Deeds in PDF/A for the Companies' Register - Callas validates them

> **The pdfaPilot tool from callas software is the central point in the Infocamere application which validates deeds in PDF/A format deposited at the Companies' Register: a legal obligation which is transformed into a service with multiple benefits, from the increase in reputation to the homogeneity of documents later granted to information agencies who deal with their sale**

When legislation and practice converge, complying with the regulations is simpler. That's been the case with the deeds that firms deposit with the Chambers of Commerce Companies' Register - computer documents that from this year on have to be produced in PDF/A format. Infocamere carries out systematic compliance checks on them using procedures from callas software's pdfaPilot application, which has been entrusted with the prompt validation of the files sent to the Register.

Michele Piva, Head of Marketing for the document area of the Italian Chambers of Commerce IT department: "We're dealing with a standard that was already widely in use before the Ministerial Decree (of 10 December 2008 sanctioning its use) came into effect, exactly because it derives from the PDF which firms had been widely using for some time."

Leading edge standard

Of the possible candidates for the long term archiving of electronic documents the PDF/A won out over XPS (XML Paper Specification), TIFF G4 and JPEG. "The PDF/A — Piva adds — was set as the standard ahead of the legislation. Infocamere has invested in it both for the necessity of making available documents that must keep their legal integrity and value over time — considering that the elimination of paper is a must in public administration — and because it considers that, as it is a reinforcement of the PDF, the shift over to it could be taken for granted".

And the statistics are indeed showing this: whereas from the beginning of March to the middle of April already 47% of the deeds presented to the Companies' Register were compliant with the new measures, the documents deposited in the following month and a half achieved a format validation of over 58%.

"Looking in particular at company constitution deeds, the most frequent type received in total by the Chambers of Commerce among the over 580,000 analyzed in the period under consideration (excluding the documents classified as 'other deeds')

turns out to have been in PDF/A compatible format. And for a good 89 of the 105 Chambers the percentage of valid ones is over 80%. This is the proof that the adoption of the PDF/A is being generally and rapidly confirmed over the whole of Italy".

According to the ISO 19005-1 standard, PDF/A offers a mechanism "for representing electronic documents in a manner that preserves their visual appearance over time, independent of the tools and systems used for the creation, memorization and

Bridge Technologies, a bridge over standards

Bridge Technologies is an Italian company that since 2005 has been developing complete projects in the area of information management and hybrid mail.

As an international level System Integrator, Bridge Technologies provides technologically advanced solutions for document automation, document conversion and bulk mail.

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Bridge Technologies is the exclusive distributor of Compart AG, as well as the first Italian member of the "PDF/A Competence Center", the international association of companies working on the development and promotion of the ISO PDF/A standard.

Bridge Technologies is aimed at clients in the Enterprise band, providing integrated solutions to improve business productivity and optimize the availability of internal resources such as applications, services, processes and information. It enables both public administration and large companies to reach their fixed targets through an excellent and efficient management of the entire information life cycle.

rendering of the files".

In other words, the PDF/A files are self-contained and, since they incorporate the information (content, colour, image, text and so on) necessary to display the document, they do not require any additional data for its correct visualization. However, exactly on account of this property, the format must exclude determined functions allowed in normal PDF files such as transparency and multimedia content, and cannot include macro-instructions or rely on links to external resources.

The validation check

"In order to facilitate the file production operations — continues Piva — we have also chosen the blandest compliance to the standard – which corresponds to the sub-category PDF/A-1b, for which no explicit logical structure is needed. Despite this we have noted that there are some recurring errors: on the one hand, the poor indexing and aggregation of the deeds attached to the form; on the other, the widespread habit of creating a copy of the document which then doesn't have the original's representation (and its metadata) and so loses its validity".

As well as all this, the possibility of visualizing a document "in PDF/A form" is not in itself synonymous with standard compliance: "It happens — even with Adobe Reader 9, which provides this indication — a source of a widespread error. Thus the only way to ensure adherence to the standard is the validation control".

To check this it is necessary to use products such as Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro or pdfaPilot from callas software. The alternative is the free service, accessible from the tools section of the WebTelemaco site, which employs the same pdfaPilot tool used by the Companies' Register office and which enables the validation of any document whatsoever supplying the result online, complete with details of any non-conformities encountered.

Negative outcome — rejected form

"For our validation procedures — explains Piva — we have used the server version of pdfaPilot, which the application we've developed makes appropriate calls to, determining the correspondence to the PDF/A-1b specifics. A good number of the people we work with, from service professionals to notaries and accountants, get a great deal of benefit from the tool on WebTelemaco. And, once we've received the files, we regularly repeat the checks. If the outcome is negative, the form is rejected".

"The management application was created over the space of three months from the approval of the Ministerial Decree and required an investment of around 30,000 Euro. An expense which has already been repaid by making available a standard that guarantees long term document validity and integrity: a guarantee of uniformity to a defined standard and, therefore, also of quality. Among the further benefits, apart from the return on image, is the improvement of cash flow, since compliance to the standard ensures that homogeneousness which is a key element for its subsequent conservation and concession — on payment — to distributors and information agencies who use it for commercial purposes".

PDF/A Competence Center more than 100

Founded in September 2006, the PDF/A Competence Center's purpose is the promotion of information and experience exchange in the field of long-term archiving following the ISO 19005 (PDF/A) standard.
The association includes developers of PDF solutions, companies that work with PDF/A in the DMS/ECM field, individuals interested in the subject, and also users who want to implement PDF/A in their organizations.
The PDF/A Competence Center is an association founded by callas software Gmbh, Compart AG, LuraTech Europe GmbH, PDF Tools AG and PDFlib GmbH, and up to today has more than 100 members spread all over the world. In particular the North American Chapter was recently incorporated.

SERVICES
The association provides a large number of services including organizing events, making technical documents available and the organization of working groups that take part in international committees for the definition of standards.
Some of the PDF/A Competence Center's initiatives to be pointed out are the organization of the PDF/A Conference – an event

on the PDF/A standard with the participation of international speakers and the organization of workshops for the application of the PDF/A in different sectors.
The last event was held 18–19 June 2009 at the Berlin Kosmos.