

OFE release

Graham Taylor, Director of OFE speaks at the 4th Ministerial eGovernment conference in Lisbon

Lisbon 20 September

Speaking at the 4th EU Ministerial eGovernment conference in Lisbon today, OFE Chief Executive Graham Taylor presented the Open Community response to the Ministerial Declaration, unanimously approved by the Ministers responsible for eGovernment on 19 September 2007. Invited to speak in the concluding session of the event, Mr Taylor welcomed the broad commitment demonstrated by participants throughout the conference to the use of Open Standards in government, and offered the support of the Open Community in implementing the targets outlined in the Declaration.

This was the first time that the Open Community had been asked to respond formally to the Ministerial declaration, showing clearly the growing interest by the public sector in the solutions presented by Open Source and Open Standards. The declaration, cosigned by over 20 organisations representing the Open Source Community across the EU, supports the targets highlighted in the Ministerial Declaration, in particular:

- Cross-border interoperability
- Reduction of administrative burdens
- Inclusive eGovernment
- Transparency and Democratic engagement

Recognising that the challenge of interoperability was arguably the main underlying theme of the event, Taylor emphasized the importance of the Commission's work to revise the European Interoperability Framework (EIF) and reminded the audience that version 1 EIF was recognised worldwide as a benchmark achievement in an area of technical complexity and potential business controversy.

Mr Taylor said, "The Open Community offers its full and honest support to the commitments expressed in the Declaration, particularly in the area of interoperability. We hope governments and the European Commission will continue to take a proactive role in this process."

"Whilst we understand that Version 2 will concentrate heavily on providing more advice on the practical implementation on the organizational and semantic levels of interoperability, we strongly support maintenance of the current rigour taken to the technical levels – notably its definition of an Open Standard", he added.

Echoing the words of Tim Berners-Lee, founder of the Internet and whose presentation was delivered earlier in the session, Mr Taylor said, "A single Open Standard, independently maintained and implemented by multiple vendors, will maximize innovative competition where it really matters – in solution provision, and in choice for end users."

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Notes for Editors.

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1. OpenForum Europe is a not-for-profit, independent organisation launched in March 2002 to accelerate, broaden and strengthen the use of Open Source Software (OSS) in business and government.
2. The 4th Ministerial eGovernment Conference was hosted by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union, between the 18th and 20th of September.
3. Co-signatories to the Declaration were: ANSOL – Associacao Nacional para o Software Livre (www.ansol.org), COSS – The Finnish Centre for Open Source Solutions (www.coss.fi), OSL – The Danish Open Source Business Association (www.osl.dk), European Committee for Interoperable Solutions (www.ecis.eu), Free Software Foundation Europe (www.fsfeurope.org), Holland Open Software Platform (www.hollandopen.nl), Internet Information Institute (www.3i.pl), Linux Verband (www.linux-verband.de), Linux Industrial Association Hungary (www.lipsz.hu), Linux User Group of Slovenia (www.lugos.si), National Open Centre (www.nationalopencentre.org.uk), Open Advantage (www.openadvantage.org), OpenForum Europe (www.openforumeurope.org), OpenIreland (www.openireland.com), OpenOffice.org, (www.openoffice.org), OSS Alliance (www.oss.cz), Slovak Open Source Initiative (www.skosi.org), the UK's Unix and Open Systems User Group (www.ukuug.org) .