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i. Summary

This document provides an overview of lessons learned through study visits and experience exchange in the context of the OSEPA project aiming to assess and facilitate free and open source software (FOSS) uptake in public administrations.

6 study visits took place throughout the duration of the OSEPA project from June 2010 to March 2012. Based on their outcome, it has been shown that success stories in open source can inspire peer organisations and can speed up FOSS uptake when based on proven effective tools and applications that respond to specific tasks and needs and that can be transferred at minimum cost and effort. What has been also emphatically stated is that sharing and communicating good practices in open source is the key to ensuring a smoother integration and gaining political support from higher officials and top managers.

Based on feedback from participants and experiences shared in the study visits and in the context of the OSEPA project, this report also outlines and discusses some critical success factors that should be considered in integrating open source software in public IT infrastructures grouped in:

- a) political factors: *gaining political support and involving decision makers*
- b) organisational factors: *having a plan for change management, training and awareness raising for staff*
- c) technical implementation factors: *technical features matching certain needs, support availability, controlled migration scales, following the pace of technology change*

Considering the complexities and implications of implementing a software strategy within a public organisation, these factors are relevant not just to technical staff but also to decision makers. Such critical factors and aspects could serve as a basis for common approaches and methodologies in defining successful use of FOSS through extensive collaboration and experience sharing among public administrations.

ii. Abbreviations

BISTRITA	Bistrita Municipality, Romania	MFG	FG Baden-Wurttemberg - Innovation Agency for ICT and Media, Germany
EPA(s)	European Public Administrations	SAMBRUK	Swedish Association of Municipalities for Joint Development of eServices, Sweden
FOSS	Free/Open Source Software	SCHOTEN	City of Schoten, Belgium
FUNDECYT	Foundation for the Development of Science & Technology in Extremadura, Spain	USFD	University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
IT	Information Technology	VYSOCINA	Vysocina Region, Czech Republic
KEDE	Central Union of Municipalities, Greece		

1. Introduction

1.1. *Scope and purpose of this document*

This document provides an overall assessment of the experience shared through study visits in the context of the OSEPA project and defines, based on the project's experience, some key success factors in free/open source software (FOSS) usage by European public administrations.

The OSEPA project (Open source software usage by European public administrations) promotes knowledge sharing and experience exchange among European public administrations in integrating and assessing open source software solutions that best fit their needs. Its key objective is to provide a set of good practices, guidelines and knowledge resources that will guide and support public administrations in FOSS adoption, migration and sustainable integration. Through this process, administrations that are less familiar with open source solutions are expected to gain from the knowledge shared by organisations that have migrated to FOSS and have implemented open source solutions.

The report is based on:

- *The evidence and materials gathered in all 6 study visits of the OSEPA project*
- *The synthesized assessment report of all OSEPA study visits, delivered by OSEPA partner, BISTRITA (Municipality of Bistrita, Romania)*
- *material gathered in the final OSEPA workshop held in Athens (6-7/11/2012) where partners had the opportunity to discuss the lessons learned from experience exchange within the partnership and to give their feedback on key aspects and critical factors on FOSS in the public sector.*

The report focuses on the outcome of the study visits that took place during the project and is structured in two main chapters providing:

- *a summing up of lessons learned based on the feedback provided by study visit participants (Chapter 2)*
- *an outline and discussion of critical success factors on the use of FOSS by public administrations, based on the evidence of the study visits and the overall experience exchange process in the context of the OSEPA project (Chapter 3)*

1.2. Scope and context of the OSEPA study visits

The OSEPA consortium had the opportunity to share knowledge, share experiences on FOSS usage in European public administrations as well as identify and transfer best practices on FOSS uptake through a series of interregional events (9 Workshops, 6 Study Visits & 6 Site Visits) and 2 European conferences.

The study visits focused on reviewing case studies and good practices at a micro level, covering different aspects (organisational, technical, economic) and examining open source solutions implemented in different operational and organisational settings in the public sector.

Topics covered included:

- *FOSS applications currently in use by public administrations*
- *Readiness of public organisations in relation to FOSS migration*
- *Staff attitude towards FOSS / resistance to FOSS*
- *Technical aspects of FOSS migration and implementation (e.g. interoperability and compatibility issues, technical support)*

6 study visits took place in the context of OSEPA from June 2010 to March 2012 as shown in table 1.

Table 1. The OSEPA study visits.

