



MODA ML Initiative

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L.Update: 07/07/2010 19.23.00



From Moda-ML to eBIZ-TCF, a succesful story in short

A permanent working group.

The **eBIZ-TCF** project has been launched by the European Commission and is managed by Euratex (European confederation of Textile and Apparel industry), CEC (European organisation of the Footwear industry) and by the Italian ENEA with the aim to harmonise the eBusiness procedures for data exchange in the European firms of the fashion industry: Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF).

At the end of the project an **eBIZ Interest Group** has been constituted in order to maintain and develop the eBIZ-TCF specifications and to extend the eBIZ impact.

In eBIZ-TCF the outcomes produced by MODA-ML have been taken up; MODA-ML is a permanent initiative addressing the textile clothing industry that originated from an European project (IST EUTIST-AMI/MODA-ML) ended in 2003; MODA-ML aims has been to establish a common language for the European Textile Clothing (T/C) supply chain¹.

With the conclusion of the project, managed in connection with Sistema Moda Italia (Italian industry association for Textile and Clothing), the partners constituted a permanent initiative group that continues to be active and is coordinated by ENEA; the aim of the initiative is to promote the adoption and the technical improvement of the MODA-ML specifications. The necessary resources are made available from participation to research and innovation projects or from industry consortia (like TQR² consortium, in Biella) that can require improvements to the specifications or bring their outcomes (as in the case of Consorzio IPSA and Fondazione Politecnico di Milano³).

Close relationship with Euratex and standardisation initiatives.

Since 2003 the MODA-ML activities has been closely related with Euratex activities in the field of creation of a common standard for data exchange in the European T/C industry.

More specifically MODA-ML experts contributed to the first CEN/ISSS⁴ initiative **promoted by Euratex**, TexSpin, that released a first set of standard specifications. A second round of this activity, CEN/ISSS Texweave, ended in 15 September 2006 and produced an updated set of specifications (published by CEN in September 2006⁵); the specifications for manufacturing were completely received in the MODA-ML 2006-1 release.

The MODA-ML/eBIZ-TCF specifications have been assumed as a reference for the data exchanges in different research projects like Leapfrog IP (European integrated research project promoted by Euratex to radically innovate the Clothing industry) as well as the most recent TexWin project).

Since 2003 the MODA-ML experts assure the technical supports to the Euratex standardisation initiatives, like **'Innovation and Standards' Horizontal Working Group** of the **European Technology Platform** (ETP-FTC) promoted by Euratex with continuous and back-compatible developments.

In the following eBIZ-TCF project (2008-2010) three areas of interest have been identified: manufacturing enterprise networks of textile clothing, the corresponding networks of footwear manufacturers and, finally, the relationships between retail organisations and manufacturing industry of both the sectors. The eBusiness Reference Architecture for harmonised e-Business was the main outcome from the project and includes the Moda-ML contents to support the first out of the three areas (TC industry), the SHOENET⁶ specifications support the second one (Footwear industry), the standard OASIS UBL (Universal Business Language⁷) for data exchanges with retailers will be supported by a Use Profile specifically created for the sector⁸.

The eBIZ-TCF activity has led to the release of the most recent Moda-ML-2008-1⁹ version, back-compatible and with more than 60 types of documents, and to the deployment of 17 pilots testing the whole eBIZ architecture with 150 involved organisation in cross-country networks.

¹ MODA-ML project partners: ENEA, Institut Français Textile-Habillement, Politecnico di Milano, Gruppo SOI, Domina, Fratelli Piacenza, Loro Piana, Successori Reda, Vitale Barberis Canonico and Fratelli Corneliani).

² www.tqrbiella.org/

³ www.moda-ml.org/?li=it&p=365

⁴ CEN/ISSS: European Standardisation Committee/Information Society Standardisation System, a branch of CEN addressing standardisation for the ICT technologies; www.cenorm.be

⁵ CEN/ISSS CWA 1555:2006, "Scenarios and XML templates for B2B in the textile clothing manufacturing and retail"

⁶ www.shoenet.info/

⁷ www.oasis-open.org/committees/tc_home.php?wg_abbrev=ubl, and www.ubl-italia.org

⁸ spring.bologna.enea.it/ebiz/?p=326

⁹ www.moda-ml.org/moda-ml/imple/moda-ml-2008-1.asp?lingua=it&pag=0&modo=0



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Status of adoption and industry attitude

Since the beginning MODA-ML had a good acceptance from the industry as availability to adopt the specifications. The adoption in real daily activities is less diffuse, however in recent years a growing number of firms in the districts of Biella has increasingly used MODA-ML in real work, mainly towards their suppliers.

Nowadays the adoption level show promising results for the following reasons:

- there is no other public specifications dedicated to the T/C manufacturing that has been evaluated in a standardisation body (like CEN/ISSS is)
- the community is constantly growing and thanks to activities as TexWeave and mainly eBIZ-TCF, it integrates experiences started in other countries like Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, Germany, with cross-boundaries data exchanges (see the pilots on the eBIZ-TCF web site).
- thanks to a campaign of dissemination MODA-ML/eBIZ-TCF has reached a good level of popularity in several TCF and ICT communities across Europe and even where it is not adopted.
- the on-going experiences show clear indications of the specifications matching with the users requirements and with full satisfaction of the companies management.

The technical content of MODA-ML

MODA-ML/eBIZ-TCF specifications are only dealing with data representation (based on XML technology to better exploit the flexibility of the new Internet paradigms), they do not impose any specific software solution. Thanks to online public documentation and to the ebXML based approach, the specifications can be easily implemented by every technology provider with minimum efforts, even by the smaller technology providers which often support small manufacturers.

From a technical point of view, the specifications are based on strong data typing and international codings of all the information (also GS1 product coding could be supported, but not mandatory) in order to reduce ambiguity and allow exchanges between different countries and languages.

Collaboration models are presented in the documentation to easy users' access to best practices and full exploitation of the specifications for the numerous applications, including:

- yarn supplying
- fabric supplying (pricelists, collection forecast, purchase order, order confirmation, advancement status, quality report, despatch request and advice, etc etc), with or without the presence of fabric checkers in the information flows
- fabric supplying with or without the 'groupage' of cut pieces with accessories, performed by the producer or by the fabric checker in order to speed up the delivery directly to the clothing productions laboratories
- yarn and fabric subcontracting for production and finishing (dyeing, spinning, finishing etc)
- yarn and accessories supplying
- knitwear production subcontracting.

The main benefits from the adoption of MODA-ML/eBIZ-TCF specifications

- **The eBIZ Reference Architecture** which is a state of art architecture for data modelling, with public documentation. It is designed to be used at international level for data exchange across the supply chain. It is related to previous Euratex standardisation initiatives; which allows to elaborate a complete set of data models to fully integrate the suppliers and subcontractors within the company workflows (without re-invent the wheel).
- **Reduction of the development costs** and, mainly, maintenance of the software interfaces (not a new one for each partner; and anyway not in charge to a single company)
- A reactive **group of experts** that assures back compatibility and is able to follow new potential areas
- **An easier adoption for small and medium enterprises**, thanks to the use of technology that can be supported even by small technology providers as well as by international ERPs (avoiding to overwhelm companies with different proprietary formats each required by a different customer).

It is known that before eBIZ many initiatives of integration failed due to the difficulty to connect the small and medium enterprises and that, for a firm, the real value of a network solution is related to the number of potential connected partners that, without standardisation, is very small. eBIZ offers the opportunity to overcome both these obstacles.

References

www.ebiz.tcf.eu
www.moda-ml.org
www.texweave.org