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Open standards and open source in public procurement - from policy to implementation

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# Report

## ROUND TABLE: Open standards and open source in public procurement - from policy to implementation

5 November 2014, Silken Berlaymont Hotel, Brussels

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## **Speakers**

**Linda Humphries** - *Senior Technical Adviser, UK Cabinet Office.*

**Pierre Damas** - *European Commission, DG DIGIT Unit A3 - Service Oriented Solutions.*

**Bart Lindeboom** - *CIO of Ede, The Netherlands.*

**Roberto Moreno-Diaz** - *General Director for TLC and New Technologies, Canary Islands Government.*

**Introduction:** Karel De Vriendt, Fellow of the OpenForum Academy

**Moderator:** Graham Taylor, CEO OpenForum Europe.

**Rapporteur:** Dr. Efthymios Altsitsiadis, Research Expert KU Leuven, Fellow of the OpenForum Academy

**Assistant Editor:** Konstantinos Giagtzoglou

## ***Foreword***

Over the years, we have seen a number of policy initiatives promoting the take-up of Open Standards and Open Source in public institutions. One recent example is that of the UK where the adoption of the Open Standards Principles led to a major overhaul in the way standards are selected for government use.

But how effective are these policies in practice? How can it be ensured that policies are implemented and the benefits from greater competition, flexibility, and independence from any individual supplier are reaped? What are the real challenges faced in rolling out such reforms within large organisations?

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## *Executive Summary*

Public procurement of IT goods and services is still suffering from practices that pose restrictions to competition, many of which related to the claustrophobic nature of the procurement practice - a practice that seems to ignore the spirit of EU legislation. Open Standards and Open Source have been associated with a more fair procurement process and the potential to provide public administrations and bodies with the ability to bring down their spending, to get more equity for taxpayer money and to enhance their flexibility as to avoid lock-ins while at the same time boosting the economy.

The discussion has been ongoing for quite some time; much has been written about the barriers and potential benefits of opening up IT public procurement - considerably less ink has gone to how to actually get there. The experiences that are presented in this report come from different parts of the policy-to-implementation process-chain giving a flavour from distinct application areas, levels and approaches. Along the four diversified cases the speakers share some remarkably practical and well-rounded insights from both a policy and an implementation perspective yet one factor seems to undergo all: stakeholder engagement.

Arguably the single most defining element of success in these cases is the open, efficient and participative approach towards stakeholders. Whether it is the developers of PLATINO at the Canary Islands collaborating and sharing code, the employees at Ede being actively involved not only through training but also through community interaction, the network of technology leaders set up by the UK government collaborating on the implementation of Open Standards or the UK Government's Open Standards selection process through public comment, these examples strongly point to engagement being a vital ingredient of success. And even though the road ahead might seem uphill, these stories suggest that against common belief, the opening up public procurement of IT goods and services can be easier than it looks.

The current report covers the proceedings of the Round Table and is structured according to its format - it starts with the introductory presentations given by the invited speakers of the event followed by the interactive discussion amongst the participants and ends by drawing the overall conclusions. We hope that you will find it as inspiring as the discussions that took place.

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## *Introduction*

**Mr. Graham Taylor** introduced the OpenForum Europe, an independent, not-for-profit organization based in Brussels with the mission to support openness in the IT market. He then introduced the OpenForum Academy, a think-tank that was created 2 years ago and which is now comprised of more than 40 fellows around the world who bring about innovative, independent thinking on several topics revolving around openness in the IT market. Mr. Taylor reminded the participants that the Round Table is supported by the Open Invention Network<sup>1</sup>, a shared defensive patent pool with the mission to protect Linux, and proceeded to introduce the speakers of the round-table.

**Mr. Karel De Vriendt** stressed that every organization that employs IT has to make important decisions with regard to the acquisition of IT goods and services - decisions that are expensive and may have long-term consequences. In the case of private organizations, such decisions do not involve significant restrictions regarding long-term repeat acquisitions from the same company. However, this is not the case for public organizations which are bound to certain rules and regulations. More specifically, public organizations are bound by regulations at Member State level (derived from the EU procurement directive) which are more often than not quite complex and numerous.