Study Visit	Date	Host Organisation	Location
1 st study visit	8-9 June 2010	MFG	Stuttgart, Germany
2 nd study visit	22 June – 1 July 2010	Sambruk	Lyngby, Sweden
3 rd study visit	2-3 December 2010	Fundecyt	Extremadura, Spain
4 th study visit	7 April 2011	USFD	Sheffield, United Kingdom
5 th study visit	18-19 October 2011	City of Schoten	Schoten, Belgium
6 th study visit	29-30 March 2012	Vysocina	Jihlava, Czech Republic

2. Lessons learned in the OSEPA study visits

The anonymised feedback forms, questionnaires and reactionnaires that were filled in by study visit participants and collected upon completion of each study visit revealed that indeed valuable experiences were exchanged among participants. OSEPA partners and participants had the opportunity to showcase how they use FOSS in their own organisations and/or learn from others about their practices. Their overall comments and feedback suggest that the outcome of the exchange was very positive particularly in motivating further FOSS uptake and integration among European public administrations through good practice replication and knowledge sharing among peer organisations.

Lessons learned through the OSEPA study visits have been analysed, based on participants' feedback and grouped into four key statements as shown below:

1. *Success stories and cases that exemplify uses of FOSS in public administration settings can serve as inspiration or motivation for FOSS uptake by peer organisations with similar needs*
2. *Proven effective FOSS applications already demonstrating added value in public administrations can be transferred or replicated to other organisations with minimum customisation or localisation efforts*
3. *Sharing and communicating good practices lays the ground for smoother organisational transition and political support for FOSS uptake*
4. *Technical implementation factors are critical in easing the transition toward FOSS and should be never overlooked in order to maximize the probability of successful FOSS uptake.*

Each of these key statements are further elaborated in the following sections.

2.1. Success stories can inspire peer organisations with similar needs

A common reaction of the study visit participants was their positive surprise at the scale and level of successful FOSS uptake that was demonstrated during these visits. Very positive remarks were collected in the feedback forms regarding shared success stories, even though most participants were public administration representatives that are well aware of several previous success cases in FOSS adoption.

Some indicative quoted comments of study visit participants are the following:¹

- *“I learned that a lot of municipalities and regions have implemented open source software with success in their organisation.”*
- *“I already knew that some cities or municipalities used open source, but it is always nice to see open source solutions that work very good in a similar environment like ours.”*
- *“I learnt much about the state of open source use in existing EPAs, although current approaches are somewhat disjointed – I intend to investigate further the usage in my own locality, and gauge interest in both future study visits and use of the software itself.”*
- *“Seeing that Linux solutions can be implemented in practice in large scale (secondary school).”*
- *“Extremadura, Spain's poorest region, made headlines following a 2002 decision to migrate about 70,000 desktops and 400 servers in its schools to a locally tailored version of Debian called gnuLinEx.”*
- *“Extremadura’s FOSS adoption in public administrations could be a kind of solution for money saving, especially during current difficult economical circumstances in Europe. I also think that Extremadura is using and promoting FOSS through very creative processes.”*

¹ Comments of participants are quoted as included in study visit questionnaires or reactionaries with only minor phrasing editing.

- *“To know Lyngby City Hall efforts to implement FOSS into the public administration was very fulfilling and interesting.”*
- *“Lyngby is a very strong business-case on using FOSS in a public administration!”*
- *“Extremadura region's government has promoted open source usage in public administrations saving a lot of money compared to Microsoft-based systems. “*

These remarks illustrate the increased awareness that came as a result of the participation in the study visits and the positive approach that the study visits helped build up in relation to the use and uptake of open source in EPAs. Exchanging experiences on FOSS solutions currently applied for public administration organisational profiles and operational needs and under public sector budget constraints is one of the main motivators for EPAs facing similar challenges to follow and integrate FOSS-based applications and services.

Furthermore, this increased awareness raised the issue of closer interaction and information exchange between EPAs that have successfully adopted and deployed FOSS and EPAs that wish to do so. Study visit participants expressed their willingness and active interest in further exploring how successful FOSS use cases have been adopted and operate “in the field” in order to obtain a better understanding of the benefits involved, the potential issues that need to be resolved, as well as the scale and magnitude of the transition that their organisation will need to undergo in order to adopt FOSS.

