



iText DITO® – Powering the digital future of civil records in Belgium

Digital storage and distribution of information is the future. That's why the DABS (Databank voor de Akten van Burgerlijke Stand or Database of Civil Registry Records) project was initiated by the Belgian government.

This cooperative project between the Department of Justice, Department of Internal Affairs (including the National Register), Department of Foreign Affairs, Municipalities and Consulates and many other government departments

is an initiative that has been coordinated by the Dienst Administratieve Vereenvoudiging (DAV) or Administrative Simplification Service.

Read on to learn how iText DITO® is being used to revolutionize citizen certification inside (and outside) Belgium.

BACKGROUND

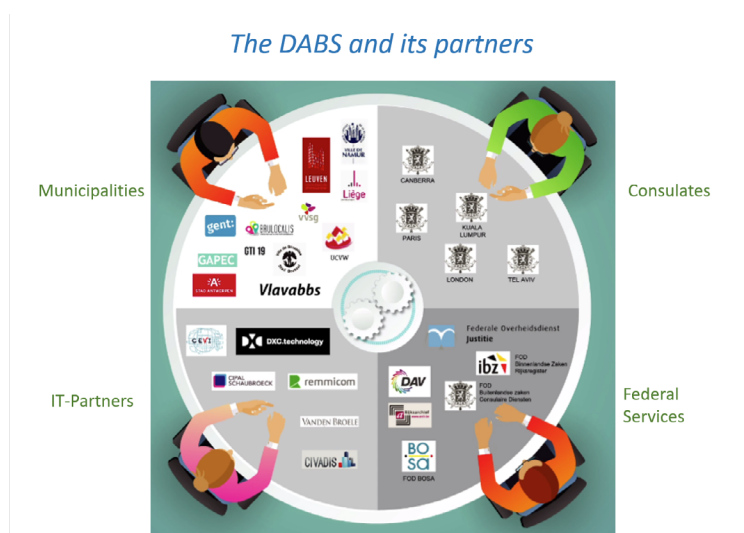
The DAV or Administrative Simplification Service was established in Belgium in 1998 and was initially instructed to propose measures to reduce the administrative complexity for companies and the costs associated with this administration. In 2003 this assignment was extended to include simplification actions for citizens, which is where the DABS or Database of Civil Registry Records project comes in.

The DABS project's aim is to centralize all citizen certifications (birth, marriage, death, recognition, adoption, change of nationality...) in one large digital database, and make the process entirely electronic from start to finish.

Traditionally in Belgium, citizen information was held by local authorities, each with their own template for creating every type of certificate. This meant that to access a person's records such as a birth certificate, they had to be requested from the person's respective local authority. Meanwhile citizens would need to travel to their place of birth in order to request a copy of the certificate in person.

This system had been in place since the time of Napoleon, and in the modern world caused a significant amount of administrative complexity and wasted time. The new electronic system would allow both authorities and citizens easier access to records, both inside and outside Belgium.

DXC Technology was awarded the contract to coordinate the project from a technical point of view and to implement a digital solution replacing this outdated methodology. DXC approached iText as they recognized our expertise in PDF technologies and had been a trusted partner in the implementation of several previous projects at the FPS Justice and others.



The DABS project is a huge cooperative project between many different federal departments, municipalities, and IT partners

GOALS

- ✓ To create citizens' civil state certifications in one central database in a dematerialized format.
- ✓ To request extracts from a certificate independently of the place where the certificate was created.
- ✓ To reduce administrative complexity and wasted time.
- ✓ To completely replace the existing non-digital document workflow.
- ✓ To support all required languages: French, Dutch and German.

CHALLENGES

Based on their experience with the iText SDK during the JustX project, DXC initially planned on developing a custom template solution using iText 7 Core to handle the requirements for each type of document. With this in mind, they had begun coding the required PDF templates.

