

## The European Parliament needs Free Software

Free software is software that can be used, studied, modified, and redistributed by everyone. This means that issues of language rights, information security, digital inclusion and legislative compliance can be addressed by European Parliament personnel, by independent contractors, by specialized small and medium sized enterprises, or by citizens themselves, instead of these roles being dependent on a few vendors or institutions. For example, when the European Parliament processes data from citizens, or data which is for citizens, it has an obligation to know exactly what is being done with this data. Protecting the privacy of citizens requires also being able to perform complete security audits. Using free software is the only way to fulfil these obligations.

For transparency, the Parliament's proceedings and debates must be available to all citizens, regardless of the software they choose to use on their own computers. For Members, assistants and staff of the Parliament to fulfil their functions regarding communication with citizens, they must be able to communicate with any citizen, which means that applications and operating systems must not be an obstacle for that communication. To fulfil the obligation of transparent democracy, the Parliament should therefore aim to use open standards which are known to work with free software.

The use of free software by a public administration means that public funds may also go directly to European companies, contractors and enterprises, and thereby help foster and create local economies and markets where fair and open competition is possible. The use of free software can also contribute to social and economic development through the creation of new jobs and the built of high-tech skills. Ideally, the software used by the

European Parliament's would be both diverse and interoperable, designed and developed to meet the Parliament's and citizens' needs, supported by freely associating individuals and companies from throughout the world and serviced by agile enterprises and contractors under open tenders with transparent procurement processes. Only then would democracy be guaranteed also on a technical infrastructure level.

### Free Software needs The European Parliament

We believe that the freedom provided by free software is beneficial to the public and intrinsically linked to citizens' freedoms and equal participation in the information society and should, therefore, be promoted by the Parliament.

Because software systems rely on interoperability, taking the lead is sometimes difficult. But if the Parliament is not using free software or does not allow the use of free software, the ability of citizens and companies which use free software to communicate with the Parliament might be compromised. The need to communicate with the EU institutions may then force software decisions detrimental to the interest of these citizens and companies.

Last but not least, politicians and decision makers across Europe, including in other EU institutions, rely on the European Parliament for guidance and backing for the promotion of free software. The European Parliament must therefore set an example for all European public institutions.

### Join us!

**Mailing List** - To subscribe to the main discussions list, send a mail to [epfsug-subscribe@epfsug.eu](mailto:epfsug-subscribe@epfsug.eu) with the subject "Subscribe".

**IRC** - We hang out there most of the time. If you have an IRC client, come to [#epfsug](irc://irc.oftc.net)

# EPFSUG

## European Parliament Free Software User Group

EPFSUG is an open community of staff, assistants and Members of the European Parliament, and of supporters from the free software community.

Our goals are to:

- Assist people interested in using free software in the European Parliament
- Drive adoption of free software in the European Parliament's information infrastructure
- Push for use of open standards, to ensure equal access for citizens using free software
- Work in cooperation with like-minded groups in Europe and around the world



<http://www.epfsug.eu>