Tagging Text Blocks in ESEF

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These are some comments about the content of text blocks as required to be tagged by ESMA in 2022 ESEF reports.

Some seem to criticize the content of textblocks in ESEF reports, especially tables.

Everybody knows that blocktagging was not made for humans to be able to read the XBRL content of the tags. A machine should be able to read it. If it is not, the whole purpose of blocktagging will miss its aim and it may show that it is not the adequate way of digitalizing tables for automatic use of the data.

The Inline XBRL elements are as follows and the aim is underlined in green:

	Processed by a machine	Readable by humans in browsers	Readable by humans using specific viewers	Automatically consumed by a machine
HTML text	Yes	**Yes**	Yes	No
XBRL textblocks tags	Yes	No	Yes [1]	No
XBRL detail tags	Yes	No	Yes	**Yes**

(1) The viewer may need specific format attributes to reproduce the original document.

If you take a textblock disclosure:

- The requirement is to tag under a textblock tag the whole content of the table:
  - o *RTS: Article 6: …issuers shall comply with the following: a) embedding of markups in the issuers' annual financial reports in XHTML format using the Inline XBRL specifications.*
- The Inline specifications, as documented by XBRL International say:
  - o *The Inline XBRL Specification does not prescribe how such fact values should be presented to an end user and does not define whether whitespace normalization should be applied.*
- Guidance in the ESEF reporting manual says:
  - o *Due to mechanics of producing XHTML documents, some narrative blocks extracted from such documents to an XBRL instance may not be formatted in a manner that is exactly the same as the full document when looked at in isolation (such as, but not limited to, lost table structures, applied styles, different line breaks).*

Applying these rules, the disclosure shown below would be represented in XBRL as shown:

		2021

	Brands [a]	PetCare	Other [a]	**Total**
Sales	11 490	9 980	5 475	26 945

Disclosure of entity's operating segments [text block]

Concept

- (ifrs-full) Disclosure of entity's operating segments [text block]

  The entire disclosure for operating segments.

Dimensions

Date	1 Jan 2021 to 31 Dec 2021
Fact Value	2021 Brands (a) PetCare Other (a) Total Sales 11 490 9 980 5 475 26 945

For the XBRL content of the textblock tag of the segment disclosure table:

- The correct tag has been used: the requirement is then fulfilled,
- The format of the table is not reproduced in XBRL: the specification and the recommendation are applied.

HOWEVER, THE RESULT IS NOT WHAT IS EXPECTED.

1. ESMA expectations as expressed in the manual are not consistent with the specifications as the extracted data into XBRL, if it is free text, cannot be processed automatically (even though the computer is told that this is a table!)

   o *Block tagging in ESEF should be able to designate meaningful fragments of a well-formed XHTML that are **extracted into XBRL for processing**. That means that the extracted information, when displayed outside the context of the original document, resembles the original document as the semantic structure but not necessarily the style is maintained.*

Fact Value	2021 Brands (a) PetCare Other (a) Total Sales 11 490 9 980 5 475 26 945

Fig 1: Representation of a textblock for a table in XBRL (using "escape=true" as generally recommended)

*[It is hardly difficult for a human to find the "**Revenue**" of the segment "**Brands** "and the "**Total revenue**" split by segment (Furthermore when the report in one of the EU languages). A machine cannot find this information automatically]*

2. Responding to expectations of some auditors, although not required legally, some software vendors have developed "tricks » for making the lines and columns present in the XBRL tag : the question is how is this more automatically readable by a machine ? The label of the line is "**Sales**", the columns are the periods, segments and a total. In addition, the standard iXBRL viewer does not show the difference.

Fact Value	2021 Brands (a) PetCare Other (a) Total Sales 11 490 9 980 5 475 26 945

[For a human the view is the same.]

With the Edgar viewer, it looks more of a table:

Tag	ifrs-full:DisclosureOfEntitysReportableSegmentsExplanatory		
Fact	2021Brands (a) PetCare	Other (a)Tot a lSales	
	11 490	9 980	5 475

The fact that it is a table is available in the XHTML source code:

Fig 2: *Representations of a textblock for a table in XBRL, using he "table formatting."*

Fig 3: *Representation of a textblock for a table in XBRL, using he "table formatting" as read by a machine.*

The table representation read by a machine needs a specific tool. But a machine still cannot find the revenue by segment automatically].

3. It will become clear that the only way a machine can understand the content of the table is a detail tagging which would contain for each cell a structure carrying the information about the line and the column as defined in the supporting taxonomy.

[*The table is tagged within the textblock.*

The line is tagged as "Revenue from contract with customers", as in the Income statement.

Each value is tagged with a segment and the total is the same value as in the Income statement.

These values can immediately be retrieved by a machine.]

Fig 3: *Representation of a detail tag for a table*

In conclusion, nobody is to be blamed for the results of textblocks tagging in the context of the present ESEF regulation: the preparer does what is required, the regulator requires what the technology enables, the technology has specifications, the software applies these specifications.

The only question that should be answered is: what is the purpose of using block tags for disclosures? and then, the expectations can be precisely defined.

-        An answer is proposed French auditors: *"The objective of macro-tagging is to make it easy to extract information from several transmitters relating to a given theme based on their Annual Financial Statements in ESEF format. For example, by calling macro tags related to the theme "goodwill", a user should be able to obtain the information provided by issuers on their goodwill in their IFRS consolidated accounts."*

[This means that the text is easy to find as tagged, but the content remains readable by humans in the XHTML representation.]

As Charles Hofmann, the "father" of XBRL, often says: "*the problems come from USING XBRL INCORRECTLY, which is unfortunately too common*".