"Public procurement needs to be fair and open to all interested players of the market. This is the essence of public procurement legislation", highlights Mr. De Vriendt. In practice, however, many public administrations appear to have linked their IT future to dominant market players - either large monopolistic software providers or a small group of service providers - with whom they have been working for long-term periods. This restriction of competition has direct consequences to both the cost and the quality of the procured goods and services and frequently leads to the adoption of procurement practices that may comply with the formalities but are not in line with the spirit of procurement legislation. A well-known example of such procurement practices is the way the European Commission every couple of years extend their contract with Microsoft after a "negotiated procedure".

Several approaches have emerged over the years in order to tackle lock-ins in public procurement of IT products and services. **One approach** is for public procurers to express an interest for Open Source Software (OSS). While the decision to use OSS software does not imply a public procurement procedure - as there is no money involved - using OSS

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<sup>1</sup> [www.openinventionnetwork.com](http://www.openinventionnetwork.com)

software fosters competition between service providers for contracts related to support the implementation of the software, to maintain the software and to adapt the software when needed - especially when the OSS software selected is being developed and maintained by a large communities and not by a single companies.

*"We continue to do what we do because it seems like the easiest way"*

A **second** approach is listing Open Standards to which all newly acquired or developed IT systems should adhere. The underlying concept of this approach is that decisions about individual IT systems should not impact future procurement decisions. Open Standards must be viewed separately from Open Source, since Open Standards can equally be implemented in proprietary solutions.

**Finally**, a third approach involves breaking multi-year, high-volume contracts into smaller pieces, allowing for smaller, more specialized companies to be able to compete as well as for better budgeting. Of course, the three approaches can and should be combined.

In spite of the fact that there have been several policy statements over the past 10 years regarding Open Source preferences, Open Standards policies and changing procurement practices, the potential impact of these statements remains unrealized as translating policies into practice appears to not be an easy task for public organizations. This is not just because of the conflicting interests of the existing dominant IT providers that benefit from the current situation of limited competition for public procurement but also because of the inertia of procurement teams in IT departments.

Mr. De Vriendt pinpointed several areas of contribution for the Round Table discussions:

- How to make a business case for the introduction of Open Source and/or Open Standards in public procurement.
- How to learn from what is done elsewhere.
- How to formulate Open Source and Open Standard policies that respect both the spirit as well as the formalities of public procurement.
- How to help procurement teams in IT departments to understand and implement these policies.
- How to report successful cases as well as not so successful ones, so as others can learn and benefit from them.

**Ms. Linda Humphries** stressed that public procurement of IT has been in many cases locked into "black boxes", very long-term contracts typically with a small number of suppliers if not just one. These lock-ins imply limited to no competition, lack of cost transparency as well as increased costs in case the need for changes/adaptations arises.

The open standards policy was introduced to help the UK Government address this exact problem as well as to ensure that the needs of users of Government services were fulfilled through the procurement of appropriate IT products and services. More specifically, the UK Government has published 7 simple and clear open standards principles, each one of them being a call to action for departments. They describe the behaviours people should expect from departments and allow people to challenge them if their procurements do not operate according to these principles:

- Principle 1 - We place the needs of our users at the heart of our standards choices: This principle ensures that the selection of standards is user-driven aimed at solving actual problems.
- Principle 2 - Our selected open standards will enable suppliers to compete on a level playing field. This principle encompasses both open source and proprietary software safeguarding a fair public procurement process.
- Principle 3 - Our standards choices support flexibility and change: This principle ensures that the standards that are selected enable us to adapt our technology to meet changing user needs.
- Principle 4 - We adopt open standards that support sustainable cost: This principle emphasises that standards are selected based on the most economical solution for the public sector as a whole.
- Principle 5 - Our decisions on standards selection are well informed: This principle acknowledges the usefulness of external expert advice and peer review.
- Principle 6 - We select open standards using fair and transparent processes: This principle stresses the importance of engagement and transparency of the procedures followed to select open standards.
- Principle 7 - We are fair and transparent in the specification and implementation of open standards: An example of this

principle in practice is the publication of implementation plans by departments. Also, public contracts are published in the online Contracts Finder<sup>1</sup> service. Other mechanisms are also in place to ensure fairness of the procurement procedures such as a mystery-shopper scheme which enables complaints to be filed with the Cabinet Office.

