
# Rock solid UI modeling using annotation processing

Case of study

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# Speakers

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- Java Developer since 1999
- Software architect at


- ILOG – IBM
  - 2D Graphic toolkit
  - Rule Engine
- Prima-Solutions
  - SOA Platform for J2EE
  - Domain models code generators

- @jubaudry – Julien Baudry
- Java Developer since 2007
- Senior developer at

- Prima-Solutions
  - SOA Platform for J2EE
  - Domain models code generators
  - Reinsurance software

# Agenda

Context

Quick demo

Modeling approach

Dependency Model

Field features

Extensions

Live coding demo

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# Context at LesFurets.com

- 5 questions sets for an insurance aggregator
  - Car form (160 questions)
  - Motorbike form (180 questions)
  - Health form (50 questions)
  - Home form (70 questions)
  - Loan form (40 questions)
- A lot of questions with business rules linked by dependencies and business rules

# Sample : old question set for motorbike

# Nature of dependencies

- Visibility
  - I declare a claim -> question set for this claim appears
- Value range
  - I've been owning a car for one year -> constraint on the date for a claim should be later than the car's purchase date
- Reset
  - I change the number of occurred claims from 2 to 1 -> previous details of claim number 2 should be dropped
- Validation
  - I change my date of birth -> I could not obtain my car license before being 18 years old

# Complexity and bug hell

- Historical design was based on a page scope
- All the rules between fields were embedded in each page code
- Business rules were directly written on the widget values without MVC pattern
- Page navigation was triggering model updates that were sent to the server

- Governance of the business rules between fields was difficult
- Lots of side effects between rules
- Improving or adding new rules provided a lot of regressions
- Dependencies between fields was not documented
- Adding new fields or shuffling the fields order required a lot of testing

# The CSS ids : a limited starting point

- All the form fields were still having a CSS class and an ID for CSS skinning
  - No real taxonomy
  - No guaranty that CSS ids are unique
  - Styling is evolving with his own constraints
  - Not the original purpose of CSS

Using CSS on web forms hides an implicit model that could be leveraged

# Requirements

- Ensuring non regression even with frequent changes on forms
  - No unexpected side effects between business rules
  - Make unit testing possible
- Enabling a fast and up-to-date understanding of the form complexity
- Reducing the maintenance effort
- Supporting fields shuffle
- Supporting AB testing

# MDL4UI our OSS sandbox

- Available on github
  - http://github.com/lesfurets/mdl4ui
- Full framework and example
- Based on GWT and Twitter bootstrap
- Ready to fork and play
- Requires Java 6+ and Maven
- 50 sec to build and run from scratch

**WE ACCEPT PULL REQUESTS**


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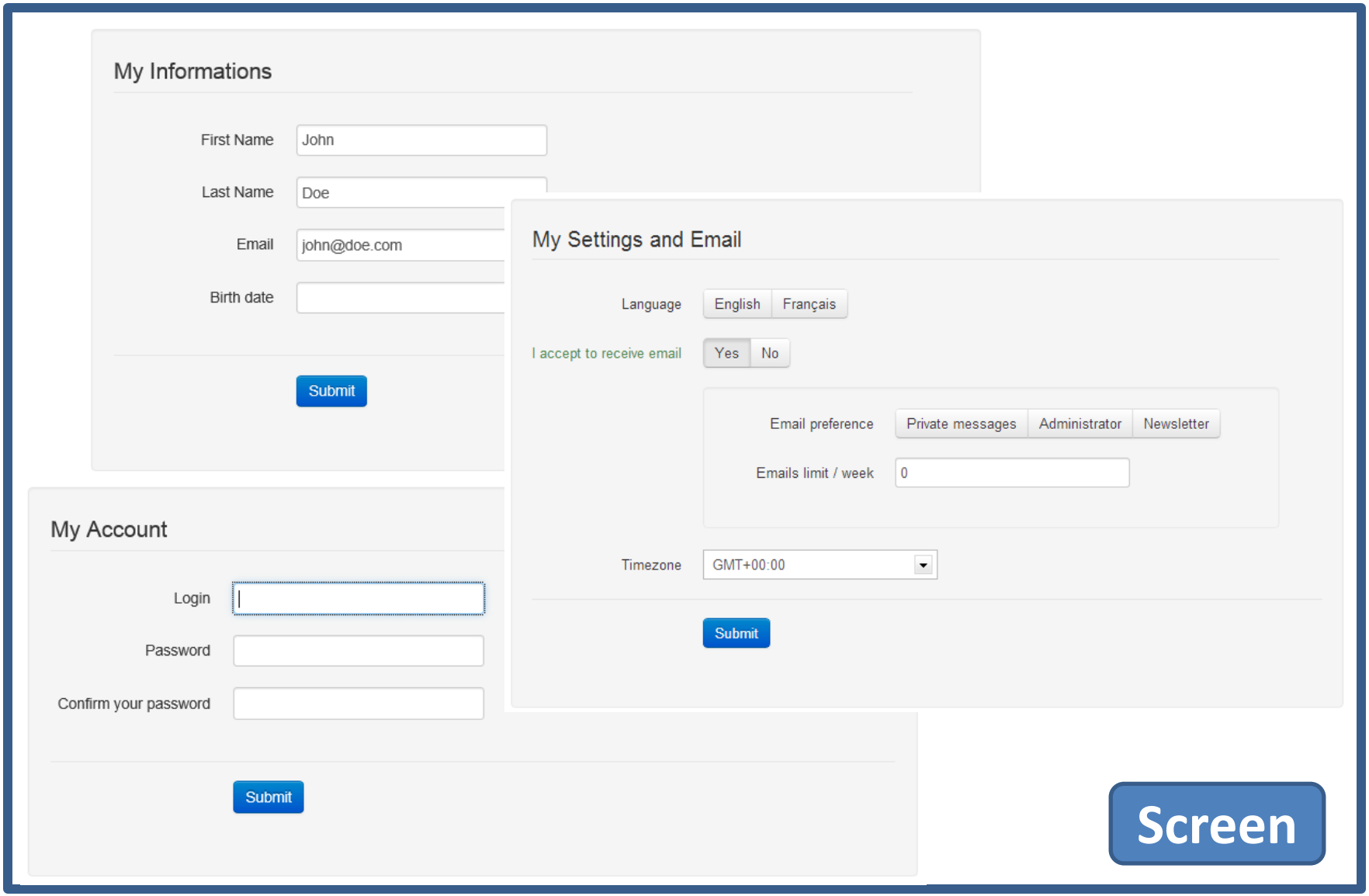
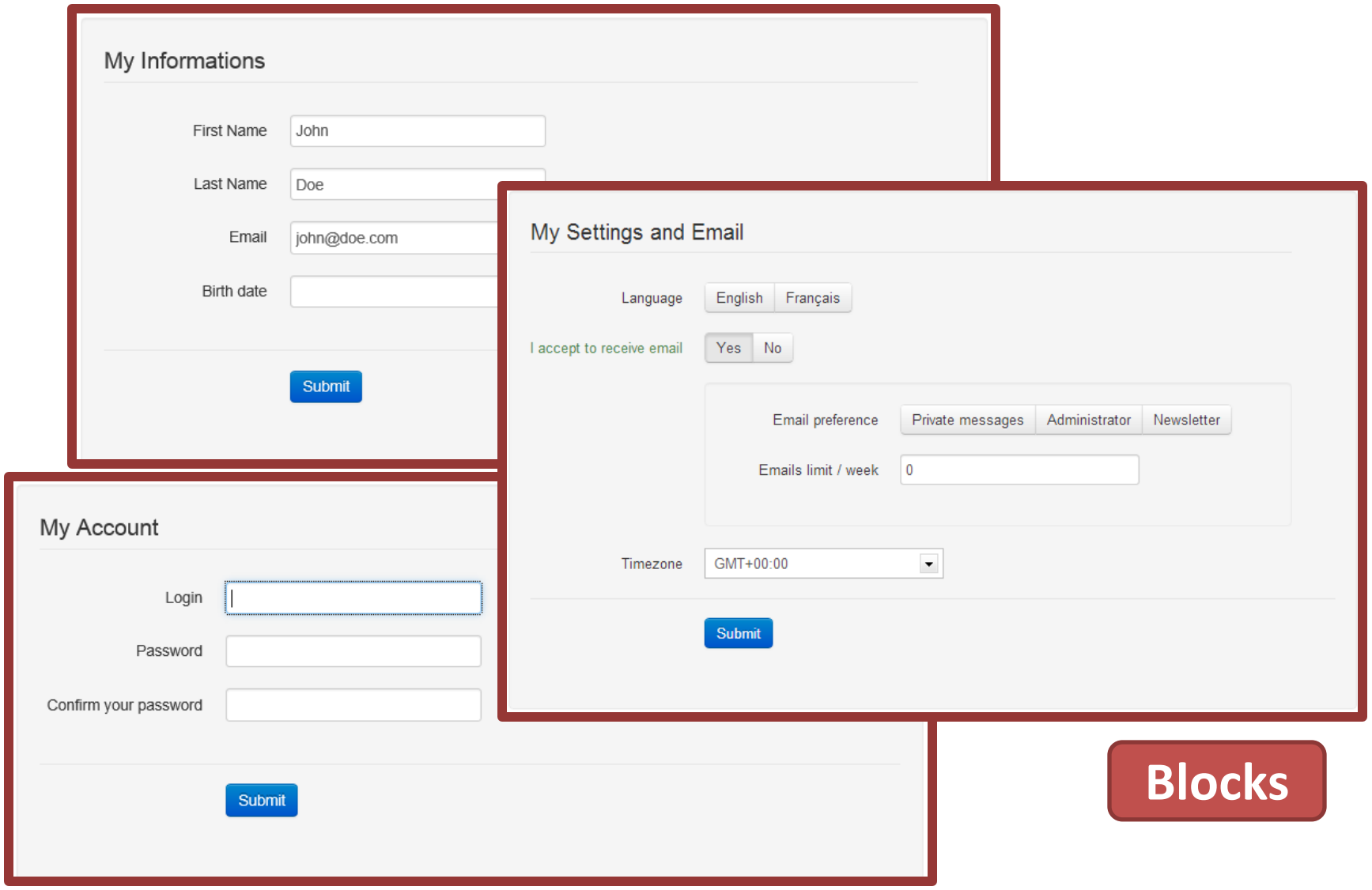
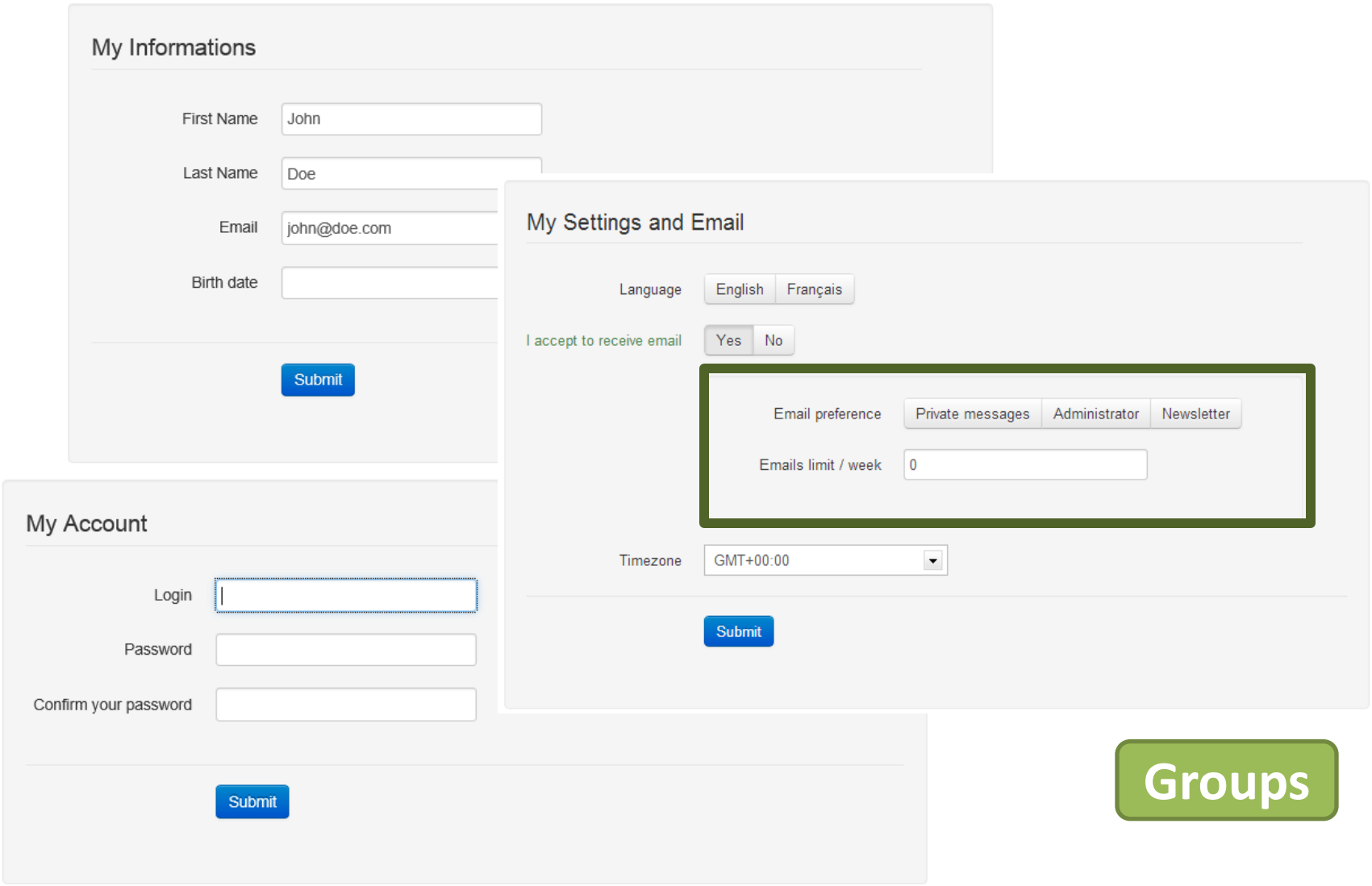
# MDL4UI model concepts



