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Contents

Page

Foreword 3

Introduction 4

1 Scope 5

2 Normative references 5

3 Terms and definitions 5

4 Format 6

5 Definition of sort plan concepts 6
5.1 Sort plan concepts general 6
5.2 Definition of SortingProducts 6
5.2.1 Item related 6
5.2.2 Machine related 7
5.3 Definition of Cards 7
5.4 Definition of Actions 7
5.4.1 Sort to outlets 7
5.4.2 Sequence mail 7
5.4.3 Print on label 8
5.4.4 Show on display 8
5.4.5 Print on mail item 8
5.4.6 Sweep 8

6 Structure of the sort plan file 8
6.1 Sort Plan 8
6.1.1 General 8
6.1.2 Flag 9
6.1.3 MailAttribute 10
6.1.4 Card 10
6.1.5 SortingProduct 11
6.1.6 Destination 11
6.1.7 CardRequest 12
6.1.8 SpecialSort 12
6.2 OutletGroup 12
6.3 SweepGroup 13
6.4 Action 14
6.4.1 General considerations 14
6.4.2 Sort 14
6.4.3 Print 15
6.4.4 Sweep 15

7 Precedence rules 15
7.1 General considerations 15
7.2 Sorting Product 16
7.3 Action 16

8 Implementation chart 16

Annex A (informative) XML data 17
A.1 XML data structure 17
A.2 Example of Destination Sort Plan 29
A.3 Example of Sequence Sort Plan 30

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Foreword

This document (CEN/TS 16316:2012) has been prepared by Technical Committee CEN/TC 331 “Postal Services”, the secretariat of which is held by NEN.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. CEN [and/or CENELEC] shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

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Introduction

In a very generic postal system architecture, an Information System manages the creation, production and life cycle of sort plans. This Information System is also responsible for distributing sort plans to Sorting Machines. Sorting machines use several configuration files. A sort plan is a kind of configuration file dedicated to the description of sorting operations executed by a sorting machine. Sorting operations are mainly the assignment of mail items to physical outlets, the display text and the tray labels. As both, the Information System and the several types of Sorting Machines, have to interpret this sort plan file. This file format therefore is the interface between them.

In order to optimise performance, there is a growing demand of the postal operators to combine parts of their sorting automation equipment from different suppliers. In the past this has led to project-specific interfaces being negotiated between one postal operator and one or multiple suppliers. These project-specific interfaces were developed by the suppliers and maintained for an agreed period of time. However, this approach has several disadvantages:

— the interface is derived from an interface that was not intended to be open;

— the interface is developed for a single project and works only in the context of that project (extra costs);

— each participating supplier has to implement the interface (multiple efforts);

— experience shows that integration of components with project-specific interfaces is complex and expensive;

— project-specific interfaces are not integrated into the product line and once the initially agreed maintenance period is over it may be difficult and expensive to maintain and/or may hinder the adoption of equipment upgrades.

This has led to “open interfaces” defined by one supplier. Yet these still have the disadvantage of being in product use only by one supplier.

Within a group of postal operators and suppliers, it was decided to develop a set of “open standard interfaces” which will be developed by the suppliers and referred to by the postal operators. It was explained that the benefits of these interfaces will be that they:

— are fixed in an international standard (with change control);

— are agreed and implemented by major suppliers;

— are agreed by customers and therefore used in calls for tenders;

— will result in net savings, higher initial development effort and consequent higher basic equipment prices being more than offset by reduced project development, integration and maintenance costs;

— will minimize the need for project integration effort by reducing implementation timescales;

— will increase competition between suppliers by stimulating product improvements.

This technical specification is based on the "Common Sortplan Format" which was used in projects before this standard was developed.

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1 Scope

This Technical Specification specifies the sort plan file content and structure. It does not deal with other configuration files in sorting machines nor is it applicable to the transport mechanism.

The content of a sort plan allows the specification of the following capabilities:

— sorting by address and non-address attributes;

— sorting of code ranges;

— sorting of rejects;

— support of display and label texts;

— dynamic outlet groups;

— sorting to more than one outlet;

— overflow handling;

— support of cut off time before dispatch;

— sequence sorting;

— provide volume information (option);

— support of Cards;

— possibility to add simple manufacturer specific information;

— support of various sort code formats and non-address attributes;

— support of various display and label formats;

— check against characteristics of the sorting machine.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references for this document.

3 Terms and definitions

3.1
configuration file
one of the different files specifying actions to be processed by a sorting machine during operation time

3.2
configuration file set
complete set of configuration files needed by a machine to operate at a given time

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