Open standards, however, are not a comprehensive solution, they are only a part. An appropriate digital strategy as well as design principles, such as the "Make things open, it makes things better" adopted by the Government Digital Service (GDS) in the UK, are also required along with senior backing for the policy, effective procurement routes and capability.

Since 2010 the UK government has managed to significantly increase the number and geographic range of its suppliers, which implies that the changes that have been implemented are indeed having an impact. In this respect, key levers have been the G-Cloud and Digital Services frameworks, which have significantly contributed in leveling the playing field for prospective suppliers by expediting the public procurement process.

With emphasis on building strong leadership the UK Government has set up a network comprised of the technology leaders from departments (e.g. Chief Information Officers, Chief Technology Officers, etc.) who, among other things, are responsible for the implementation of open standards. Furthermore, acknowledging the importance of establishing appropriate rules and controls, a code of practice has been agreed by all the technology leaders across the UK Government (e.g. no contracts over £100 million, no extensions to contracts, etc.) allowing the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to challenge any deviations. This is a positive challenge in a collaborative environment, offering ideas for how to do things differently. It aims at improving technology in government.

The UK Government selects open standards for use in departments through the online platform [standards.data.gov.uk](https://standards.data.gov.uk) where feedback is collected during public comment periods. This engagement process provides the Government with vital insights from technology leaders, developers, academics and implementers; an improvement on processes that had previously been used in the UK. Ms. Humphries noted the openness of the portal to everyone who wants to be involved. As such the UK Government is able to also gain access to significant number of innovative ideas on how to approach and

*"Through this portal everyone can get involved, whether from the private or public sector. Anyone who knows anything about a topic can have a say."*

build trust amongst potential suppliers incorporating them at an early stage of the open standards selection process.

Since 2011, the UK Government has saved more than £1 billion by building upon digital platforms, by transforming paper based and overly-complicated government services into digital services, by putting the right frameworks in place, by taking control of technology spending across departments and making sure that government personnel comply with the code of practice as well as implementing the standards that have been put in place. It is evident that the situation of public procurement of IT in the UK is starting to change but a lot of work is still required. An important step that has to be taken towards further improving the current situation is addressing all the various stakeholders that are involved in public procurement, building capability and removing misconceptions.

**Mr. Pierre Damas**, explains that the OSS strategy of the European Commission has already evolved 4 times since its inception and is now again in the process of being revised. The strategy was first drafted in 2000 and has been renewed every 2 - 4 years. He proceeds to describe the various stages of evolution of the strategy along with the particular focus of each one and reports that its new iteration will emphasize on how the Commission can contribute code back to the OSS-development communities.

The current iteration of the OSS strategy is in the form of a Decalogue consisting of principles and complemented by an action plan that ensures their effective implementation. The strategy focuses on 5 domains of use, namely servers (e.g. Linux, APACHE, etc.), collaboration tools (e.g. wikis, forums, blogs. etc.), desktops (e.g. Firefox, Adobe Reader, etc.), development tools and platforms as well as on the production of code under OSS license. According to the results of the 2014 OSS inventory, Open Source has established a strong presence amongst the developers as well as the data centers and desktops of the European Commission. The 10 principles of the Decalogue of the current OSS of the Commission are:

1. **Product management:** The Commission shall continue to adopt formally, through the Product Management procedure, the use of OSS technologies and products.
2. **Procurement:** The Commission shall consider OSS solutions alongside proprietary ones in IT procurements. Contracts will be awarded on a "value for money" basis.
3. **Interoperability & Open standards:** For all future IT developments, the Commission shall promote the use of products that support recognized, well-documented and preferably Open Standards. Interoperability is a critical issue for

the Commission, and usage of well-established standards is a key factor to achieve it.