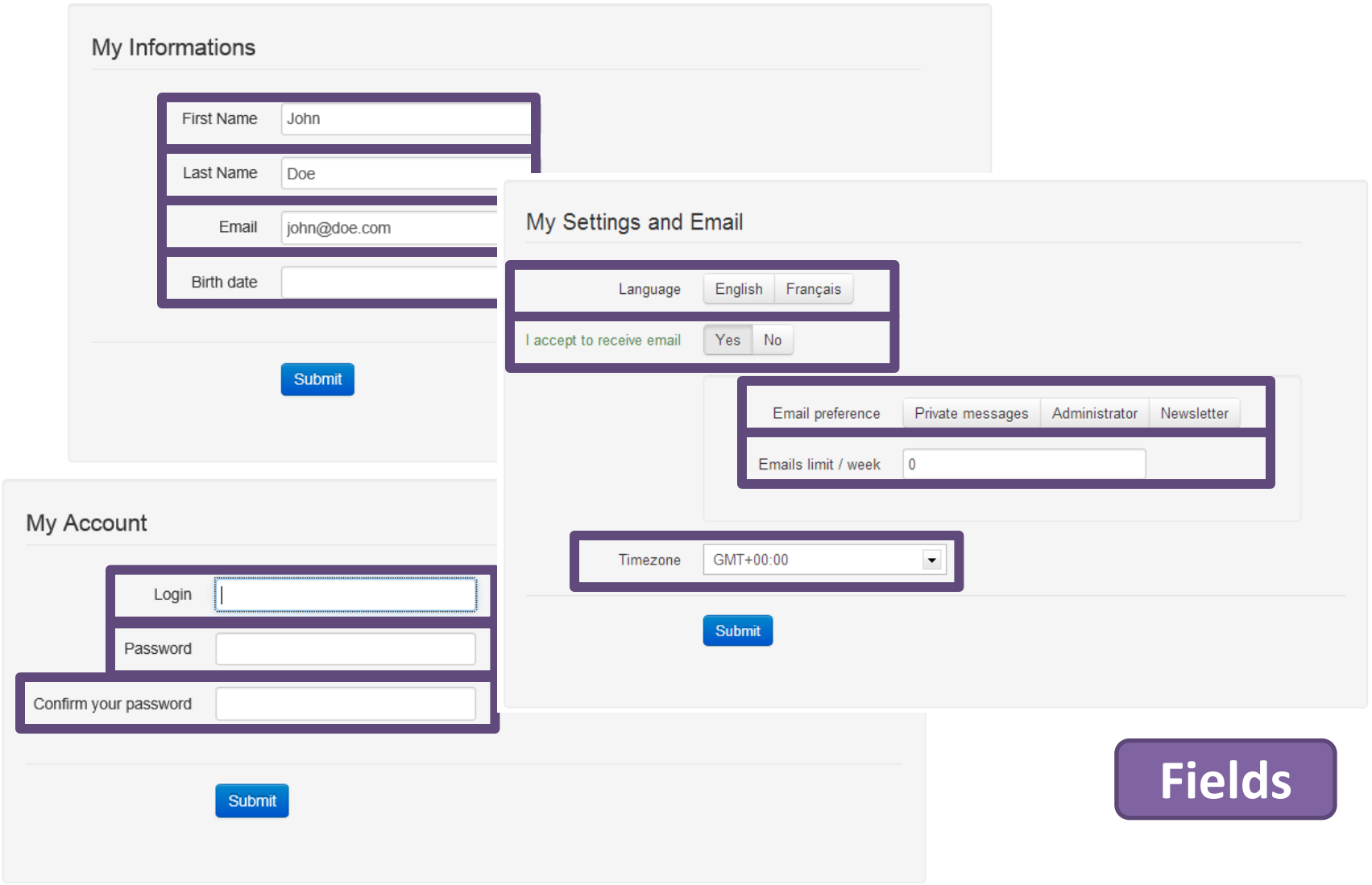
# MDL4UI model concepts



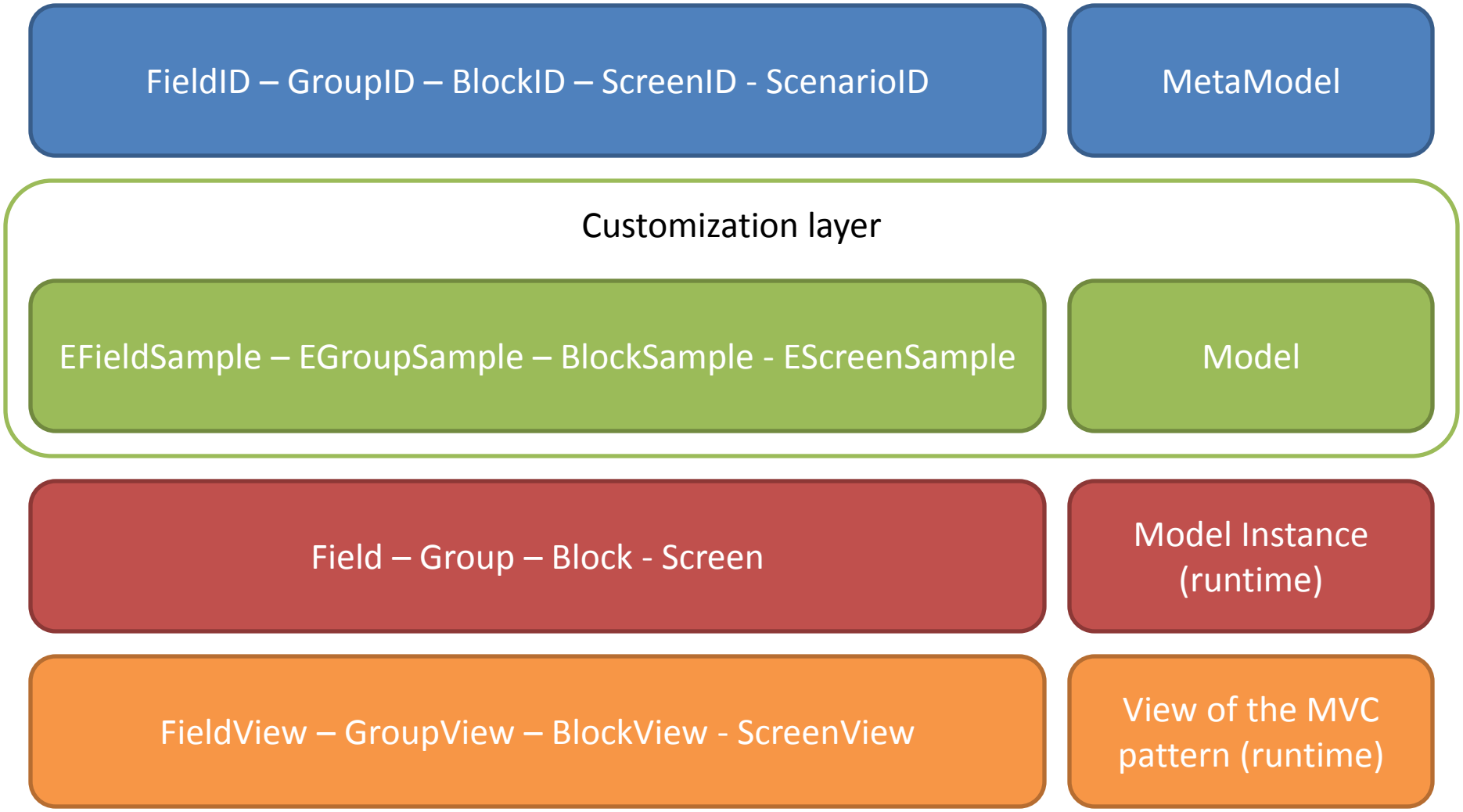
# MDL4UI model concepts



# MDL4UI model concepts

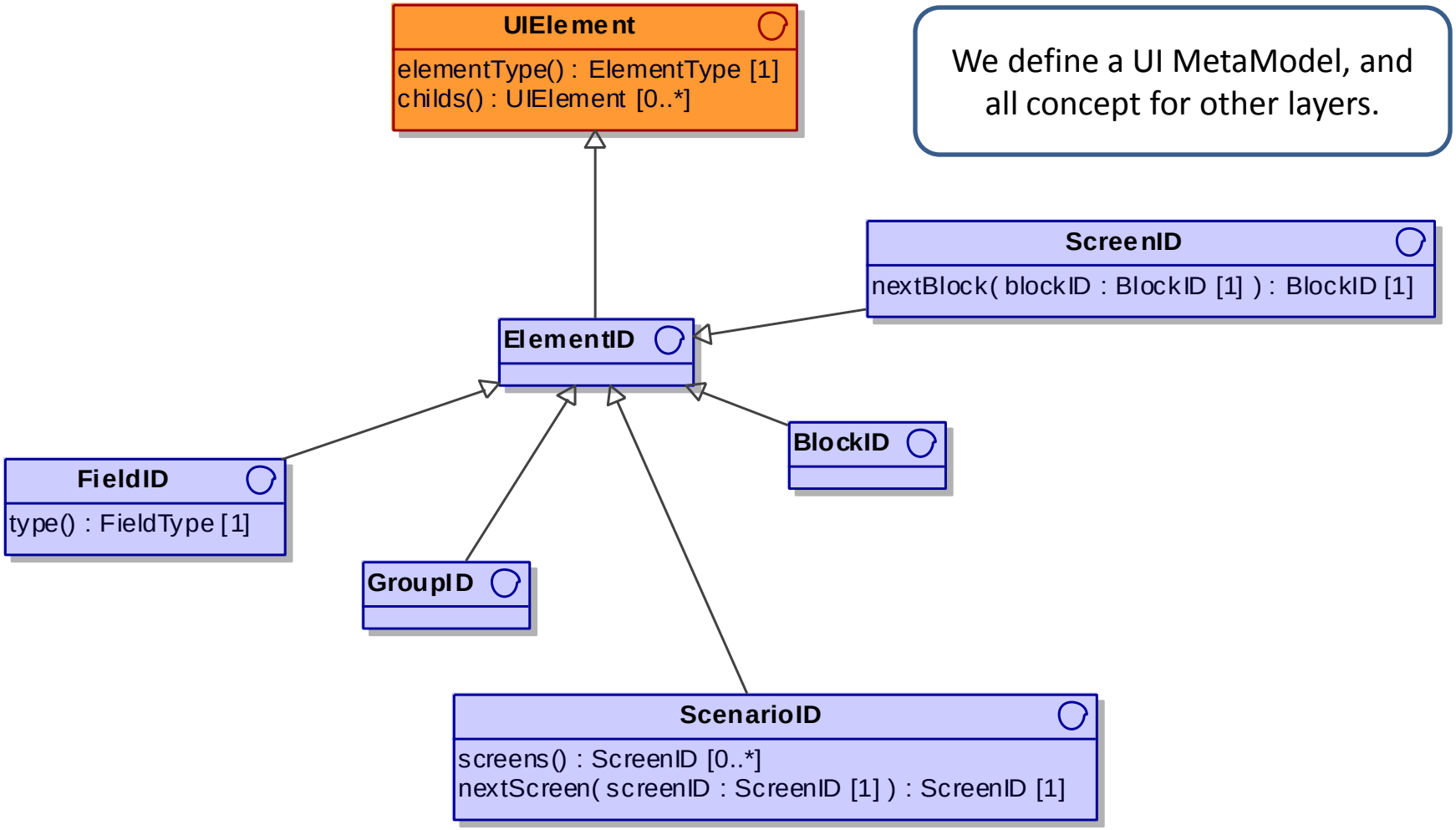


# Introducing MDL4UI model layers



# FieldID – GroupID – BlockID – ScreenID - ScenarioID

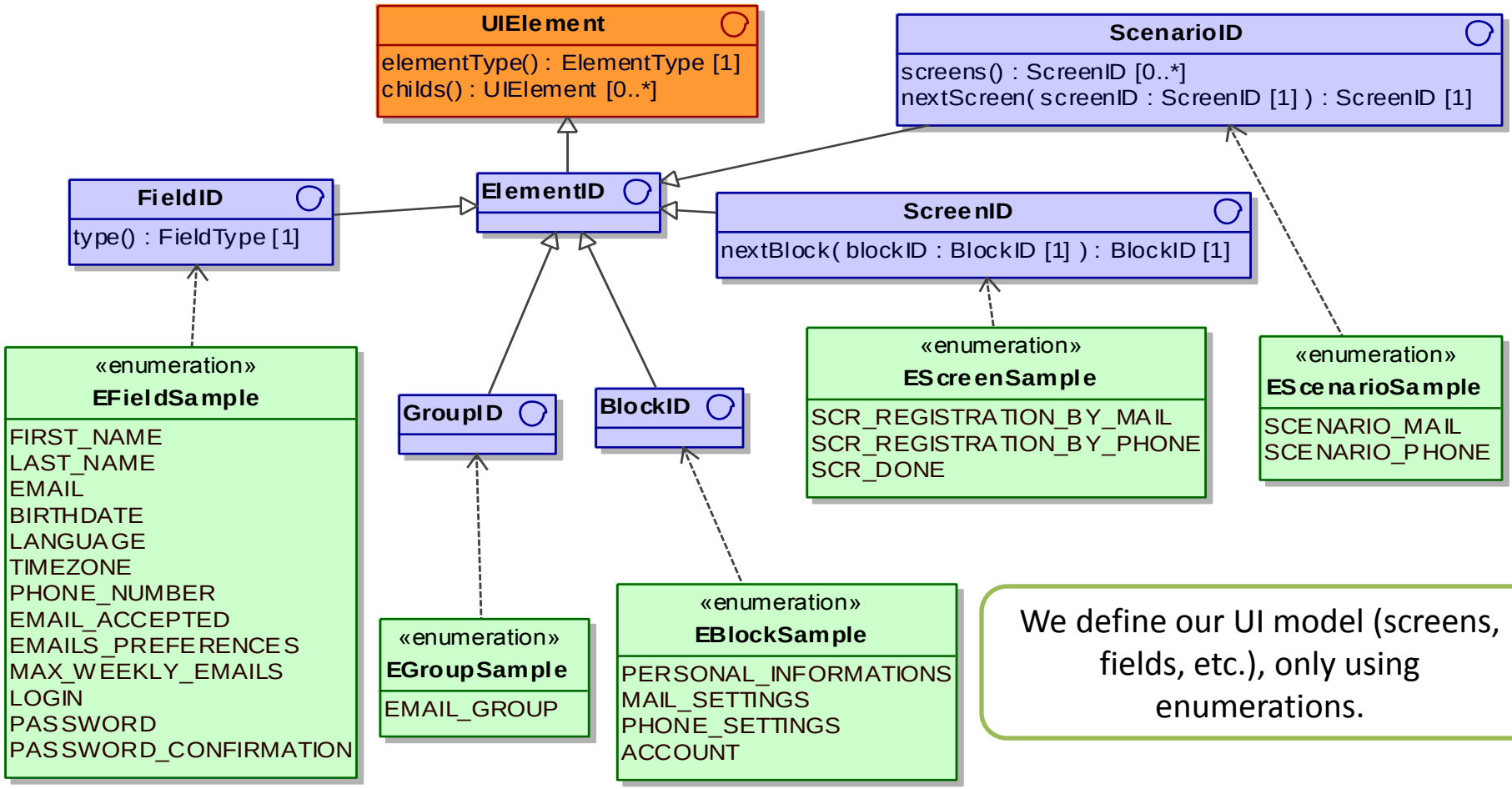
