



Open Source
Observatory



4
MAY
2023

Policy & Strategy Aspects of OSS in Public Administration

Report from the 25 April expert workshop

interoperable
europe

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Identifying where help would be useful

A big picture overview to identify...

- Issues which cause multiple problems
- Solutions which would solve multiple issues

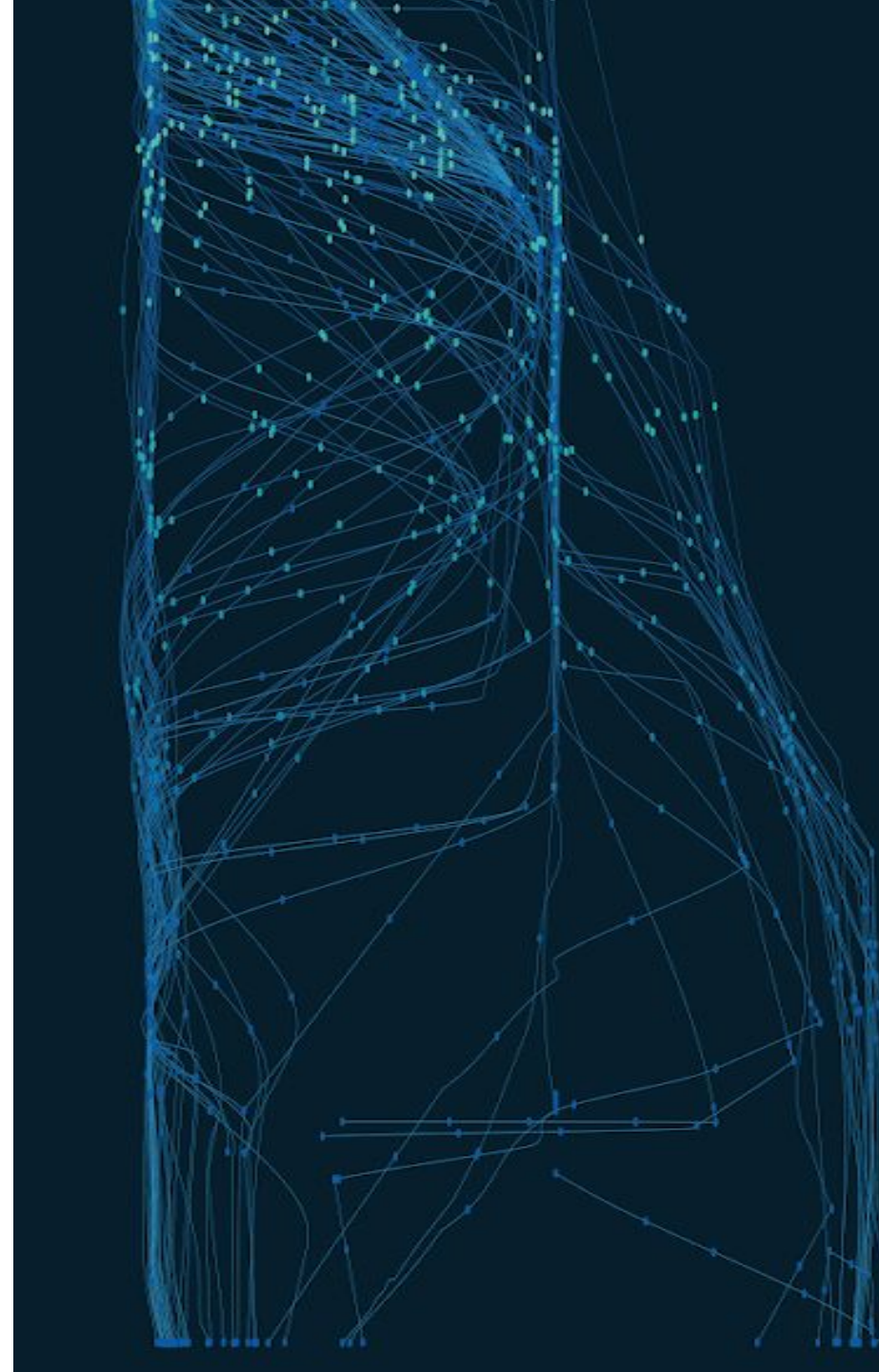


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...to shine some light on what everyone can do

Roles for...

- The FOSS community
- Public administrations
- External solution providers



solutions & entities



Public sector body

- Organisation
- Internal procedures
- OSPO



Project

- Match the requirements
- Findable
- Contactable



Client

- Fulfill the public sector's needs



Governing law-maker

- Legislation
- Funding



Community

- Meta projects
- Security, technical documentation



Private sector

- Organisation
- Internal procedures
- OSPO

Our eight group discussions

01 | Releasing software

02 | Finding software

03 | Selecting software

04 | Soft skills

05 | Funding

06 | Community-building

07 | Knowledge sharing

08 | Re-use of solutions



Participants said...

Security
Internal processes - can we release this?
Fear of accidentally publishing internal data

Difficulty - time
The extra effort is hard to predict

Hosting
Where should the code go? What department is in charge of the code and the infrastructure?

Community interaction
Uncertainty over whether code contributions will be accepted by existing projects



New decisions
No existing framework for choosing a licence or choosing where to host code

No procedure
Simple lack of internal procedure

Service providers
Some service providers don't want to help if they have to open source their code.

IT compatibility
Working with community tools when the IT department already has internal issue trackers etc.



Participants said...

