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European Software Association calls for balanced approach open source & packaged software

The European Software Association is the industry body set up by some of the best know companies in Europe whose business is to develop and market software. These businesses are usually known as ISVs or Independent Software Vendors. Members of the European Software Association have successfully developed their companies around a variety of business models and products.

The draft report commissioned by the European Commission on “the economic impact of OSS on innovation and the competitiveness of the ICT sector in Europe” recommends the promotion of “open source” software as a tool for growing the use of IT in the SME sector. The European Software Association believes that it is not helpful to advise consumers to make a clear choice between open source and packaged software. Customers increasingly choose a variety of licensing models -- also including customised software -- depending on their specific requirements in individual situations. Europe benefits most from the flexibility of such heterogeneous offerings.

Open Source and Packaged software both form part of an increasingly heterogeneous IT environment. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. Many ‘closed source’ solutions incorporate developments based on Open Source code, and many open source applications provide extensions to package based solutions. Both forms of licensing need to co-exist to provide the wide range of IT solutions needed in Europe’s complex, sophisticated and diverse business and public sectors. Open Source can provide excellent solutions where its limitations can be mitigated against through the availability of specialist skilled resources. However, packaged software, purchased under license and maintenance agreements, remains by far the most popular method of acquiring software, particularly with micro, small, medium and risk-averse businesses.

The European Software Association calls upon the European Commission to develop a strategy that encourages the development of the European Software Industry across Open Source, closed package and a variety of other development and licensing models. Innovation is the key to the success of all European businesses, including the software industry. Open Source licensing is only one, limited route to that innovation and should not be promoted at the expense of others.

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