## MetaModel



## Customization layer

EFieldSample – EGroupSample – BlockSample - EScreenSample

Model

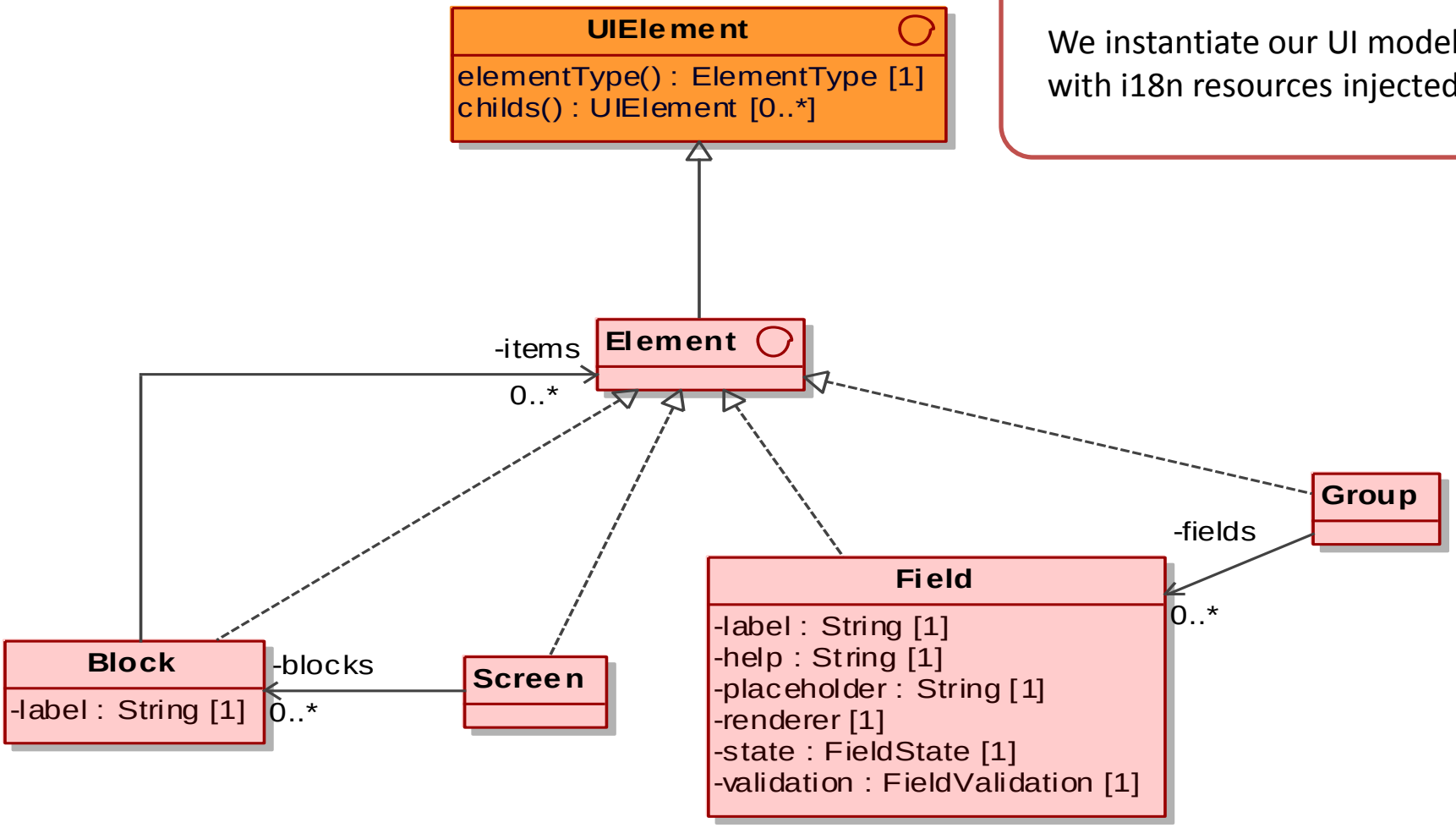



We define our UI model (screens, fields, etc.), only using enumerations.

# Field – Group – Block - Screen

Model Instance (runtime)

