

OFE and OBOOE Jointly Call for Action in European Commission Support for European Software Strategy

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OpenForum Europe and the Open Source Business Organisations of Europe have jointly written to Commissioner Viviane Reding, congratulating her on Commission progress in supporting the development of thinking and research into the use of Open Standards and Open Source Software, but encourage her to now move from ideas into specific action.

OFE and OBOOE believe the European Software Industry (ESI) both has an opportunity and is challenged by the global economy. Europe can, despite the impact of past and present proprietary monopolies, now seek a 'break out' culture to maximise the opportunity created by the combination of new business models and the impact of the 'Openness' trend coming of age. What is key, therefore, is to both ensure that preservation of the status quo does not deflect from the new opportunity, and that existing suppliers are strongly discouraged from deploying tactics and policies which allow lock-in to be maintained.

Open Standards and Open Source are two specific tools that can help enable the principles of Openness, and deliver the next level of innovation and growth to the market place. However, the tools now need to be put to use if we are to maintain a truly open and fair competition.

The question is what specific measures can the European Commission undertake which would accelerate and support the ESI in maximising this new opportunity. Equally challenging, one must encourage the 10000+ small SME suppliers currently nationally based, and not just take measures which are likely to maintain the dominance of the existing top 20 (global) players. We say this, even though OFE includes some of those global players, because we truly believe that Europe benefits from a complex, multi-layered software ecosystem. Only then can we leverage all growth opportunities.

OFE and OBOOE have jointly suggested a range of measures and actions which the Commission can pro actively take, and has offered the full support of its members and resources in ensuring these measures can be successfully introduced into the market. The measures suggested cover a number of discrete areas:

- Support to the market via public sector procurement of Open standards
- Correction in policy strategies that implicitly or explicitly favour proprietary software
- Greater emphasis on collaboration and integration models within R+D
- Support to market initiatives that clarify Free/Open source adoption
- Support to market initiatives that discourage proprietary lock-in

About OBOOE and OFE

OBOOE is a European initiative to bring companies and organisations related or using Free and Open Source products closer together. Its goal is to create a network between national organisations to provide more knowledge and business interchange in the European IT sector. Most of the Free Software products and solutions in Europe are created by small and medium enterprises. But the pan European communication on the market is mostly led by large international companies. We intend to give the European Open Source Software companies, Users from private economy and Public Sector a common voice.

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OFE is a not-for-profit independent organisation whose mission is to promote open, competitive choice in the ICT sector. Drawing its membership from both the user and supply communities (including some of the largest and most influential companies) it also works in close partnership with both national and pan European based organisations with a common voice. In September 2007 in Lisbon at the Ministerial eGovernment Conference OFE was honoured both to be invited by the Commission and the Portuguese Presidency to respond to the Ministerial Declaration, but also to represent some 27 other organisations across Europe from the 'Open Community' who became co-signatories to the Statement of support.

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