Some representative comments reflecting what participants would be interested in are the following:

- *“Maybe a visit to a municipality to see how open source software is used ‘in the field’”*
- *“Schwabisch Hall: process manager to improve process performance before new application is introduced - hope we can succeed in engaging one in Schoten”*
- *“A visit to an EPA to see how open source software works ‘in the field’”*
- *“I also saw that Lyngby is a municipality that has done a lot of successful open source projects. “*

- *“Extremadura : nearly every application is written in open source for use by public administrations and SME's. We are going to visit them to see if we can do something similar in Belgium.”*
- *“Implementation of OSS in region Extremadura principally in health care and education system”*

The achievements of Schwabisch Hall, Extremadura and Lyngby have been clearly identified by the participants as exemplary uses of FOSS in EPAs with a potential to inspire and produce guidelines for the successful uptake of FOSS.

2.2. Proven effective FOSS can be transferred to other organisations with less cost and efforts

Identification of existing successful use cases is essential to motivate FOSS uptake by other public administrations but it is not sufficient. The investment, not only in cost but also in effort, in developing FOSS applications should not be overlooked or underestimated. One of the key elements to achieve successful and smooth integration of FOSS in EPAs is the identification and availability of specific, proven effective FOSS applications that can be tested and transferred as ‘packaged’ solutions to similar organisational profiles and settings and immediately demonstrate added value at the lowest possible costs for support and sustainability (e.g. technical support, customisation and localisation).

Some indicative comments by study visit participants are the following:

- *“Some open source solutions that we saw will be tested in our municipality.”*
- *“Lisog: open source solution stack is very interesting to follow this “summary of open source applications”*
- *“So that we have a similar situation in our schools with the Office suite licensing, we are going to change to an open source office suite solution soon. We also are going to implement the open source PBX solution in our municipality. ”*
- *“Also Softwareborsen² is a very useful initiative : I will promote in Belgium to start a similar project. ”*
- *“Well, the service platform of Lyngby is a very important initiative : we would like to test their developed software and evaluate it. If positive (as I expect), then we will use it in the future in our own environment. ”*
- *“Agorum : we are going to translate the user interface in Dutch and French and use the program ourselves for file-archiving. Maybe also for scanning.”*

² <http://digitaliser.dk/network/389444>

These comments further illustrate the value of experience exchange through study visits. The participants not only became aware of existing FOSS applications and their potential benefits for public administrations, but they also projected the solutions offered to the needs of their own organisations and realised that some FOSS applications can be directly reused in their own contexts with a minimum cost or effort. Many suggestions for further use of existing FOSS applications or concepts were proposed during the visits. Testing existing FOSS applications as a preparatory step for integrating them or replicating them in similar organisational settings sets a basis for good practice transfer which is one of the key foreseen results of the OSEPA project.

2.3. Communicating good practices lays the ground for smoother and politically supported FOSS uptake

Successful adoption and proliferation of FOSS applications and tools requires not only the availability of proper applications that can cover respective organisational needs. It also requires active and extensive awareness raising, informational actions and consensus-building among decision makers and stakeholders in order to ensure a smooth change towards FOSS that is supported by staff and is politically backed by top-level managers and government officials.

OSEPA consortium partners realise this and are fully aware of the range of issues that need to be addressed in order to facilitate the successful introduction and sustainable use of FOSS applications in public administrations. Project partners that have successfully adopted and used FOSS applications have already encountered these issues and are best placed to disseminate their experiences on how to achieve consensus building and respond to different types of uptake resistance.

The comments of the participants indicate that they have learned valuable lessons from FOSS migration processes involving different organisational departments and government levels or that they are fully aware of the decision making process and political argumentation required to overcome any problems or conflicts that they may face in moving towards open source solutions:

- *“I learned some good use of open source software to solve some organisational issues in small-medium public administration. That will be useful to me when the Region starts working with municipalities.”*
- *“It would be interesting to know if and how the local governments pushed or not the national or regional government on open source. If the use of FOSS corresponds to a political choice or to a technical one and how politicians are aware about software*

and innovation. How and if local companies, that work on standard proprietary software business models, react on the choice of using FLOSS.”

