Open Source: Driving the European Digital Decade Brno – September 16, 2022

Keynote transcript and Announcement of http://code.europa.eu/ by DIGIT Director-General Veronica Gaffey,

Dear Governer, Members of the European Parliament, Representatives of the City of Brno and Masaryk University, thank you for the opportunity to address this conference, and hello and good morning as well to all coming to us across EU public services who joined us in person and online.

I am very happy to have this opportunity to discuss the achievements and challenges of our open source journey. For me this is a very short journey so far because I am only six months into my term, but of course leaders and experts on open source in my organisation are Miguel and Gijs sitting over there. If you want to talk to real experts, talk to them. Miguel and Gijs came to me very early in my time in DIGIT to sponsor open source events and to sponsor hackathons and then when I wanted to know more about what is happening in the organisation I said we'll have a deep dive into different areas of DIGIT. I am a bit embarrassed calling it a deep dive because with my little expertise it's more like testing water. But this conference emphasizes the importance of open source in the digital decade in the interest of European Public Services, for our technological sovereignty, and digital commons and global strategic economic relevance.

I have learned, and I heard it last night and this morning, that there are Czech software developers involved in nearly all of the major open source projects. So Czech high-tech engineers were, for the past 20 years, creating word leading free and open source projects. There is a wide range of projects by CZ.NIC, its success includes charts and charts on via network routes used by the open source consumers in the Czech Republic and several EU member states. And I was really impressed by this one, BIRD Internet Routing Daemon. In 2015 it was used by two out of three Internet exchange points across the world. We checked with CZ.NIC last week and they showed us that BIRD is now involved in routing 85% of network traffic in Internet exchange points worldwide. It is very impressive.

It shows how to spend local resources for running the Internet and by itself, it only proves the relevance of open source for digital government. Other Czech open source inventors are busy changing manufacturing across the globe. The i3 Josef Prusa's printer was and perhaps still is the world's most used 3D printer. The buzz of free and open source innovation is probably why Red Hat chose the Czech Republic and the city of Brno for its research and development town where it now employs over 1500 open source engineers.

I picked these examples because they link open source software to computer hardware. Hardware, especially computer chips are strategic assets. Open source hardware is essential for digital sovereignty. And this brings me to a Chips Act

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announced by the Commission earlier this year to create a state-of-the-art European chip ecosystem and with the target in 8 years from now that the EU will produce 20% of the world's chips. This is why the Commission is investing in projects working in open processor architectures such as RISC-V.

The global, growing importance of open source software and hardware is reflected in my own organisation, DIGIT, or its formal name, the Directorate General for Informatics. Open source is dominant in our data centre. 75% of our servers run Linux. We use Drupal for all Commission websites. And our internal software development toolchain increasingly relies on open source.

Over the past two decades, the use of open source has expanded from the data centre to our desktops, to the web and our smartphone apps. And really when you see the journey that we have all made in our working lives over the last twenty years, it's quite extraordinary. And, in fact, much of that also facilitated our being able to continue to work and function effectively over the Covid crisis, when we had to change the way we work.

It's not just DIGIT. The software shared by the Digital Europe programme is open source, and hotspots of open source activity in the European Commission include Directorates-General such as the Joint Research Centre and Eurostat. And open source is becoming the norm in Commission projects. I point to the Next Generation Internet funding framework, funding hundreds of grassroots open source projects, and to the cloud middleware project Simpl, where open source is a requirement.

The progression reflects our growing maturity, from an organisation that consumes open source to one that builds its own solutions on open source, to ultimately a Commission that is closely involved in open source. That's why, in 2021, we elevated our own internal Open Source Strategy and made it a Commission-wide strategy. And we created a dedicated team, the Commission Open Source Programme Office, or "OSPO", to make it easier to use and share open source and to assist colleagues to build open source into their projects and ensure a focus on IT security which, let's face it, for the last six months has never been far from our hearts.

I've a few minutes left and it gives me a little time to mention our work with member states. There is an upcoming Interoperable Europe Act, a proposal which has been co-designed with member states, and this cooperation framework supports the digital transformation of our public sector and acknowledges the importance of open source. The Act draws on two decades of knowledge, aggregated by the Open Source Observatory, a hub of information on the development and use of open source in EU public services, encouraging collaboration. And the idea in our interoperability actions is that we will pull together the member states—and the member states are asking for

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this—in order that we can identify what works, what's successful, and have that freely and openly available to all.

In the Digital Europe programme we are funding more and more open source initiatives including flagship projects like LEOS, which is the editor for drafting legal documents which will be inter-institutional and will involve also the Council and the European Parliament.

To our colleagues in the member states who are taking steps to increase their use of free and open source, to all of the enthusiasts, advocates and community members, it will take dedication and time to become a mature part of the community but we are taking incremental steps all the time to build and strengthen the support for free and open source. I'm pleased to announce today one such step. In December last year we got rid of an outdated, complicated, bureaucratic legal process that stopped us sharing open source. Now Commission projects that wish to share their software with others are free to do so.

We created a central code repository, one which I can now announce publicly. You will find our software development platform at code.europa.eu. So, code.europa.eu facilitates the open development of software projects from the Commission as well as the other European Union institutions. We start today with just over 100 projects and 150 developers, but the OSPO is busily onboarding others.

All these projects are open to software developers interested in re-using, adapting and helping to extend and improve the software. Running on an open source solution, in a data centre in the EU, code.europa.eu facilitates co-development and sharing and re-use of European public service solutions. It reinforces similar efforts of public services in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and elsewhere in the EU and we think more and more countries will become active in the near future. And ultimately it is a practical, incremental step to achieving digital sovereignty.

I'm really impressed by the achievements of open source in the Czech Republic, and likewise encouraged by the progress made in the European Commission. It underscores the strategic, economic and global strategic value of this work. But I'm also aware of how much work there is ahead. We've come a long way in 20 years, but I think we need to be quite ambitious in the years ahead. But I close by confirming my commitment, and that of DIGIT, to further open source and its contributions to a technologically open, and therefore sovereign and interoperable Europe.
So thank you all very much, and I wish you a really interesting day.