

## **Munich: "Open Source and Open Standards resolve IT dependencies"**

### **Open Source News - 18 March 2008 - Germany**

Switching its IT systems to Open Source and Open Standards helps the city council of Munich to resolve problems with software applications and their dependencies, says Florian Schießl, deputy IT project manager for the city.

"GNU/Linux provides us with a great opportunity to remove dependencies between operating systems, business software and office applications. In the future, we will be able to really decide which applications to combine."

Schießl recently gave a presentation on the city council's ongoing migration to GNU/Linux based systems. He described the future IT system of the city to be web based and platform independent. Switching to GNU/Linux, he says, is the best way to achieve and keep this independence.

The IT department currently uses various intermediate solutions to deal with applications that depend on certain other applications or will only run on certain operating systems. The city council deals with these issues by using both proprietary and Open Source virtualisation and emulation applications. "It takes time to get all the software vendors on the right track. But we let them know that their applications could one day be exchanged for one that is platform independent. This part of the migration takes time and a lot of negotiation."

Schießl says that the city's 2003 decision to migrate to GNU/Linux has also helped to reduce the complexity of the IT infrastructure. "Each of the city's twelve departments used to have its own Microsoft Windows desktop clients. There were several types of back-end infrastructures, some based on Novell Netware, some using PC-Netlink or others."

The Munich IT department deploys LiMux, a customised version of the Debian GNU/Linux distribution. It offers the users the KDE desktop environment, OpenOffice, Thunderbird, Firefox and GIMP. Now a thousand work stations run LiMux. Some 6000 other PCs use OpenOffice. Of all the work stations in the Munich city council's office, more than 90 percent uses Firefox and Thunderbird.

While preparing for the switch, the city's IT department discovered that the GNU/Linux client would have to be able to work with or offer alternatives for about six hundred applications that are used by the city's administrators, ranging from enterprise resource applications, specialised software for handling car licenses or registering citizens, to commodity software for creating websites or managing images.

The more complex the system, Schießl says, the longer the preparation for the migration will take. However, he adds, Munich does not work in isolation. "All over Europe, public administrations are moving towards Open Source software and Open standards. Governments, counties and municipalities no longer want to depend on monopolistic software vendors. They want to have choices. We are getting help from others and we share our experiences to others. There's increasing cooperation among the participants."

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## **'More than half the state's servers run Open Source'** **Open Source News - 13 March 2008 - Bulgaria**

More than half of the 5000 servers in use by the Bulgarian central government run on Open Source operating systems, says Yuri Alkalay, director of the administrations "E-Government" Department.

An interview with Alkalay was recently published on the website of the Bulgarian Ministry of State Administration.

According to Alkalay, Open Source is even found on some of the governments desktops. A few Bulgarian administrators use OpenOffice and some even installed GNU/Linux. These are however exceptions, says Alkalay. "The vast majority of PCs however still use Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office."

The Bulgarian government signed a contract with Microsoft for 60.000 software licenses that will run out in 2011. But since the number of computers used by the Bulgarian government is rising, Alkalay expects the number of Open Source implementations to also grow. "Open Source will cover the difference."

"In the coming years we will continue to use Microsoft software, but at the same time we will introduce Open Source alternatives." The Bulgarian government will organise talks with Open Source software companies, Alkalay announces. "We want to provide opportunities to these companies to show that they can offer reliable solutions and to allow them to prove the economic benefits of their approach."

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## **Major cost reduction result of Bristol's switch to Open Standards** **Open Source News - 13 March 2008 - United Kingdom**

Bristol City Council's switch to StarOffice in 2005 has led to a major reduction of IT costs, says Gavin Beckett, the council's ICT Strategy manager.

StarOffice is Sun Microsystems' proprietary suite of office applications, which is based on the Open Source OpenOffice. In 2006 Bristol took the further step of adopting the ISO-approved Open Document Format (ODF).

Speaking at a conference on ODF in the Netherlands last month, Beckett said that implementing StarOffice for 5,500 desktops in Bristol saved 1.1 million GBP (1.4 million euro) in comparison to the total cost of implementing Microsoft Office. "The licences for StarOffice cost us 186,000 GBP (243,000 euro), in comparison to 1.4 million GBP (1.8 million euro) for MS Office."

These major savings were offset slightly by extra time needed for implementing StarOffice. Implementation cost the city council 484,000 GBP (632,000 euro), double the estimate for MS Office. This was due to document conversion and training, said the IT Strategy manager. Explaining and troubleshooting the new office applications took several months more than planned.

Nonetheless, Bristol's city council is still the only large public sector body in the United Kingdom

using ODF, said Beckett. "Our biggest challenge is that many of our business system suppliers and service delivery partners use Microsoft formats and applications." Many of the applications made by these companies use Microsoft's Visual Basic programming language to enable integration with office software. "We need to convince them to invest in support for ODF, but that has been an uphill battle for the last three years. Some of these companies simply refused to support ODF."

The city's IT systems interact with others that either use Microsoft Office or require data to be converted to Microsoft formats, he said.

Due to decades of dominance by Microsoft, the file format is secondary to application integration in UK public sector, described Beckett. "To level the playing field for competitive document applications, government users should act in concert and use their collective influence on the market."

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