- *“I learned a few good arguments, especially from Danish colleagues, on how to encourage and convince broader use of FOSS in public administration, schools, hospitals and ways to finance that. ”*
- *“I will contact the Latvian Municipal Association, share experience, offer to help find financing, in order to quickly and effectively adopt FOSS for use by Latvian public administration. One source of financing could come from saved money that was provided for commercial software licences. State and municipal institutions should be especially interested to use and therefore partially or fully finance OSS development and local adaptation. ”*
- *“By learning problem definition techniques and the real problems of the public administration to use open source software will be easier for me to find new approaches to the problems that may appear in different circumstances and contexts related to the implementation of FOSS. ”*

These comments clearly show that there are several aspects to consider in order to reduce uptake resistance and pave the path towards FOSS:

- *accurately defining the problem addressed by a FOSS solution and communicating its necessity to top managers and decision makers as a response that best fits organisational needs.*
- *securing necessary support across organisational hierarchy: staff, heads of departments, IT managers, officers, elected representatives*
- *securing financing sources and dedicated staff to support FOSS solutions.*

Addressing these aspects by sharing and following best practice guidelines is critical in order to design and execute successful FOSS integration projects. Inability to take all these factors into account can lead to long delays in the uptake process, waste of valuable resources or organisational fatigue from multiple unsuccessful migration attempts. Sharing and communicating proven effective practices can help EPAs to prepare the transition properly across organisational departments and hierarchies.³ Hence, experience exchange through study visits or workshops becomes a valuable source of information.

³ To this end, the OSEPA project developed the OSEPA Good Practice Guide, to be found at: <http://www.osepa.eu/pdeliverables/index.php>

2.4. Technical implementation factors are critical in moving towards FOSS

A critical aspect that must never be overlooked when deciding on the uptake of software is the actual technical merits of the applications themselves. Valuable lessons can be learned regarding these issues through direct communication and experience exchange between stakeholders as in the case of the OSEPA study visits. It is essential not just for IT managers in public administrations but also for heads of procurement and decision makers to have a clear understanding of the technical aspects that define the functionality, performance and overall efficiency and suitability of software solutions. This critical need to address various technical aspects was also reflected in the OSEPA study visits where participants focused on:

- the need to cover several fields, implementation areas and task-specific applications (e.g. office applications and document management, servers and databases, e-health and e-tax systems, security and networking)
- the need to integrate emerging fields, trends and technologies (e.g. cloud computing)
- the need to address FOSS-specific issues (e.g. identification or reliable software sources, examples of open source stacks for public administrations, FOSS licensing, open source code development issues etc.)

This is clearly shown by comments made by study visits participants:

- *“New ideas and new points of view on cloud computing, different but smart approaches on document management and information management in local authorities were the core of the visit and the added value of the meeting.”*
- *“I learned about licences and the problems that could occur when a company develops open source software for you.”*
- *“A lot of experiences on how to manage some issues as identification, open source platform etc.”*

- *I gained a lot of information about implementing OpenOffice in schools. This experience is very rare and very useful. Also acquired information about different approaches using open source software, not only in areas which they are made for. I appreciated the info from the side of the open source code developers. I have never looked at this in this way before.“*

3. FOSS usage in public administrations: critical success factors.

The successful uptake, integration and usage of FOSS applications and tools in European public administrations is a very challenging task that involves a number of different factors and criteria. Getting it right the first time translates to understanding all important aspects of the endeavour and finding the right balance between these factors and criteria in order to involve stakeholders and manage the technical implementation properly while acknowledging different constraints and requirements. This delicate balance obviously varies based on the organisational scale, profile and the FOSS tools or applications to be used. Despite different organisational settings, however, it is possible to identify a number of critical success factors that relate to FOSS integration in public administrations that can be grouped as:

- a. political factors
- b. organisational factors
- c. technical implementation factors

These factors, as elaborated in the following section, largely reflect the views and experiences exchanged in the context of the OSEPA project,⁴ and can collectively build up a ‘checklist’ of parameters that need to be thoroughly considered before any FOSS deployment process commences.

⁴ particularly in the final OSEPA workshop in Athens, , 6-7/11/2012, hosted by KEDE / Central Union of Municipalities, Greece.

3.1. Political factors

3.1.1. Getting support from decision makers: why it matters

Effective and sustainable integration of FOSS in public administrations cannot be achieved without the active involvement of stakeholders and the commitment of decision makers. Critical stakeholder groups are top managers or heads of organisational departments and higher government officials or elected representatives. These are typically the decision makers that can prioritise FOSS migration projects, reverse resistance to change among staff, influence software procurement requirements and secure or redistribute funding sources for software and IT infrastructure. Hence, their active support or endorsement, particularly for medium or large scale open source project is required; obtaining their active commitment can be one of the key milestones of the process. Achieving the commitment and endorsement of decision makers is in itself a difficult task. Officials or top-level managers will need to be convinced about best value-for-money solutions, operational advantages and economic benefits in respective organisations.

