



Ecma International
Rue du Rhône 114
CH-1204 Geneva
Tel: +41 22 849 60 00

Ecma International celebrates its 50th anniversary

A Europe head-quartered standardization institution in service of ICT and CE standardization

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In the evening of June 29, 2011 in Divonne (France) Ecma International celebrated its "Golden Jubilee". The celebration was co-sponsored by HP Europe and held right after the successful 101th Ecma General Assembly.

It is hard to believe but Ecma International has turned 50. Founded in 1961 – as one of the pioneering standards bodies in the area of information and telecommunication technologies (ICT) and consumer electronics (CE), the organization has been serving a large number of manufacturers as well as millions of users by creating about four-hundred Ecma standards and one hundred Technical Reports and enabling so many of the products we daily use.

At the celebration - where besides Ecma members some of Ecma past Presidents, past Secretary General and guests from partner organizations have been invited - a number of short presentations were delivered. They gave an excellent overview of the history of the organization, its past and present working methods, highlighted some of its most successful standardization areas, concluding with the future outlook for the organization.

Dr. Istvan Sebestyen, Secretary General of Ecma International, started with his presentation about the early days of Ecma International. He said that Ecma International was founded in the spirit of the early 60ies as an organization intended to develop European Standards for the IT industry but in fact from the very beginning – in close co-operation with other SDOs, like ISO, IEC, CCITT (now ITU-T), ANSI – it was creating global standards. He also pointed out that while, since that time, the political goals of the founders have changed (and so the Ecma By-laws), with recognition that ICT and CE industry and standardization is a global phenomenon, the simple and fast working rules and methods of the organization, (allowing fast and efficient progress in standardization) have remained almost unchanged from the very beginning.

Dr. Paul Weijenbergh, former President of Ecma International and current Chair of Ecma TC31 (Optical Disks and Disk Cartridges) gave an overview of the 36 years of the extremely successful co-operative standardization of optical storage media in Ecma, ISO and IEC, starting with analogue Videodisks in the 1970s, through the digital CDs and DVDs in the 1990s and in the last decade and he expressed his hope that this tradition will continue with the standardization of Blu-ray disks.

Mr. John Neumann, former President of Ecma International and current Chair of TC39 (ECMAScript) spoke about the successful standardization of computer languages in Ecma, in particular about the standardization of ECMAScript that is currently the major programming language on the Web. He reviewed the current status of work (ECMA-262 Edition 5.1 got just approved by the Ecma General assembly in Divonne) and pointed out that currently this standard is the most popular standard in Ecma and counting alone for one third of all standards downloads from the Ecma website.

Ms. Isabelle Valet-Harper, Vice President of Ecma and current Chair of TC45 (Office Open XML Formats) gave a historic overview with pictures of the TC45 work in Ecma and pointed out the excellent co-operation and joint work with ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 34. As a result of this ECMA-376 Edition 3 has been successfully synchronized in this Ecma General Assembly with the latest version of ISO/IEC 29500 Office Open XML (OOXML).

Mr. Michael Breidhardt, Chairman of the Ecma Co-ordinating Committee gave a review of the very effective rules and working methods of Ecma that allow speedy progress of consensus making and standard development. He also gave a historical overview of the development of the Ecma Patent policy since 1963, which was definitely one of the earliest SDO patent policies, if not the oldest. Then he briefly provided a short overview about the recently introduced experimental software copyright policy – also one of the pioneering policies.

Ms. Josée Auber, President of Ecma international rounded up with her words the series of short but lively presentations. She expressed the hope that the simple and effective working methods of Ecma combined with its well-functioning network of partner SDOs and Fora will continue to attract bright new projects and will ensure that the next 50 years of Ecma International will be as successful in creating world-class global ICT and CE standards as the first 50 years.

After the presentations distinguished guests from other SDOs and liaison organizations (including the European Commission, ISO, IEC, ITU, ISO/IEC JTC1) have expressed their best wishes to Ecma.

The program and slides of the presentations can be found [here](#).

About Ecma International

Since its inception in 1961, Ecma International (Ecma) has developed standards for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Consumer Electronics (CE). Ecma is a non-profit industry association of technology developers, vendors and users. Experts from industry and other organizations work together at Ecma to develop standards. Ecma often submits its work for approval as ISO, IEC, ISO/IEC JTC 1 and ETSI standards and is a frequent practitioner of “fast-tracking” of specifications through the standardization process in international standards organizations. Download the Ecma publications free of charge from the Ecma International website www.ecma-international.org.

For more information: please contact **Dr. Istvan Sebestyen**, Secretary General of Ecma International. Email: istvan@ecma-international.org.