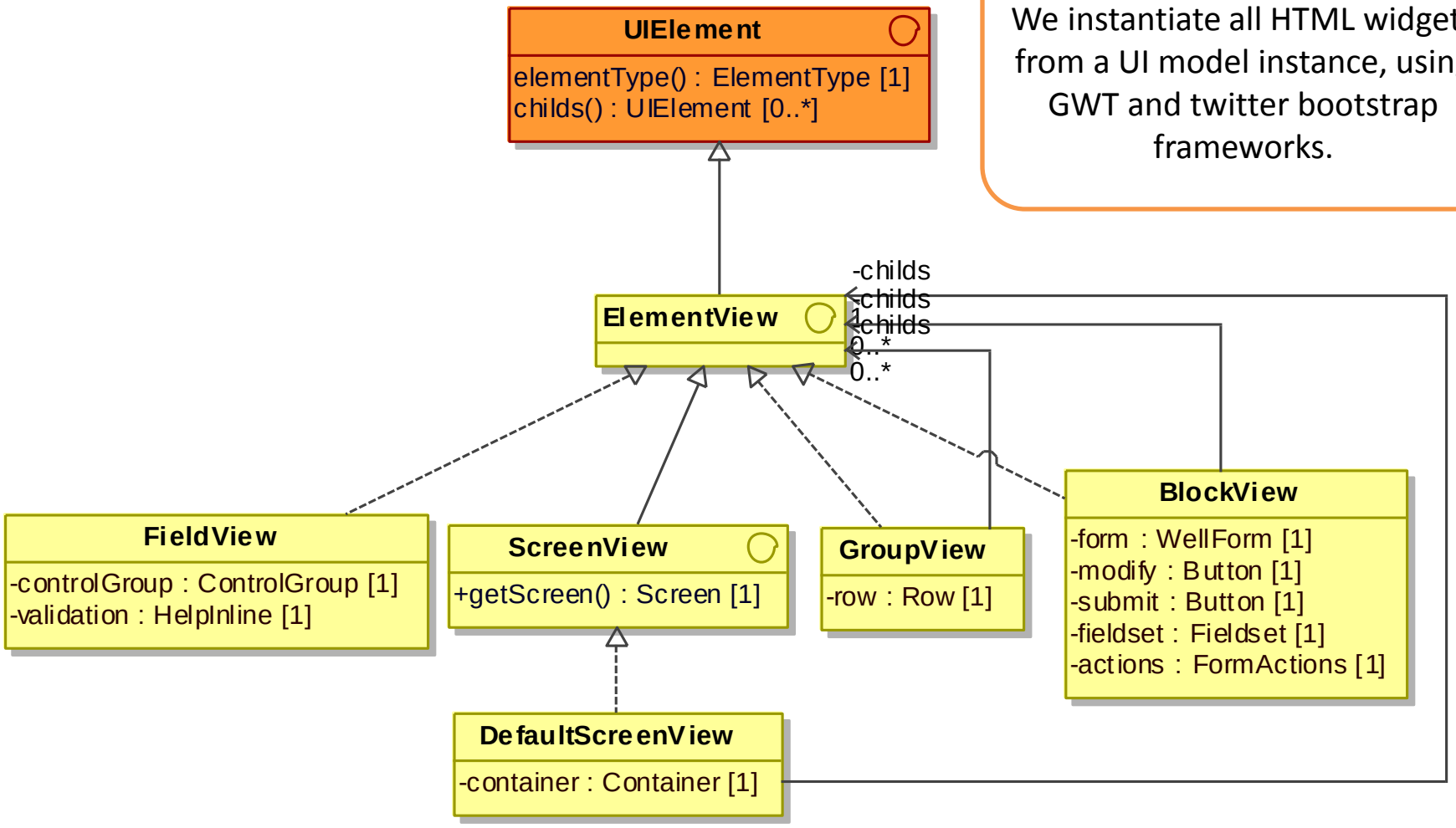
We instantiate our UI model, with i18n resources injected.



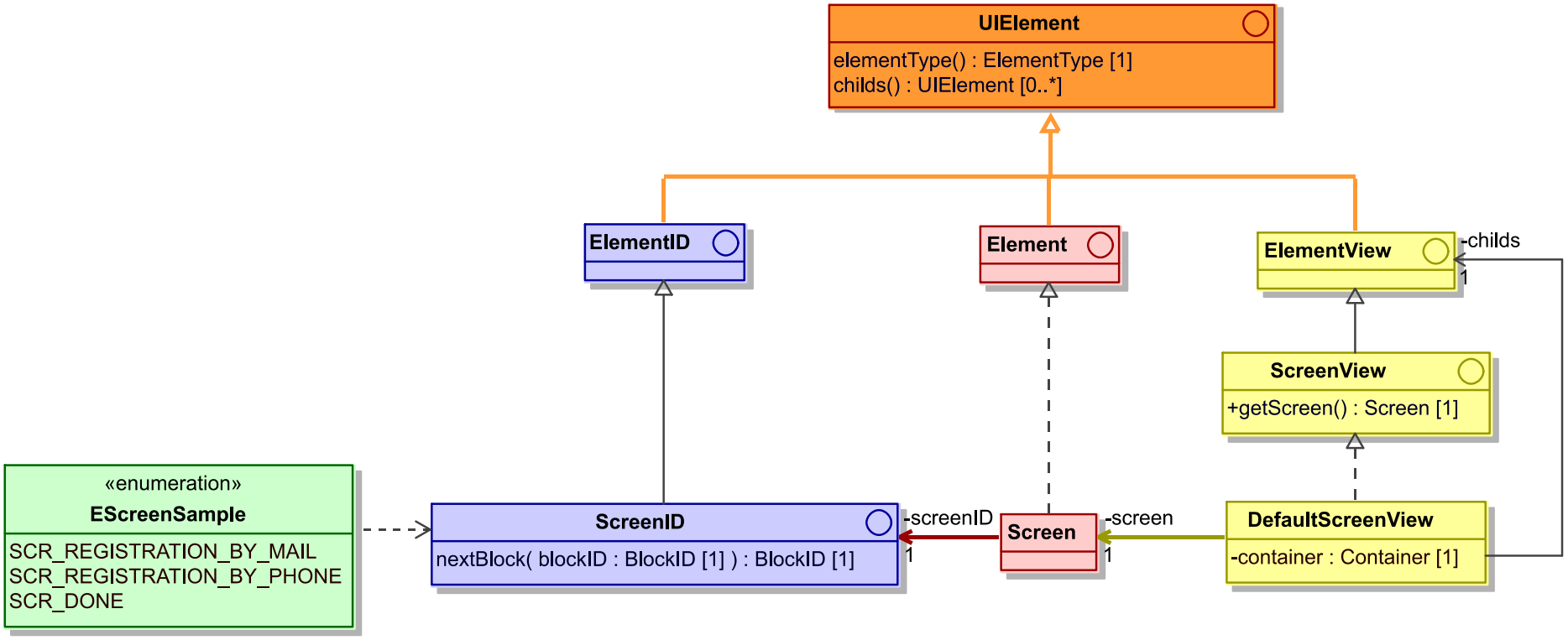
# FieldView – GroupView – BlockView - ScreenView

View of the MVC pattern (runtime)

We instantiate all HTML widgets from a UI model instance, using GWT and twitter bootstrap frameworks.