3.1.2. Involving decision makers

Getting the support of decision makers does not only require persuading them but also training them, providing a wider understanding of both the opportunities and risks that may arise in moving towards new, FOSS enabled, IT environments. Heads of organisational departments or top managers that fully grasp all the aspects, risks or complexities that a transition to FOSS entails are in a position not only to endorse any related initiatives but steer FOSS projects within a wider strategic planning for their organisations. The process of ‘training’ or informing decision makers should address some critical aspects that may affect the entire organisational structure or full operational cycle such as:

- *making sure that the organisation's staff is gradually accustomed to and trained on new FOSS-based applications in order to minimise productivity loss and avoid operational disruptions.*
- *opting for FOSS solutions that have been previously used or tested in public administration settings in order to minimise failure risks.*

3.1.3. The benefits of political support

Achieving commitment from decision makers can subsequently trigger a series of other benefits:

- *it is much more likely to overcome policy related issues that may arise. Having political support enables policy modifications/improvements that can facilitate or accelerate the uptake of FOSS in public administrations.*
- *expected organisational resistance to such a change can be significantly reduced if there is firm support behind this transition.*
- *securing financing for the project is much easier if decision makers are fully on board. Finding sources of finance for the preparation and transition phase is also much easier to motivate. This also enables the planning and implementation of the training sessions and awareness raising initiatives required.*
- *higher political support or endorsement can also result in a faster deployment of the FOSS solutions, which limits the duration of transitional effects. A cleaner and faster move from old software tools to new FOSS tools is likely to have a positive impact on the attitudes of users.*

3.2. Organisational factors

3.2.1. Having a plan for change management and training

Another important group of critical success factors for the adoption of FOSS comprises different organisational factors, related to user/employee training and change management. Any change in the software infrastructure that is used daily by public administration employees is bound to produce some resistance. Changing daily habits is difficult and it requires significant effort. Reducing this resistance and accommodating for the potential reluctance of employees to switch will require change management and will involve a combination of awareness raising and training.

3.2.2. Awareness raising among staff

Raising awareness among staff and users of the new FOSS solutions is critically important to minimize resistance and increase the probability of successful uptake. People usually want to understand why changes are necessary or beneficial. Convincing them with solid technical and organizational efficiency arguments tends to curb resistance. The awareness raising campaign needs to be carefully planned out so as to promote the transition and highlight its benefits both for the organization and for the users themselves.

3.2.3. Staff training for a smooth transition

A second important step is training the relevant staff in order to facilitate a smooth transition. The organisation must actively invest in the knowledge capital of its staff through carefully planned and maintained training sessions. The intensity and the duration of the training should be adjusted depending on the scale of the change of the daily user experience between old and new tools. It is vital to prepare the staff well in advance of the transition about what to expect from the new software. Such training can take advantage of the experiences of other organisations that have already adopted the same FOSS tools to illustrate in a qualitative and quantitative manner the benefits of using FOSS. These training sessions, if performed in advance, can also serve as the first step towards a more active end-user involvement. Interested users may participate in localisation or customisation efforts through feedback in

the specification generation process. Such involvement can turn a potentially negative stance into a positive one and prepare users who will champion the transition and reduce negative sentiment.

Training sessions can also be enhanced through experience exchange with other organisations that have already undergone the transition to FOSS, hence effectively bootstrapping the efforts to deploy the new software and accelerating deployment times. Lessons learned and good practices that may result from such exchanges are likely to have a much higher impact than pure classroom-based training, since they will disseminate experiences of using the tools in a real-world environment that is similar enough to that of the organisation that is making the switch.

3.2.4. Staff already skilled in FOSS

Another factor which may prove valuable is the existence of staff already skilled or trained in the installation, use and maintenance of FOSS solutions. Positive peer encouragement can become a valuable asset in reducing organisational resistance. Furthermore, such staff can spearhead the transitional efforts. They can provide the necessary skills and capacities to the internal IT department of the organisation, significantly reducing roll-out times. They can provide continuous communication and support to the users who will have to go through a learning phase before they master the use of the new software.

3.3. Technical implementation factors

Technical implementation aspects are also critical when it comes to the successful uptake and deployment of open source systems and applications within public IT infrastructures.

3.3.1. Technical features matching organisational needs and contexts

Probably the single most important implementation aspect is how well FOSS applications match specific needs of public administrations. Therefore it is critical that the technical features and functionalities of open source applications match the operational tasks that a public organisation has to undertake. Based on the OSEPA experience, administrations that have taken advantage of the agility and customisation possibilities that open source software provides to fine-tune solutions to their specific problems have managed to cover their needs in a more effective and sustainable way.