No procedure
An engineer finds software, uses it

No catalogue
No central document to say what software packages are approved

Authorised sources
An increase of 10% in OS contributions would generate additional ~600 ICT start-ups per year

Who else is using it?
Lack of information about who else is using a package, or who evaluated it, and what's their experience



Sharing own software
No repository for the code of the public sector body, or other bodies in the same administration

Documentation
Either insufficient or not reliable

No funding for fixes
When a FOSS project has a small gap, there's no way to fund it - even if cheaper than buying alternative

No policy
No policy for preferring FOSS, or no political support for putting time into this



Participants said...

Value not recognised
Only price is compared, without giving value to transparency, lack of lock-in, or control over development

Matching with skills
Need to have internal expertise for any chosen software package, and this favours the current system

Building from scratch
No incentive to prefer something external that already exists and is in use

Security procedure
No methodology for security assessment



Documentation
Good software packages are often rejected because of a lack of a manual (even when other documentation exists)

Local knowledge
Unfamiliar software usually rejected, but there's no procedure for becoming familiar

Procurement officers
Some procurement officers simply don't know what FOSS is

Know-how not valued
The building of local knowledge is not acknowledged as an added value



**Participants
said...**

Positives
Need documentation for advantages such as flexibility and lack of lock-in

Public money, public code
Need understanding of the reasons to create a public good

Involve the users
Users should be informed of reasons and should be part of the beta testing team

Recognition
Need to be able to show success



Training
Users need training and a place to get help when needed

Accreditation
Learning time needs to be accredited for some professions, such as teachers and many contractors

Time required
People need to learn new concepts, maybe through “ininter source” first

Working environment
Need to acknowledge that the new solution might not be easier, but has other advantages and can improve



Participants said...

Who to fund
Sometimes not clear who is available to be funded or how funds can flow into development

Cross-departmental split
Not clear how to organise funding when multiple departments benefit

Unique value
Public administrations don't see the unique value (transparency, sovereignty)

Multiple targets
Sometimes funding a project requires the funder to find the right people and maybe fund the project and building blocks separately



Short-term thinking
The long-term benefits, due to perpetual access to the code, are not taken into account

Favouring Big Tech
Burdensome processes make it more difficult for the SMEs that make up most FOSS companies

Big and small
Many benefits of FOSS come at larger scales, but the service providers are often smaller and procedures are difficult

Donations
Many projects are funded by donations, but public administration can't make donations



**Participants
said...**

More in-person
In-person meetings were identified as a big source of information sharing regarding available software

CIO networks
More interaction is needed at local, national and international levels

Legal discussions
A lot of legal expertise is shared at technical and semi-technical events

Who's using what
More interaction is needed so that people considering a software package know who else is using it or has tried it



Recognition of events
FOSS events are often of a different style, can be harder to get authorisation to travel

Project members
Getting to know the people in a project is part of choosing partners for the future - for funding or engaging as a service provider

Sharing documentation
Current lack of central service to share documentation - technical, reports, tips, open issues

New collaborations
How can public sector entities collaborate on new types of projects such as distributed security audits?



Participants said...

IEA art 4
Interoperable Europe Act,
article 4 on sharing and reuse
of solutions

Catalogues
Catalogues listing software,
the users, documentation,
community information and
service providers

Business directory
Service providers and what
they work with

Licences & legal
Up-to-date and authoritative
information about legal topics



Testimonies
Who is already using various
packages and what is their
experience - good and bad

Case studies of “why”
Documentation of cities’
motivations for using FOSS,
and how the reality matches
with their hopes

About communities
Explanations of how to work
with communities to get the
full benefit, but also about
why working with the
community is useful

Guides & check lists
Practical guides, to give
people confidence that
they’ve thought of everything



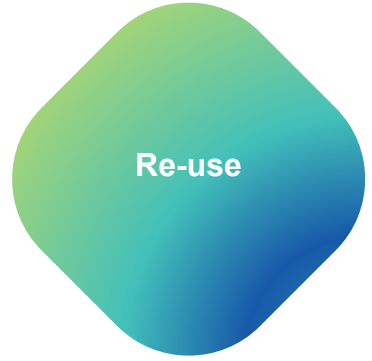
Participants said...

Code repo
Need an EU repository, but that also supports hosting of private sector projects

Sharing & translation
Agreeing on standards can solve many problems, but some documents are only in one or two languages

Modularity
Some projects combine too much functionality, but parts would be re-usable if available as modules

Coding standards
Guidelines for how to make it easier for other entities to re-use your code

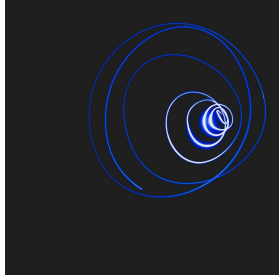


Future uncertainty
For some code, the roadmap for future development isn't clear

Translation
On the technical side, software with no system for translating the interface was highlighted as a problem

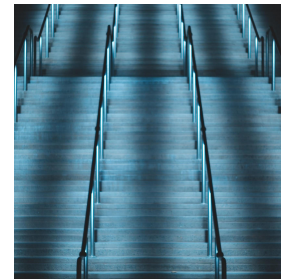
Clearer documentation
A standard way to show dependencies, licence info, usage documentation. (Some of this is in publiccode.yml)

Local-specific
Need more awareness of which design decisions are tied to a local situation. Such as how to encode someone's address



Solutions

A preview of the coming
workshops & webinars





Thank
you