Open Standards
and
Free Competition

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0. Roadmap

Approaching the issue

1. Background
2. Interoperability
3. History of an Open Standard
4. Effects on national economy
5. e-Government
6. Summary
7. Outlook

1. Formats and protocols

- Are a form of language, spoken by computers

- Have very specific properties:
  - **Arbitrarily chosen**
    (which frequency is used to dial '0'?)
  - **Require precise implementation**
    (computers are bad interpretors)

- Are written by humans

- Interpreted by humans into software, but all software has unintended behaviour (bugs)

Compatibility is difficult!

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2. Interoperability

Interoperability is essential

"The ability of two or more systems or components to exchange information and to use the information that has been exchanged." – IEEE

Open Standards vs Lock-In

- No globally accepted definition
- Hard to achieve in reality
- Software patents: the "RAND hook"

More standards mean less competition!

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3. History of an Open Standard...

...from the Workgroup Server Market

Novell was the dominant player, so Microsoft

- launches Open Standard effort around CIFS

- gains foothold in the market

- stops participating in standardisation

- modifies protocol, claims "IPR"

- locks Novell out of the client by cryptography

- pushes desktop monopoly to server

Result: EU antitrust case

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4. Effects on national economy

1. communication required

2. five intermediaries

3. proprietary software:
   rewards lock-in through "value-adding"

Proprietary model encourages monopolies, proliferating into the hardware domain

Fraunhofer ISST study:

- \> 50% of German industry

- \> 80% of German exports

depend on ICT!

5. e-Government

Governments must be accessible to **all**, so

- **Governments using proprietary technology**
  - lose control over decisions and data
  - spread monopoly at cost of local economy
  - force population into similar dependency
  - transfer economic power out of country

Reminder:
It is the responsibility of governments
to protect freedom of competition!

7. Summary

Interoperability

- is essential to Free Competition
- depends on Open Standards

Open Standards

- need active work & maintenance
- require vigilance against abuse

Free Software != Open Standards
but is solves many of the difficult issues!
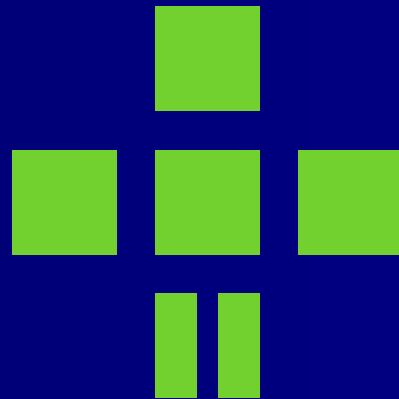
Ultimately, you want both.

8. Outlook

- Open Document Format (ODF)
  - OASIS standard, ISO/IEC 26300:2006
  - supported by Sun, Google, IBM, ...
  - implementation(s) in Free Software

- "MS Office OpenXML" (MS-OOXML) format
  - dependency on proprietary components
  - only ever fully implementable by MS
  - one proprietary implementation

Romania gets to make a choice here!

8. Contact

Thank you for your attention!

Questions?

- Free Software Foundation Europe: `http://fsfeurope.org`

- Get involved, defend your freedom: `http://www.fsfe.org`