Matching technical features to organisational needs can be a troubling task with several issues to consider such as:

- localisation and customisation capabilities & resources
- backward compatibility / interoperability issues with current IT systems
- open standards compliance
- fast changing technologies or platforms, new formats and standards

3.3.2. Availability of support

Equally critical is the availability of support for FOSS. Unless it is developed in-house, some support will be needed to ensure proper and trouble-free installation, operation and maintenance. The availability of support either from the developer community or from external, commercial sources can be a vital argument and a critical success factor for the uptake of FOSS. In case of in-house developed software, a policy for software development, maintenance and support should be established and followed within the organisation.

Support of availability, may translate, in the case of FOSS to:

- *online documentation and support resources (e.g. manuals, guides, wikis) provided by the software application's website*
- *online open source community resources (forums, help and guidelines, downloads, fixes and upgrades)*
- *in-house development of support resources (e.g. localised versions and guides, staff training)*
- *external, professional support by commercial open source projects (e.g. Redhat, Novell) or local support providers*

3.3.3. Controlling the scale of FOSS integration

A very important factor for successful gradual integration of FOSS is controlling the scale of its impact on the daily operations of users. Changing any client-side, front-end component or user interface has a wider noticeable impact on the operation and productivity of the bulk of software users. Back-end or infrastructure software changes impact only the IT department, who are more well versed to deal with them. It is not surprising that many open-source, community developed software tools already form the backbone of the infrastructure of organisations and corporations. Representative examples include MySQL, Apache, Wikis and Content Management Systems like Joomla or Drupal. Hence it is advisable to begin the migration toward FOSS applications and tools from the server side, back-end software infrastructure that has a smaller impact and is directly used and managed by experienced IT

professionals. Once FOSS is already operational in any organisation and has proven its value, it is more difficult for opponents to argue against its expansion into other functional/operational areas. This kind of strategy can prove beneficial in reducing organisation resistance and gaining wider acceptance and consensus.

3.3.4. Following technology change

Closely monitoring and integrating latest software trends and developments in which open source has a dominant role such as cloud computing can also prove to be valuable particularly for small to medium size public organisations which may not have dedicated IT departments or advanced computing resources. The ability now offered by cloud-based, ‘as-a-service’ delivery models for remotely managing and allocating computing resources and software applications opens up new perspectives for smaller administrations that no longer have to invest in advanced in-house infrastructure or waste resources on hardware maintenance, repeated software installations and upgrades.

Following current technology trends is also critical for selecting reliable, up-to-date and fully functional open source solutions that will be supported for different platforms on a mid-term horizon.

4. Conclusions

The integration of open source systems and applications in public IT infrastructures and daily operations is a complex and challenging task involving several actors and aspects and having various economic, organisational and political implications that need to be taken under consideration. Therefore, such projects, particularly of medium or large scale, should be planned and implemented as part of a wider IT strategy within an organisation.

Due to the complexity of all issues involved it is difficult to single out success criteria through which FOSS use in public organisations can be assessed or planned without oversimplifying or underestimating certain aspects and factors. The OSEPA experience has shown, however, that there are recurring themes, views and needs as expressed by stakeholders and public administration staff that indicate some key factors or prerequisites that can make open source work in public organisations. These are political, organisational and technical implementation factors and therefore refer to the entire organisation structure and operational cycle of public administrations. In this sense, there are relevant not just to technical staff or IT managers managing FOSS projects but particularly to top managers and decision makers who will need to steer such projects towards sustainable IT solutions that will trigger organisational changes and improve operational performance. Software selection, procurement and use is not merely a technical matter but a strategic one that requires political choices and decision often on a top level.

The OSEPA project has provided, through a series of experience exchange events such as the workshops and study visits, valuable, ‘in the field’ experiences and insights from those who actually make and implement decisions on software use within public administrations. OSEPA has proved that sharing knowledge, communicating success stories and transferring good practices between public administrations that face similar challenges, despite differences in organisational size or structure, is the key to effective implementation and sustainable results. On this ground, there is potential for developing common approaches or methodologies to define or assess the successful use and integration of FOSS among European public administrations.

A prerequisite for shaping such common approaches or methodologies would be the continuous and extensive communication, collaboration and exchange between public organisations that can share solutions to common or similar problems.

5. References

- [1] Good practice guide covering various aspects of FOSS usage by European Public Administrations. 2nd version. Document delivered by OSEPA project partner City of Schoten (SCHOTEN), 27/07/2012.
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