# From the point of view of a screen



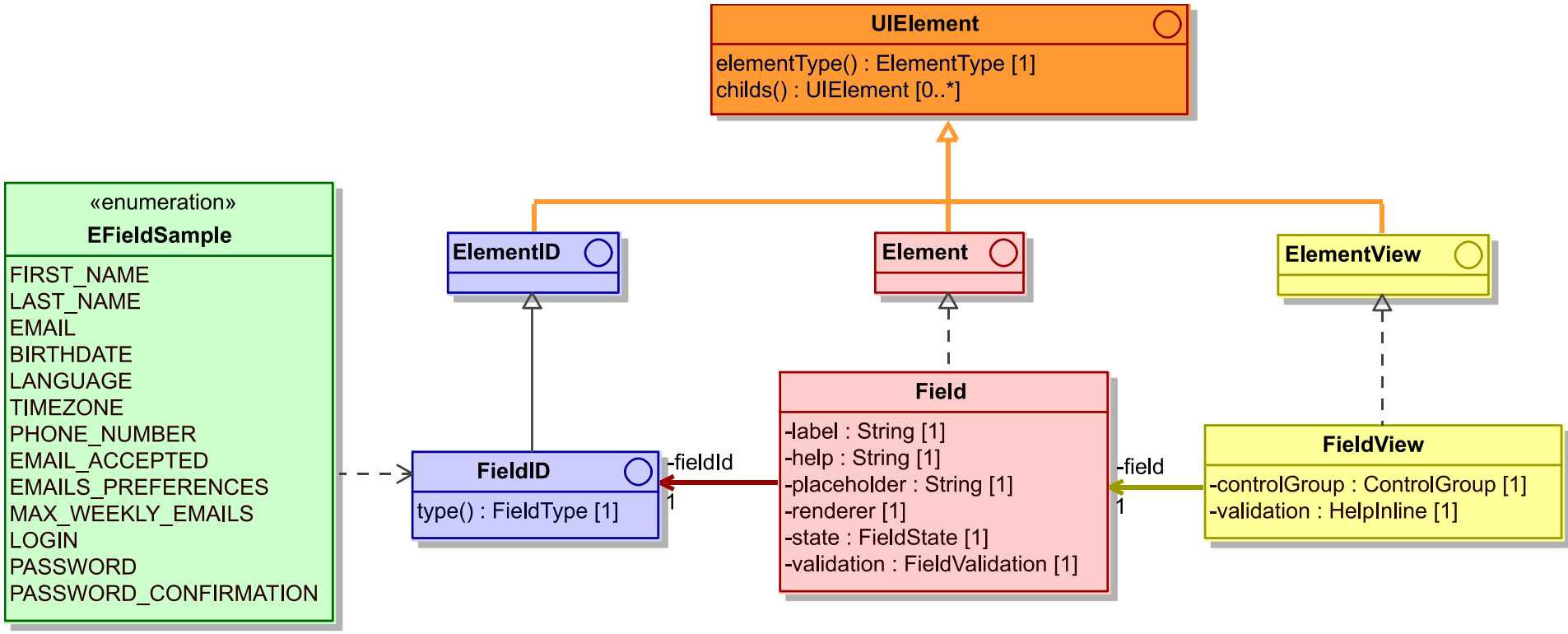

Model

MetaModel

Model Instance (runtime)

View of the MVC pattern (runtime)

# From the point of view of a field



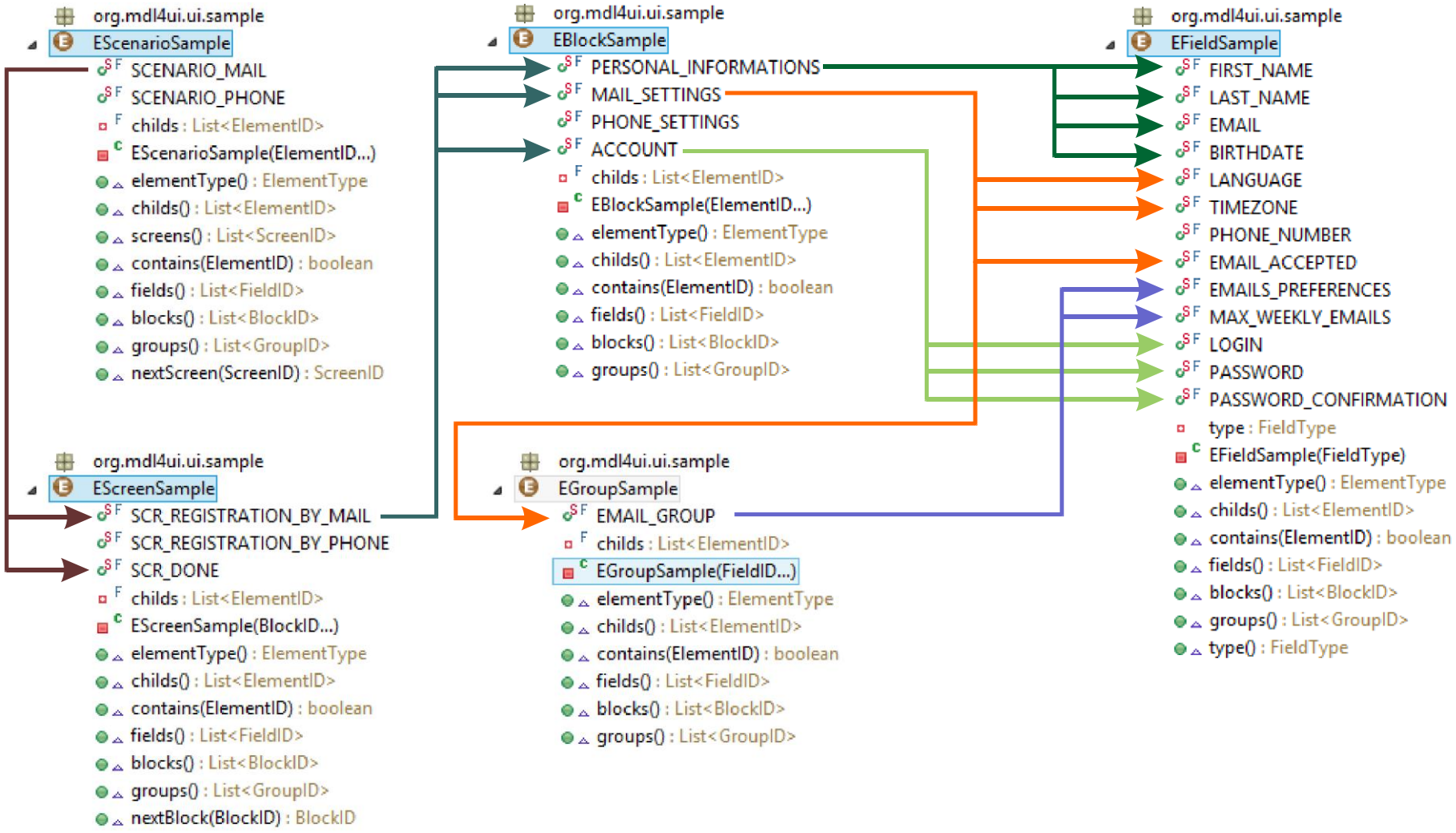

Model

MetaModel

Model Instance (runtime)

View of the MVC pattern (runtime)

# Implementing the model



# Why modeling as code ?

- Sorry we are Java developers
- Built-in **continuous integration** for the model
- **No code generation** required to implement the model
- **Modeling concept** understanding is **not required**
- **Modeling stack** is **transparent** for UI development
- **Tooling** is very fast
- **Memory footprint** is very low
- A lot of **consistency** checking is done by the compiler
- More benefits to come in the next slides …


Context

Quick demo

Modeling approach

Dependency Model

Field features

Extensions

Live coding demo

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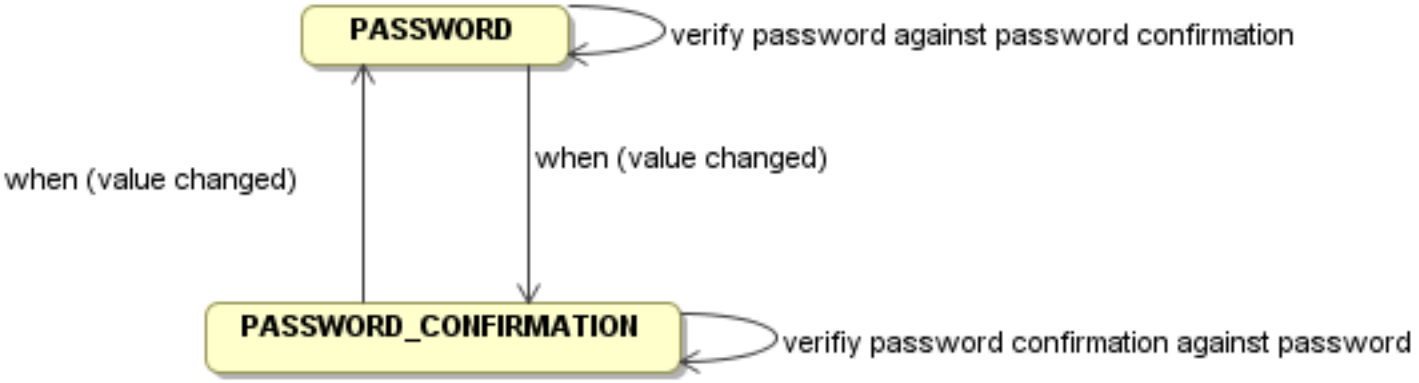
# We need a dependency graph

- Implementing business rules involves **triggering the behaviors** using a dependency model
- **No semantics** on the dependency
- Fields receive **dependency events** with **source attribute**
- Each **field implements various features** to react to dependency events
  - Visibility of the fields
  - Value range definition
  - Reset of value
  - Validation of value

