

# How Local Authorities can help in bridging the digital divide: the Province of Rome's policy for FLOSS

## The Italian Policies on FLOSS

The Italian Minister of Innovation and Technologies set up a national Commission which produced a [Report](#) analysing problems and opportunities of Open Source Software (OSS) in Public Administration. Following the results of this Report the Minister wrote a [Directive](#) (October 2003) recommending that Public Administrations also publish information on their web sites in an open format.

### Target

The main target of this directive is to insure pluralism and competition, considering the new offer of OSS solutions on the market.

### Comparative Analysis and Solutions

Following this directive, Public Administrations buying software must perform a comparative analysis of all the solutions available on the market considering:

- Development of software custom
- Reusability
- Proprietary software
- OSS solutions
- Mixed solutions

### Comparison criteria

Public Administrations buying software must also verify the proposed solution by the following comparison criteria:

- Technical
- Economical
- Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

### Preference Criteria

Public Administration must give preference to solutions:

- Based on Open Data Standard
- Ensuring interoperability and cooperation
- Ensuring availability of source code at least for inspection and traceability (even in case of proprietary code)

In May 2005, a new national norm - [Codice dell'Amministrazione Digitale](#) - forces Public Administrations owning software developed on their own specific specifications, to give it for free with the source code and documentation to any other Public Administration who can adapt it to its own needs.

## The Italian Local Public Administration Taxonomy

Local Public Administration (LPA) in Italy is organized in three different territorial levels: Municipalities, Provinces and Regions.

There are about 8000 Municipalities (about 6000 of them have less than 5000 inhabitants); they have a direct interaction with citizens and their activities.

There are about a 100 Provinces with an average population of around 500.000. Besides some specific tasks (roads, employment offices, environment, GIS, territorial plans,...), provinces mainly coordinate and support municipalities, especially smaller ones, in many different fields both economically and technically.

There are 20 Regions and they are the bridge between the local and central Public Administration; they have a specific legislative power (based on constitutional elements of federalism) on issues related to the

government of their territories.

### **The Province of Rome's policies for FLOSS**



Following the Italian norms and implementing its specific subsidiary role, the Province of Rome, with the main goal to bridge the digital divide in its territory, has defined a Directive (“Disposizioni in materia di software libero e costituzione di un Centro di Competenza per la promozione del software libero nella Provincia di Roma”) on FLOSS (Free Libre Open Source Software) and on reuse promotion and has enclosed in the Digital Innovation Plan all the goals to achieve it, pushing its management to buy software in compliance with national laws and to make the information and the software itself available on the web site.

### **Target**

The main target of this directive is to provide rules on and setting up of a Competence Centre for FLOSS promotion in the Province (both territorially and internally).

The directive is also forcing the management to convert all future published information to an open format.

### **Advantages**

Public Administrations spend considerable funds for commercial off-the-shelf software licenses. By using appropriate technologies these expenses might be reduced.

Public administration can achieve many different advantages through adoption of FLOSS solutions:

- Initial low cost and cost reduction (not just licences)
- Suppliers independency
- Control, Reliability, Flexibility, Security
- Better opportunity for local enterprises and European market
- Reuse and easy distribution of ICT solutions and knowledge
- Competition enhancement
- Democratic model for managing information and knowledge

Furthermore, the availability of source code addresses the following two challenges of the IST Priority in the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme:

- *“solving trust and confidence problems so as to improve dependability of technologies, infrastructures and applications”.*
- *“enabling sustainable growth and improving competitiveness both of large and small businesses as well as the efficiency and transparency of governments”.*

### **The structure of the FLOSS Competence Centre (CC)**

The FLOSS CC is part of the Province's e-government structure under the supervision of Assessor Vincenzo Vita (Cultural policies, communication and information systems).

The Centre will operate with the contribution of different local FLOSS associations, CNIPA (National Centre for Informatics in Public Administration), local SMEs and Universities. In particular the CC will collaborate with the Computer Science Department of the University of Pisa since it organized the first Masters course in Open Source Management, with the main goal to promote the new business model based in FLOSS especially for Public Administrations; the Masters programme is actually structured in five different areas: technological, management, economical, legal and socio-political.

