals and aerospace. More companies must implement strategies for managing business information and plan for long-term data storage and retrieval. Not only must these entities act properly, but they must also have proof of doing so, and such records are not limited to financials but include personnel records and others covered by new laws. Increased regulation intensifies focus on ERM as the discipline needed to meet compliance requirements.

Who Is Leading the Way?

The 1990s saw individual European countries develop their own schemes

MoReq as a best-practice standard.

The European Commission's efforts stem from the eEurope initiative, the European Union's overall scheme for guiding Europe's transition into the digital age, launched in 1999. The objectives of eEurope include:

- Bringing every citizen, home, school, business, and administration online and into the digital age
- Creating a digitally literate Europe, supported by an entrepreneurial culture ready to finance and develop new ideas
- Ensuring the whole process is socially inclusive, builds consumer trust, and strengthens social cohesion

Heads of state have agreed on an action plan (http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/2002/action_plan/index_en.htm) to address these objectives that include stimulating Internet use by accelerating e-commerce, furthering online government with electronic access to public services, and pro-

At the Core

This article

- examines the drivers of ERM in Europe
- discusses leading ERM initiatives undertaken by several EU countries
- examines future developments in ERM in Europe

viding online health services, all of which are underpinned by reliable electronic records.

Records management is indeed on the top table, as evidenced by a Resolution on Archives from the May 2003 Council of the European Union meeting of heads of state, which noted that “well-kept and accessible archives contribute to the democratic functioning of our societies” and “special attention should be paid to the challenges of archive management in the context of the enlargement of the Union.”

Modernizing Government

Across the European Union, countries have committed to the eEurope initiative and most have ambitious plans to improve and modernize government administration and to support e-business. Many have added relevant European Union directives to the statute books, for example:

- *E-commerce Directive* recognizes electronic contracts
- *Electronic Signatures Directive* ensures digital signatures are admissible
- *Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) Directive* provides a model agreement for EDI transactions

These all mandate corporate commitment to ERM practices. Two other factors supporting ERM adoption are:

- *The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act*, enacted in Ireland in 2001 and slated for the United Kingdom in 2005, is relatively new for many European countries' public sectors. It requires records management controls over business information held by public bodies so that the public has access to this information in an efficient and controlled manner. The U.K. government has set out directives on the requirement for ERM in order to address FOI compliance.
- *Data Protection Acts* now in place across all EC member states require organizations to manage their personnel records more formally, and stan-

dards and codes of practice have been produced for this purpose.

These directives have been rapidly put into law by the larger EU member states, and supportive programs have been initiated for ERM. The promotion and investment in embracing records management in support of e-government varies across states, with the United Kingdom most advanced in setting standards for ERM and deadlines for meeting modernising government targets.

EU countries – numbering 25 as of May 2004 – face unique challenges in implementing effective electronic record-keeping in support of modernization and

e-government efforts. Electronic records change the way business is done and the way that governments function with implications for the many national cultures that rely on ingrained ways of dealing with these institutions. Among countries hard at work in effecting cultural change are:

The United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has gained recognition as the model for developing e-government strategy linked to better records management practice. The key plank is the “Modernising Government” white paper, which mandates that by 2004 all central government departments can produce new records only electronically and that public services of central and local government must be available online by 2005.

The U.K. approach is possible because a wide range of e-government initiatives is in place, providing an infrastructure of services and guidance on best practice. In addition, a “carrot-and-stick” approach has been adopted, and initiatives are supported by substantial funding from central government on condition that levels of online services are met. Finally, a formal process is in place for assessing ERM systems' functionality against standards defined by the U.K. National Archives (NA). These requirements have teeth, and suppliers in the government market need to conform to them – more than 90 percent of proposals specify that the product must be NA-accredited.

Overall, progress is good. The annual IEG (Implementing Electronic Government) statements from local authorities show that the majority will meet the 2005 targets. The major central government departments all have active electronic records management system (ERMS) programs underway to select or implement an NA-approved product. Indications are that few will meet the 2004 date, but all are on course for the 2005 target.

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More About MoReq

The European Commission (EC) in 1999 solicited proposals for producing "Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records." The MoReq project was part of the wider EC initiative to provide clear guidelines in managing and controlling the capture, storage, accessibility, and distribution of electronic information.

MoReq comprises:

- Core records management functions
- Other system functions, including electronic signatures, document management, and workflow
- Detailed metadata elements
- Non-functional aspects, including operational needs and standards

MoReq is made up of 390 requirements and 127 metadata elements. Each MoReq module makes recommendations on requirements and classifies them as mandatory or desirable.

E-mail Management

E-mail is used for sending both simple messages and documents (attachments sent within and between organizations). However, the characteristics of e-mail can make it difficult to track and register. Organizations are required to be able to enforce management controls to

- capture all inbound and outbound e-mail messages and attachments
- provide users with the capability of capturing selected e-mail messages and attachments

The latter option requires users to assess the relevance and importance of items and the risks of not capturing them.

ERMS Requirement

The electronic records management system (ERMS) must allow one of the following modes of operation to be chosen at configuration time:

- The ERMS allows users to capture e-mails (i.e., after choosing which, if any, to register).
- The ERMS provides an automated process for capturing all inbound and outbound e-mails.

The ERMS should allow individual users to process and capture their incoming e-mail messages from within their e-mail system. The user should be able to process each e-mail in the inbox from within their e-mail system as follows:

- View each mail message and an indication of its attachments (if any)
- View the contents of the attachments using multi-format document viewer
- Register the mail message and its attachments as a new record in ERMS
- Link the mail message and its attachments to an existing record in ERMS

The ERMS should ensure the capture of a human-readable version of an e-mail message address, where one is associated with the original message; for example, "Jan Schmidt" rather than jsa97@xyz.int.