# Validation dependency




My Account

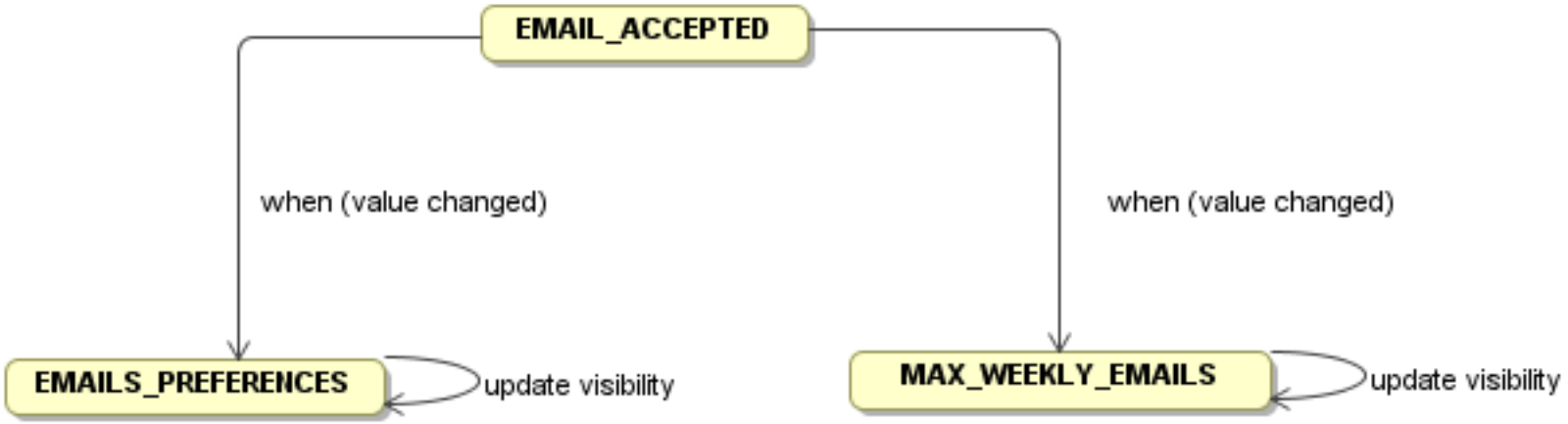
Login john

Password •••••

Confirm your password •••••

Passwords does not match

# Visibility dependency




I accept to receive email Yes No

Timezone GMT+00:00

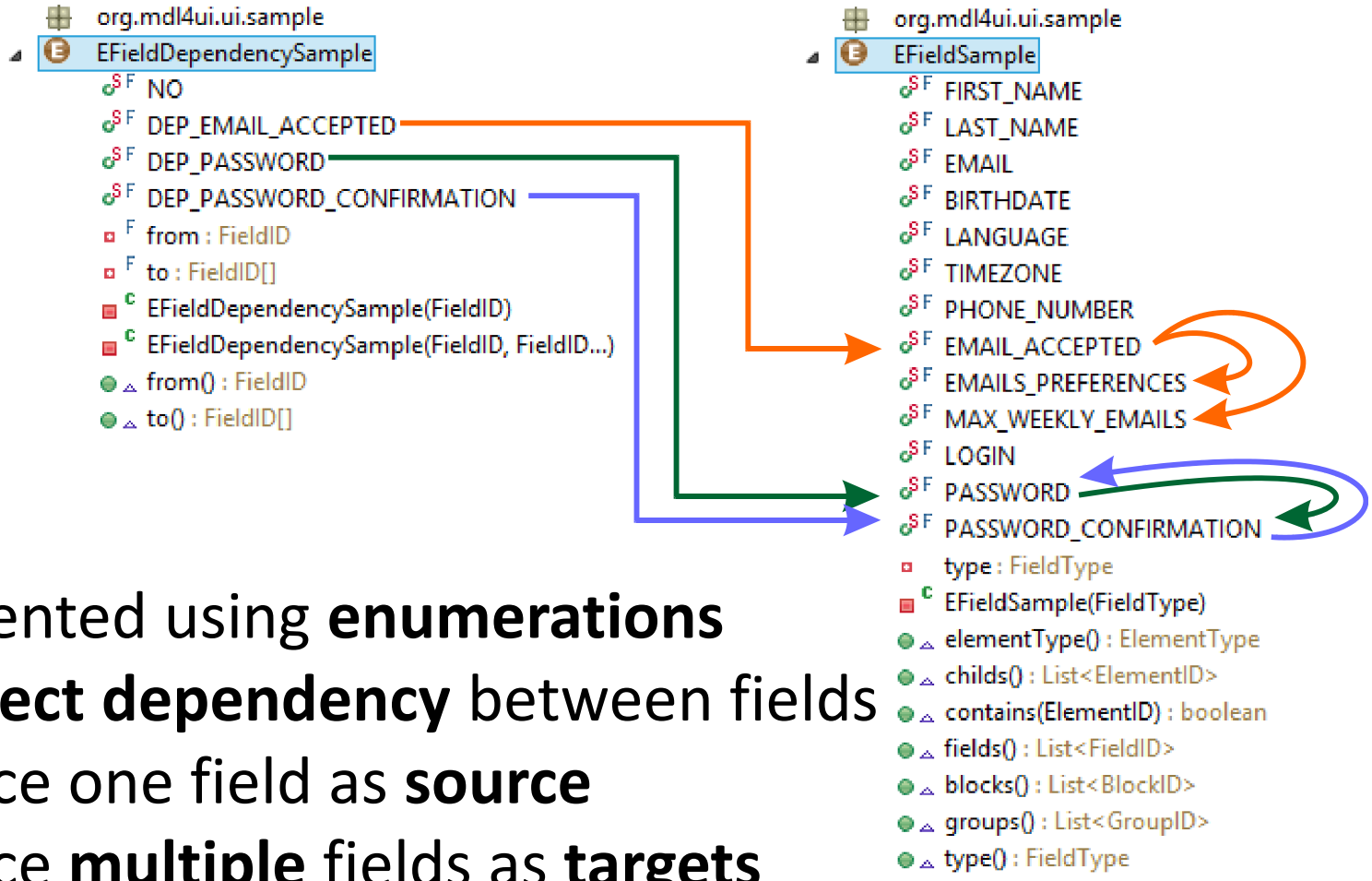
I accept to receive email Yes No

Email preference Private messages Administrator Newsletter

Emails limit / week 0

Timezone GMT+00:00

# In code declarative dependencies modeling




- Implemented using **enumerations**
- **Only direct dependency** between fields
- Reference one field as **source**
- Reference **multiple** fields as **targets**

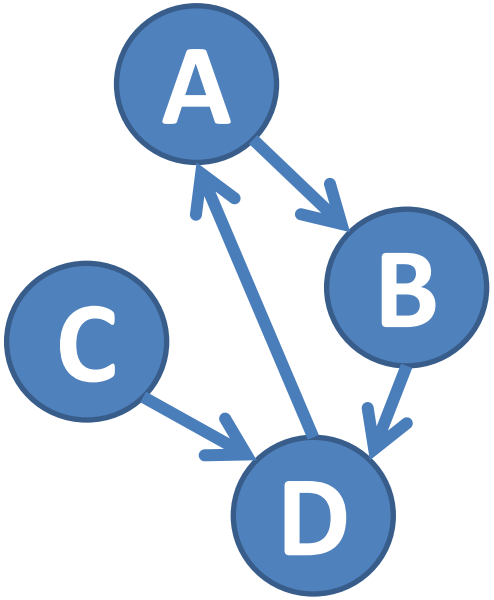
# Dependencies processing

Declared dependencies

```
A -> B
B -> D
D -> A
C -> D
```

Hand written code

Dependencies graph




Underlying model

Deep dependencies resolved

```
A -> B,D
B -> D,A
D -> A,B
C -> D,A,B
```

Generated code

# Deep dependency, dependency cycle, graph validation

- **Cycle declaration** between fields is **allowed**
- Deep dependencies are statically resolved
  - For each field the **deep dependencies** are **generated** during the compilation
  - Model declared in **EFieldDependency[Sample]**
  - Deep dependency  are generated in **EFieldDeepDependency[Sample]**
  - Dependency **order** is **not guaranteed**
- **No runtime infinite loop**

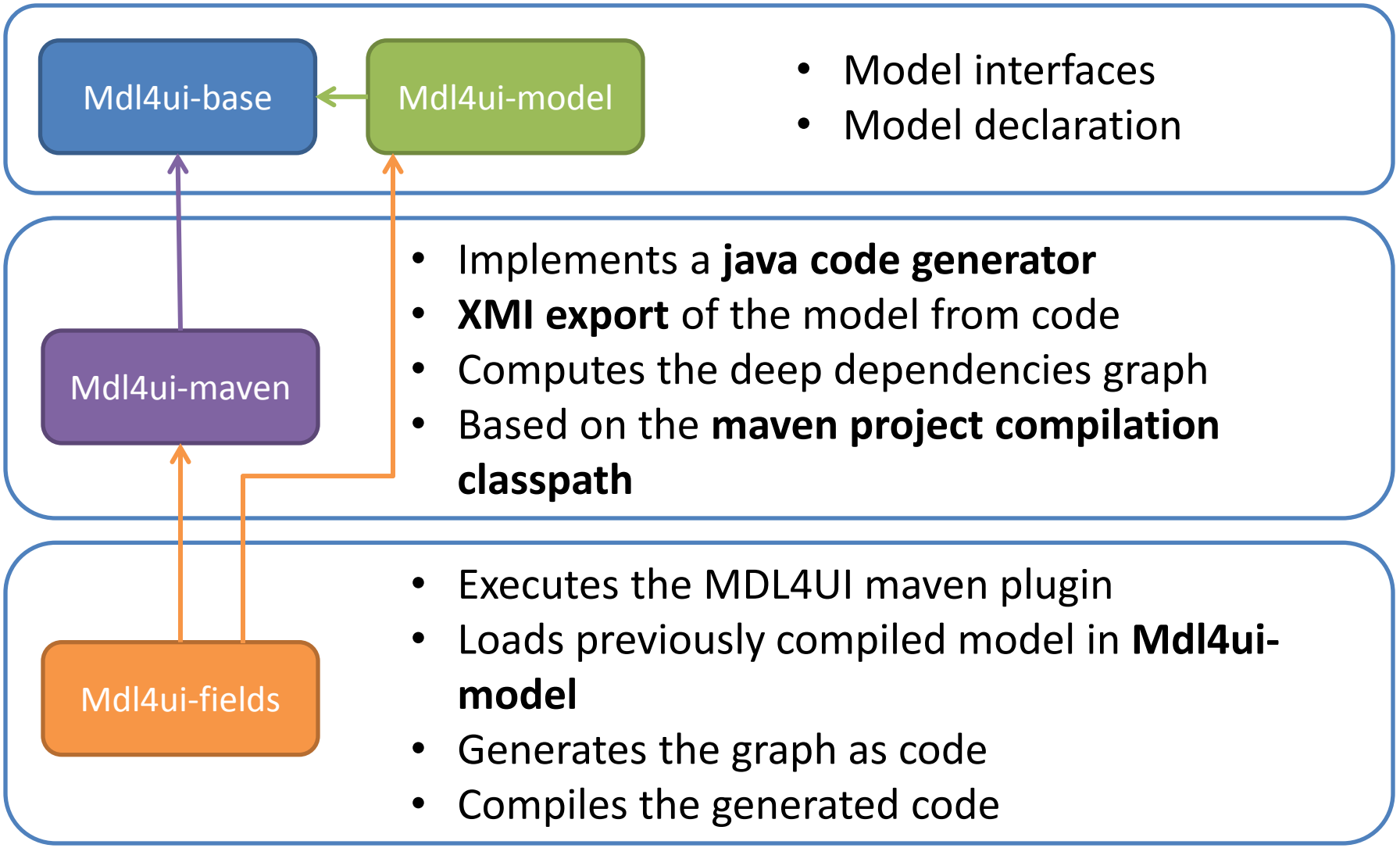
# Simple dependency API

```
public interface FieldDependencyFactory {

    FieldID[] get(FieldID fieldId);
}
```

- Implementation is **generated** by our maven plugin
- Graph is **built from** the **FieldDependency** declaration
- Deep dependencies are **statically resolved** for each field
  - Look at the implementation EFieldDeepDependency[Sample]
- **No runtime computation** of the dependencies
- **Safe** and **efficient**

# Code generation using a maven custom plugin



# Walkthrough the model in a maven plugin

```
void lookOver(ElementID parentId) {
   for (ElementID childId : parentId.childs()) {
      if (childId.elementType() == GROUP ||
          childId.elementType() == BLOCK)
         lookOver(childId);
      else
         System.out.println("field :" + childId);
   }
}
```

