

PRESS RELEASE

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OpenForum Europe welcomes the European Commission's Cloud strategy, but questions its choice of coordinator in the process of identifying key Cloud standards

OpenForum Europe (OFE) welcomes the European Commission's approach to Cloud Computing laid out in its strategy paper published today, in particular its emphasis on the need to develop technical standards that will play a crucial role in ensuring that Cloud Computing remains an open, interoperable and innovative environment.

With a clear set of industry-wide standards Europe will be able to prevent individual Cloud suppliers from locking their users into their own closed and proprietary Cloud offerings. Earlier revolutions in computing, such as the birth of the personal computer, were hampered by this type of lock-in. It appears that the Commission is determined to avoid the same thing happening with Cloud Computing.

The Commission's emphasis on avoiding protectionism and its vision of a global, interconnected Cloud market show a clear understanding of how best to harness the full potential that Cloud Computing offers to users, whether they be businesses, individuals or governments.

"Cloud computing is by definition global. The economies of scale that it offers to Cloud users would be severely undermined if Europe were to erect geographic barriers to the free flow of data in the Cloud. The European Commission understands this and we are confident this strategy document will have the desired effect of making Europe an active player in this dynamic new computing environment," said Graham Taylor, OFE's Chief Executive.

While the focus on drawing up technology standards for Cloud Computing is clearly vital, many in the IT industry will be surprised that the Commission has chosen the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) to oversee the process of identifying a list of essential Cloud standards in areas such as security, interoperability, data portability and reversibility.

OFE is also surprised by this choice. The business models supported by ETSI are not aligned with those of IT industry fora and consortia, which are playing a lead role in mapping out the standardization needs for Cloud Computing.

“We would have preferred the Commission itself to play the key role it has handed to ETSI, but having made this decision we hope the Commission will hold true to its word in ensuring that this coordination role is open and transparent,” Taylor said.

“It's vital that SME's, software developer communities and IT industry players that aren't members of ETSI are able to participate on an equal level with ETSI's own membership,” he added.

The Commission recently set up a multi-stakeholder platform comprising IT standard-setting bodies, national governments and representatives from the IT industry to give advice on the development of technology standards in Europe.

OFE urges the Commission to include Cloud Computing standardization under the platform's remit, and to integrate the platform with the process being led by ETSI.

For more information please contact OFE chief executive and spokesman Graham Taylor on +44 7713 593 217, graham@openforumeurope.org ; or Paul Meller, OFE media advisor on +32 497 322 966, paul@openforumeurope.org

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