4. **Distribution:** For the development of new information systems, in particular where employment is foreseen by parties outside of the EC infrastructure, OSS shall be the preferred choice and in any case used whenever possible.
5. **Legal context:** The Commission shall further clarify the legal context around the internal use of OSS and make these clarifications available to interested parties. Main topics to be addressed are: licensing schemes, Intellectual Property Rights, equal opportunities in the context of procurement and participation in OSS communities.
6. **Architecture:** The EC shall further develop guidelines and best practices allowing the setup of OSS and mixed solutions covering the full set of needed professional services, including deployment of OSS solutions in its data centers at the same level of service as the proprietary ones.
7. **Methods & Communities:** The Commission shall continue to develop and adopt best practices and tools emerging from OSS communities while applying state-of-the-art governance practices. In addition, the EC will facilitate and promote the creation of communities for those OSS products released by the Commission and facilitate participation in external OSS communities.
8. **e-Government:** OSS plays an important role in e-Government projects and shall be therefore considered within the framework of these activities.
9. **Internal & external strategies alignment:** The collaboration between Commission teams in charge of the internal and external OSS strategies shall be further enhanced in order to achieve convergence.
10. **Inter-institutional aspects:** The ICT ecosystem is extremely dynamic, innovative, and constantly evolving; as such it impacts many areas of the Commission's policies. Within this context, DIGIT shall continue to play an active role in promoting partnerships focusing on OSS between the European Institutions and other stakeholders.

In order to update its OSS strategy the Commission has investigated the current situation of several countries revealing 3 different approaches that are typically followed:

- **No formal approach** according to which the national government has not formally adopted or published a specific approach with regard to the procurement of IT goods and services;
- **OSS by default** according to which public organizations that would like procure commercial software have to prove first that there is no Open Source software that serves the same need;
- **Equal treatment** according to which public procurement processes and teams do not distinguish between proprietary or Open Source software.

Mr. Damas explains that the plan for the next iteration of the OSS is to preserve its Decalogue format and add further segments that will emphasize and promote the Commission's contribution to the OSS-development communities, stress its preference for OSS for internal development and finally complement the strategy with an appropriate Action Plan outlining the activities required for its effective and timely implementation. He concludes his presentation by highlighting that on one hand establishing a strategy is important as there is already a force that drives the adoption of Open Source software in the public sector. There are people who are in favor of this adoption and a published strategy allows them to advance their efforts towards a shift to Open Source software. On the other hand, nothing will be done naturally and thus an action plan is necessary to guide the process and especially in domains where progress is slow.

*Establishing a strategy is important... yet nothing will be done naturally - an action plan is necessary to guide the process.*

**Mr. Lindeboom**, started working in the IT department of the municipality of Ede at 2007, a time when there was a strong focus on commercial software. He was hired to drive down costs and in order to achieve this he applied a differentiated approach to the operational, tactical and strategic levels of the municipality of Ede.

Initially, he targeted the operational level trying to bring about a shift in the personnel by cultivating a more "open" mindset among them. For this purpose he employed several strategies and tools in addition to educational programmes. He let members of OSS-minded communities to

share their stories with members of the IT department. He allowed participation in targeted fairs and seminars as well as provided interested people with subscriptions in relevant magazines. He offered them notebooks that ran on operating systems different than MS-Windows aimed at showcasing the advantages that come with OSS. Finally, when someone left the department, Mr. Lindeboom seized the opportunity to bring in a new staff member with an orientation to OSS.

*"Ranking first since 2010 in the Dutch open standards monitor has not been a difficult task."*

At the tactical and strategic levels, Mr. Lindeboom focused on creating acceptance of Open Source and Open Standards. The starting point to achieve this was to increase awareness on the benefits of OSS. His engagements with the city board allowed for his manifesto "Open Government" to be signed by an alderman of the Ede municipal council. The implementation of the National Policy Open Standards and Open Source also facilitated acceptance. Finally, he searched for connections with other municipalities as well as communities.

The "Open Government" manifesto was about vendor independence, digital durability, interoperability, transparency as well as about auditable and manageable software. A total of 72 Dutch cities signed the manifesto which according to Mr. Lindeboom sparked the creation of what would be later called "The Netherlands in Open Connection", an action plan for the use of Open Standards and OSS in the public and semi-public sector of the Netherlands.

As a result of Mr. Lindeboom's efforts, after a few years, the software inventory of the IT department of the municipality of Ede was significantly enriched with a wide variety of Open Source software and applications such as use of TYPO3 as a content management system or Firefox as the default internet browser. Furthermore, the municipality of Ede has been ranked No. 1. in the Dutch open standards monitor since 2010, an achievement that as Mr. Lindeboom admits has been easy. When compared to other Dutch municipalities Ede is often employed as a benchmark. Through the adoption of OSS they have been able not only to raise revenue and the quality of their services but also to gain increased flexibility. Further benefits include the exclusion of license limits, better results achieved through cooperation, faster innovation processes, increased customer satisfaction as well as increased motivation of the people within the department.

