Guidelines for creating sustainable open source communities in the public sector

Workshop of 1 February - Summary

FOSDEM 2020

OSOR.eu

Agenda

OSOR

INFORMATION OBSERVATORY

Publishes information, experiences, and best practices around the use of open source software in public administrations. Additionally, the Knowledge Centre gives access to key resources such as studies and guidelines.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Promotes open source software through community engagement activities such as participation in events, social media, and production and publication of content.

ASSISTANCE & SUPPORT

Provides information and offers ad-hoc legal support services on the licensing of open source software solutions in cooperation with the EUPL collection.

"OSOR aims to become a trustworthy observatory that provides FOSS expertise and information as well as serving as the middle-ground to connect European Public Administrations with other relevant stakeholders. To reach this objective, OSOR will support a dynamic community and further promote the use of Free and Open Source Software."

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EU-FOSSA 2
Communities' Engagement

Hackathons

- PHP Symphony
- Apache Tomcat
- EU Projects

Conference

- Open Source Beyond 2020
- Powering a Digital Europe
- Open Source software and hardware

https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/eu-fossa-2

EU-FOSSA 2
Communities' Engagement

AMA Session

Community Sessions

We connected with many small & micro communities

Conference participation

Open Forum Europe | FOSDEM | ApacheCon Berlin

Linux Foundation | OSS Summit Lyon | DrupalCon | OSS Summit Paris

ASK ME ANYTHING (AMA) SESSION
with the EU-FOSSA 2 team on Reddit

GIJS HILLENIUS   MAREK PRZYBYSZEWSKI
SEBASTIEN RAIBLE   SARANJIT ARORA

ARDUINO   Zephyr™   Nextcloud   OpenBSD   open source hardware   OKC OSH OKC Open Source Hardware

OPENVPN   e   autocrypt   Lineage OS Lineage OS Android Distribution

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Our Objectives

Key factors

Identify the key success factors contributing to sustainability of public sector OSS communities.

Case studies

Develop case studies of successful and failed OSS initiatives in the public sector.

Guidelines

Create community-driven guidelines for fostering open source communities in the public sector.

"*A healthy or successful community can be defined as a viable, organisational-friendly community that consistently produces high-quality, innovative products and services.*"
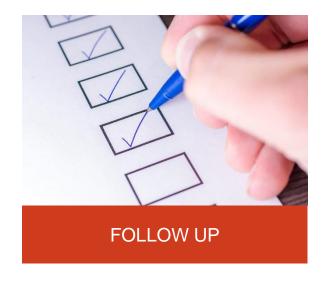
Maha Shaikh

Workshop objectives

BRAINSTORM

Together with you, let's **identify key factors** that contribute to sustainable public sector OSS communities.

PRESENT

Present our work in relation to **successful and failed OSS initiatives** in the public sector and the key success factors.

FOLLOW UP

Provide an overview of the main outcomes of the workshop and present the associated **next steps**.

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Public sector OSS initiatives

An example of a successful public sector OSS initiative:
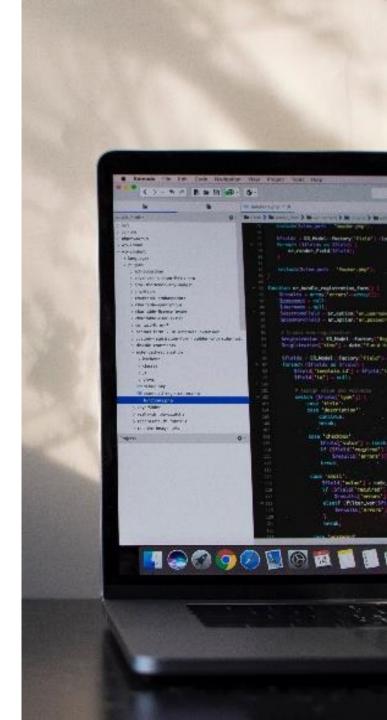the *School Cloud* in Germany

The open source-based HPI School Cloud *'Schul Cloud'* project aims to advance the use of digital media in schools.

The project was initiated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

The project was funded in three phases: the concept phase in 2016, the development phase in 2017/2018, the third extended phase (underway) until July 2021.

Explore the source code: https://github.com/schul-cloud/

Public sector OSS initiatives

School Cloud - identified **success** factors :

Cross-state collaboration

- The federal states were incentivised to engage in cross-state projects, thanks to the available funding.

Public sector adoption incentives

- As education does not fall under responsibility of the Federal Government but within the remit of the federal states, necessary competence was developed at the local level.

Successful governance

- Because the project was extended, a team of 26 researchers, programmers and subject experts could be recruited.

Sustainable finance

- 5% of the federal funding programme's *DigitalPakt.Schule* budget was allocated to the project.