However, during the initial development stage in February 2018 they contacted iText to see if there were any other possibilities to aid their development. During these discussions iText recognized that this project would be the perfect test-case for their latest innovation – iText DITO®, a powerful PDF template engine which combines iText's proven abilities in mass-producing high-quality PDFs, with a graphical interface for designing templates.

iText DITO was developed to give both developers and non-developers a way to design and maintain templates to produce PDFs without any programming. Instead users are able design their templates visually and can link data from various sources to elements of the template in the same way.

iText worked with DXC to develop proof of concept templates from examples of the existing non-digital document workflow. The templates that were prepared were well received. DXC could immediately see the added value of iText DITO and that it would prove to be an enormous time saver compared to their planned approach.

It was clear that designing the templates visually would be a much better solution and enable more customizability of templates. In addition, the ability to define the data binding functionality in the editor would also be a boon to development.

In turn, iText was able to use the feedback from DXC to influence the development of iText DITO as a product, in order to implement the features and functionality required for the solution DXC was developing. By working together closely, both companies benefitted from the collaboration.

SOLUTION

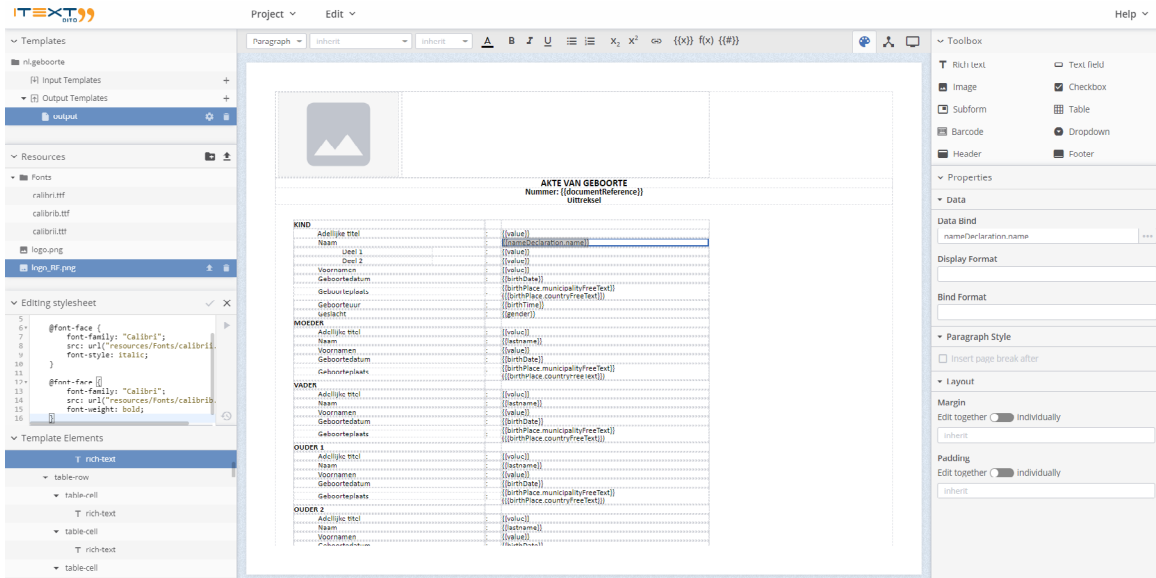
HOW THE ITEXT DITO SOLUTION TRANSFORMS PUBLIC RECORD MANAGEMENT

By using iText DITO’s template designer, each certificate template can be unified into a standardized format, which is used for both printed and online versions. However, it can also be easily customized for each local authority’s needs - for example to use their own logo for every type of certificate. With almost 600 different local authorities included in the scheme, this could be a complex task using conventional coding methods.