However, OSS also involves certain disadvantages. It is sometimes difficult to find suitable system engineers and 3<sup>rd</sup> party supporters. Furthermore, it appears that users sometimes think that cheaper OSS-products are not as good as more expensive products. Moreover, OSS comes with the

temptation to run more applications simultaneously which typically makes organizations to switch faster or even add new versions which in turn produce unnecessary user and administrative effort and can potentially lead to (further) errors. Finally, it is quite difficult for many organizations to implement change when the shift to OSS is not obligatory.

**Mr. Roberto Moreno-Diaz** explains what they have been doing for the past 3½ years within the local Canary Islands Government in respect to the shift to OSS. The plan to switch to Open Source began being more aggressive after the formation of the new regional government in 2011 due to a combination of two main reasons: a) the official political position of the government was to adopt Open Source solutions whenever possible, and b) the budget situation for IT was, as in many European administrations, critical at the time.

In fact, the Open Source adoption plan was only one aspect of the reorganization of the IT policies in the Canary Islands. The reorganization also included controlling the costs of internal communications between the various administrations and IT departments of public services (e.g. education, healthcare, etc.), boosting electronic administration and related services (e.g. the general information services of the Canary Islands government) as well as facilitating the maintenance and deployment of the infrastructure of the emergency telecommunication network. They seized the opportunity that emerged from the general crisis that they were immersed in, to reorganize the entire IT structure of the public system. This ambitious task, of course involved risks as the public services had to keep running and the transitions and changes/migrations had to be transparent. Despite all the adversities, in the end, the reorganization efforts were successful.

Within this framework their first big move of the Canary Islands government towards the migration to OSS involved virtualization software. Switching to Open Source virtualization software saved the regional government more than €700,000 in a period of 2 years. The migration project spanned over 4 months in terms of technical work and led to an increase from 847 to 1018 virtual servers as well as to a reduction from 711 to 450 physical servers. The endeavor was such a success that other regions in Spain also followed this example adopting the model of the Canary Islands government and in some occasions even employing the same technology providers.

Furthermore, in 2012 the Canary Islands government decided to make Open Office the official software for public workers. In order to ease the transition they have arranged training programmes and have set up a helpdesk to help solve specific problems that users may encounter in the process. In 2013, all the electronic administration websites of the various

Canary Island government departments were opened up to the public. Their electronic administration system is an in-house developed open source called "PLATINO - Plataforma de la interoperabilidad" and is also used by other Spanish administrations. In order to foster cooperation for the further development of PLATINO, its use requires developers to share their new additions to the code with government. PLATINO also includes a portable office tool for mobility that allows the user to manage and sign official documents using just his/her mobile phone.

The contribution of the local IT private sector to the shift of the Canary Islands government to OSS has been significant. For instance the introduction of PLATINO led to the development of the government's workforce as the demand for its services grew tremendously. Local IT firms, through an official call of the government, provided training and certification to this new workforce. As such the transition did not only benefit the technological and financial sustainability of the government but also that of the local IT business and in a time of economic adversity.

Many of the milestones, however, in the transition of the Canary Islands government to OSS may be found in several European public administrations over the last few years, fueled by the need to develop and adopt cost-effective practices in IT and relevant public services.

*"The transition did not only benefit the government but also the local IT market and in a time of economic adversity."*

## ***Discussion***

### ***Implementation and impediments to Open Document Format adoption***

One of the key issues that typically emerge in public administrations when adopting Open Standards is exchanging documents with other public bodies that may use proprietary formats.

Indeed the above mentioned issue may pose an implementation problem in the UK as the remit of the Open Standards policy includes only the central government and the agencies that it controls. There is no remit for local administrations or other public bodies (e.g. police) and thus information exchange that involves documents (e.g. reporting) might be hindered. In this respect, however, the question is whether there is any need at all to exchange information through documents. By challenging this need, public authorities have the opportunity to improve their services and overcome issues arising from different formats or the lack of software that can cope with different formats. For instance, these information exchanges could take place through a browser based service. The GDS is also working with the Open Document Society to produce guidance for workers in the government sector and potentially help them to consider different ways of working.