- Simple tree API to explore the structure
- Easy use of recursive algorithms

# Maven plugin declaration

```
<plugin>
 <groupId>org.mdl4ui</groupId>
 <artifactId>mdl4ui-maven</artifactId>
 <executions>
  <execution>
   <id>generate-model</id>
   <phase>process-classes</phase>
   <goals>
    <goal>generateModel</goal>
   </goals>
   <configuration>
    <screenClasses>
     <screenClasse>org.mdl4ui.ui.sample.EScreenSample</screenClasse>
    </screenClasses>
   </configuration>
  </execution>
  ....
```

- Model instance is available in the maven project **classpath** through the **maven dependencies**
- We **load** the model from the **screens elements**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# Goal and inspiration

- UI logic is often synonym of **spaghetti code**
- **Decoupling UI and logic** is often difficult to implement
- **Slicing the logic** in tiny pieces of code is the key for :
  - Testability
  - Governance
- Inspiration
  - MVC (client side)
  - JavaBean
  - BeanValidation
  - Injection, CDI, Guice, Dagger
- **Browser** runtime using JavaScript is a heavy **constraint**
  - Inversion of control is difficult to implement

# Features provided by fields

- FieldInitializer
  - Initialize **default value** and **range**
- FieldEditor
  - MVC pattern to **sync the model** during form completion
  - **Validation** during form completion
  - Reset after **visibility changes**
- FieldBehaviour
  - **Visibility** update
  - **Dependency** update
- Labeling
  - **Attached** widget **labels**, **help** messages, **place holders**

# FieldInitializer API

```
public interface FieldInitializer {

   void init(Field field,
             FieldEvent event);
}
```

- Initialize the field during the **bootstrap** of the application

# FieldEditor API

```
public interface FieldEditor {

   void updateFromContext(Field field,  WizardContext context,
                          FieldEvent fieldEvent);

   void updateContext(Field field, WizardContext context,
                      FieldEvent fieldEvent);

   void reset(Field field, WizardContext context,
              FieldEvent fieldEvent);

   FieldValidation validate(Field field, WizardContext context,
                            FieldEvent fieldEvent);
}
```

- WizardContext is the **entry point** of the domain model for the MVC pattern
- **updateFromContext** and **updateContext** **read and update** the domain model of the MVC pattern
- **reset** is called after a **field** is **hidden** or a **value change** from a **dependency**

# FieldBehaviour API

```
public interface FieldBehaviour {

    boolean isVisible(FieldID fieldId,
                      WizardContext context,
                      FieldEvent fieldEvent);

    void updateValue(Field field,
                     WizardContext context,
                     FieldEvent event);
}
```

- **isVisible** returns the visibility **following** the value of the domain **model**
- **updateValue** is **triggered** by the **dependency management**

# Declaring a feature of a field

```
@InjectSampleBehaviour(
        @OnField({ EFieldSample.EMAILS_PREFERENCES,
                   EFieldSample.MAX_WEEKLY_EMAILS }))
public class AcceptEmailsBehaviour extends DefaultBehaviour {

    @Override
    public boolean isVisible(FieldID fieldId, WizardContext context,
                             FieldEvent fieldEvent) {
        SampleContext sampleContext = (SampleContext) context;
        Boolean acceptEmail = sampleContext.getUserAccount().isAcceptEmail();
        return acceptEmail != null && acceptEmail;
    }
}
```

# Injecting the field features with annotations and meta annotation

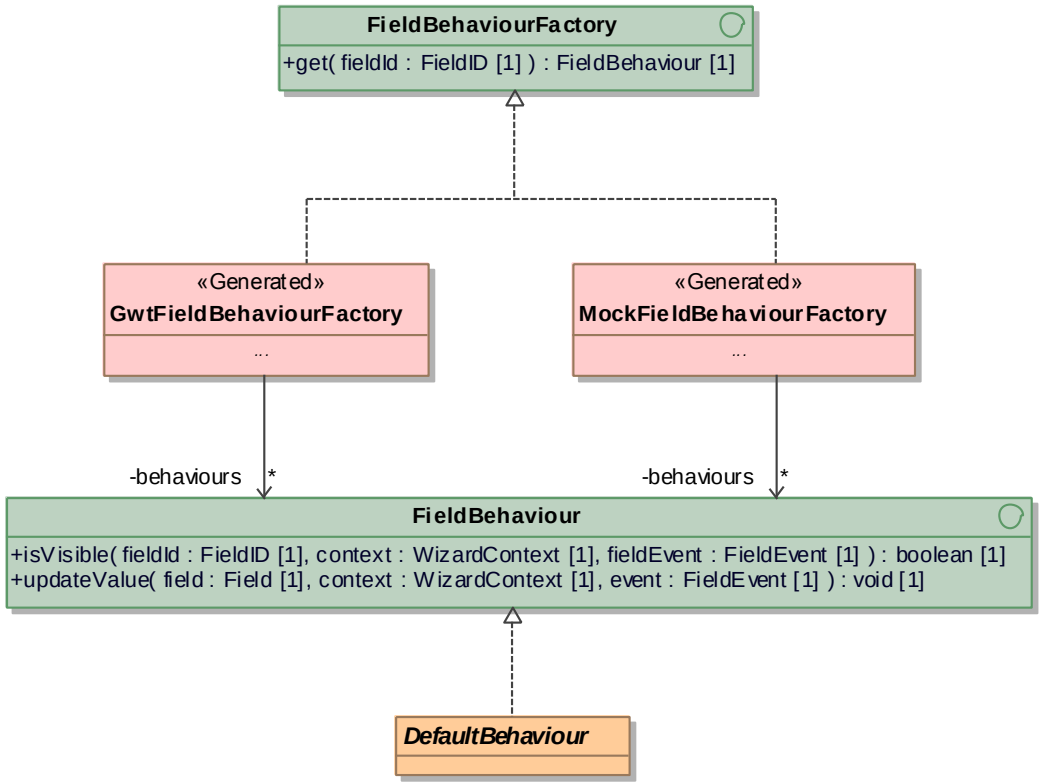
| Meta annotation | Custom annotation | Injected resource |
|---|---|---|
| **@InjectInit** | **@InjectSampleInit**<br>Reference one or more EFieldSample | Any class implementing **FieldInitializer** |
| **@InjectEditor** | **@InjectSampleEditor**<br>Reference one or more EFieldSample | Any class implementing **FieldEditor** |
| **@InjectBehaviour** | **@InjectSampleBehaviour**<br>Reference one or more EFieldSample | Any class implementing **FieldBehaviour** |
| **@InjectLabel** | **@InjectSampleLabel**<br>Reference one or more EField, EGroup, EBlock and EScreen[Sample] | Any **interface method** without parameter returning a String |
| **@InjectHelp** | **@InjectSampleHelp**<br>Reference one or more EField, EGroup, EBlock and EScreen[Sample] | Any **interface method** without parameter returning a String |
| **@InjectPlaceHolder** | **@InjectSamplePlaceHolder**<br>Reference one or more EField, EGroup, EBlock and EScreen[Sample] | Any **interface method** without parameter returning a String |

# The plumbing using APT

We use **Annotation Processing Tool** to bind together the various field features and the fields

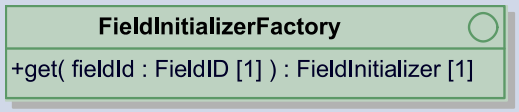
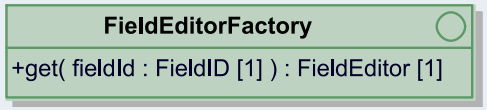
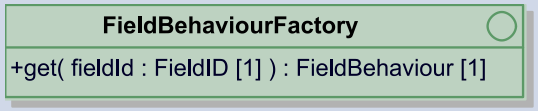
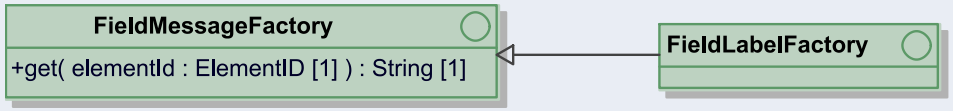
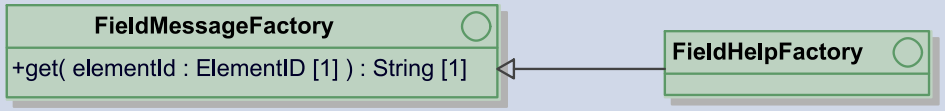
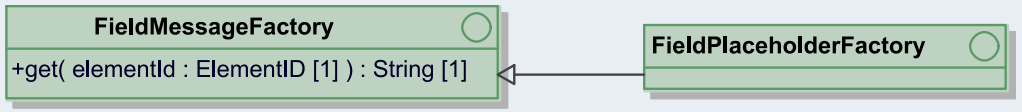
- APT is a **standard tooling** packaged with the JDK since Java 6
- Allows to **generate source code** and resources in the source path of the compiler during the early stage of the **compilation process**
- Source code processing based on **javax.lang.model** API
- Code processing is **triggered by annotation**
- No built-in code generator
  - Use basic template mechanism to simplify source code generation

# Generated pattern to glue things together




- Code generation is triggered by **@InjectBehaviour**
- **APT processor** is executed during the compilation of **Mdl4ui-field** project
- We perform some **validations**, like detecting duplicated injections
- We use a **factory pattern** returning the right instance for each field
- An implementation for **GWT client runtime** purpose
- A **mock implementation GWT less** for unit testing purpose

# Replicate the factory pattern for each feald feature

| Meta annotation | Feature factory |
|---|---|
| **@InjectInit** |  |
| **@InjectEditor** |  |
| **@InjectBehaviour** |  |
| **@InjectLabel** |  |
| **@InjectHelp** |  |
| **@InjectPlaceHolder** |  |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# Content of MDL4UI