Explore the source code: https://github.com/schul-cloud/

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Public sector OSS initiatives

An example of a failed public sector OSS initiative:
adoption of **StarOffice** in Bristol City Council

In 2005, StarOffice was rolled out across the Bristol Council to over 5,000 users, supported by 8-person team of floorwalkers and technical specialists.

In 2009 continued use of StarOffice became problematic.

The Bristol Council decided that it was no longer viable to continue using StarOffice and that MS Office should be adopted.

Public sector OSS initiatives

StarOffice - identified **failure** factors:

Poor Compatibility

- Fidelity of file conversion was still not fully effective and a number of MS Office licenses had to be retained due to a lack of system integration.

Funding

- Vendors began to step back from their willingness to do integration work without the Bristol Council contributing significant extra funds, citing a lack of market take-up of StarOffice open document format.

Lack of political championing

- Allowing the emergence of 'privileged' users that did not use open source created a non-OSS user elite.

No support community

- Lack of good support and talented candidates to hire to work with OSS.

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Workshop Opening: Discussion

Together we clarified where the guidelines stand as part of the OSOR project. In addition to the guidelines, OSOR Knowledge Centre will contain various OSS project case studies, individual country factsheets outlining the OSS policy's state of play, and a potential OSS project directory.

The scope of the guidelines is to focus on the community's sustainability rather than the output (i.e. software) produced by the community.

When asked what sort of elements the guidelines will contain, the team clarified that this is still to be decided through ongoing data gathered from workshops such as this one and from the ongoing survey.

A discussion took place regarding the compatibility issues identified in the Bristol case study. An argument was made that there might not be any lessons learnt from such issues if the project reverted back to using Microsoft Office.
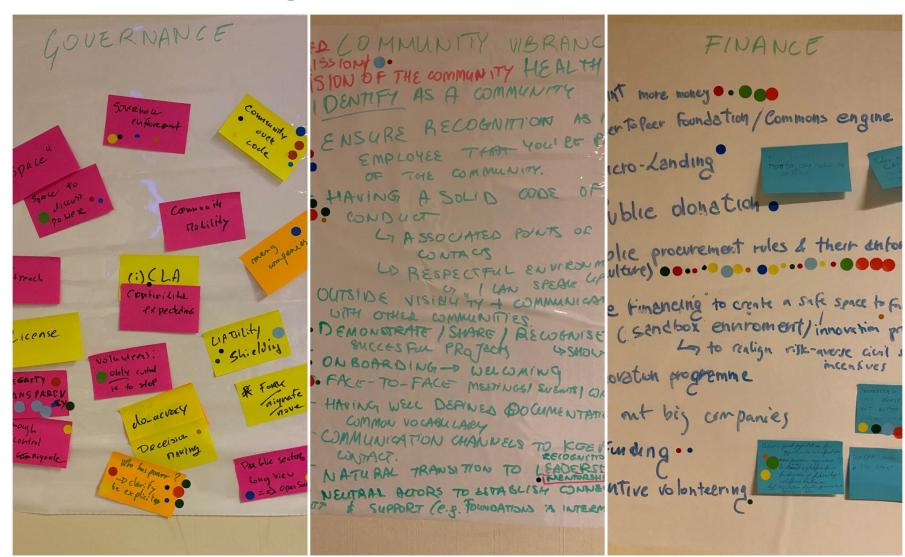
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Brainstorming session

SUSTAINABILITY

Our findings so far

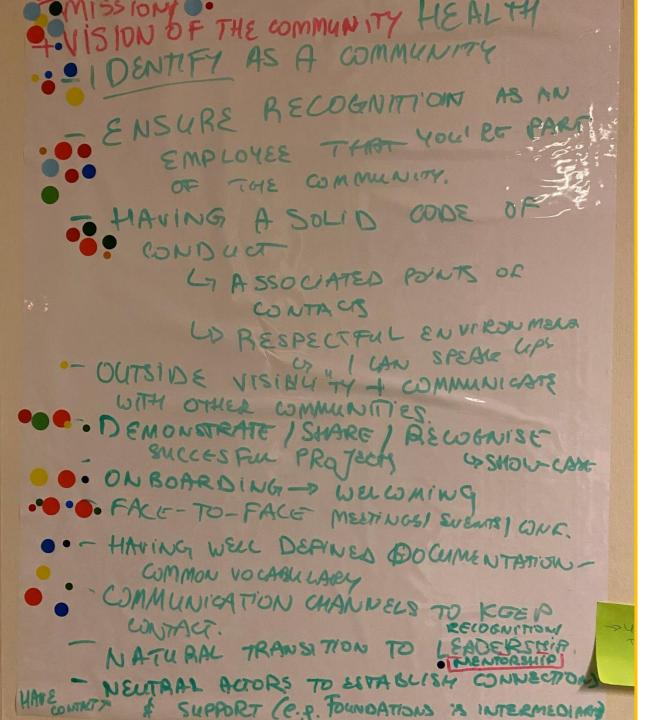So far we have identified **five key factors** that contribute to the sustainability of public sector OSS communities.