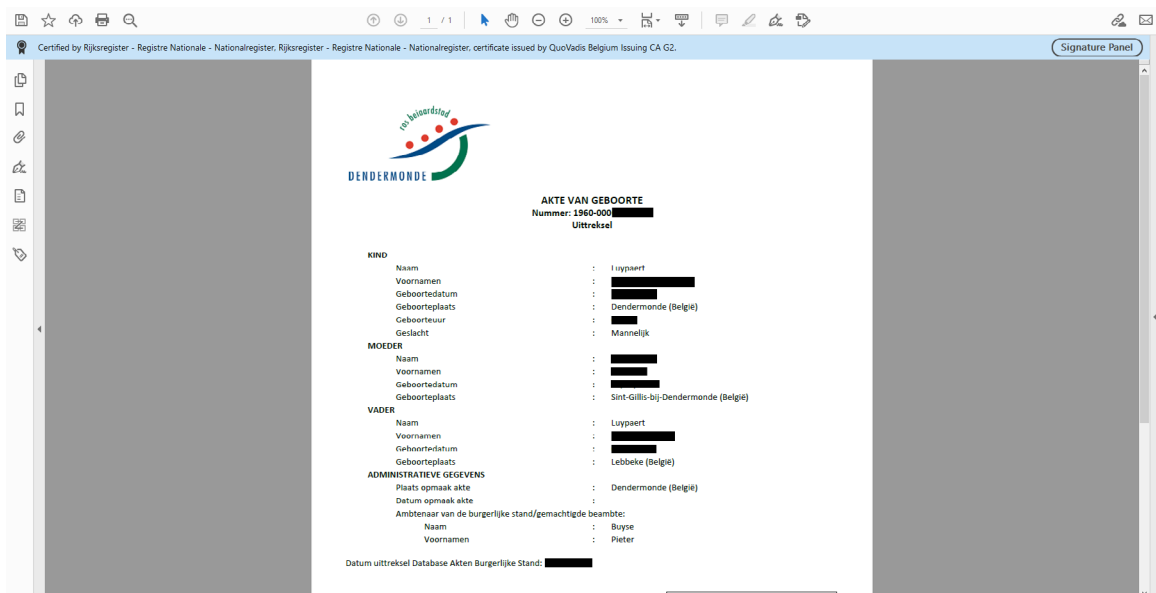
Unlike traditional template solutions, iText DITO enables quick and easy updates to templates when content changes are required such as when the law changes. With hardcoded templates, even slight edits require recoding and testing to be carried out, wasting valuable development time and resources. Not so with iText DITO.

Thanks to the intuitive graphical interface, designing templates can be carried out without requiring extensive training or technical knowledge, and because of its browser-based technology it can be used on virtually any device, with no software installation required.

As with all PDFs generated with iText technology, they are standards-compliant and highly compatible, and iText DITO supports the latest PDF 2.0 specification. The generated certificate is then handed off to a separate system to be digitally signed, making it a legally recognizable document that can be used by multiple governmental organizations. In addition, extracts of documents can be quickly and easily verified with the use of a QR code, which is added using iText 7’s Core library.



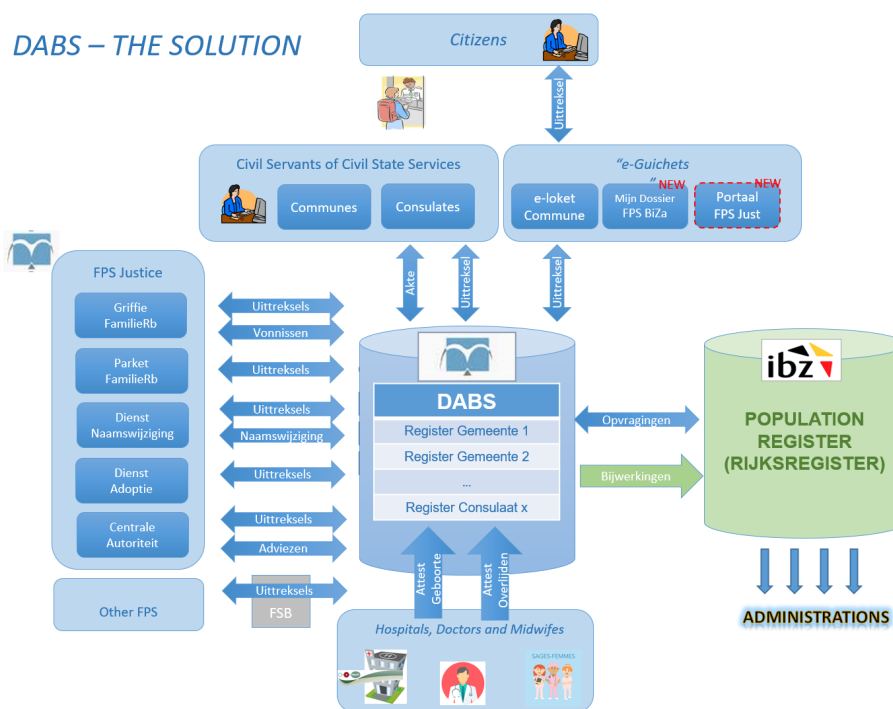
Editing a DABS template in the iText DITO Editor