The FLOSS CC will also exploit the competences of the experts participating to the Technical and Scientific Committee for the Province Innovation Plan:

- Derrick De Kerckhove (President), McLuhan Program in Culture & Technology Director and Toronto University professor
- Alberto Abruzzese, Full professor, Mass Communication Sociology, University “La Sapienza” Rome
- Giulio De Petra, Director “Innovation Regions and Local Authorities”, CNIPA
- Giorgio Guidarelli, former General Secretary of the Communication Ministry
- Flavia Marzano, e-government and FLOSS expert, Internet Economy professor, Bologna University
- Nicola Melideo, ANCI consultant, Strategic evaluation nucleus member

- Mario Morcellini, Sociology and Communication Department Director, University “La Sapienza” Rome
- Paolo Zocchi, e-government expert

### **The main objectives of the FLOSS CC**

The main objectives of the Centre are the following:

- Elaborating strategies for the diffusion of FLOSS in the Province;
- Coordinating a working board with Universities, associations and enterprises interested in the diffusion of FLOSS platforms;
- Promoting information and training activities for territorial LPAs and SMEs;
- Promoting experiences exchanges and reuse of projects and solutions with other LPAs;
- Promoting coordination activities with CNIPA and the [Union of Italian Provinces](#) (UPI) for development of FLOSS platform policies;

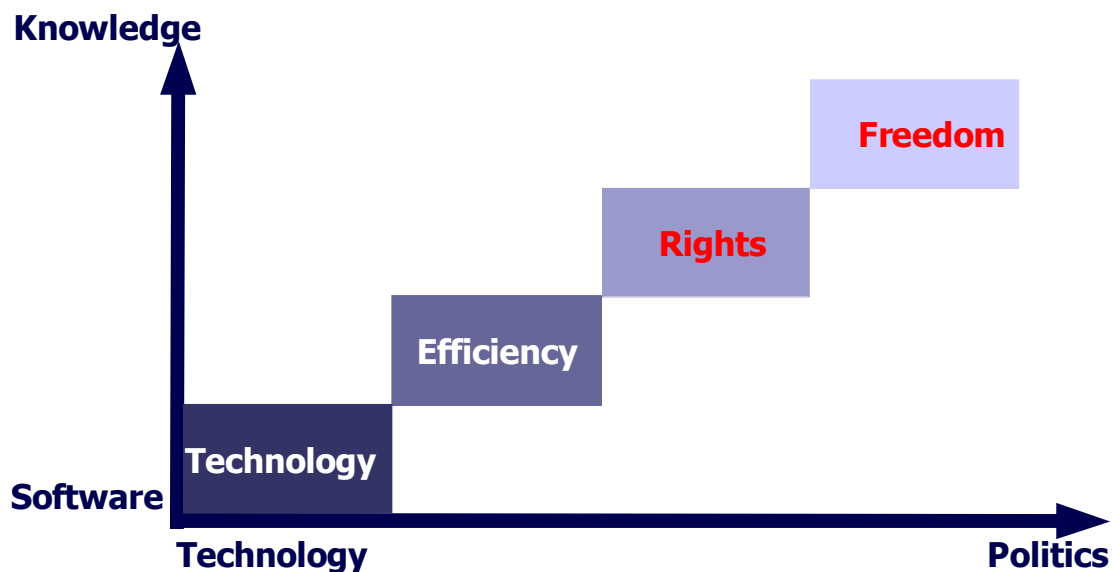
### **Results achieved**

After the structure and the budget were defined two questionnaires have been prepared in order to understand the state-of-the-art in FLOSS policies and solutions.

These questionnaires will be filled in by Province of Rome’s LPAs and SMEs and the FLOSS Competence Centre will analyse all the results in order to better define its own future policies and investments.

A few University students will make their own thesis based on data coming from the mentioned questionnaires and all the results will be presented in a public conference.

The following figure clearly represents and summarises how LPAs policies can help in bridging the digital divide.



*Source: Angelo Buongiovanni  
Coordinator of the Tuscany Telematic Regional Network, [RTRT](#).*

*RTRT is “the permanent means of coordination of the regional system of local authorities and of cooperation between the system itself and other public and private parties” for the building of e-government and information society, with the direct participation of all stakeholders (Region, LPAs, State Administrations, organizations representing businesses and citizens) to decisional process.*

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**Further Information:**

Rome Province Web site

<http://www.provincia.roma.it>

Rome Province Digital Innovation Plan guidelines

<http://www.provincia.roma.it/download.asp?tn=1&id=1417&f=2&e=pdf>

Minister of Innovation and Technologies Guidelines

[http://www.innovazione.gov.it/eng/normativa/documenti/linee\\_guida\\_eng.pdf](http://www.innovazione.gov.it/eng/normativa/documenti/linee_guida_eng.pdf)

Directive (19th december 2003) "Sviluppo ed utilizzazione dei programmi informatici da parte delle pubbliche amministrazioni". (*Gazzetta Ufficiale n. 31 del 7-2-2004*)

<http://www.innovazione.gov.it/ita/normativa/allegati/Dir191203.pdf>

CNIPA (National Centre for Informatics in Public Administration)

[www.cnipa.gov.it](http://www.cnipa.gov.it)

OSS activities

[http://www.cnipa.gov.it/site/it-IT/Attività/Efficienza\\_interna\\_della\\_PA/Utilizzo\\_Open\\_Source](http://www.cnipa.gov.it/site/it-IT/Attività/Efficienza_interna_della_PA/Utilizzo_Open_Source)

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