MoReq has seen wide acceptance across Europe as an effective tool in developing electronic records management specifications for e-business and e-government. MoReq can be downloaded from www.inform-consult.com/services_moreq.asp.

Criteria Standard for Electronic Records Management Software Applications." The original NA program (1999) approved 16 products. Updated requirements were published in December 2002 and six ERMS are currently approved, with more in the pipeline. The updated specification has incorporated many of the records management functions of MoReq. The NA requirements are more demanding than DoD 5015.2, with a wider range of functionality required, and the product testing session requires more than four to five days. (Visit www.pro.gov.uk/records-management/eros/invest/default.htm for more details on the requirements.)

France

France has traditionally favored original paper documents as proof but, in a major change, recently introduced statutes that accept electronic records as evidence.

The French National Standard (NF Z 42-013) code of practice for electronic records aims to guarantee the integrity of electronic records and the audit trail. As the French National Standards Organisation (AFNOR - *l'Association française de normalisation*) makes clear, this standard applies to computer systems using WORM optical disc technology.

The document includes both procedural and technical requirements. It sets out the technical and organizational specifications to be implemented for the capture, storage, and retrieval of electronic records in order to ensure their preservation and integrity. The recommendations apply to hardware and software and to instructions on use, security, and tracking of digital records, and on periodic system audits. Electronic records storage solutions will be compliant with the standard where their technical characteristics and operating procedures follow its specifications and are regularly monitored. Interestingly, the standard is becoming more prevalent in the private sector, notably in finance and engineering, than in the public sector. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has begun a process of defining an international elec-

tronic data storage standard with the French national standard as input that may be published in mid-2005.

In the public sector, a French government agency has been set up to coordinate the e-government drive, but there are no exact ERM specifications or approval/vetting processes for suppliers equivalent to those from the U.K. National Archives.

Germany

The German national program supporting eEurope is called *BundOnline-2005*, and the government has a coordinated e-government drive in the public sector.

The German government has established the DOMEA standard ("Document Management and Electronic Archival"), which covers a wide spectrum of electronic information aspects beyond ERM systems. DOMEA has three main sets of requirements:

1. *Records Registry Systems* – applies to records management with structured thesauri and hierarchical ordering systems; this category includes systems to manage paper archives and does not imply any electronic archival or workflow
2. *Electronic Folder Systems* – refers to applications in the archival and document management environment, where all documents related to a case or a customer are presented electronically; includes the management of paper documents being processed in parallel
3. *Business Process Management (BPM) Systems* – The *Vorgangsbearbeitung* concept is much nearer to business process management than it is to pure workflow and includes integration with existing applications, intelligent routing, and multiple-user interactions

A certification program is in place but not widely required. Only 60-percent compliance with test criteria is required for certification, so while DOMEA-approved ERM solutions are more easily

procured within the public sector, non-DOMEA solutions are common.

Holland

Following other EC countries, the Dutch government promotes e-business, including e-business for government. One of its goals was to conduct at least 25 percent of national government business electronically.

Government policy gave birth to a wide range of programs and initiatives, gathered under the umbrella of the *Aktieprogramma Elektronische Overheid* (Action Program of Electronic Government, www.minbzk.nl/e-overheid). A large part of the program is devoted to establishing reliable infrastructure, including a government-wide intranet, public key infrastructure, and safe e-mail.

Electronic recordkeeping is seen as an essential part of electronic infrastructure. Initially, the *Digitale Duurzaamheid* program focused primarily on long-term preservation issues, but cooperation between the National Archives and the Ministry of Interior moved the program toward electronic recordkeeping. The main issues are the development and implementation of recordkeeping systems, education and training of records management staff, and long-term preservation.

The State Archive Inspection, previously a department of the State Archive Service, is now an independent agency that undertakes inspection works on the implementation of the *Ministeriele Regelingen*, the regulations for keeping records, based on the 1995 *Archiefwet*. A particular issue is the requirement for all government agencies to develop a set of rules for recordkeeping. With the publication of the Australian Standard ISO 15489:2000-Records Management, the Ministry of Interior took the initiative to translate the standard into Dutch and

to have it published as a Dutch norm (ISO-NEN 15489:2001).

Future Developments

From its various initiatives, Europe is developing a mature approach. Records management has a new and crucial role in supporting delivery of e-government and e-business services. The U.K. National Archives, with its comprehensive testing programs, is setting the capability standards for systems. The testing programs cover not only records management but also document management, authentication, and metadata; case management and content management are planned.

The DLM Forum is in position to harmonize the various European electronic archiving initiatives for best effect and plans to broaden its membership to include the private sector, suppliers, and service providers. In March 2004, the DLM Forum signaled its intention to continue to enhance MoReq and look at a MoReq accreditation system.

After witnessing the U.S. debacles of Enron and WorldCom and feeling the effects of the resulting Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, Europe is now addressing corporate governance. The European Commission, increasingly concerned that organizations be more vigilant in recordkeeping, now has an initiative in place to ensure that corporations follow the rules and create records that prove they have done so. There will be stringent penalties for poor practice regarding control and defined retention timeframes for records.

Records management in Europe, for so long perceived as an activity for long-term archiving and of little business value, is now being received at the top levels when an organization is developing a corporate business and information strategy in both the public and private sector. ■

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