An example of a PDF generated using from iText DITO, combining citizen information from the database with the template (some details have been redacted).

RESULT

The digital civil registry has been in operation since 31st March 2019. From that date all civil status records are now digitally created and recorded in the DABS central database. This means that in 581 municipalities across Belgium and 102 consulates abroad, paper deeds are finally a thing of the past for citizens.



An overview of the entire DABS solution

For example, drafting documents such as birth or marriage certificates no longer requires a pen and paper. Civil servants from both the municipalities and Belgian consulates can instead sign the documents digitally and store them in the central database, from where extracts and copies can easily be accessed.

Citizens are no longer required to make long journeys in order to obtain copies or extracts of documents. Instead, they can go to their local residential authority or use an “e-loket” electronic portal, which significantly reduces time and costs. Thanks to the increased speed of communication and data exchange it also ensures more legal certainty (e.g. divorces can be processed up to a month and a half faster).

Compulsory digitization also has the benefit of eliminating the inconvenience of storing and updating millions of paper deeds in town halls and courts. Paper archives can now go into long-term storage as they no longer need to be quickly accessible, which also cuts costs.

An additional benefit is that judgments related to civil state facts are handled automatically, which reduces the operating costs for the municipalities.

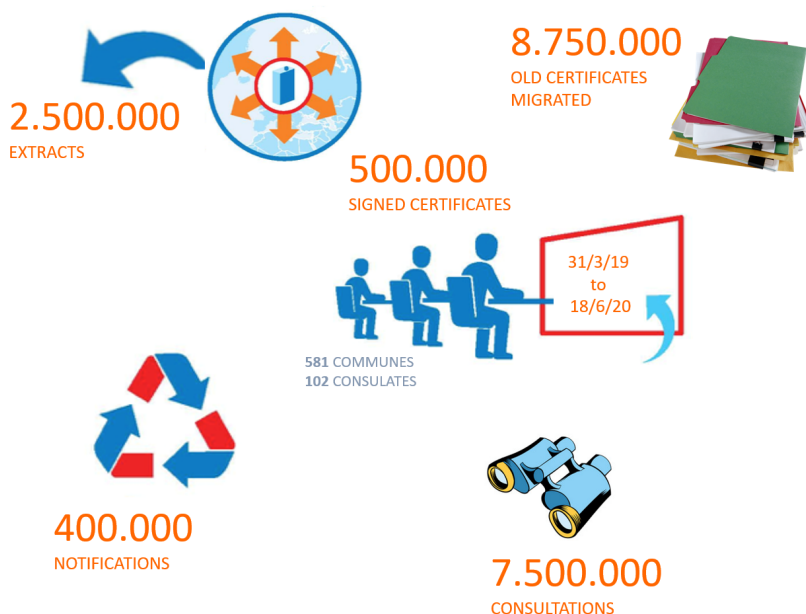
At the federal government level, the clerks are no longer required to draft and send judgment bulletins to the registry office. This means no need to update and store the duplicates of the deeds. Public prosecutors can perform their supervisory function in a modern and centralized manner, and their workload is also decreased due to the fact that municipalities can correct errors themselves.

