

PRESS RELEASE

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Openforum Europe welcomes the publication of the UK Government's ICT strategy

The UK Government published its long-awaited ICT Strategy document today, confirming its determination to move the public sector in the UK away from being locked in to large scale single supplier proprietary software solutions.

Openforum Europe (OFE) welcomes the move and congratulates the UK Government on its visionary thinking, and urges local and regional public bodies around the UK to follow central government's lead.

"The Strategy focuses on an open approach to ICT, mandating open standards, re-aligning the playing field for open source, and encouraging greater SME participation in government ICT contracts. This is all to be commended," said Graham Taylor, chief executive of OFE.

He warned that the move away from being locked into a handful of large ICT suppliers will not be an easy one, but added: "The determination from central government is now clear."

Local governments have shown reluctance to consider open alternatives to the software systems they have historically turned to. The Government's Strategy published today can only claim success "once there is evidence at grass roots level of its implementation," Taylor said.

"The fact that the Strategy is accompanied by a set of firm Actions is positive, and indicative of the resources being applied to focus the minds of all those involved in procurement practice. But it is in procurement that the Strategy will either come alive or wither." Taylor added.

Publication of the strategy makes the UK a useful role model for other European governments which are in the process of trying to open up their public sectors to more open and interoperable ICT systems.

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OFE and its members and partners will work very hard to continue to support the UK Cabinet Office in bringing this Strategy to life. "The opportunity for the market, for Government users, and for citizens is just too great to ignore," Taylor said.

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