Community vibrancy

Clear governance structure

Technological maturity

Sustainable finance

Public sector adoption incentives

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Brainstorming session results

COMMUNITY VIBRANCE

Brainstorming results: **Community Vibrance**

IDENTITY

➢ Have a clearly defined mission & vision (**7 votes**)

➢ There should be a sense of common identify as a community (**5 votes**)

RELATIONS WITH OUTISDE

➢ Where relevant, have your employer recognise that OSS is an important part of your working time (**7 votes**)

➢ Have visibility among and contacts with other OSS communities (**1 vote**)

➢ Possibility for community members to showcase their successful project results and receive recognition (**5 votes**)

IN-GROUP BEHAVIOUR

➢ Facilitate face-to-face community meetings to further foster a sense of common identity (**6 votes**)

➢ Develop a community-driven code of conduct with representatives that could be approached when needed (**5 votes**)

➢ Establish easy-to-use communication channels (**4 votes**)

➢ Have possibility to naturally grow into a mentorship role within the community (**1 vote**)

ONBOARDING

➢ Establish and follow smooth onboarding process (**3 votes**)

➢ Publish clear documentation with regard to the community (**2 votes**)

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GOVERNANCE

Brainstorming results (1/2): **Governance**

COMMUNITY ELEMENT OF GOVERNANCE

➢ Governance should be enforced because hierarchy does not always happen naturally. This can be helped by:

- Volunteers to ensure enforcement
- Creating a contribution file
- A discussion about power (**7 votes total**)

➢ Establish a balance between strong leadership, community transparency, and fairness

- The community should be a safe place to discuss power and enforce relations (**3 votes**)
- The community should give people the opportunity to engage with the project and have more impact

➢ "Community over code": the following aspects should be respected by all communities:

- Do-ocracy within the community
- Fair decision-making
- Transparent power distribution
- Inclusive governance model (**8 votes total**)

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Brainstorming results (2/2): **Governance**

PROJECT ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

➢ The public sector should adopt a long-term view as currently it is missing out on opportunities provided by OSS (**4 votes**)

➢ Projects have three core phases that are better facilitated through the enforcement of governance standards:
   1. Maintenance
   2. Deployment
   3. Operation (**4 votes total**)

➢ Several companies, rather than one, should be involved in the project in order to ensure ecosystem diversity (**1 vote**)

OTHER ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

➢ Ensure transparency and integrity in the various processes of a community (**7 votes**)

➢ Harness licencing as a means to protect individual contributors and provide liability shielding (**4 votes**)
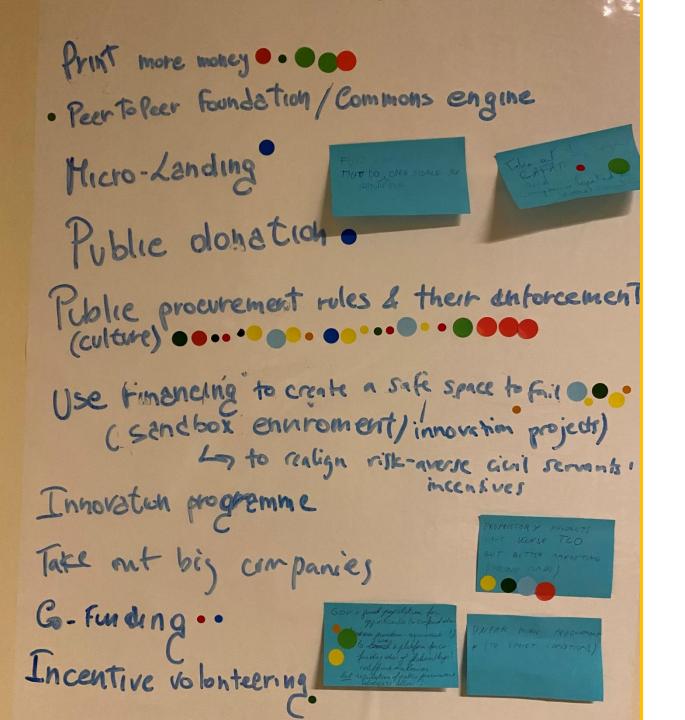
➢ Have a clear project structure to ensure that there will always be volunteers to address various issues that may arise, which will allow the project to move forward (**1 vote**)

➢ If a project has ended or failed, mobility and community migration should be facilitated

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FINANCE

Brainstorming results: **Finance**

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

➢ Develop public procurement rules that enable the adoption of OSS within public administrations and ensure their enforcement (**21 votes**)

➢ Use public financing to create a safe space to fail (sandbox environment and innovation projects). The objective is to realign the risk-averse civil servants' perspective on OSS (**6 votes**)