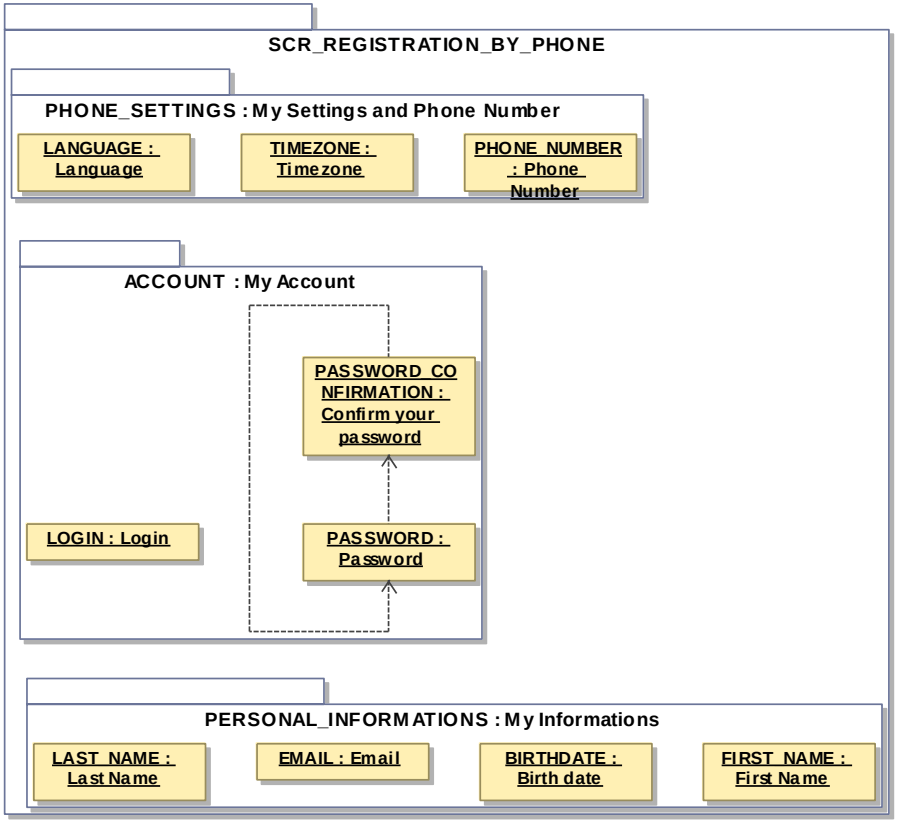
- **Mdl4ui-I18n** : foundation framework for text resource injection, containing APT processors and annotations
- **Mdl4ui-base**: foundation framework for the UI model interfaces, containing APT processors and annotations
- **Mdl4ui-model**: model instance for our code sample, including fields and dependencies
- **Mdl4ui-maven**: maven plugin part of the foundation framework that generate and check the dependency graph between the fields, export the model in XMI
- **Mdl4ui-fields**: business rules, validation and field editors (MVC pattern) for our sample

- **Mdl4ui-webapp**: the web application that assembles the code, compiles various resources with GWT and adds styling

```
[INFO] Reactor Summary:
[INFO]
[INFO] mdl4ui-root ..................................... SUCCESS [0.375s]
[INFO] mdl4ui-i18n ..................................... SUCCESS [1.921s]
[INFO] mdl4ui-base ..................................... SUCCESS [0.829s]
[INFO] mdl4ui-model .................................... SUCCESS [2.860s]
[INFO] mdl4ui-maven .................................... SUCCESS [1.641s]
[INFO] mdl4ui-fields ................................... SUCCESS [4.751s]
[INFO] mdl4ui-webapp ................................... SUCCESS [39.632s]
[INFO] ------------------------------------------------------------------------
[INFO] BUILD SUCCESS
[INFO] ------------------------------------------------------------------------
[INFO] Total time: 52.166s
```

# Generate UML to understand the model

- Use to **document** the model and specify **evolution**
- **Visualize** the dependency graph
- Artifact Generated during the **continuous integration**




| MDL4UI | UML |
|---|---|
| ScreenID | Package |
| BlockID | Package |
| GroupID | Package |
| FieldID | Instance specification |
| FieldLabel | Class |
| FieldDependency | Dependency |

# Field tracking

- Use field features to track
  - Field inputs
  - Field validation errors
  - Screen and block navigation
- Use of tracking results
  - Find common user profiles
  - Improve forms for faster input
  - Find ergonomic issues

# AB testing and shuffling the fields

- Define two versions of a webpage (A and B)
- Split traffic amongst those versions
- Determine which one was more successful
  - Validate any new design
  - Improve the conversion rate

- How it can be done?
  - Define new fields and new FieldBehaviour
  - Define two different scenarios

# Unit testing

- Need to **test fields** using **regression** tests:
  - validation rules
  - field visibility update
  - domain model read & update
  - domain model reset
- Generated **mock factories** allow to execute features implementation **without** a web application **container** (GWT)

# Unit testing

```
@Test
public void dependencies() {
   FieldDependencyFactory dependencyFactory
            = new FieldDependencySampleFactory();

   Collection<FieldID> dependencies =
      Arrays.asList(dependencyFactory.get(EMAIL_ACCEPTED));

   assertEquals(2, dependencies.size());
   assertTrue(dependencies.contains(EMAILS_PREFERENCES));
   assertTrue(dependencies.contains(MAX_WEEKLY_EMAILS));
}
```

# Unit testing

```
@Test
public void visibility() {
    FieldDependencyFactory dependencyFactory = new FieldDependencySampleFactory();
    MockFieldBehaviourFactory behaviourFactory = new MockFieldBehaviourFactory();

    SampleContext context = new SampleContext();

    for (FieldID dependency : dependencyFactory.get(EMAIL_ACCEPTED)) {
        FieldBehaviour behaviour = behaviourFactory.get(dependency);

        context.getUserAccount().setAcceptEmail(false);
        assertFalse(behaviour.isVisible(dependency, context, null));

        context.getUserAccount().setAcceptEmail(true);
        assertTrue(behaviour.isVisible(dependency, context, null));
    }
}
```

# Selenium and integration testing

- Selenium is a **test automation** framework for **web applications**
  - sends commands to a browser
  - retrieves results (parsing the DOM)

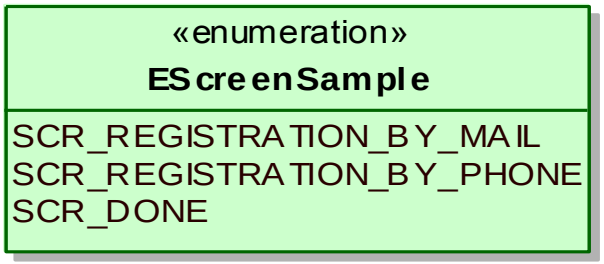
- Supports:
  - **Java**, Ruby, Python, C#, etc.
  - **Firefox**, Chrome, IE, iOS & Android browsers, etc.

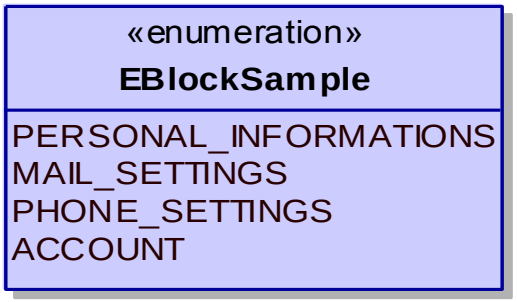
# Selenium and integration testing

- Generation of page object classes
  - **representing a screen or a block** with selenium framework
  - exposing methods to **manipulate each fields**
- Make testing **easier**
  - **hide** selenium framework complexity
  - **minimize** the test maintenance effort

# Selenium and integration testing

```
@Test
  public void testRegistration() {
     RegistrationByMailScreen registrationScreen
                    = new RegistrationByMailScreen(getDriver());
     registrationScreen.assertDisplayed();
     registrationScreen.getPersonalInformations()//
                .assertDisplayed()//
                .setFirstName("John")//
                .setLastName("Doe")//
                .setBirthdate(new DateMidnight(1980, 1, 1))//
                .setEmail("john@doe.com")//
                .submit();
     registrationScreen.getMailSettings().assertDisplayed;
  }
```




Context

Quick demo

Modeling approach

Dependency Model

Field features

Extensions

Live coding demo

Back to LesFurets.com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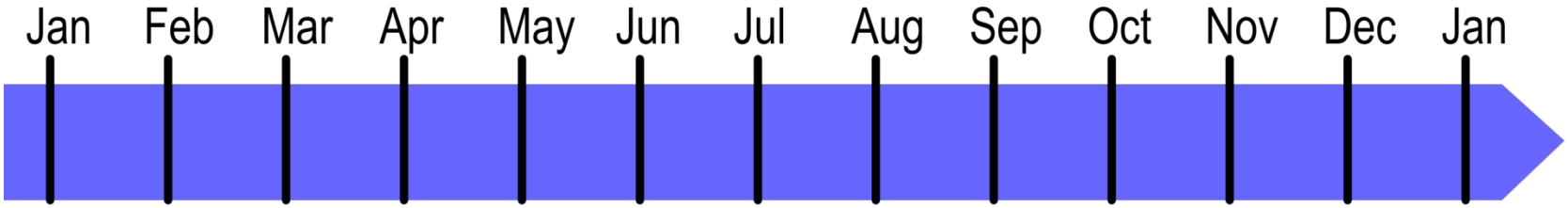
# Refactoring and Agile practice

- Opportunity based
- 12 iterations with production deployment
- 1 year of step by step refactoring
- Test coverage from 10% to 50% (in progress)
- Automated testing on more than 400 fields in 5 complex forms

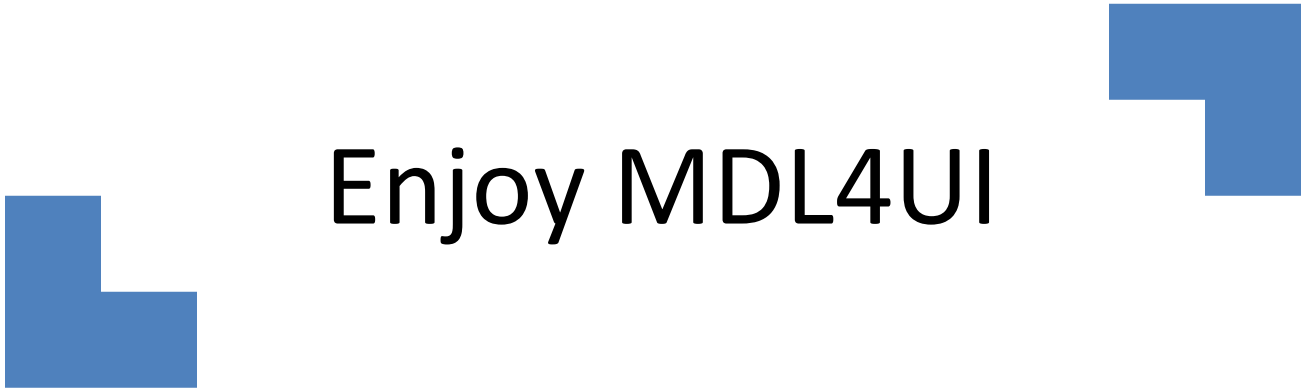
# Project implementation timeline




- Labeling, field and screen ID
- Dependencies
- Field editor, initializer, behavior without MVC
- MVC impl. and incremental field validation
- Block and group for car UI
- Selenium integration testing
- Health, loan, home UI
- AB Testing
- Motorbike UI

# Under investigation

- Multi Variable Testing
- Machine learning algorithm on field tracking
- Dynamic shuffling of the fields order
- Adaptive path for the forms completion



# Enjoy MDL4UI