The majority of the documents in the IT department of the municipality of Ede are produced through a document generator. As the generator is not influenced by the software used to draft the document (e.g. MS Office, Open Office, etc.) it can serve as a solution to problems that are caused by varying document formats. Furthermore, they have agreed on a common format to be used internally (i.e. .doc) whereas on another one (i.e. .pdf) for documents sent out of the department.

With regard to the problem of moving developers to open source as the recommendation of the European Commission for its developers is to use Java for which there are many Open Source libraries and frameworks. For the exchange of revisable documents the Commission has agreed to use Open Document format. Internally that poses no problem as they use the format required by their own platform.

Barriers to implementation may also arise in the process of explaining the strategy as well as the need for the transition. In order to tackle this issue the GDS in the UK is employing a multi-faceted approach to increase awareness on the shift to open formats. In addition, they are hosting dedicated events/workshops to which technology leaders from all government departments are invited and share knowledge.

The transition to open format is a challenge not only at department level but also at a personal level as it requires people to change deep-rooted practices.

The human factor is really important. On the one hand there are people that are in favour of Open Source and advance naturally to the adoption of such practices. On the other hand many have invested in the use of proprietary application software which may not support open formats, and if the supplier has not provided support for the open format the user may not be so inclined to leave it behind. We have to be strong in leading the way, which implies that a strategy should not only be better communicated but also indicate that preparations are necessary at the present if any change to another product is to be made in the future. Furthermore, these preparatory changes must be made obligatory and not optional. In Holland, for instance, it appears to be very easy to explain that one cannot work with an Open Source product leading to a failure of adopting Open Source solutions in many public departments. Conversely, in the Canary Islands, the situation is a bit different as many people had already been convinced of the importance of adopting Open Source, perhaps mainly due to the development and adoption of PLATINO which served as an engine that quickly spread the benefits of Open Source throughout the local government.

In this context, there is a form of lobbying which is currently underestimated. For example, it might be rather difficult to convince a group of developers that are highly proficient in Microsoft-based environments, to change their focus and learn something new.

In response a practical example was provided regarding a developer working in the municipality of Ede showing that the transition to Open Source may in fact be easier than it sounds. Communicating and motivating development personnel can greatly help in this respect. The truth is, however, that even new editions of proprietary software such as Microsoft Office can be drastically different from one to the next and thus many of the above mentioned developers would have to study and learn the new edition anyway.

### ***The policy perspective***

The decision to acquire services to support the implementation of an Open Source software/product must follow public procurement rules. With this in mind, should a public procurer first consider the OSS product, the services required for its adoption or launch a call for tender seeking a comprehensive solution?

Procurement decisions in the IT department of the municipality of Ede are made taking into account costs as well as technical functionality by three

parties, all of which have the power of veto. The first party is the consumer - user for whom the most important aspect is the functionality of the product. The second party is the IT department for which the most crucial aspect is architecture and connectivity. The last party is the financial department that will have to provide the budget required to purchase the product. When they are looking for software products they publish open calls for tender with specific selection criteria, which imply the preference for OSS and the requirement of delivering Open Standards.

A similar approach is employed in the local government of the Canary Islands when it comes to the procurement of IT products. Despite some initial doubts with regard to the response of the market, public contracts that demand for Open Source solutions appear to attract a significant amount of prospective suppliers.

**Question:** To what extent can policies developed within and for a specific country (e.g. the UK) be developed and implemented in a pan-European level?

The Open Standards definition of the UK government was based on European Interoperability Framework v1 definition. The definition was further expanded with feedback obtained through a consultation process. Therefore, the principles are completely reusable as well as the majority of the rules for departments.

**Question:** What would be the clearest signal that the Commission could give to European public bodies with regard to promoting the adoption of Open Standards?

The long-term engagement of the Commission with Microsoft (MS) sometimes overshadows its significant efforts in fostering the adoption of OSS. The real challenge, however, for office automation at the moment is to enhance mobility allowing you to keep your office with you at all times e.g. through mobile phones or tablets. It is not to replace MS Office with Open Office. This is already an ongoing project for the Commission which is gradually starting to consider alternatives to MS in uses such as e-mail, collaboration, social media, etc.