➢ Protect smaller OSS players by supporting them in the open market, aka "*Take out the big company*" (**3 votes**)

➢ Create a legal entity that facilitates public donations (**1 vote**)

➢ Incentivise volunteering through fiscal advantages (**1 vote**)

BUSINESS MODEL

➢ Invest more resources in marketing (**4 votes**)

➢ Collaborate with other players through:

  • peer to peer foundations and common engines (**2 votes**)

  • co-funding (**2 votes**)

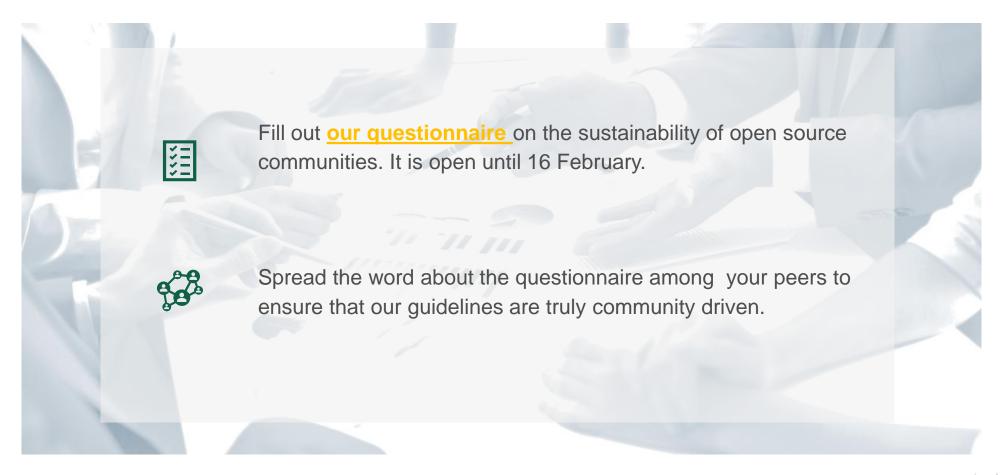➢ Benefit from microlending (**1 vote**)

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Next Steps

✓ Feed workshop results into our work

✓ Develop four case studies to be published in the Knowledge Centre on OSOR during the months of February and March 2020

✓ Draft and publish community guidelines in the Knowledge Centre on OSOR in June

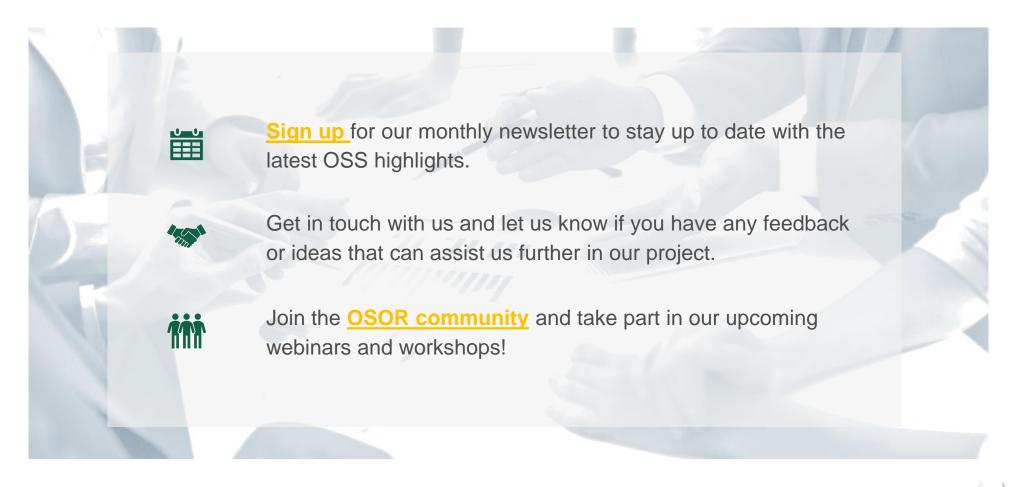✓ Organise a webinar in April to share our results with you

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How you can contribute

Fill out **our questionnaire** on the sustainability of open source communities. It is open until 16 February.

Spread the word about the questionnaire among your peers to ensure that our guidelines are truly community driven.

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How you can contribute

Sign up for our monthly newsletter to stay up to date with the latest OSS highlights.

Get in touch with us and let us know if you have any feedback or ideas that can assist us further in our project.

Join the **OSOR community** and take part in our upcoming webinars and workshops!

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STAY IN TOUCH

Get Involved – Stay Informed

Follow osor@eu on Twitter

OSOR Knowledge Centre

Reach out at ISA2@ec.europa.eu or osor@wavestone.com

Join the OSOR community on Joinup

Activate your RSS feed

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Thank you!

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