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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION
STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (EUROSTAT)**

**ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)
STATISTICS DIRECTORATE**

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(Geneva, 17-19 May 2004)

Topic (iii): Open source and software consortia in statistics

EUROSTAT AND OPEN SOURCE

Invited Paper

Submitted by EUROSTAT¹

Summary

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Eurostat is both a user and producer of Open Source applications.
2. This paper describes both our experiences with and our plans for Open Source Software, particularly in the context of statistics.

II. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

A. OSS in the office

Eurostat and OSS

3. The current policy at Eurostat is that OSS must be considered for all projects. Products that have open source architecture and could be considered for release as OSS products include:

CIRCA - the Communication and Information Resource Centre Administrator, is an Internet based groupware tool developed for and owned by the European Community. The European Commission acts as licensor on behalf of the European Community. The CIRCA source code is available to European agencies and national administrations for their own purposes. Although CIRCA is based on open source architecture, the licensing is not fully compliant with OSD in that there are restrictions as to users.

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IDEP/CN8 - an Intrastat data entry package which has been developed and maintained at Eurostat. Following a decision to cease centralized maintenance, the source code is being released to Member States, under a legal transfer agreement, which will allow those Member States to further develop and modify the package for their own use. Due to certain limitations as to use, the legal agreement is not fully compliant with OSD.

STIPES (Statistical Inquiries from Popular European Software) - is an IDA funded Eurostat project in the framework of SERT (Statistiques d'Entreprises et Réseaux Télématiques – Business Statistics and Telematic Networks). The objective of STIPES is to create a software that will convert most of the data formats generated by popular business software packages (like the SAP Business Warehouse), into formats required by Statistical Offices (like the format for e-Quest). It is being developed as an open source tool.

GENEDI - is an ongoing development of a tool to convert text files to the GESMES format for transmission of data files within the Central Banking community and from NSI's to Eurostat. It is an open source tool.

4. In parallel with Commission studies on OSS in public administrations, Eurostat is considering the issue of migration to OSS applications within the office.

B. Public Administrations and OSS

5. The EU Commission is actively studying both the development of OSS software and utilization of existing OSS applications. A current IDA project **“Encouraging Good Practice in the use of OSS in Public Administrations”** is aimed at producing an information base on the use of OSS within European Public Administrations. This is intended to assist decision makers on the pros and cons of open source.

6. Interesting EU reports on OSS include:

- Study on the use of Open Source in Europe (June 2001);
- Pooling Open Source Software (June 2002);
- IDA OSS Migration Guidelines (October 2003).

These reports and other documents can be found at: <http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/ida> (Open Source Observatory/Resources/ EU Publications.....)

7. The EU studies indicate that, while OSS is feasible in the context of issues such as quality, initial costs, independence and security, there are a number of other issues to be considered:

- Existing dependency on the MS/Windows suite;
- Accountability;
- Interoperability;
- Maintenance/human resources;
- Existing IT contracts.

III. CONCLUSIONS

8. OSS is feasible and can be beneficial to Eurostat and other public administrations. A number of Eurostat products could be released as OSS products. Migration to OSS is feasible, but should be systematic, avoiding a “clean sweep” of existing systems.

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