**Question:** How much involvement is there from different member State governments in the policy making activities regarding Open Standards?

It appears that there is a lack of discussion on such matters with relevant stakeholders that if fostered could lead to a common understanding of public procurement in IT.

## *Conclusions*

Public administrations and bodies across Europe have already taken steps towards the adoption of Open Standards (inc Open Document Format), and separately Open Source policies in their procurement decisions. The major drivers of this shift are the need to drive down costs in order to cope with the limited financial budgets of public departments in the aftermath of the recent economic recession as well as the need to break long lasting lock-ins that can result by increased dependency on a single provider. By avoiding these so called "black boxes", public procurers have the opportunity to become more flexible and at the same time increase and diversify their supplier base which can translate to increased service quality and may have a direct beneficial impact on the economy.

Policy makers can facilitate the shift by adopting a user-driven approach that will foster the transparency and fairness of procurement processes but will also increase the engagement of all relevant stakeholders to embrace change and effectively elevate the chances of success. This involves the development of clear strategies along with the establishment of appropriate rules and controls that will have to be properly communicated and explained to all stakeholders involved in public procurement. The emphasis should be on making procurement processes open to the public so as any interested party can provide feedback intended to constantly improving them.

Conversely, perhaps the most important barrier that policy makers encounter in the implementation process of Open IT policies can be attributed to the human factor. Even though there are people within public departments who are welcoming the shift to Open Standards and/or Open Source , a significant stakeholder part is resisting or is inert to change. Raising the awareness on the benefits involved in the shift and the motivation of all parties involved in public procurement can help to alleviate this barrier.

In light of the efforts that are being made by several public authorities across Europe towards the inclusion of Open Standards and Open Source in public IT procurement, the European Commission can play an important role to increase the involvement of Member States and coordinate the dialogue as to reveal and promote best practices, and leverage lessons learned from past experiences to overcome barriers and effectively implement the shift towards a more "open" mindset.

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### Short Speaker Bios



**Karel De Vriendt, OFA Fellow**

*De Vriendt worked for 25 years as an IT expert for the European Commission. From 2005 to 2011, he was responsible for the implementation of the IDABC programme and for the definition and implementation of the ISA programme. He was actively involved in initiatives such as the Open Source Observatory and Repository (OSOR) and the Semantic Interoperability Centre Europe (SEMIC), now merged into Joinup, and in the elaboration of the European Interoperability Strategy and the European Interoperability Framework. He also acquired a good practical experience in the public procurement of IT goods and services.*



**Linda Humphries, Senior Technical Adviser, UK Cabinet Office**

*A senior technology adviser in the UK Government Digital Service, Humphries has over 12 years' experience of working on IT and digital projects. She is head of open standards policy, covering software, data and document formats for use in government technology, working as part of the Office of the Chief Technology Officer. She delivered the Open Standards Principles in 2012 to level the playing field for open source and proprietary software use in government. She has implemented a transparent selection process for open standards and led the project to select open standards for document formats.*



**Pierre Damas, DG DIGIT Unit A3 - Service Oriented Solutions**

*Damas drafted the first OSS strategy back in 2000, helped DG Competition lawyers on technical aspects for the statement of objection against Microsoft for abuse of dominant position, implemented the authentication system of the Commission (ECAS). In the framework of the Technical Architecture Task Force, he provided EC developers with the implementation of the reference architecture for Information Systems (RefApp) and a development life cycle management platform (CITnet) based on Open Source products supporting development communities and project teams.*



**Bart Lindeboom, Senior IT Advisor to the City of Ede, The Netherlands**

*Lindeboom headed the IT department of the City of Ede, where he led the use of numerous open source products. Ede is one of the 25 largest City Councils in the Netherlands and is one of the Front runners in execution of the Dutch Public sector policy on Open Source and Open Standards Plan. In the past he has been head of the IT departments in various Dutch public institutions, including the City of Dordrecht and the Baronie College in Breda.*



**Roberto Moreno-Díaz, General Director for TLC and New Technologies, Canary Islands**

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