The project to digitalize the civil registry has been a great success. In fact, in December 2019 the project received the Agoria e-Gov Award for Best Project of 2019. It was also declared the winner of the award in the Profitability subcategory.

It's no wonder, when you consider impressive figures like 8.75 million old deeds migrated, or annual savings of 39.6 million euros in administration costs for citizens, businesses, municipalities and the federal government.

There are also significant benefits to the environment, as thanks to the convenience of the new system it is estimated that over 7 million sheets of paper will be saved each year.

DABS – SOME FACTS AND FIGURES



Facts and figures from a report of the success of the DABS project



Collecting the Agoria e-Gov Award for Best Project of 2019



ABOUT DXC TECHNOLOGY

As the world's leading independent, end-to-end IT services company, DXC Technology leads digital transformations for clients by modernizing and integrating their mainstream IT, and by deploying digital solutions at scale to produce

better business outcomes. The company's technology independence, global talent, and extensive partner network enable 6,000 private and public-sector clients in 70 countries to thrive on change.



The DABS solution using iText DITO unites the data and workflow from all local authorities in the Flemish, Walloon, and Brussels-Capital regions of Belgium, and supports all three languages used by the administrations.

ERWIN DE PUE - DIRECTOR GENERAL: DIENST ADMINISTRATIEVE VEREENVOUDIGING (DAV)

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ITEXT DITO HELPED WITH THIS PROJECT, COULD IT HELP WITH YOURS?

iText DITO is a data-driven, template-based PDF generator that simplifies the process of creating and maintaining PDFs. It offers an intuitive visual template designer, a powerful REST API for processing and production, and with the release of iText DITO 2.0 we've introduced the new iText DITO Manager to handle user, template and resource management.



**LEVERAGE DATA WHEREVER
IT RESIDES.**



**REDUCE TIME AND COST OF
DOCUMENT AUTOMATION PROJECTS.**



**MASS-PRODUCE
STATE-OF-THE-ART PDFS.**



**EMPOWER BUSINESS USERS TO OWN
THEIR DOCUMENT TEMPLATES.**

SCHEDULE A DEMO

When you request a demo, a specialist will contact you within two business days to inquire details and set up a time for the walk-through. The link for the demo will be sent to you shortly after submitting your request here. If you did not receive it, check your “spam” or “junk email” folders.

Scan the QR-code to schedule a demo.



ABOUT US

iText is a global leader in innovative award-winning PDF software used by millions of users worldwide to create digital documents like invoices, credit card statements, mobile boarding passes, and more. The iText 7 Core library is available as open source, while commercial licensing provides professional support and release from AGPL requirements. The iText 7 Suite includes a wide range of add-ons for extra functionality, and we also develop iText DITO: a low-code, template-based PDF generator.

iText works and works well. Our customers choose iText because of our world-class software quality, and our reliable, mature, and proven technology. Our PDF solutions can be embedded into the document workflows of various industries and their applications to create and manipulate PDFs, tasks like secure content redaction, encryption, digital signatures, and ensuring documents are accessible and archivable.

Europe, Middle East, Africa & CIS

AA Tower
Technologiepark - Zwijnaarde 122
9052 Zwijnaarde
Belgium

✉ sales.isb@itextpdf.com
🌐 www.itextpdf.com
☎ +32 9 298 02 31

Americas

530 Harrison Ave,
Second Floor
Boston, MA 02118
United States

✉ sales.isc@itextpdf.com
🌐 www.itextpdf.com
☎ +1 617 982 2646

Asia & Oceania

Republic Plaza
9 Raffles Place, Level 6,
Republic Plaza 1
Singapore 048619

✉ sales.isa@itextpdf.com
🌐 www.itextpdf.com
☎ +65 6932 5062