

FOSS4SME—OpenUK

Executive Summary paper and UK policy recommendations

28th January 2020

Introduction

OpenUK's CEO, Amanda Brock, moderated a panel hosted by Open Forum Europe in Brussels, to launch the FOSS4SME report on 25 September 2019. This included a presentation from Andre Richier, of DG Grow¹ on digital skills training and education.

The report reminds us that the 2014 'Tallinn Declaration' commits the EU to increase use of Open Source and standards: *"When building or rebuilding ICT systems, public services should make more use of Open Source software solutions and open standards"*.

The FOSS4SME Report suggests tangible benefits for SMEs. It identifies three policy areas and 37 recommendations within these.

The report is clear that public sector procurement in EU Member States (including the UK) is paying lip service and not living up to the commitments of the Tallinn Declaration.

The following summarises the recommendations identified by OpenUK as key to a successful digital future within the EU, and in a post-Brexit UK. OpenUK proposes that these require direct action by UK business and UK Government to:

- a. narrow the digital skills shortage in the UK;
- b. ensure that UK businesses are digitally competitive;
- c. reduce reliance on foreign data systems whilst encouraging development of sovereign digital systems; and
- d. enable UK businesses to benefit from the economic advantages of an open approach.

Summary of recommendations

1. Vocational, Education and Training: Improving and broadening digital skills

Create a certification or standard qualification for Open Source coding skills.

Encourage more people to become qualified teachers of coding.

Provide training in digital skills including Open Source development to support re-skilling a redundant workforce and training the workforce of the future.

Ensure all children are taught to code and use Open Source methodologies as a compulsory element of education.

Encourage minority groups to participate in the open community to create diversity and inclusion.

2. Business Policy: Intended to create a level playing field for open

Consider total cost of enterprise for Open Source.

Amend public procurement rules to create a level playing field by adjusting legislation to accommodate needs of Open Source and SME software supply chain with measurements to ensure that this is functional.

The IP Paradigm—find alternative ways to measure the value of innovation as patent-based valuations are outdated and inappropriate to both SMEs and Open Source.

Encourage more investment in open technology.

Update public procurement policies by removing inappropriate IP requirements and replacing these with open-appropriate IP requirements.

Adjust UK Government policy to take into account a wider set of dimensions, including open initiatives; open governance; open standards; Open Source; open hardware; open data; open platforms; open APIs; open science; and open access, and the positive impacts these have.

Promote models to ensure governance and sustainability of the open ecosystem whilst ensuring protection for the enterprise customer.

3. Institutions Policy: post-Brexit the recommendations should apply equally to UKGov

There is a lack of up-to-date EU-focused research on FOSS and the same is true in the UK. The UK may not be included post-Brexit in the continuing European Commission project to foster a supply-chain of FOSS service providers, which seeks to resolve this in the EU, and the UK urgently requires a similar study to be undertaken.

Use OpenUK to build communities around public sector and government software solutions.

Foster a dialogue with the openness community for consultation. OpenUK is ready to engage and bring together communities across open.

Explore the creation of an open technologies unit to avoid drafting new legislation failing to take open into account.

Commitments to openness need to be followed through, ensuring the Tallinn Declaration is being implemented and considering a follow-up to the Declaration.

Commercial organisations' increased use and support of open technology, through their investment, employment of developers working on Open Source projects, and involvement in open communities was noted.

A lack of diversity in open communities is recognised and it is hoped that corporate involvement will improve this. We support building a more diverse community.

OpenUK recommendations for UK Government

OpenUK suggests the following actions in the UK as a consequence of the report, and seeks UK Government support and endorsement:

1. UK Gov will create an Open Source office to advise on openness in all new legislation.
2. UK Gov will clarify its procurement regime including both contracting and processes to facilitate procurement of Open Source and open digital services.
3. UK Gov will promote education in open technologies.
4. UK Gov will encourage diversity in open communities.